UNDERGRADUATE COUNCIL MEETING
November 12, 2013
Collaboration Room, Knight Library

PRESENT
Susan Anderson, Andrew Bonamici, Ron Bramhall, Sue Eveland, Lisa Freinkel, John Gage, Dave Hubin, Jim Imamura, Loren Kajikawa, Ruth Keele, Alisha Kinlaw, Susan Lesyk, Lori Manson, Lee Rumbarger, Alison Schmitke, Josh Snodgrass, Beata Stawarska, Randy Sullivan, Glenda Utsey, and Caitlin Yamaguchi

ABSENT
Coleman Boyer, Jeffrey Bradshaw, Danaan O’Donnell-Davidson, Tom Wheeler, and Maggie Witt

GUESTS
• Ian McNeely, Associate Dean for Undergraduate Education, CAS

AGENDA
I. Minutes from October 29, 2013 meeting

II. Continued discussion of background and goals for General Education at UO

III. Planning for obtaining feedback on General Education from the campus community

UPDATES
The Chair reported that a technical error has resulted in the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies (VPUGS) not being recognized as an ex officio member of the UGC. The Senate is being approached to rectify the situation and will be adding the VPUGS as convener and ex officio non-voting member to the UGC. The matter is expected to be taken up at the next Senate meeting.

MINUTES

I. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM OCTOBER 29, 2013 MEETING
The Chair called for emendments to the minutes of the October 29, 2013 meeting. The Attendance roster was corrected to reflect that Beata Stawarska was present at the October 29th meeting.

The motion was made to accept the October 29, 2013 minutes as emended.

Moved: Ron Bramhall
Seconded: Beata Stawarska

The minutes were accepted as emended by a unanimous vote.
II. CONTINUED DISCUSSIONS: BACKGROUND AND GOALS OF GENERAL EDUCATION AT THE UO

The Chair reviewed the current state of General Education at UO and invited the Council to discuss several questions.

Emphasis of Current General Education System

The current system emphasizes the common educational experience and recognizes the importance of mastery of linguistic, analytic and computational skills, as well as the development of aesthetic values. It fosters personal development and an expanded view of self, and seeks to impart an enthusiasm for learning. It emphasizes breadth of knowledge and exposure to a variety of modes of inquiry, as well as the development of critical thinking, logic, healthy skepticism, and effective reasoning.

The system emphasizes six areas for which it aims for students to develop an understanding of and appreciation for:

1. The centrality of effective communication and language facility
2. The moral foundations of human interaction
3. The nature of the historical past and its relationship to the present
4. The diversity of human experience through the study of various cultures
5. The importance of modern sciences and technology
6. The fundamentals and interrelationship of the human mind and body

Questions:

1. Are these appropriate goals for Gen Ed in order to provide a liberal education to all students?
2. Is there broad campus awareness of the goals of Gen Ed? Is the messaging effective?
3. How well does the Gen Ed approach fit with the University’s Mission/Academic Plan?
4. Does the current approach adequately balance providing a liberal education with needs for specific disciplinary and technical training?

Discussion

Council members raised questions and made various observations on General Education:

- Should General Education focus on more training for jobs? If students want their degree for work, shouldn’t the job hirers be included in the discussion on General Education?

- Students want to start their major immediately on entering college; they want the quickest route to their major. Students don’t think General Education applies to their major. They see General Education as too onerous.

- Messaging on the value of General Education has been going out, but it is not hitting home. The substance of the message about Gen Ed needs to be examined.

- The issue of dual-credit courses from high schools is a challenge to General Education.
- UO needs to focus on creating a “product” [General Education] that is unique. What is General Education at a research university? We also need to look at how we educate educators. UO should be educating Community College educators.

- Should there be any change in General Education given our growing enrollment of international and out-of-state students?

**Current Gen Ed Implementation at UO:**
The Chair pointed out that there are some differences in a Bachelor of Music, Education, Architecture, Interior Architecture, and Landscape Architecture compared to BS and BA but all require General Education, consisting of:

1. Courses in written English (2 courses)
2. Group requirements in Arts & Letters, Social Science, and Science (with breadth and depth in each)
3. Multicultural requirement, with fulfillment of two categories from the following: American Cultures; Identity, Pluralism, and Tolerance; and International Cultures
4. BA requires foreign language (2 years college-level or the equivalent) vs. BS which requires math/CIS (one year college-level or the equivalent.)

Questions:

1. Is the current implementation adequate to reach the Gen Ed goals? Does the current system adequately provide a liberal arts and sciences education? Is there a problem with delivery?
2. Is the system too complicated? Can the system be less complicated and still achieve the Gen Ed goals?
3. Do instructors do enough to align their individual Gen Ed classes with the goals of the system? Do they regularly incorporate Gen Ed specific learning objectives?
4. Are the guidelines for UOCC/ICGER to review Gen Ed classes adequate to consider Gen Ed status?
5. Are there problems with articulation with the major?
6. Are there problems with communication about the meaning of Gen Ed and the system of Gen Ed?
7. How does the current UO budget model influence the implementation of Gen Ed?

**Discussion**

- There is agreement that General Education provides a common core of knowledge and that a core curriculum is important. However, we don’t have a consistent message on what General Education is. That message should be written as verbs (outcome statements for General Education).

- General Education should build pathways of engagement (not just create a collection of courses). Our current approach to General Education tends to support the “checklist” model; we can—and must—do a better job of articulating the importance of General Education.
- We have goals for Gen Ed: we want students to engage. Students want relevance (to their majors and their careers). General Education and the major should be integrated in some kind of capstone project.

- The Writing program should be used to help bring all this together. The English department will be sending proposals for the CAS Renaissance in General Education project.

- This all leads to the need to assess our General Education program. We should ask departments to look at their General Education courses and how they relate to the degrees the UO offers. Are faculty getting enough guidance on the fact that their classes are in General Education?

III. PLANNING TO OBTAIN FEEDBACK FROM THE CAMPUS COMMUNITY

The Chair noted that a goal for the Council this year is to produce a “white paper” by the end of the AY on the state of Gen Ed at UO that provides a systematic look at whether or not it is broken. And, if we agree that it is broken then can we agree on how it is broken?

Questions:
1. Should we obtain feedback from the campus community on whether Gen Ed at UO is broken (or suboptimal)?
2. If so, who should we talk to—students (ASUO? Open to all students?), faculty (just those teaching Gen Ed classes? Open to all faculty?), department heads, admin/staff (Associate Deans for Undergraduate Education? Advising? Registrar’s Office?), key committees (UOCC? ARC/SRC)?
3. How do we obtain this feedback and what is the timeline?

Discussion:
Council members suggested ways that input from the UO community could be solicited. The first source of input should be students themselves. A general survey could serve as a foundational assessment for how students navigate General Education and their own engagement with the curriculum.

The discussion will continue.

The Chair announced that the next meeting would take up the topic of para-academic courses.

The next UGC meeting is scheduled for November 26, 2013 at 12:00pm in the Collaboration Room of the Knight Library.