UNDERGRADUATE COUNCIL MEETING
November 2, 2012
Collaboration Room, Knight Library

PRESENT
Susan Anderson, Andrew Bonamici, Ron Bramhall, Ashley Buchholz, Madeleine Hudson, Dave Hubin, Ben Smood, Josh Snodgrass, Karen Sprague, Randy Sullivan, Tom Wheeler, and Glenda Utsey

ABSENT
Sue Eveland, Jennifer Joslin, Loren Kajikawa, Diana Salazar, Alison Schmitke, Kerry Snodgrass, Beata Stawarska, and Paul Engelking

AGENDA
I. Minutes from October 5 and October 19 meetings (3 mins)
II. Proposal to submit statement in support of the Division of Undergraduate Studies (10 mins)
III. Proposal of Senate to create new committees and the impact on the Undergraduate Council (10 mins)
IV. Review on-line course discussion and next steps (10 mins)
V. Presentation and discussion with Yong Zhao, Presidential Chair, Associate Dean for Global Education and Director, Center for Advanced Technology in Education, COE (60 mins)

MINUTES
I. MINUTES FROM OCTOBER 5 & OCTOBER 19 MEETINGS
The Chair called for any changes or emendments to the minutes of the October 5 and October 19 meetings. There were no substantive changes to the minutes, but Susan Anderson cited a number of typographical errors, which were noted for correction.

The motion was made to accept the minutes from the October 5, 2012 and October 19, 2012 meetings, as emended.

Moved: Tom Wheeler
Seconded: Susan Anderson
The motion to accept the minutes as emended passed unanimously.

II. PROPOSAL: STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF THE DIVISION OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDIES
In the previous Council meeting, a proposal was made for the UGC to submit a letter of support for the continuance of the Division of Undergraduate Studies.
The Chair asked Vice Provost Karen Sprague to give the Council a brief background on the possibility that the Division of Undergraduate Studies might not persist and her view of the role of this unit. Karen summarized some of the Provost’s current thinking about reorganizing Academic Affairs, noting his point that when Undergraduate Studies was established, there was neither an Enrollment Management office nor an Equity and Inclusion office. With those offices in place, there are many ways of dealing with the student experience. This suggestion that Undergraduate Studies is no longer needed did not appear to be an isolated, off-hand remark since it fit with other actions by the Provost:

1. Formation two years ago of a task force to examine the portfolios of those responsible for the student experience;
2. Examination one year ago of Vice Provost portfolios by Vice Presidents and Deans;
3. Exclusion of Undergraduate studies from the Capital Campaign.

While the new Enrollment Management and Equity and Inclusion units play important roles, Karen believes that Undergraduate Studies will continue to be needed. Although each of the UGS units could continue working independently if moved to other offices, they are more effective if brought together. Desire for more cohesion was one of the principal motivations for creating Undergraduate Studies to begin with. The idea was to bring these units together so as to connect the administrative aspects the student academic experience to the academic side of the university. The particular units gathered into UGS are the ones that have the most to do with the students’ academic experience: Orientation, Academic Advising, First Year Programs, Teaching and Learning Center, and Accessible Education Center (which had historically been a part of advising). By being combined in Undergraduate Studies, these worked more effectively with faculty than they had in the past, and also worked more effectively with each other. Their efforts, through the twelve years of Undergraduate Studies’ existence, have changed the UO culture surrounding undergraduate academics. It is Karen’s view that Undergraduate Studies should continue and should have more robust support in the form of an adequate recurring budget and inclusion in the Capital Campaign.

Discussion

Members of the Council expressed strong support for Undergraduate Studies and agreed that its work continues to be needed. Several observations were made:

- A position like Vice Provost of Undergraduate Studies is necessary to look at the integrated academic experience of students, rather than the fragments of experience that are limited to majors or particular elements of General Education.

- The position is also needed to respond to changes in students’ academic environment over time—increases in class size, for example. The university is a living organism; it is always changing. Hence, there will always be a need for a Division of Undergraduate Studies.

- Undergraduate Studies has also been a driving force to encourage excellent undergraduate academic work, and this influence will continue to be needed.
The Chair will compose a letter of support for the continuance of a Division of Undergraduate Studies and will circulate the letter for Council members to provide their own input.

III. UNIVERSITY SENATE PROPOSAL FOR STANDING COMMITTEES & IMPACT ON UG COUNCIL
The Chair reported that the University Senate is currently conducting its 10-year review of its standing committees. There has also been mention of creating two new committees: one is intended to focus on academic excellence related to AAU criteria; the other, on instructional technology. There has also been talk of creating new committees on undergraduate education and on graduate education. The Chair will invite Senate President Robert Kyr and representatives from the Committee on Committees to meet with the Undergraduate Council to talk about the work the UGC does and to discuss ways to collaborate effectively with any new committees with similar responsibility.

IV. REVIEW & DISCUSSION: ONLINE EDUCATION
The Chair asked Ron Bramhall to give a brief summation of the UGC’s previous discussion of issues surrounding online education. Ron said that the Council agreed that it needs to play a role in the implementation of online education technology, but it is not clear just what that role should be. The primary issue appears to be developing a clear mechanism for oversight of existing courses, and online courses would come under that umbrella. The Council felt it important to look at best practices by consulting with faculty currently engaged in online education and to engage in broad consultation with other groups re. course review in general and online education in particular. It was suggested the Council could benefit from consultation with Cathleen Leue, director of CASIT.

V. PRESENTATION: YONG ZHAO, ASSOCIATE DEAN FOR TECHNOLOGY & GLOBAL EDUCATION, DIRECTOR OF THE CENTER FOR ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY AND EDUCATION, COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
The Chair introduced Yong Zhao, Professor and Associate Dean in the College of Education. Professor Zhao is actively developing online education software, called ObaWorld.net, and promoting technology for globalized education. Zhao also introduced his assistants, Dane Ramshaw and Lindy Lavender.

Research has shown that, in terms of cognitive outcomes, there is no significant difference between face-to-face instruction and online instruction. However, the two approaches do differ in important ways:

A. Interaction of faculty and student. Both faculty-to-student (and vice versa) and student-to-student interactions are required for any effective teaching, but face-to-face and online instruction differ in the way interaction occurs. Satisfaction in an education experience comes from the interaction. There is a distinction between online instruction (content transmission) and online education (content engagement).
B. Content. Some learning that is very technical, e.g. accounting, works well online, even without interaction. But, in higher-level learning, such as changing people’s attitudes or world views, a lot of synchronous interaction is required.

A blended model that includes both face-to-face and online instruction is best because it is a synchronous mix of technology and human interaction. The human interaction doesn't necessarily have to be physical, but it definitely needs to be synchronous. Successful education must also build in off-task interactions.

There have been three stages in the development of online learning:

1. Someone talking; someone listening
2. Addition of technology tools that create online forums and promote student discussion
3. Incorporation of social media that are student-driven and global. Faculty serve as resource administrators. Students are more vested in organizing their own learning.

Zhao has developed ObaWorld.net, aimed primarily at K-12 students, but readily adaptable to undergraduate college students. Students have their own portfolios which are used as archives for materials and resources for multiple courses. Students can write the same paper for more than one course. A network of Eugene schools using the system is being developed. Because the system runs off the Cloud, it’s affordable and it facilitates cross-institutional instruction and global access. Online courses are not a technology issue; they are an education issue. Online courses redefine what coursework looks like. The ObaWorld network can provide post-graduate support as well as community-building among students before and during their undergraduate experience. Technology should be used to broaden student experience.

Zhao concluded by emphasizing three points:

1. In online education, the medium itself does not make a huge difference in learning. Rather, it is what we do with it that makes the difference.
2. Faculty involvement is essential for high quality educational experiences.
3. The technology tools are much easier to use than we think they are.

Discussion:
- Council members agreed that there is a need to have an open discussion in the academic community and a decision as to what system will be the umbrella for online courses. Zhao noted that there should be only one management system, but there can be multiple delivery systems.
– He pointed out that online courses can provide an anonymity that can promote greater candor in the exchange of knowledge, ideas, particularly when connected with controversial and sensitive issues.

– An online system can also facilitate the orientation of students studying internationally in foreign institutions and allow international students to have a pre-experience of the UO before they actually arrive on campus.

– Zhao concluded that the university should take action knowing that changes will have to be made along the way.

The next UGC meeting is scheduled for Friday, November 15, 2012 at 2pm in the Collaboration room of the Knight Library.