

Minutes & Agendas

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UNDERGRADUATE COUNCIL MEETING 2007

February 5,

Johnson Hall Conference Room

Present:

Andrew Bonamici, Herb Chereck, Hilary Gerdes, Dave Hubin, Dan Keller, Steven Pologe, Kathy Roberts (Christopher J. Murray), Bill Ryan, Ron Severson, Karen Sprague, Arkady Vaintrob, Pat Bartlein, Lyllye Parker,

Absent:

Anne Laskaya, Dean Livelybrooks, Dan Patton, Martha Pitts, Ashley Rees, Kate Wagle, Malcolm Wilson, Paul Engelking, and Ken Calhoon

Guests

Charles Martinez, Vice Provost of Institutional Equity and Diversity
Dennis Galvan, Director, International Studies
Doris Payne, Linguistics

Minutes:

The motion was made to accept the minutes from the January 8 and January 22, 2007 meetings.

Moved: Herb Chereck

Seconded: Lyllye Parker

The motion to accept the minutes passed unanimously.

Introductions:

The Chair introduced Charles Martinez, Vice Provost for Institutional Equity and Diversity, who attended to present a status report on the University Diversity Plan to the Council.

Multicultural Requirement and the University Diversity Plan

Charles explained that his purpose was primarily to generate a conversation with the Council and to provide a sense of how the University Diversity Plan was developed and where it currently stood.

During the development of the second draft of the Diversity Plan, discussions focused on the Multicultural Requirement in the university curriculum. Students had

repeatedly voiced concern over a perceived disconnect between their own expectations for skill development in navigating the diverse environment of the university and the actual content of courses meeting the multicultural requirement. This led the Executive Diversity Work Group to specifically charge the University Senate to initiate a re-evaluation of the multicultural requirement through the Undergraduate Council, the Curriculum Committee and other appropriate entities. Colleges and schools with content activity were given the same charge, especially physical sciences and mathematics. However, at the same time, the Executive Group tried to avoid taking authority from faculty and departments in the determination of the curriculum.

Charles stated that it would be hard to argue that the current multicultural courses are irrelevant; however, we need to look at whether the courses are missing a focus on helping students cope with diversity now. Students complain that some courses are not “personally challenging,” i.e. they do not provide a self-reflective component to help students see the world more clearly from their individual perspectives.

He also said the challenge is to see where we are now as an institution as opposed to where we aspire to be; to meet our aspiration will require faculty skill set development. He noted that curricular change usually begins in an additive mode (that is, through the addition of stand-alone courses), moving toward a more integrative curriculum in which the additional content is embedded within a range of courses. When asked where he saw the UO currently, he said that in terms of curriculum, the university is in a transitional phase. Academic departments have much discussion to do, analyzing how multiculturalism is relevant to particular subject areas. It would be oversimplistic and perhaps wrongheaded to dictate that every course should be multicultural.

There is still lots of foundational work to do to develop a more integrated multicultural curriculum, particularly in lower level foundational courses. Ultimately, this must come from faculty.

Most current diversity plans submitted by units in the university seem to have more focus on infrastructure rather than curriculum. Charles commented that the work of the Undergraduate Council to shape the curriculum in multiculturalism will be very helpful.

Discussion

Council members presented their comments and observations:

- It is coincidental that the Undergraduate Council is undertaking a review of the multicultural requirement at the same time the Executive Work Group is developing an institutional response to the University Diversity Plan. The Council’s review is part of its ongoing review of General Education;
- Student feedback to the Council indicates that they don’t see

- multicultural courses as part of the core liberal arts curriculum. It seems extra, tacked on. Some students would prefer to take multicultural courses that are conceptually linked to their majors;
- Students frequently see the significance of the multicultural courses only later in their lives;
 - The Council wants to avoid a prescriptive approach to multiculturalism in the curriculum;
 - There are also extracurricular opportunities in multiculturalism that might be studied by the Council;
 - While multiculturalism is everyone's responsibility, advisors have the greatest influence on students and the advising process can be little more than a checklist. Faculty advisors generally counsel students, effectively on multicultural courses in the majors;
 - Prior to 1991, the multicultural requirement was a grab-bag -- with the wrong incentives for courses to qualify; today, there is greater coherence among courses that fulfill the requirement.

Proposal for a Minor in African Studies

The Chair introduced Dennis Galvan, Director of International Studies and Doris Payne, Professor of Linguistics, and Chair of the African Studies Committee. Dennis presented a proposal for the creation of a Minor in African Studies. The proposal had already been reviewed and approved by the CAS Curriculum Committee. Dennis explained that African Studies have been growing in interest and demand over the past five-to-ten years. Grant support has been received to support the development of undergraduate African studies. Additionally, teaching grants have been received.

Members of the Council discussed several points in the proposal:

- It was suggested that experimental courses in the minor not be listed in the proposal since they are not permanent in the curriculum;
- The existing capacity for the program justifies the need and there will be adequate seats for students to take courses;
- The minor would provide a focus for students to continue a planned program of study;
- The study abroad component of the program has been discussed with International Programs. Students have the option of study abroad or learning an African language;
- The courses for the minor, outside of language, add up to 32 – this makes it a tough minor.

The Chair noted that historically, minors add breadth to degrees; overlapping courses between majors and minors are generally limited to two courses. This program

contains a considerable amount of overlap in courses qualifying for the African Studies Minor and toward majors in other disciplinary areas. Dennis responded that the committee was open to a mechanism to limit overlap.

In response to a question as to who has the right to say that you cannot double-count courses, it was pointed out that it is in the purview of the Undergraduate Council to address this question. Double-counting courses is more far-reaching than just majors and minors. The African Studies Committee was advised to address language in the proposal that could be generalized into a principle of operation to address this issue. Also, the revision could indicate that required consultation with International Studies faculty advisors could maintain flexibility while keeping overlap to an acceptable minimum. The committee will submit a copy of the proposal with the minor revisions for the next meeting of the Undergraduate Council.

The meeting was adjourned.

The next UGC meeting is scheduled for Monday, February 19, 2006, 9:00am at Johnson Hall Conference Room.

Undergraduate Council, 5256 University of Oregon • (541) 346-1221 • Last Update: August 8, 2007