

## Minutes & Agendas

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### UNDERGRADUATE COUNCIL MEETING

January 22, 2007

Johnson Hall Conference Room

#### Present:

Andrew Bonamici, Herb Chereck, Hilary Gerdes, Dave Hubin, Dan Keller, Dean Livelybrooks, Dan Patton, Steven Pologe, Ashley Rees, Ron Severson, Karen Sprague, Pat Bartlein, and Lyllye Parker

#### Absent:

Anne Laskaya, Martha Pitts, Kathy Roberts (Christopher J. Murray), Bill Ryan, Arkady Vaintrob, Kate Wagle, Malcolm Wilson, Paul Engelking, and Ken Calhoun

#### Minutes:

Minutes from the January 8, 2007 meeting will be distributed electronically to the Council membership.

#### Announcements:

The Chair opened the floor to announcements of interest to the Council:

- Pat Bartlein is the new Undergraduate Council representative to the Educational Technology Committee;
- Review of the CAS proposal for African Studies program is moved to February 5 while the synopsis for the proposal is being submitted to Academic Affairs in accordance with program review procedures;
- Undergraduate Council members will be receiving an invitation from Mike Eyster and Karen Sprague to attend a presentation by a director of the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) on Tuesday, February 13. UO has participated in two cycles of the survey, which has replaced the CRIP surveys that were done previously. The focus of the NSSE survey is assessing the time students spend on tasks related to developing critical and analytical thinking skills. Council members will receive Karen's initial analysis of UO data from the NSSE survey prior to the February 13 event.
- UO will be joining the Campus Compact, which is an organization focused on engaging students in public affairs.
- The Library announced the Research Award competition..

The Chair reviewed the previous discussion of the Council on the topic of the university multicultural requirement. First, he solicited student

## feedback:

- A lot of freshmen do not understand the multicultural requirement;
- History and Political Science students are aware of specific courses in their majors that also satisfy the multicultural requirement;
- Some students understand the philosophy of the multicultural requirement but don't want to go outside of their major area of study for the requirement; it is more beneficial to have the multicultural requirements within the major;
- It would be helpful to incorporate multicultural courses into pathways of study so that students would understand their relevance;
- Perhaps review of multicultural courses should be considered in the context of UO Diversity Plan. This effort is consistent with the goals of the Diversity Plan;
- Some students "tack on" the multicultural requirement courses after their major course of study is completed and don't see these courses (at least in advance) as integral to their education;
- Students would like to see multicultural course requirements fulfilled earlier in their academic careers; they want more guidance in how these courses relate to their major area; they would like to see a more deliberate connection of multicultural courses to majors.

## The Council members discussed the comments from the students:

- Students have identified a disconnect between advising and what students actually do. Professional schools (e.g. LCB) have done a good job in this area because they incorporate multicultural courses into the requirements for their majors. Arts and Sciences departments have not been as successful in raising awareness of multicultural courses and showing how they fit into the General Education curriculum, although the idea is emphasized in the general advising during orientation;
- The lack of enthusiasm for taking multicultural courses because they are outside the major is symptomatic of a larger problem – namely, students' lack of interest in General Education;
- The purpose of the multicultural requirement is to encourage students to move outside their major study area for a more global (diverse) perspective;
- If the multicultural requirement becomes prescriptive, there is a danger of the courses becoming pedantic;
- The underlying theme of the discussion seems to be: how do we help students get out of their intellectual comfort zone? What are the channels available for raising students' awareness of and curiosity about a whole range of coursework, including multicultural courses, outside the narrow focus of some majors?

- Perhaps multicultural courses should be on both ends of a degree program, both in the General Education requirements and in a capstone experience;
- It is important to understand the variety of students entering the university and their degree of preparedness for academic exploration. Some arrive confident and eager to explore; others have a narrow view of what college is and it takes time for these students to open up and begin investigating more broadly.

The Chair will summarize the Council's discussion and distribute his summary to the members for their further reflection and comment.

The Chair moved the discussion to a study of the language of the multicultural requirement: does the categorization of courses make sense? A brief summary of the development of the current requirements was provided by Dave Hubin and Karen Sprague. The UO's multicultural requirement was examined from 1992 to 1994. Initially, the requirement was seen as a grab-bag of unrelated courses under the umbrella of multiculturalism. After careful study, a task force proposed that multicultural courses would be most useful to students if they dealt with three kinds of topics: specific sub-cultures in American society; specific non-American international cultures; or, specific concepts that underlie our thinking about cultures (identity, pluralism, and tolerance). These topics correspond to the current categories from which students select courses to fulfill the requirement.

The following points emerged in the Council discussion of the current organization of multicultural courses:

- Based upon their comments, it appears to some students that the multicultural requirement is still a grab-bag of courses;
- Students don't understand the categorization of the multicultural courses – it needs to be communicated more clearly;
- More student data is needed before the multicultural requirement is changed;
- A capstone experience could be effective in enhancing students' multicultural understanding.

The Chair asked Council members to consider whether or not the current language of the multicultural requirement serves as a clear guideline and organizing principle for students. Also, is there a significant area that is being overlooked or poorly communicated?

The Chair will invite Charles Martinez, Vice Provost for Institutional Equity and Diversity, to attend the next Undergraduate Council meeting to present his perspective on the multicultural requirement.

The meeting was adjourned.

**The next UGC meeting is scheduled for Monday, February 5, 2007, 9:00am at Johnson Hall Conference Room.**

Undergraduate Council, 5256 University of Oregon • (541) 346-1221 • Last Update: August 8, 2007