UNDERGRADUATE COUNCIL MEETING
November 26, 2013
Collaboration Room, Knight Library

PRESENT
Susan Anderson, Andrew Bonamici, Ron Bramhall, Sue Eveland, Lisa Freinkel, John Gage, Jim Imamura, Lori Manson, Lee Rumbarger, Alison Schmitke, Josh Snodgrass, Beata Stawarska, Randy Sullivan, Glenda Utsey, and Maggie Witt

ABSENT
Coleman Boyer, Jeffrey Bradshaw, Dave Hubin, Loren Kajikawa, Ruth Keele, Alisha Kinlaw, Susan Lesyk, Danaan O’Donnell-Davidson, Tom Wheeler, and Caitlin Yamaguchi

GUESTS
• Ian McNeely, Associate Dean for Undergraduate Education, CAS
• Kevin Hatfield, Assistant Director, Academic Residential Programs, Residence Life
• Lori Lander, Director of Residence Life and Academic Initiatives
• Barbara Altmann, Vice Provost of Academic Affairs

AGENDA
1. Discussion of para-academic courses

MINUTES:

No minutes were available for review. Deferred to next meeting.

I. PARA-ACADEMIC COURSES
The Chair provided a broad outline of goals for the meeting. At the request of the Provost’s Office (Barbara Altmann) and CAS (Ian McNeely), the UGC is being asked to develop some guidelines for the UOCC and college-level curriculum committees as to what constitutes a para-academic course and how it should be reviewed. The Chair explained there will be two meetings. This first meeting is to find agreement on what courses are being talked about and to work toward a definition of “para-academic” courses.

Background
The term “para-academic” does not appear to have been used at UO until 2013 when a discussion of Substance Abuse Prevention Program (SAPP) seminar (407) and workshop (408) courses occurred after that program requested UGC endorse a change to their program. “Para-academic” was used to describe courses that are not wholly academic, in content or context, but may be valuable to students.
Para-academic courses might include courses with these aims:

- Student orientation
- Student job training (e.g. for RAs, FIG assistants, student ambassadors)
- Career planning
- Life skills development (stress management, performance enhancement, fostering of "positive self-concept", addiction recovery, etc.)
- Study skills development
- Service learning unconnected to an academic program

Most or all of these courses appear to have real value in supporting the college experience but they don't always belong to established academic disciplines.

These courses are typically offered through academic units (not administrative ones) but it appears that at least some of the units that offer them do not count these courses as integral to their regular disciplinary curricula. Some of these courses are partnerships between academic units (e.g., College of Education) and a non-academic auxiliary unit (e.g., Residence Life, the Career Center, Intercollegiate Athletics, etc.).

A partial list of para-academic classes that have and/or were offered include:

- *FHS 110 Foundations of Leadership and Life Skills (formerly FHS 199 Issues in Intercollegiate Athletics)
- *FHS 111 Leadership for the 21st century
- *FHS 409 Introduction to Residence Life
- *CPSY 110 College and Career Directions (formerly CPSY 199)
- *CPSY 311 Strategies for College Success (formerly CPSY 407)
- CPSY 410 Nontraditional transfer seminar
- CPSY 407 Life Skills / Self Esteem
- CAS 407 Sem Job Intern Search
- CAS 407 Sem Career Decisions
- CAS 407 Sem Job Search Nat Sci
- SAPP 407s [various topics on addiction, drug use, prevention, recovery criminology, juvenile justice]
- TLC 101 Intro University Study
- TLC 199 [various study skills classes]
- TLC 399 Research Skills

* = rejected by the UOCC

The UOCC has been putting “para-academic” courses on hold until a policy can be set.
**Discussion**

Council members noted that courses need to be defined as credit-bearing or non-credit-bearing. At the same time, there should be a distinction of credit for participatory learning (such as internships or special experiential projects) that should not be confused with “para-academic” courses.

Questions about the issue of these courses were raised:

− What makes a class a "training" and what makes it academic?
− Could some of these be offered as non-credit-bearing Academic Extension courses with a set fee?
− Will students only take a class if it bears credit, even if it’s already mandatory for other reasons (e.g., RA training)?
− Should these classes be allowed at all as credit-bearing?
− Should there be a cap on the number of credits one can take in these types of courses?
− Can a clear definition of para-academic courses be established and administered?
− Should they be required to go through UOCC even before their 3-year experimental window expires?
− Are PE courses a good model for how to treat para-academic courses?
− Should a new UGS subject code be created as an umbrella for these? If so, how would the VPUGS ensure proper academic oversight?

Currently, the Registrar sets credit limits on PE, Music lesson, and TLC courses (12 credits each area; a total of no more than 24 credits) that can apply toward the degree.

The Chair invited guests Kevin Hatfield, Assistant Director for Academic Residential Programs in Housing, and Lori Lander, Director of Residence Life and Academic Initiatives in Housing, to describe the Residence Assistant program that is run to train students for Peer Teaching and Peer engagement in residential academic programs (such as Community Conversations, SuperNova, and Residential FIGs).

A major factor in identifying courses is the component of assessment:

− What do students do in particular courses? Are they assessed? How is the course itself assessed?

Academic course credit is marked by assessment. In pedagogy courses at the graduate level, assessment is linked to a position. This could be problematic at the undergraduate level.

Another challenge is that there is currently no mechanism to remove courses using experimental course numbers. Many of these courses have their numbers as seminars, workshops, or special topics. The “para-academic” courses of concern have become divorced from departmental oversight. The SAPP issue highlighted the problem that many...
“experimental” courses or those with generic course numbers manage to bypass the course review process.

It was suggested that the Student Engagement factor for academic courses (i.e. each credit requires 30 hrs of student academic engagement) be used to identify a course. Also, a determination by each department sponsoring the “para-academic” course needs to be made as to whether a course fits within the departmental curriculum.

The next UGC meeting is scheduled for Thursday, January 9, 2014 at 10:00am in the Collaboration Room of the Knight Library.