

Undergraduate Council Meeting

January 11, 2001

Individuals present: John Nicols, Kwangjai Park, Herb Chereck, Mike Fishlen, Anne Leavitt, Karen Sprague, Hillary Gerdes, Marian Smith, Dick Koch, Bob Zimmerman, Wendy Mitchell, Craig Hickman, Glenda Utsey, Steve Ponder, Wayne Gottshall, Scott Pratt, Faye Chadwell, Kathy Roberts

Three main agenda items to be discussed.

I. Initiatives in Undergraduate Education.

Karen Sprague updates the UGC on undergraduate programs (see handout).

Intent of initiatives is to focus on academic programs that affect beginning undergraduates. Marilyn Linton is the new coordinator of the Learning Communities. She is focused on improving the quality of undergraduate education – getting students started in the best way at the UO.

The FIG and Pathway programs are being revised and there will be the creation of 6 new Residential FIGs.

In the existing FIGs, the College Experience courses will be replaced by a Freshmen Seminar course. This new course will be academically based.

Wendy Mitchell asked what would replace the part of the College Experience course, which supported students in their transition from high school to college.

Karen emphasizes that the personal interaction will not be lost within these new seminars. There will still be small group interaction, discussion of resources on campus, and an emotional support piece. Personal interaction will not be gone, but will be encouraged in the context of dealing with academic questions.

Student FIG leaders (now called FIG TAs) will be taking an increasing role in the academic component. They will participate in FIG seminars, work with faculty, and participate in the seminar discussions. They will also be trained by Academic Learning Services to help the FIG students. There will still be room for “pizza with the professor” sessions and social interaction among students. The Learning Communities program will also encourage interaction among the faculty teaching the regular FIG courses. The goal is to create an environment for entering students in which the exchange of ideas is not an unusual event.

Residential FIGs: This year there are 4 Residential FIGs. With the collaboration of Mike Eyster, Director of Housing, the number of Residential FIGs will increase to 10 -- one example being a “true” Fine Arts Residential Hall. Students will take courses and

live near one another. FIG students will not room together but will be scattered through a specific complex, and thus find each other more easily. There will be an undergraduate FIG Academic Assistant (FAA) living in each of the FIG Residential Halls. This student will be chosen with care and will go through special training to prepare both for the life in the residence halls and academic responsibilities.

Another change this year is that there will be a greater connection between FIGs and Pathways. Pathways will now begin as FIGS in the fall term – and then continue for 5 more terms. This will lead to less confusion in the fall for incoming freshmen; who will a) have the opportunity to continue their FIG experience through a Pathway in the winter b) not have to decide to make a commitment in the fall. There will be multiple “feeder FIGS” that will lead into each Pathway. This arrangement has the potential to increase the numbers of students entering the Pathways.

On April 1, a new booklet will be sent to admitted students. It will explain the academic programs, focusing on the beginning students. It will also act to engage the students’ interests without overwhelming them with detailed information. Through getting the new booklet out early, we will be able to put academics at the forefront of what students learn about the UO. It will also be a recruiting tool, informing undecided students of the interesting academic offerings at the UO. Previously, they received academic information that was diluted by the multitude of other information sent to them. The booklet will also replace the old Learning Communities booklet – placing the Learning Communities within the broader context of the first year academics.

Through the early response form (found in the booklet and on-line), students will be able to tell us about interests, goals, FIG choices, before they come to IntroDUCkTion. This communication can begin once students pay the advance tuition deposit. We will be able to look at their submitted information and suggest a partial fall schedule. The student will not be committed to take these suggested courses, but this information will then be the basis of discussion between the student and advisor at the IntroDUCkTion (or Week of Welcome) advising session.

The computer center is working with us to get information on-line. They will be helping us to pull information both from Banner and from the Early Response Form for use by the academic advisors.

Paul commented on the June 15 deadline for students to accept. He asks how many students in the freshmen class will participate in FIGS and how many students will complete the early response form.

Karen responds that approximately one-third on these students will be in FIGS. In looking to the University of Missouri as the example (they have been doing early registration for 4 years), 70% of Missouri freshmen take early option. Our hope is that 50%, or 1500 students will respond to the early option in the first year; it is felt that one-third of these students will be interested in the FIGS.

Paul asks how this new process will increase the coherence of general education, as requested in the accreditation team report.

These changes will help connect the courses within FIGS and also connect FIGS to Pathways, encouraging greater intellectual cohesion in the fall term experience and beyond.

Herb asks about the connection between FIGs and Pathways.

Karen explains that there will be a list of FIGs that will be designated as “Feeder FIGs” going into the Pathways. FIGs by default will be the first term of the Pathway.

Wendy asks what happens if there are a number of FIGs that do not connect to a Pathway.

Karen comments that we will be altering some FIGs so that they will link with Pathways, but that there will still be many FIGs that simply stand alone.

Herb summarizes during the first term all students, will be enrolled in FIGs. Pathways will not start until the winter.

John raises his concern of how we will combine groups that have internal coherence? If students are shuffled around, they may lose the momentum to move into a Pathway.

He also comments that the faculty in the fall term can only handle a certain number of students while maintaining the degree of advising and the personal component found in the program.

Glenda reiterates John’s concern, stating that the two FIG groups she presently has takes quite a bit of time; Architecture puts advising packets together for each of these students. She also questions how various majors might go through certain FIGs.

II. Responses of CAS department heads.

John and Herb met with the department heads of the College of Arts and Sciences. He chose not to distribute the document with the most recent motions. The heads of the CAS have some concerns. Through John’s numerous conversations with the department heads, he suggests the need for more time.

There appear to be two main issues.

1) Courses offered for general education should be taught on a regular basis. Considerable agreement on this.

Discussion with Gage on courses that meet general education. What are appropriate courses for non-English majors (for example)? Effective way to introduce proposal is to ask: isn't it better for students to have courses offered on a regular basis?

2) Five Year Rule – 5 year hiatus before irregularly taught courses could regain group-satisfying status. This though is Draconian, but may be irrelevant. These courses will be dealt with in another way. They will appear on a drop list that will be referred to Herb to go through a process of review. It will take another month with department heads before looking over proposals. John would like Marion, Glenda, to go speak with Music.

Herb states that under the Draconian definition, departments acclimate to not being able to offer courses for 5 years. Departments should not give mixed messages to students; they should not offer a course one year and not the next. If departments want to reinstate a course, Herb suggests the following: 1) first show them the previous history with the course 2) then ask the department how will things be different?

Paul comments that to reinstate the course, 4 department signatures must be on it. If group satisfying for a specific college, the last box on the form is not consistent with the new policy. The form is sending mixed messages.

Herb mentions the college has overview of group-satisfying courses. This may be in conflict with what departments are doing. The review process is important.

How do the mechanics work? Do you sign the form and send it in? Will group satisfying be a separate issue?

John responds with a yes. That it should be the same.

Herb states that people do not know what they are asking for.

John feels that they can work on some of these procedures. They need to get departments to see what they can afford to offer. The most important outcome will be to get departments to think about general education on a regular basis. Whatever encourages this is important. How many courses allowed in major has not been a big issue with department heads. Music and Education has some concerns. He has raised the question whether it is useful for their students to have courses outside their departments. Everyone agrees that it is. How departments are going to do this, they need to explain to themselves.

The issue becomes, how to proceed? John wants to go to the senate, however it will be later than desired – there is a need to increase support first.

Concern is raised over the Math and language requirement? John suggests a preliminary committee be created, composed of Bob, Dick and Wayne, to look through the problems and define what needs to be addressed.

Herb asks what the language issue is?

John responds whether American Sign Language satisfies the language requirement.

Kwangjai briefly discusses the controversy surrounding this topic at the UPCC.

John next raises the question of what to do when courses lose their group-satisfying status. How should students be notified of this change?

Herb states that this will be a concern for transfer students. Discussion follows on the issue of the CIS course that satisfied the math requirement while not having a mathematical component. It is decided to further this discussion at the conclusion of the meeting.

Karen comments that we should take on a more general question. Why we do not have a universal university requirement for language and math.

Herb mentions that this issue was raised previously within the discussion of the double dipping issue. It was felt at that time that it would be too much of a load to make students do both.

Karen asks if this issue can be re-explored.

John comments that there is 1 more meeting this month. At this meeting they can take time to have an open discussion on the math/language issue. Karen is to prepare the question for the agenda.

Bob, Herb, Paul will talk about the other issue.

With regards to the CIS 121 issue, Dick comments that it was a one-time affair. He doesn't see the need for a general policy unless they see more of this occurring in the future.

Paul feels there is quite a bit of concern.

Herb states that the course has been taught for 2 years as a course that meets the math satisfying requirements but it has no math.

Dick asks if a policy from the council help.

Paul spoke with Jenny Lo. No one could show policies to be followed; it became an act of negotiation, instead of policy based.

John adjourns meeting.

