

## **EXPANDED COURSE DESCRIPTIONS FOR GROUP-SATISFYING GENERAL EDUCATION COURSES**

Background from UO Senate (this was in response to UGC's 2003-2004 analysis of general education)

Motion US03/04-8—Amend the Criteria for Group-Satisfying Courses  
and

Minutes of the University Senate Meeting May 12, 2004

.....snip.....

1. For all Group-satisfying courses to be offered during a particular term, faculty or departments are asked to post electronically, in the Schedule of Classes, course descriptions that are substantially expanded over those provided in the catalog. The posted course information should be understandable to someone unfamiliar with the field and should emphasize the questions or issues that reveal, by their breadth and significance, why the course has earned Group status. Examples of such descriptions are included in the Addendum to the Motion. To help students make informed choices of courses, the web postings should be made prior to the start of the registration period for the term in question, and should be directly accessible from the Schedule of Classes. Links to the Schedule of Classes are easily established, and departments may choose to give this responsibility to office staff or to individual faculty, as is locally appropriate. In cases where course descriptions are not yet available, electronic syllabi that provide this information will suffice.

### **2005 – 2006 UGC discussion:**

Nov 28, 2005:

#### Course Descriptions

Herb Chereck presented a brief overview of the Undergraduate Council's analysis of Group-Satisfying Courses in 2003-2004. One recommendation that emerged and was approved by the University Senate was the provision of more informative descriptions for these courses. The idea is to post those on-line, accessible from the class schedule (HO #1). Students and academic advisors would thus have ready access to the information necessary for making informed course selections.

To date, descriptions for only 60%-70% of the ~500 Group-Satisfying Courses have been submitted to the Registrar's Office. Members of the Council were asked to encourage their colleagues to submit descriptions. Herb suggested that descriptions be coordinated through one person in each department so there would be an inherent coherence and consistency within programs.

Karen Sprague presented slides depicting samples of course descriptions currently on line at the University, course descriptions posted on-line at Duke University, and samples of how course descriptions at UO could be enhanced with graphics that would attract the interest of prospective and current students (HO #2).

- **Discussion**

Members of the Council supported the development of the on-line course descriptions.

- Can course descriptions be developed for all courses, not just those with Group-Satisfying status? Herb explained that the ultimate goal is to have descriptions for all courses, lower and upper division, but staffing logistics in the Registrar's Office limits the effort to Group-Satisfying courses at this time.
- There should be one information sheet for faculty to complete for their course offerings which incorporates program requirements, course requirements and course descriptions.
- The development of a graphic presentation of course descriptions should keep a "Print Version" option available to accommodate lower band widths on modems.
- While graphics could help market a course, care should be taken to avoid creating unrealistic expectations on the part of students.
- Course descriptions for on-line display should run only about 100-125 words.

It was observed that the Inter College General Education Requirements Committee will be requiring all new courses to have an effective course description. The Course Review Committee will request that all Group-Satisfying Course descriptions be completed by the end of this academic year. The importance of having the descriptions placed on-line and available when the Accreditation Team visits cannot be overemphasized.

**Karen and Herb were directed to work with the Library and Media Services to design and develop a format for the course descriptions to be placed on-line for public access.**

Continued UGC discussion during 2005-2006

May 5, 2006:

### **Accreditation Self-Study comments**

Karen asked the members of the Council if they had any comments to offer on the information re. undergraduate curriculum currently outlined in the Accreditation Self-Study. Several suggestions were made:

- A look should be taken at the proliferation of “little programs” that may be monetarily rewarding to faculty but of little academic value to students.
- General Education requirements ought to be revisited.
- Analyze our assessment of academic programs.
- Complete the extended course description project.

Karen reported that Travis (in the Registrar’s Office) has created a mock-up of a web page for illustrated versions of these descriptions. She reminded the Council that some samples of these descriptions had been presented at a previous meeting [November 28, 2006], but Travis’s version is even better. It is modeled on the MIT Open Course website. Although only 2/3 of the group-satisfying course descriptions have been turned in, that is enough to start setting up a web site. Malcolm Wilson noted that this project would be an excellent submission for Educational Technology funding.

### **Planning & Implementation 2006-2007:**

Goal: Provide an image-enhanced web description for all group-satisfying lower division courses (see list). Target deadline: April 2007, in time for Accreditation Team Site Visit

#### **Primary Participants:**

Karen Sprague, Vice-Provost for Undergraduate Studies  
Cathy Kraus, Executive Support Specialist, Undergraduate Studies  
Herb Chereck, University Registrar  
Kirstin Hierholzer, Asst Director, CET  
Azle Malinao-Alvarez, Web/Graphic Designer, CET  
Lesli Larson, Coordinator of Image Services  
Andrew Bonamici, Assoc Univ Librarian  
JQ Johnson, Director, CET  
Sue Eveland, Associate University Registrar  
Travis Shea, Imaging & Web Coordinator, Registrar’s Office

PROCESS:

December 2006:

Planning meeting with Karen, Herb, Andrew, Kirstin, Leslie, & Travis

January – February 2007:

Larger meeting to review goals and determine potential for Banner/Duckweb integration

Develop information architecture (IA) framework (Lib/CET; Registrars); review as wireframe.

Confirm [pilot] departments and courses (Herb & Karen)

Develop design based on approved IA

Develop functional web template based on design

Write copy for welcome page, about, group descriptions, etc.

Identify images (library subject specialists with academic departments and project team)

March 2007:

Populate template with selected images & copy

mid-March – content freeze for Quality Assurance

Saturday, 31 March: launch pilot site; send link to Accreditation Team