

Undergraduate Council Meeting

January 25, 2001

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

1.) CAS Department Heads

Since the last meeting John has met with the CAS department heads. Upon Karen's request he distributed a simplified form that summarizes the proposed changes. In presenting the information in this way, it does not seem so Draconian, and encourages departments to think about the general education courses they offer in a broadminded way. Among CAS department heads, there was universal acceptance of the proposals that are above the black line on the form. This includes: 1) 48 credits divided into 3 groups of 16 credits each 2) at least two courses in one subject code in each group 3) at least one course with different subject code 4) no more that 3 courses in the same subject code. Below this line there was debate. A little over half of the department heads (17 to 14) accepted the wording as is, general education courses offered twice in 3 years. The others would accept the proposal if courses were offered every other year.

John feels they should now go to the other schools for discussion. Wendy will set up a meeting with the Business School – we need to get on the agenda. John requests that Cathy, Glenda, and Wendy secure times during the department head's meetings in the professional schools. Also in March they should go before the senate to have the proposals voted upon. As such, UGC members need to work with senators who will vote. Need to get this list and then have, Kathy, Wendy, Marion, Herb and Karen speak with the senators.

2.) General Discussion of General Education Requirements

Bob notes that the third line from the top (on the handout) would be an overwhelming task for CIS. No one knows how to start the review process. If started at this time, it would be superficial. There would be a review of all courses, which would be a large task. With the committee unsure as to how to go about this task, they are waiting for guidelines.

John suggests asking the departments to monitor themselves. The departments know the courses. Up until now, they haven't been asked to think about 80-90% of the students in their courses that are not in their departments. They need to think about whether the courses will work for non-majors. No department has been asked to do this. Their focus has been on majors, not on general education requirements.

Johns proposes that it may be good to have an “A” and “B” list. Departments on the A list would a) agree on specific courses to be taught every year; b) support an explicit set of links giving a broader educational experience; and c) give part of their focus to these courses. Making this information available to students, so that they are more equipped to plan their future coursework, would get these departments’ courses a privileged position on the list.

This proposal is met with a number of questions by UGC members as to the definition of “privileged” and who would decide upon this.

Marion raises the concern that her department will lose a lot out of their courses out of the catalog; that they will have to get rid of some of these courses.

Herb believes that the core issue is to offer courses to students in a consistent way. The decision for the College of Education, for example, as to whether a course would have group-satisfying status, would continue to be with them.

Bob begins discussing new courses and the need to have teeth in the rules. He feels the rules are ambiguous and difficult to enforce.

Herb again reiterates the need to focus on the content of courses and the consistency in which it is offered. He feels the core of the problem is: how are students supposed to plan their coursework, if there is no planning on department’s end to offer courses on an annual basis.

Bob doesn’t see this as an issue. He doesn’t see a lot of undergraduate courses that have group satisfying status but are not taught regularly. He points out that when one goes from the sciences to the social sciences, the number of courses increases but the offerings decrease.

Karen mentions that at her request, the Humanities Center will sponsor an open discussion on general education in February. Steve will send out flyers soon. This discussion will be a great opportunity to talk about the current problems and suggest ways in which to fix them. She invites everyone present to attend. If departments are asked to think about the quality of their general education courses and their connection to other university courses, they might be able to establish a workable definition of what counts as a general education course.

Glenda asks what percentage of courses is required for majors in a department.

John points out that in each department, there are so many lower division courses allowed.

Glenda notes that the best courses are usually the ones for majors. Many times these are the introduction courses to the major.

John states that the Introduction to the English major is not group satisfying but gives a good overview.

Dick mentions that when President Olum was a student, his response to general education requirements was to take courses that were designated for majors only. He wanted to take the real thing.

John says that the courses may be great but one must consider that in looking at general education, major-focused courses may not be ideal for students who will not continue in the subject area.

Glenda argues the need to be careful and the desire to intellectually build students.

Paul Engelking suggests looking at the handout's proposals 1 and 2 on group satisfying courses. To satisfy this they would either not offer courses every 3 years or else offer them every year. What about seldom offered courses?

John states that we had the rules to review compliance but they haven't been utilized.

Herb comments on the need to have better estimates of a) courses that are currently group satisfying, but are not taught regularly; b) need to see if this is a big or a small problem.

Paul Engelking believes there has to be an incentive for offering courses that are group satisfying but not for majors. Department heads have to lean on professors to teach these courses as an out-load.

Craig Hickman asks if there will be lower enrollment in courses if the number of sections increases.

John feels that if courses are taught more, it is better than the current situation. With regards to the UGC rule – which removes courses that haven't been taught – it will be better that departments decide. The UGC should provide framework.

Instead of automatically dropping courses that haven't been taught regularly, Herb wants to identify problems and talk with department heads about issues. He believes in this way, the majority of issues can be resolved.

Karen wants to see the facts.

Herb proposes quantifying the number of courses in each group.

John believes that the task at hand is to take the language and find a way that is immediately comprehensible and not confusing to students.

Herb recommends that student peer advisors look over it.

John asks Hillary, Bob, and Kathy(College of Ed person?) to work on the subcommittee to find the appropriate language for students. The motion to the senate will be different.

Herb asks what the effective date on this will be.

John says when DARS is implemented.

Herb says that although this will be in the coming year, it will not incorporate all major departments but general education courses.

John states the need to have policies in place. He asks if there is a need to look at the math and language requirements.

3.) Math and Language Requirements

Karen wants a general discussion on this. She questions why mathematics and language are not required of everyone. Why do we require only one or the other, depending on whether a student is working toward a BA or a BS.

Bob explains the argument that the major requirements would be too demanding. That this would take away from concentration of major.

Karen points out that Hillary and her staff have tried to see what is happening at other institutions. Hillary passes out a handout with their preliminary findings of what the norm tends to be.

John mentions that there is a new language requirement for high school students. This may resolve some of Karen's concerns.

Karen poses the question: what do we want a UO graduate to be able to do? She would like to see a certain level of competency gained in foreign language and would like students to be able to reason quantitatively (able to handle graph information). At the present time, the majority of our graduates cannot do this. In going through the list, she found that Colorado requires all of its students to take general math courses. Michigan requires quantitative reasoning courses. Arizona and OSU both have university wide math requirements.

Bob asks where does the UO stand with regards to Hillary's list. Also, what should we do?

Karen states that the UO does not have any universal rules. She feels it is important for science students, for example, to take a second language in addition to taking math.

Bob comments that there are high school students who cannot do math; it is too late now. Regardless of major however, students should pass a certain level of proficiency.

Dick mentions that when giving high school placement exams was proposed, the high school teachers were antagonistic. Now, however, they are supportive if proposal done gradually. With high schools backing this, it will give a new feel to the university. Dick believes it is a good idea to have 3 terms of a language and to work with mathematics to develop an appropriate required course.

Craig raises a companion question. What do we want students to have when they leave here? If these new policies are put in place, what do we want students to have less of?

Karen would be happy to give up some of the major requirements. If they are to get anywhere with general education, departments are going to have to be less greedy. The university has a responsibility to the general education of its students.

Marion comments of having to teach students what university life is like. She also states that students learning a second language would increase their English ability.

Marion mentions the frustrations of students in one course caused by not knowing what Arabic numerals were. She is in favor of giving students a general university experience.

Karen points out that we can have some influence and points out the amazing things that are taking place in housing. Before Mike Eyster began, the atmosphere in the residence halls was not good. However he is turning this around.

Wendy Mitchell says that students have various course requirements. An additional language requirement could be somewhat restrictive.

Bob sees problem with math. Due to students not being able to pass math courses, they choose to work towards a BA.

John proposes that 2 or 3 people meet and plan out a more guided discussion on math and language requirements. They should consider what the ultimate goal is. Also need to look into the CIM and CAM language and math exams to see the effect of these tests. It would be good if high school students came to campus with our language requirements being satisfied. It would help them to finish their degrees sooner.

Steve Ponder wants to look at the lesser-supported schools, to see how their students are impacted.

Karen asks if there is a way to know what the proficiency levels are.

Dick will look into math.

Kathy, Wayne, and Dick will work on these issues for the next meeting.

John needs information from Kathy by Monday.

Scott would like to know from admissions what we are currently doing and the impact that such a change would have.

John asks Herb to check into lower division group-satisfying courses.

John will work on language of legislation.

Meeting is adjourned.