

## **UNDERGRADUATE COUNCIL MEETING**

**April 27, 2005**

**Johnson Hall Conference Room**

### **Present:**

Deborah Baumgold, Colleen Bell, Deborah Exton, Hilary Gerdes, Emily Gilkey, Dave Hubin, Tyler Neely, Julie Newton, Steven Pologe, Kathy Roberts, Ron Severson, Karen Sprague, Mark Thoma, Laura Vandenburgh, Amalia Gladhart, Paul Engelking

### **Absent:**

Herb Chereck, Peter Gilkey, Anne Laskaya, Martha Pitts, Shelly Kerr

### **Guest:**

Susan Eveland, Associate Registrar

### **Announcements:**

The Chair announced that this was Emily Gilkey's last Undergraduate Council meeting. Emily was thanked by the UGC for two years of excellent service as a student representative.

### **Introductions:**

The Chair introduced Susan Eveland, Associate Registrar, as a guest .

### **Agenda**

#### **Transcript Symbols**

Hilary Gerdes and Susan Eveland presented a proposal to modify the visible symbols for group-satisfying courses that appear on websites and printed advising material, but to retain the underlying computer programming of ">1, >2, >3" etc. Sue explained that symbol changes will require significant work by the Computing Center; since the Center is currently working on a campus-wide upgrade to Banner 7.1 that is due out by Thanksgiving 2005, all new projects are on hold until then. Therefore, Sue proposed making symbol changes available in Spring 2006. She also proposed to eliminate symbols on transcripts altogether, since information about how a course counted toward graduation credit is rarely important to readers of transcripts. Elimination of symbols on transcripts would have the advantage of freeing up additional space for course titles, which are important to readers. If group-satisfying information is needed in particular situations, it can be obtained from a student's DARS report.

Proposed symbol changes:

- >1 would become A&L (Group I: Arts and Letters)
- >2 would become SSC (Group II: Social Science)
- >3 would become SCI (Group III: Science)
- >4 would become MTH/SCI (counts toward BS math requirement or Science group requirement: Math/Science)
- >5 would become MTH (counts toward BS Math requirement only)

Symbols for the multicultural courses would remain the same as they are now.

- **Discussion**

The Undergraduate Council agreed that the optimal time for symbol change is Spring 2006, in time for the 2006-2007 Course Catalog. There were some questions about the symbols proposed:

- What is the distinction among >3 (designating courses that count toward the science group requirement); >4 (designating courses that can count toward the science group requirement or the BS math requirement, but not both); and, >5 (designating courses that count toward the BS math requirement, only)? Could any of these be combined? (No, according to Sue Eveland. Altering >4 is complex because it indicates that a course can be used in different ways by different individuals. It is not a fixed characteristic of a course.)
- Are there limits on the number of characters that each symbol can contain? Would it be possible to give group-satisfying courses 3-character symbols, and retain the current effective 2-character symbols for multicultural courses? There is a technological concern about whether enough computer space exists in the system to accommodate symbols containing more than two characters. Susan Eveland will explore this with the Computing Center.
- Is it possible to include a cue (through formatting, color or parentheses) to indicate that the new symbols are a code, not part of a course title?
- Will the change of symbols create problems with DuckWeb or the transfer course equivalency database?

Sue will address the council's questions with the Computing Center and will have the information relayed back to the UGC for further discussion.

### **Grade Inflation Report:**

(See: [Grade Inflation Report](#))

Mark Thoma presented a preliminary report on grade inflation at the University of Oregon, compiled with the assistance of Jim Blick. He emphasized that the report is just a starting point in analysis of the issue. His initial summary shows evidence of inflation of grades at UO in the period from 1992-2004: 10% more "A"s and 7% more "A"s & "B"s were given across the courses sampled, averaged over all levels and all divisions and schools. He noted that there was a great deal of variance in the data.

The Council members thought that the analysis was excellent, and that the change in grade distribution over this time interval was significant. Several questions were raised that Mark was asked to pursue further:

- Can the GPAs of students in the courses that were analyzed be compared to overall GPAs at UO during the same period?
- Can the apparent correlation between faculty composition and grade inflation be examined in more detail to determine whether it holds up?

The Chair introduced communications from outside the Council that made the following points:

- Some UO faculty are concerned about the large number of "A+"s given at UO; faculty are pressured to "bump up" grades with "+"s. This contributes to increases in the numerical value of GPAs.
- The University of Washington changed its grading system to a "point" system (3.1, 3.2, 3.3, etc) with a cap at "4.0." This change was said to slow the rate of grade inflation at that institution.

The UGC will work on developing specific recommendations for reducing grade inflation. It would like to encourage departments to discuss what grades mean within the unit. General recommendations could help individual faculty withstand the pressures that lead to grade inflation.

The council directed Mark and Jim to continue with further research into the data and report their findings at a future meeting.

The meeting was adjourned.

**The next UGC meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, May 11, 2005 at Johnson Hall Conference Room.**