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Undergraduate Council Meeting: 2014 : 11 : 21

Undergraduate Council

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Undergraduate Council Meeting Minutes
21 November 2014, 3:00 p.m., 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: Susan Toler

Meeting: Called to order at 3:09 p.m. with quorum present by Tom

Minutes: Minutes of 24 September 2014 and 29 October 2014 approved unanimously

New Business

Curricular Matters

1. Proposed Modification of the ESP Major. This is a matter that needs immediate attention and it is "crucial" that this be done. Student impact is neutral. Discussion focused on the proposal of incorporating the new courses that would change the ESP major, rather than the applications individual courses that will be vetted separately. If approved, this will be held and considered inactive until all of the constituent pieces are also approved.

   Following discussion, Joan MOVED that the Undergraduate Council ACCEPT the undergraduate curriculum change request proposal to modify the ESP major. Jim SECONDED this motion. Hearing no further discussion, the MOTION WAS APPROVED by vote of the Council.

2. Proposed creation of new course: Capstone Experience in ESP (EVR 4xxx). Council members raised concerns in the proposal document, including the following: 1. The prerequisites listed on page 3 ("ESP Core-Courses (32 credits approved)") is ambiguous. Are the core courses worth listing, or should the assumption be that students must have senior standing? 2. The course description on page 4 is too generic and requires greater specificity rather than merely stating that this is "a topical reading and discussion seminar . . ." 3. The descriptions on page 5 are also seemingly too generic and should have greater specificity to the curriculum. 4. The grading policy stated on the syllabus is inconsistent. The document claims "Plus Grades ARE used in this class," yet immediately below that, the grading scheme makes no mention of plus grades. It only shows standard letter grades (no +/-). 5. The syllabus also needs the addition of Title IX language.

   Following discussion, Jim MOVED that the Undergraduate Council RETURN the course proposal for necessary revisions to the proposal and the syllabus. Kevin SECONDED this motion. Hearing no further discussion, the MOTION WAS APPROVED by vote of the Council.

3. Proposed creation of a new course: Energy, Environment, and Sustainability (EVR2217). Undergraduate Council reviewed this proposal, and had questions concerning its viability. Due to the College Algebra requirement, most of the prospective students who would take this as a GE elective would come from the College of Business. On page 3, reference was made to this course becoming part of the major, but it did not get approved to serve as such, based upon the documents UGC reviewed. The "I" grade policy is outdated. There were also concerns about whether this course would be able to meet enrollment numbers.

   Following discussion, Jim MOVED that the Undergraduate Council RETURN the course proposal for necessary revisions to the syllabus and a clearer understanding of its viability, including its appropriate place in the ESP curriculum. Bonnie SECONDED this motion. Hearing no further discussion, the MOTION WAS APPROVED by vote of the Council.
Announcements

College of Education and NCATE. Bonnie reported that the recent visit by NCATE evaluators was very positive. Students in the college became very engaged in the process, discussing how the College of Education’s curriculum and support services prepare them for the classroom. A final decision regarding reaffirmation of NCATE accreditation is forthcoming.

Discussion Regarding Course Approval Workflow for UGC and Other Faculty Governance Committees/Councils: Susan Toler joined the meeting to discuss some procedural and workflow matters affecting the course approval process. Some faculty members have expressed concerns about how to understand the disposition of course and program proposals as they move through the system. There are inevitably some “black holes” in the process within the USF System, as well as when some proposals move to the BOG for state review. In addition, there are questions about the appropriate level of review or vetting of course proposals by different faculty governance committees in the process. All in attendance agreed that an improved workflow process that allows for stakeholders to know the status of their proposals would be welcome and may even expedite requests.

As part of the conversation, UGC members clarified their roles and responsibilities with Susan. They explained that any perception of them as being “obstructionist” is based on false assumptions. Jim specifically said that the reason the UGC has sent many proposals back to submitters is because they fail to follow the well-established protocols for syllabi within the USF System (i.e., statements related to ADA, Title IX, and other policies), or the proposals have some level of ambiguity or require clarification (i.e., stipulating that more than a master’s degree with 18 hours in field is required or failing to clarify if the minimum acceptable grade is a “C” or a “C-“). Many of these errors could be addressed by populating fields with standard language, as appropriate. Other bodies may examine the proposals only within the framework of their mission (such as the General Education Committee making sure that the proposal passes muster regarding GE language), but UGC must look at the proposals with a greater level of detail to assure that we do not rubberstamp something that will make the institution look bad at the USF System level or above.

Susan thanked the UGC for our conversation and everyone expressed the belief that all parties should work in partnership and that a better tracking mechanism for course and program proposals would be beneficial.

Lacking a quorum to continue business due to other scheduled meetings for two members, the meeting adjourned at 4:37 p.m., with plans to meet again on Monday, 24 November 2014, to review the remaining proposals and attend to other unfinished business.

Next meeting: Monday, 24 November 2014, Noon, Piano Man Building

Respectfully Submitted,

Jim Schnur
University Librarian