

UNDERGRADUATE COUNCIL MEETING

Minutes of October 18, 2001

Members present: John Nicols, Hilary Gerdes, Scott Pratt, Karen Sprague, Priscilla Southwell, Kate Kranzush, Amanda Stocker, John Postlethwaite, Steve Ponder, Kathy Roberts, K.J. Park, Herb Chereck, Paul Engelking, Gail Unruh, and Wendy Mitchell

Members absent: Faye Chadwell, Wayne Gottshall, Craig Hickman, Bob Zimmerman, Anne Leavitt, and Marian Smith

Guests: Andrew Bonamici (substituting for Faye Chadwell)

Meeting began at 8:05

1. Substitute Member

Priscilla Southwell will be attending the Undergraduate Council meetings this term, representing the CAS Curriculum Committee.

2. Fourth Credit in Undergraduate Classes

Background

John Nicols distributed [his summary](#) of the problems of the relationship between credit hours and in-class student/faculty contact. The sub-committee that had been appointed at the first council meeting to examine this problem had not been convened. Herb Chereck addressed the problem by reading from the February, 1992, Report of the Committee on the Curriculum to the University of Oregon faculty. "The Committee endorses the following guidelines regarding requests to increase existing courses from 3 to 4 credits and requests for new 4-credit courses:

1 unit of credit shall require 3 hours of work, normally including one hour of class time and two hours of outside work. Justification for 4 hours of credit for a class that meets three hours per week must demonstrate that the average student will need to spend the additional three hours in study or other preparation in order to meet the course requirements. The University Committee on the Curriculum requires evidence of one of the following or the equivalent to justify acceptance of the increased units of credit:

- 1. Four hours of class meetings each week*
- 2. Heavy reading assignments that cannot be completed in the six hours per week normally expected in a 3-credit course and that call for an extra three hours per week*
- 3. Extra writing projects above the normal requirements for a 3-credit course*

4. *Extra participation in class time that requires the extra hours of outside preparation*
5. *Homework problems, experiments, or projects that are in addition to the normal preparation for a 3-credit course*

In addition, the justification should include a demonstration of some means by which the student's performance of the extra work is ensured."

Herb also read from the Final Report of the Committee on the Curriculum to the University of Oregon Faculty, February, 1994, regarding justifying 4- and 5-credit courses. "In general, departmental requests for credit increases were justified by added contact hours (e.g., lecture, laboratory, discussion group) or by additional work (e.g., reading, writing, in-class presentations, examinations, interviews). When departments sought exceptions to these criteria, the burden was on them to convince the committee that the increase was based on sound pedagogical reasons or on innovative ways of improving undergraduate education."

Discussion

- Priscilla Southwell noted that CAS would recommend against fourth contact hour substitutions for classes larger than 75 students.
- John Postlethwaite asked whether four credit classes really meet the four-credit standard. Are they more substantial than their three credit counterparts? **OR** Are students working less and getting more credit?
- Paul Engelking suggested developing a new measurement known as the Student Time Commitment which would assign credit hours based on the time students could expect to put into the course. Based on this measurement, students would be able to sign up for a realistic course load.
- The problem of monitoring the fourth credit was brought up. Herb feels that the only thing that can be monitored is seat time. It is difficult to monitor time spent out of class.
- Scott asked for an enumeration of the impediments to providing the fourth credit hour through a contact hour. The following reasons were given:
 1. Lack of resources for GTFs to lead discussion sections during this hour.
 2. Increased workload for faculty if the fourth hour were additional lecture time.
 3. Nature of the subject matter. In some subjects, a field trip, or movie, or paper would be more suitable than a fourth hour of seat time.

Council Action Needed

Herb and Paul need to have a recommendation from the Undergraduate Council for the Curriculum report that will be distributed in November.

There was preliminary discussion of what the Undergraduate Council might recommend.

1. Four contact hours for four credit hours is the ideal standard, and most lower division general education courses should meet that. Two kinds of exceptions could be allowed:
 - a. Courses without a fourth contact hour could be offered for three credits, and students could count courses, not credit hours, toward fulfillment of requirements.
 - b. If adequate detail and justification were provided, substitutes for the fourth contact hour could be accepted.
2. Institutional guidelines should be developed regarding substitutions that could replace the fourth contact hour. Individual schools and colleges could develop more stringent guidelines

A new subcommittee was formed to collect additional ideas from the council and to put together a coherent summary of ideas and suggestions for the next council meeting. The subcommittee consists of: Paul Engelking, Gail Unruh, Kate Kranzush and Priscilla Southwell.

3. Summary

Donna Schimmer's minutes from the last Undergraduate Council meeting will be posted on the web along with John Nicol's summary that was distributed in hard copy today. The next meeting will be on November 1, 2001, at 8:00 a.m. in the Johnson Hall conference room.

Minutes by Donna Schimmer