Undergraduate Council Meeting: 2014-03-26

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Undergraduate Council Meeting Minutes
26 March 2014, 1:00 p.m., Conference Room, Piano Man Building

Members Present: Tom Ainscough (chair, COB), Bonnie Braun (COE), Linda Crossman (Registrar), Joan Eldridge (Academic Advising), Kevin Wang (CAS), Jim Schnur (LIB)

Regrets: None

Guests: Deby Cassill, Leon Hardy

Meeting: Called to order at 1:02 p.m. with quorum present by Tom

Minutes: N/A

New Business

Curricular Matters

1. Proposed New Minor in Biophysics. Science faculty, represented at the meeting by Deby Cassill and Leon Hardy, have expressed an interest in adding a new minor to the catalog in Biophysics. The Undergraduate Council reviewed the proposal for the minor in its entirety, as well as three courses that would be applicable to the minor. In section 7 on page 3, clarification of the number of credit hours in PHY4910 and BSC4910 (Undergraduate Research) should occur. For example, is it expected that students will sign up for one of these courses one time with the full four credit hours, or can they take this course with variable credit on more than occasion or take both PHY and BSC sections for a total of four hours? In section 8 on page 3, expand upon “State’s Prerequisite Requirements” by enumerating the actual courses required with their state course numbers so there is no ambiguity or misinterpretation by students who claim they have “a Physics” course when it is not an equivalent to state prerequisites. One of the courses listed, PHZ4702 (Applications of Physics to Biology and Medicine I) is not included for review at today’s meeting and has not come to Undergraduate Council for review. Review and approval of PHZ4702 needs to occur before this proposed minor, as outlined, is complete. A suggestion was also given to revise the proposed catalog copy as a way to enhance the “marketing” of this minor, though the present language is sufficient and not problematic at all.

Following discussion, Jim MOVED that the Undergraduate Council ACCEPT the addition of the new minor in Biophysics contingent on revisions outlined above (clarification of credit hours in Undergraduate Research, addition of prerequisite courses, submission of paperwork for PHZ4702) and contingent on approval of other course proposals that will be subsequently reviewed. Bonnie SECONDED this motion. Hearing no further discussion, the MOTION WAS UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED by vote of the Council.

2. Proposed Course in Computational Physics (PHY4xxx) offered in support of Minor in Biophysics. Science faculty, represented at the meeting by Deby Cassill and Leon Hardy, remained in the meeting during discussion of this proposed course. The following changes were recommended to assure that the course proposal moves forward without unnecessary delay after review on our campus: 1. For minimum grades on prerequisites (page 4), a grade (C,C-) needs to be supplied so there is no ambiguity about whether a “C-” sufficiently meets the prerequisite requirements. 2. In regards to Department/Program resources on page 5, use standard language of minimum SACS requirements (i.e., a master’s degree with at least 18 graduate hours in an appropriate field). 3. Provide the name of the text or primary source that students will use, whether formally published, available in Open Access, or in some other format. This will show those above the institutional level that a textbook of some sort has been selected. 4. In the Student Learning Outcomes, change “should” to “will” for greater precision. 5. In syllabus and proposal, remove any references in the first person (“I” or “we”). 6. In the syllabus, adjust grading scale to make sure that all point ranges are covered (i.e. D equals 600-699 points or 60.0 to 69.9 percent).
Following discussion, Jim MOVED that the Undergraduate Council ACCEPT the course proposal contingent on the 6 revisions stated above. Joan SECONDED this motion. Hearing no further discussion, the MOTION WAS UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED by vote of the Council.

3. Proposed Course in Undergraduate Research in Physics (PHY4910) offered in support of Minor in Biophysics. Science faculty, represented at the meeting by Deby Cassill and Leon Hardy, remained in the meeting during discussion of this proposed course. In addition to the six changes noted in the Computational Physics course, above, the Undergraduate Council recommended that the syllabus be modified slightly to remove the word or association with a “class” or “classroom” since the nature of this course is individualized.

Following discussion, Jim MOVED that the Undergraduate Council ACCEPT the course proposal contingent on the revisions stated above. Kevin SECONDED this motion. Hearing no further discussion, the MOTION WAS UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED by vote of the Council.

4. Proposed Course in Applications of Physics to Biology and Medicine (PHZ4703) offered in support of Minor in Biophysics. Science faculty, represented at the meeting by Deby Cassill and Leon Hardy, remained in the meeting during discussion of this proposed course. In addition to the six changes noted in the Computational Physics course, above, the Undergraduate Council recommended that the short course title be abbreviated so it is clearly represented in thirty characters or less.

Following discussion, Jim MOVED that the Undergraduate Council ACCEPT the course proposal contingent on the revisions stated above. Bonnie SECONDED this motion. Hearing no further discussion, the MOTION WAS UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED by vote of the Council.

5. Course Change Proposal: Introduction to Anthropology (ANT2000). This course change for courses designated as General Education has already been reviewed by the General Education Committee and the College of Arts and Sciences’ Academic Program Committee. The Undergraduate Council reviewed the program for language and documentation since this proposal will be forwarded, when and if approved, as a General Education Course in the USF System’s course inventory. In regards to ANT2000, the following elements were discussed: 1. In regards to Department/Program resources on page 5, use standard language of minimum SACS requirements (i.e., a master’s degree with at least 18 graduate hours in an appropriate field). A generic statement should be used rather than one that describes who currently teaches the course because the qualifications should be standard regardless of the instructor of record. 2. Changes to course mentioned on the top and bottom of page 6 are highly problematic. Since this is a form to address how USFSP wants to add this course to the General Education course inventory, this is not the place to explain the specific effects and pedagogical challenges of revising this class from a four credit hour to three credit hour format. First person should not be used in this portion of the document (i.e., explaining that someone—the first person “I”—found it necessary to delete films). At the USF System or state level, these statements may be construed as an individual’s displeasure with changes caused by the change of credit hours that USF elected to do based upon other state university peers. 3. Question regarding Student Learning Outcomes on page 8: For SS3, do we need a level of specificity regarding type size, font, and margins as examples of how we translate state SLOs. Thus, if a student submitted the paper but used a different font, does that mean that they have failed to meet our interpretation of SS3? 4. Philosophy of education on page 9 should be rewritten to remove the first person “I,” since the faculty assigned to teach this course may change in the future and the course is a General Education standard of the University, not a course owned completely and entirely by one individual.

Following discussion, Jim MOVED that the Undergraduate Council ACCEPT the Course Change Proposal for GE, contingent on revisions as mentioned in 1, 2, and 4, above, with consideration of 3, above. Bonnie SECONDED this motion. Hearing no further discussion, the MOTION WAS UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED by vote of the Council.

6. Course Change Proposal: Art and Culture (ARH2000). This course change for courses designated as General Education has already been reviewed by the General Education Committee and the College of Arts and Sciences’ Academic Program Committee. The Undergraduate Council reviewed the program for language and documentation since this proposal will be forwarded, when and if approved, as a General Education Course in the USF System’s course inventory. In regards to ARH2000, the following elements
were discussed: 1. In regards to Department/Program resources on page 5, use standard language of minimum SACS requirements (i.e., a master’s degree with at least 18 graduate hours in an appropriate field). A generic statement should be used rather than one that describes who currently teaches the course because the qualifications should be standard regardless of the instructor of record. This is not the place for an instructor to outline their individualized qualifications because approval of this course as part of the General Education curriculum is not contingent on it being taught solely by this instructor. It is assumed that the College and University will select faculty based upon SACS qualifications and other factors, but that autobiographical statements about qualifications and expertise are most appropriate within the sample syllabus, not the form. 2. Remove any annotation about textbook choice by USFSM, since we should be concerned in a USFSP application only with USFSP textbook recommendations. 3. On page 9, the language should be modified to remove the specific qualifications of an individual instructor, since this course is being considered as a General Education course that may be taught be different faculty. Specific skills and training of an individual faculty member may be appropriate as part of a sample syllabus, but not in this part of the form.

Following discussion, Jim MOVED that the Undergraduate Council ACCEPT the Course Change Proposal for GE, contingent on revisions as mentioned above. Joan SECONDED this motion. Hearing no further discussion, the MOTION WAS UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED by vote of the Council.

7. Course Change Proposal: Anatomy and Physiology (BSC2085). This course change for courses designated as General Education has already been reviewed by the General Education Committee and the College of Arts and Sciences’ Academic Program Committee. The Undergraduate Council reviewed the program for language and documentation since this proposal will be forwarded, when and if approved, as a General Education Course in the USF System’s course inventory. In regards to BSC2085, the following elements were discussed: 1. In regards to Department/Program resources on page 5, use standard language of minimum SACS requirements (i.e., a master’s degree with at least 18 graduate hours in an appropriate field). A generic statement should be used rather than one that describes who currently teaches the course because the qualifications should be standard regardless of the instructor of record. 2. Use of yellow highlighting on the form is unnecessary and distracting. 3. On page 7, top, both “Applicable” and “Not Applicable” are checked. 4. On page 8, the state-mandated Student Learning Outcomes do not seem to correspond with key assignments, in some cases. For example, is written analysis of a newspaper or magazine article or an “online trusted source” USFSP’s version of showing that students have mastered “the ability to examine and evaluate scientific observation, hypothesis, or model construction . . . “? 5. There are problems with the syllabus, including the first paragraph of the course description (“This is an exciting class . . .”) and questions about the nature of out-of-class assignments. 6. Is there a lab class built into this course, or the one offered in the second semester? Language in the syllabus is unclear (instead of “this class” explain the class that has the lab by giving its course number).

Following discussion, Jim MOVED that the Undergraduate Council REJECT the course change proposal and remand for appropriate revisions. Bonnie SECONDED this motion. Hearing no further discussion, the MOTION WAS UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED by vote of the Council.

8. Course Change Proposal: Introduction to Earth Science (ESC2000). This course change for courses designated as General Education has already been reviewed by the General Education Committee and the College of Arts and Sciences’ Academic Program Committee. The Undergraduate Council reviewed the program for language and documentation since this proposal will be forwarded, when and if approved, as a General Education Course in the USF System’s course inventory. In regards to ESC2000, the following elements were discussed: 1. In regards to Department/Program resources on page 5, use standard language of minimum SACS requirements (i.e., a master’s degree with at least 18 graduate hours in an appropriate field). A generic statement should be used rather than one that describes who currently teaches the course because the qualifications should be standard regardless of the instructor of record. 2. In regards to Department/Program resources on page 5, a statement is made that this course “will not require a laboratory,” yet the syllabus mentions in bold letters that “Enrollment in a laboratory section is mandatory.” 3. Use of yellow highlighting on the form is unnecessary and distracting.
Following discussion, Jim MOVED that the Undergraduate Council REJECT the course change proposal and remand for appropriate revisions. Bonnie SECONDED this motion. Hearing no further discussion, the MOTION WAS UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED by vote of the Council.

9. Course Change Proposal: Introduction to Philosophy (PHI2010). This course change for courses designated as General Education has already been reviewed by the General Education Committee and the College of Arts and Sciences’ Academic Program Committee. The Undergraduate Council reviewed the program for language and documentation since this proposal will be forwarded, when and if approved, as a General Education Course in the USF System’s course inventory. In regards to Department/Program resources on page 5 for PHI2010, the following element was discussed: The application stated that “(w)ith current faculty, this cannot be offered often, at least not with qualified faculty. We hope the university decides to devote one—and preferably two—full-time faculty to Philosophy. Since this is a state-mandated course, if we don’t teach it regularly, the students will take it elsewhere.” Since this form is used for USFSP courses that will serve General Education requirements in the USF System and will be subject to review at the state level, this statement is highly problematic. By the admission of the faculty submitting this form, we do not have sufficient faculty resources at the present time to offer this course on a regular cycle. Therefore, lacking such resources, this proposal is predicated on the university securing additional resources to be able to offer the course in a manner or with regularity that will assure students can take it to fulfill General Education requirements. Based upon this fact alone, this statement invalidates the need for USFSP to add this as a General Education course within the USF System inventory at this time. This part of the form is meant to be where minimum requirements for faculty are enumerated, not a place to make a plea for additional faculty, a statement that may have negative political implications at the System and state level.

Following discussion, Jim MOVED that the Undergraduate Council REJECT the course change proposal based upon insufficient institutional resources. Bonnie SECONDED this motion. Hearing no further discussion, the MOTION WAS UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED by vote of the Council.

10. Incomplete Nature of the Form Promulgated by the General Education Committee. Jim addressed his concerns that the revisions to the form to create a “one-size-fits-all” approach has left very important information off of the forms we review for new courses and programs. For example, there is no clear place for a review of the impact on library resources. Even with the old form, librarians were rarely consulted, yet Jim said there are clear cost considerations for many degree programs and courses (especially in the sciences) and that our share of the cost of shared databases is directly impacted by courses and programs we have in place. To build upon this, others mentioned other deficiencies, such as the absence of fund account numbers, CIP information, and the need for our council to remind people regularly about language that was once populated into fields as standard language, such as minimum faculty credential requirements. Although a formal vote was not taken, a consensus did agree that the form created last year either requires revisions or we will need to explore the creation of an Undergraduate Council form in addition to this form before we consider courses and programs in the 2014-2015 academic year.

Announcements

Clarification regarding certificate programs. After the last USF Tampa SACS visit, a slight change in SACS wording had important consequences for all USF System entities. SACS changed the phrase “degree programs” to “educational programs” when outlining programs subject to its review. This places certificate programs front and center on the radar as “educational programs” that SACS may evaluate during its review. Tampa responded by revoking many certificate programs; USFSP programs have been carefully vetted to make sure that they are in accordance with SACS requirements. Traditionally, colleges have been expected to create the physical certificates that are awarded to those who successfully complete requirements. The registrar may do it from this point forward for those programs clearly in accord with SACS guidelines, but cannot take the responsibility for conferring certificates retroactively that were never offered due to oversight by the colleges. Certificate programs will become more prevalent in the undergraduate catalog.

USF System Policy on Distance Learning. A proposed policy has been disseminated regarding obligations by USF personnel to comply with restrictions on conducting academic courses through distance education with those in certain countries with embargoes or other trade and asset restrictions mandated by the United
States government (such as Cuba, Iran, and North Korea). This is an admissions issue more than a library or distance learning issue in its purest form, because there are gray areas of interpretation (we have a number of students from these countries who have received F-1 visas, yet they may take courses).

Fee structures established. On March 24, we received approval for fee structures in the new academic year, so they may be added to the systems and students will have a clear understanding of tuition and other costs.

Having no further business, the meeting adjourned at 3:24 p.m. Next meeting: April 16, 2:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jim Schnur
University Librarian