

**UNDERGRADUATE COUNCIL MEETING**  
**October 18, 2006**  
**Johnson Hall Conference Room**

**Present:**

Andrew Bonamici, Herb Chereck, Deborah Exton, Dan Keller, Anne Laskaya, Dean Livelybrooks, Dan Patton, Steven Pologe, Christopher Murray, Ron Severson, Karen Sprague, Arkady Vaintrob, Kate Wagle, Malcolm Wilson, Pat Bartlein, Paul Engelking, and Lyllie Parker

**Absent:**

Hilary Gerdes, Dave Hubin, Martha Pitts, Ashley Rees, Bill Ryan, and Ken Calhoon

**Minutes:**

**The motion was made to accept the minutes from the October 4, 2006 meeting.**

**Moved: Dean Livelybrooks**

**Seconded: Anne Laskaya**

**The motion to accept the minutes passed unanimously.**

**Agenda**

The Chair previewed the Agenda (HO #1-10182006) with the Undergraduate Council. The order of the Agenda was reversed, with Item 2, General Education Criteria and Outcomes, to be discussed after Item 3, the Grade Inflation Report.

**Grade Inflation Report**

[Graph of Grade Changes 2005-2006](#)

In an effort to clarify the collection of responses to the Grade Inflation Report, the Chair suggested a system of categorization:

- Responses that addressed causes of grade inflation;
- Responses that manifested “healthy skepticism” on the issue;
- Responses that addressed or offered solutions to the challenge, either on the University level or at the departmental level.

Two factors to be kept in mind while the Council formulated any kind of proposal were foreseeing outcomes of the proposal (and the possibility of “unintended consequences”) and the necessity to maintain information transparency.

• **Discussion**

As the Council discussed the responses to the Grade Inflation Report, several questions were raised:

- Why can't "D" be a passing grade? It is acceptable for group-satisfying and some elective courses, but is not acceptable in majors. Some departments do not require every majors' course to be passed with a "C-", but, instead, require that the average of courses in the major be "C-";
- Any bar set in grading is going to contribute to grade inflation;
- We need to be careful of squeezing grades into such an extremely small range that the ability to distinguish student performance is eliminated.

The Chair urged the Council to look at directions an Undergraduate Council proposal on Grade Inflation might take. Several approaches that might be included in a proposal were discussed:

- Review descriptions of the meaning of letter grades;
- Focus on grading trends;
- Facilitate conveyance of information on grades from the Registrar to the departments;
- Provide students with the opportunity to deal with or discuss grade inflation issues with professors.

Generally, the Council felt that more departmental responses to the material circulated last Spring (Grade Inflation Report plus Examples of Responses) were needed before a proposal could be developed. The Chair stated that the main goal for the Undergraduate Council is to develop a proposal that the Council can stand behind. To facilitate local discussion of grading practices, data on each department's grade trends is needed. These data are available from the Registrar's Office, but the Council needs to ensure that the departments know how to obtain it in a format that is clear and accessible.

**The motion was made that the Undergraduate Council work with the Registrar's Office to convey information on departmental grades to deans, department chairs and staff.**

**Moved: Steve Pologe**

**Seconded: Anne Laskaya**

**Herb Chereck further proposed that a small core group from the Undergraduate Council be responsible for setting the parameters of the Banner query that would produce the information to be conveyed.**

**The motion passed unanimously.**

The Chair announced that he would work with a core group from the Council to communicate with departments when the query was designed and ready to be sent.

Herb Chereck had been concerned about grade changes from Y to a letter grade. Since "Y" means "No basis for grade," it is not clear that it can ever be substituted by a letter grade. Herb determined the frequency with which such changes occurred during AY 05-

06, and was pleased to discover that it was low: less than 1% from 7/1/05 to 6/30/06 (HO # 2-10182006). After discussing the changes with the individual faculty who had made them, Herb found they could be accounted for by misunderstanding of the “Y” mark, and its improper use as an equivalent to “Incomplete.”

### **General Education**

Karen Sprague briefly reviewed the work that is being done at the state level to develop a mechanism for making decisions on the transferability of General Education courses among institutions. This has not existed in the state before, and the key elements are:

- the establishment of criteria for General Education courses
- the establishment of statewide faculty committees to recommend transferability of courses, based on these criteria.

Due to lack of time, the Council was not able to discuss the matter. Karen distributed documents ([JBAC General Education Outcomes & Criteria Draft Statements](#), [American Council on Education \(ACE\) Cover Letter](#), [American Council on Education \(ACE\) Addressing the Challenges in Undergraduate Education](#)) for members to review in preparation for picking up the discussion at the next meeting.

The meeting was adjourned.

**The next UGC meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, November 1, 2006, 1:00pm at Johnson Hall Conference Room.**