

UNDERGRADUATE COUNCIL MEETING

Minutes of February 5, 2002

Members present:

John Nicols, Jim Imamura, Bob Zimmerman, Scott Pratt, Hilary Gerdes, Gail Unruh, Kathy Roberts, Anne Leavitt, Dave Hubin, Kate Kranzush, Herb Chereck, Karen Sprague, Paul Engelking, Stephen Ponder, K.J. Park

Members absent:

John Postlethwait, Faye Chadwell, Amanda Stocker, Craig Hickman, Marian Smith, Wendy Mitchell

Guests: Martin Miller

Meeting began at 8:35

Extra academic credit for small-class experiences within large-enrollment courses

Martin Miller gave a presentation to the council proposing to offer optional extra group-satisfying credit for a select group of large-enrollment (greater than 50 students) courses. To qualify, these courses must simultaneously offer the optional limited enrollment seminars. The seminars aim to provide small-class experiences to students in large-enrollment classes, are strictly optional and carry limited enrollments of 15 students maximum. The seminars emphasize in-depth coverage of related course material and group discussion. They are open to students of all levels and are taught by faculty. During fall, 2001, five such seminars were offered within the natural sciences. The project hopes to expand in fall, 2002, and winter, 2003 to include a total of twelve seminars in both the natural and social sciences.

There was consensus among council members that offering a small seminar taught by the professor is a very good idea. It would allow students more interaction with the professor and an in-depth view of additional material that cannot be covered in the regular lectures. The council agrees that awarding extra course credit is not straightforward, however. Some potential problems noted were:

1. Optional credit status would allow for adding or dropping the class during the seventh week of the term, thus introducing ambiguity into the membership of the seminar.
2. If the extra academic credit is group satisfying, the standard pattern of four 4-credit classes satisfying a group requirement is disturbed.
3. If the extra academic credit is a stand-alone credit, it cannot be group satisfying (three credits are required for group status).

Points two and three mean that legislation would be needed to change requirements so that courses bearing different amounts of credit could be accommodated. Gail Unruh noted that this would not be an insurmountable problem. The council is enthusiastic about Martin's pilot project. Since classes have become so large, there are many students who want more contact with their professors. Perhaps there is too much emphasis on the need for optional academic credit as an incentive. Students may be attracted simply by the opportunity for a richer academic experience.

Requirements for Official Participation in a University Commencement Ceremony

Herb Chereck presented a revised document, which was distributed to the council. The final document below has been approved by the council and will be effective Summer 2002.

“To participate officially in a university commencement ceremony (that is to be considered for Latin honors and departmental honors, and to be listed in the commencement program), a student must have met the university general education requirements by the date of graduation. To determine whether a student who has applied for graduation has, in fact, met the requirements, the Office of the Registrar will check student records during the student's anticipated last term. For the purpose of verification, university general education requirements include the credit hours earned in the previous terms plus the credit hours that correspond to courses in progress.

Students who have not met the university general education requirements will not be listed in the commencement program but will not be excluded from attending the main ceremony.”

General Education Legislation from Spring 2001, to be Implemented in Fall, 2002

In Fall, 2002, students will not be able to use more than one of the courses in their major department to meet a group-satisfying general education requirement. The council is concerned with the steps that are being taken to inform students of this change. Steps being taken are:

1. All advisors have been informed of the change.
2. The community colleges have been notified.

This change will apply to all students admitted for Fall 2002.

American Sign Language

Preparation has begun for the American Sign Language discussion in the council. James Boren will present the case as he recalls it from the Undergraduate Council Meetings in 1994. John Nicols has contacted three faculty members Gina Psaki (Romance Languages), Steven Brown (East Asian Languages), and Mary Jaeger (Classics), who

will present a report to the council. The council's current committee (Kathy Roberts, Kate Kranzush and Hilary Gerdes) will also present a report.

Dave Hubin has a document that he will bring to the council from the Oregon Legislature in 1995. It deals with the connection between upper division course offerings and the status of ASL as a foreign language. The implications of this legislation are important. As it stands, it appears to supercede the UO charter. Can the legislature really decide the university's curriculum? Gail Unruh noted that the petition regarding ASL received by the ARC referred to Oregon Legislation and also to Western Oregon University policy. The argument presented in the petition was that the UO is required by state law to regard ASL as a foreign language. The ARC took no action on the petition and referred it to the Undergraduate Council because the ARC did not want to make an exception for one student without knowing the UO policy on this matter.

Summary of the ASL discussion:

The background, facts and arguments need to be determined and presented to the council in an orderly and dispassionate way. Council members would like to be educated and then discuss the issues; not simply take sides.

Meeting adjourned at 9:50