

UNDERGRADUATE COUNCIL MEETING
November 4, 2008
Johnson Hall Conference Room

Present:

Dave Hubin, Sean Jin, Jennifer Joslin, Anne Laskaya, Dean Livelybrooks, Karen McLaughlin, Ian McNeely, Ron Severson, Josh Snodgrass, Karen Sprague, Arkady Vaintrob, Laura Vandenburg, Tom Wheeler, Trudy Cameron, and Paul Engelking

Absent:

Andrew Bonamici, Sue Eveland, Lisa Feldhusen, Amy Goeser Kolb, Andrew Leavitt, Caleb Owen, and Morgan Williamson

Minutes:

Minutes from the October 21 meeting were not yet available for review.

Agenda

Proposal for name change of major from “Teacher Education” to “Educational Foundations”

Karen Sprague distributed an e-mail from the Dean of the College of Education which responded to questions raised by the Council re. the proposal to change the name of one of the majors from “Teacher Education” to “Educational Foundations.” After reviewing the responses ([E-mail from COE Regarding Questions about name change](#), [E-mailed Questions to COE regarding proposed name change for major](#)), the Council agreed unanimously to endorse the proposed name change.

Recommendations Related to the UO Multicultural Requirement

Karen distributed a draft of the proposed Recommendations Related to the UO Multicultural Requirement ([Recommendations Related to the UO Multicultural Requirement](#)) to the Council. Additions were made to the recommendation to:

- clarify that desired descriptions of Multicultural courses are analogous to those faculty are asked to provide for their group-satisfying courses. Since many group-satisfying courses also count toward the Multicultural Requirement, much of the descriptive work has already been done. A description of a multicultural course should “give students and advisors, who are not experts in the field, a clear understanding of the course’s relationship to the general purpose of the Multicultural Requirement and to the particular multicultural category in which it is offered.” The Council recommends that, in addition to posting these descriptions in the Schedule of Classes, faculty should “include these informative descriptions in the course materials they distribute to students by other means.”

-expand upon the need of American Cultures courses to sometimes “...cut across the geographic ranges or cultural communities of the groups being studied”

allowing for "...the inclusion of relevant material from outside the United States...provided such inclusion does not blur the focus of individual courses or distort the original goal of the American Cultures category."

The Council also revised the wording of the Purpose Statement for the Multicultural Requirement to emphasize the intent of providing critical thinking and sound intellectual analysis of multicultural issues. ([Comments on Multicultural Purpose statement in catalog](#))

The Council was generally in favor of accepting the recommendations. The Convener called for a motion.

The motion was made that the Undergraduate Council accept and endorse the Recommendations Related to the UO Multicultural Requirement and forward them to the Committee on Courses for review along with the Undergraduate Council assessment of individual multicultural courses.

Moved: Ian McNeely

Seconded: Ron Severson

The motion passed unanimously, with one abstention from a new member.
(See [Proposal Regarding Recommendations for Multicultural Requirement](#))

Karen was directed by the Council to forward the final recommendations to the Committee on Courses for their review. ([Recommendations on the Multicultural Requirement, Recommendations Related to the UO Multicultural Requirement for COC](#))

Grade Inflation

Karen presented a brief summary of the Council's work preparing a report on grading trends at UO and soliciting feedback from university departments. It is clear from the data in the Council's report, *Trends in Undergraduate Grades Awarded at the University of Oregon 1992-2004*, issued in March 2006, that grades have inflated at UO over time. The situation is not unique to UO, but reflective of a national trend.

Council members discussed actions that might be recommended by the Council to begin addressing the issue.

-The Council would like to address grade inflation on the UO campus. Grading is a form of assessment. Not to acknowledge grading as an assessment tool invites external assessment.

-Grade distribution information is already available to departments and their faculty. The Council could recommend that, at a minimum, departments distribute grade distributions to their faculty each term.

-The Council wants to urge the university to make a clear statement about what grades mean. It is important that the practice of grading and the meaning of grades be depersonalized; grades are not intended to measure personal worth.

-What grade information should be reported to faculty and departments? It's desirable to keep the reports brief and readily understandable. They could be limited to the percent of "A"s. After discussion, the Council felt that reports sent to deans, faculty and GTFs should reflect the distribution of all grades, not just "A"s, but the information should be presented clearly. The reports should be educational and provide data for reflection within departments. The Council needs to encourage this kind of discussion.

-Is distribution of this information sufficient? Are other measures needed? (For instance, normalization of grades on transcripts – as is done at Columbia).

The Council agreed that it's time to put the ideas that have surfaced during discussion into written form. The next step is to develop a draft response to grade inflation. This could include:

- An impetus to self-reflection on the purpose of grades;
- A request that departments consider their grading practices and articulate a philosophy governing them;
- Revision of transcript information.

Anne Laskaya will compose the first working draft of the Council's recommendations on grading trends and bring it to the Council.

Dave Hubin announced that the Distinguished Service and Honorary Degree Committee needs a representative from the Undergraduate Council. He invited members to either self-volunteer or nominate someone to sit on the committee.

The meeting was adjourned.

The next UGC meeting is scheduled for Thursday, November 18, 2008, 11:00am at Johnson Hall Conference Room.