

UNDERGRADUATE COUNCIL MEETING
February 17, 2005 – 8:30 AM
Johnson Hall

Present:

Colleen Bell, Dave Hubin, Deborah Baumgold, Herb Chereck, Hilary Gerdes, Peter Gilkey, Anne Laskaya, Julie Newton, Martha Pitts, Kathy Roberts, Karen Sprague, Laura Vandenburg, Mark Thoma, Ron Severson, Tyler Neely

Absent:

Emily Gilkey, Amalia Gladhart, Paul Engelking, Deborah Exton, Shelly Kerr, Steven Pologe

Announcements:

Colleen Bell, UO Library, announced the recipients of the first Undergraduate Library Research Award. The award is given for the best papers written for courses at the 300-400 level. The applicant papers were evaluated on quality and the use of library resources. The judging panel consisted of Andrew Bonamici, UO Library; Colleen Bell, UO Library Instruction Coordinator; Martha Bayliss, English Department; Marilyn Linton, UO Associate Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies; and Michelle Holdway, Scholarship Coordinator. Out of 13 applications, 11 completed papers were received. Of these, four papers received awards. Funding for the awards was provided by several employees of the Library, who contributed their compensation for teaching Freshman Seminars.

Update:

[GradeInflation.com Report](#)

Mark Thoma, currently working with Jim Blick on a report to the UGC on grade inflation, distributed a handout of national data gathered by Stuart Rojstaczer and posted on the web. The data show general trends in grade inflation at U.S. colleges and universities, 1991 to 2002. The UGC deferred discussion until the UO report is available for the council.

Agenda

FIGs and Pathways

Karen Sprague asked the UGC to provide input for a decision she needs to make concerning the budget for two programs, FIGs and Pathways.

- FIGs (Freshman Interest Group) are a first-term program for freshmen who are co-enrolled in two large general education classes and a related small seminar class facilitated by one of the professors teaching one of the large classes. The program promotes academic bridging across disciplines and social bonding in the context of an academic setting. Participants have the advantageous experience of interacting with faculty in a smaller, intimate setting.
- The Pathways program extends a FIG-like experience beyond the first term, for one or two years.
- The academic quality of FIGs has improved since 1999, and FIG students from 2001 onward have earned higher GPAs than their non-FIG counterparts, exceeding their predicted GPAs. Before 2000, the average GPAs of FIG and non-FIG students were indistinguishable, and neither group, on average, reached its predicted GPA.
- The academic performance of Pathway students is also good, but not significantly better than that of students who were in FIGs only. All Pathways begin as FIGs in Fall term.
- In contrast, the size and cost / student ratio of the two programs are very different:
 - Regular FIGs: Fall 2004 enrollment ~ 900; cost/student = \$90.00
 - Residential FIGs: Fall 2004 enrollment ~ 500; cost/student = \$400.00 (more expensive than regular FIGs because of board and room for FIG TA)
 - Pathways: Current enrollment =162; cost/student = \$600.00

- **Discussion**

Members of the UGC noted the following:

- FIGs serve many more students than do Pathways;
- Pathways provide a desired interdisciplinary perspective, but the number of students who benefit is small. Interdisciplinary perspectives are now also provided in most FIGs;
- Perhaps expenses could be cut by eliminating the formal structures and administration of Pathways, but a small amount of money could be provided

to maintain a “cohort” experience between students and faculty (e.g, via social/academic events or continued interaction with the student FIG assistant). NOTE: this already happens in residential FIGs, where the live-in FIG assistant continues to work with the FIG group during Winter and Spring terms.

After discussion, the following motion was made by Peter Gilkey and seconded by Mark Thoma:

The Undergraduate Council endorses shifting funds from Pathways to both residential and ordinary FIGS to pay not only for continuing them but also for enlarging the number of students to whom they are available.

[\(Shift Funds from Pathways to Residential and Ordinary FIGS\)](#)

The motion passed by unanimous vote.

Old Business

The means of determining funding priorities by the Educational Technology Committee was brought up for discussion. Members of the UGC would like a clearer understanding of the ETC’s process for establishing these priorities and for avoiding conflicts of interest.

The Educational Technology Committee is an administrative committee that is appointed by the Provost’s office, rather than by the Committee on Committees. UGC members wondered whether the ETC could be more effective if its membership and operating procedures were better understood. In particular, faculty would appreciate knowing how to get ETC help with teaching-related technology projects.

David Hubin will explore the UGC’s questions with University administrators.

Foreign Language Admission Requirement:

Peter Gilkey reported that, in response to the UGC’s February 3, 2005 discussion, Vice President Lorraine Davis had withdrawn the OUS proposal to drop the foreign language deficiency make-up requirement. The OUS Provost’s Council will consider the proposal next year, so as to allow adequate time for discussion at all levels.

The UGC is concerned that the foreign language requirement for college admission may not be taken seriously if exceptions are granted too readily and the requirement to make up deficiencies is removed. Presently, there are Oregon school districts that use the availability of exceptions to justify cutting foreign language classes in response to budget reductions. It was also noted that the frequency of exceptions is higher among community college transfers than among new-from-high school freshmen.