

**UNDERGRADUATE COUNCIL MEETING**  
**February 12, 2009**  
**Rowe Conference Room, Knight Library**

**Present:**

Andrew Bonamici, Amy Goeser Kolb, Dave Hubin, Jennifer Joslin, Dean Livelybrooks, Karen McLaughlin, Ian McNeely, Caleb Owen, Ron Severson, Josh Snodgrass, Karen Sprague, Laura Vandenburg, Trudy Cameron, and Jennie Leander

**Absent:**

Sue Eveland, Lisa Feldhusen, Sean Jin, Anne Laskaya, Andrew Leavitt, Arkady Vaintrob, Tom Wheeler, Morgan Williamson, Paul Engelking, and Elizabeth Reis

**Guests:**

Russ Tomlin, Sr. Vice Provost, Academic Affairs

Ian McNeely convened the meeting with a call for corrections to the minutes of the January 29, 2009 meeting. A vote was called.

**Minutes:**

**The motion was made to accept the minutes from the January 29, 2009 meeting.**

**Moved: Dean Livelybrooks**

**Seconded: Josh Snodgrass**

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

**Agenda:**

***UGC Motion addressing Grading Policy and Practice in UO Undergraduate Courses***

Karen Sprague distributed a copy of the revised draft of the Undergraduate Council motion addressing grade inflation. She explained that there is also a preamble for the motion, but that just the motion was being distributed to help focus the discussion of the Council. Ideas contained in the "Recommendations" section of previous drafts have now been incorporated into the motion itself. In addition, Council members' questions about two items have been addressed:

- What do we mean by the “grading practice” that is to be spelled out in syllabi?
- How are “comparable classes” identified for the purpose of grade distribution comparison?

A new point in the draft (indicated in bold) is one that surfaced in the previous meeting’s discussion:

**7. Proposed new item: Beginning in 2001-11, transcripts will report grades in the context of the percent A-range grades awarded in the courses. To preserve confidentiality, the context will not be reported for courses whose enrollment is less than \_\_\_\_.”**

Karen indicated that she is contacting several universities to discover their experiences in reporting grades in context. She will report to the Council on the responses she receives.

During discussion of the draft, the following ideas emerged as possible items to consider for the final version. Further discussion is needed before incorporation of any of them.

- **Discussion**
  - The new draft sets the right tone for the motion.
  - It may be helpful for departments if there is a repository of examples from across campus of what other departments are doing to address grade inflation.
  - Reflecting on assessment will help in the development of practices for handling grades and grade inflation.
  - There should be comparisons of grade distributions across departments as well as within departments.
  - The motion will support the University’s stance that grading practices are a form of assessment of student academic performance.
  - This draft of the motion appropriately places the responsibility of determining the meaning of grades on departments.

- All members of the faculty should be involved in determining a response to these issues. The draft should emphasize this shared responsibility explicitly.
- It is easy to describe the grading practices for quantitative subjects (economics, mathematics, physics, etc.). Other subjects that are more dependent on qualitative evaluation of students' written work have a greater challenge. Maybe workshops could be held to assist faculty in developing quantitative rubrics for assessment of qualitative subject matter.
- Fundamental oversight of course syllabi in lower division courses is needed to ensure that students can understand clearly the explanations of grading philosophies and methods.
- Students often equate "assessment" and "reward." Pre-tenure faculty have difficulty in accurately "assessing" students' academic work because of the pressure to get good teaching evaluations so as to have strong tenure files. It is necessary to re-educate students to take more pride in their work and not look at grades as "rewards."

The Council was generally pleased with the new draft of the motion. Members also supported the idea of placing transcript grades in context in some manner. Karen noted that this will require consultation with the Registrar, but it was important to take active steps toward countering grade inflation and this is one that will show the University's seriousness in addressing the issue.

The Council agreed that the new idea of normalizing transcript grades will be the primary agenda topic at the next meeting. Karen and Amy Goeser Kolb will finalize a preamble for the motion and present it to the Council. Incorporating UO anecdotes about grading practices was suggested.

***Collaboration Between Southern Oregon University and the University of Oregon***

Karen introduced Sr. Vice Provost Russ Tomlin from the Office of Academic Affairs. Russ presented a synopsis of a proposal to collaborate with Southern Oregon University in admitting qualified students into the OUS system. The proposal addresses the problem of overenrollment at UO and underenrollment at SOU. The goal is to provide accessibility to an OUS institution for qualified students, and especially those from the Portland area. The student surplus at UO would be accepted in both UO and SOU. They would attend SOU for two years. Then, if an adequate GPA was maintained, they could opt to transfer to UO or remain at SOU. Those who finished their degree work at UO would get a UO degree; Those who remained at SOU would get a SOU degree.

Russ invited Council members to comment upon or ask questions about the proposal. Overall, the Council supported the proposal at a pilot level. Members were concerned that there be a way for the UO to review the situation and withdraw if it is not clearly successful.

Council members provided specific comments, suggestions, and remarks:

1. The proposal resembles a “souped-up” community college transfer agreement: that’s probably good.
2. It appears UO is “outsourcing” lower division general education instruction. To what extent is the quality expected of a UO program reflected at SOU?
3. How is it decided who goes to SOU? Just least well-qualified? Do we provide incentive at all? Does SOU? How do we distinguish between volunteers and those who do not have another option?
4. Student support issues: how are these to be managed? These students may be ones who need more academic support while at SOU and then again when they transfer into the UO. Do we have a plan for this?
5. How much does SOU look like UO in its offerings: looking more alike makes this more attractive. In particular, does SOU offer innovations like FIGs and other first-year programs that we do on this campus? Will they look like a UO option or something less?
6. We set a 3.0 GPA for transfer. We’re taking a tough look at grade inflation at the UO right now. Will SOU also be interested in examining this issue?
7. An initial goal of 200-250 students has been set for this program. Is there any idea of where this number would go, up or down, over the longer term?
8. Are we preparing to take on these students in our upper-division efforts, or do we just imagine they’ll fit in somehow? Where are the resources for the increase of students in the more expensive majors and upper division effort?
9. There will be a need to develop links between the faculty of UO and SOU.
10. How will SOU handle students-in-waiting (Green Raiders) vs. students who want to be at SOU as their principal choice (Red Raiders)?

11. Will students be able to choose this option or will they just get assigned? How will this be managed?
12. We should consider how to create a schedule to rotate UO faculty into SOU to augment the local offerings.
13. Extensive work is needed on backend costs and support: admissions, advising, registrar, and so on. How do we capture these, plan for and find them?

Russ will report the Undergraduate Council's feedback to the Provost.

The meeting was adjourned.

**The next UGC meeting is scheduled for Thursday, February 26, 8:30am at Rowe Conference Room, the Knight Library.**