

**TO: University of Oregon Senate**  
**FROM: Assoc. Prof. Ian F. McNeely, Undergraduate Council Chair**  
**RE: Undergraduate Council end-of-year report**  
**DATE: May 20, 2011**

### Grade Culture

This year, grade culture once again dominated the agenda of the Undergraduate Council. Having consulted over the past two years with a truly exhaustive range of campus committees and stakeholders—indeed the entire faculty, student body, and GTF staff—the Council proposed three UO Senate motions to improve grade culture at the university (US 10/11-11abc). An extensive effort was made to lobby individual members of the UO Senate, asking them to examine our 2010 study of grade culture together with the extensive campus feedback posted at <http://gradeculture.uoregon.edu>. Individual Council members volunteered to answer any questions Senators had, and the Chair addressed concerns raised regarding the charge of the Undergraduate Council, the phrasing of the motions, and their budgetary impact. The newly-established UO Academic Council also studied the motions and issued a report endorsing them and offering a friendly amendment to motion 11b. (The Undergraduate Council chair recused himself from writing the Academic Council report since he is also interim chair of the latter.)

The Undergraduate Council's motions on grade culture were debated at the March 9 and April 13 Senate meetings and voted upon at the latter. Only 11a carried; the other two were defeated.

The Council will turn its energies next to the implementation of 11a, consistent with the role described for it in the Senate legislation. It may also consider whether to propose some new version of 11b and/or 11c at a later date.

### Formal program evaluations

The Council reviewed the following proposals to add or change undergraduate programs at UO:

- a proposal from the Philosophy department to change the requirements for a BS degree. The Council requested a revision to the proposal to bring it into line with common practice in other departments at UO, and the revised proposal was duly approved by the Council.

- proposals for a new Folklore major and minor. The Council referred these back to the Folklore program with a request for several substantive changes. Their status is pending.
- proposals for two tracks of the new General Social Science major (“Globalization, Environment, and Policy” and “Crime, Law, and Society”). The Council reviewed and approved these pursuant to its June 9, 2010 conditional endorsement of the GSS major. (The other two tracks will be considered at the Council’s last meeting this year.)
- a proposal from the Honors College to allow students of theirs who fail to complete a thesis to substitute the Honors College’s own Gen Ed curriculum in place of UO’s standard Gen Ed curriculum. The Council approved this proposal, including language to enact it that will be placed in the Fall 2011 curriculum report by the UO Committee on Courses, to be voted upon by the UO Senate.

#### Other issues

This year the Undergraduate Council also:

- continued its examination of UO’s General Education curriculum, meeting with representatives of the Global Oregon initiative, the Writing Composition program, and the HHMI-supported Science Literacy Program spearheaded by Profs. Judith Eisen and Michael Raymer. The Council also discussed the possibility of starting “Teaching Institutes” or at least recommending course clusters to make the Gen Ed experience more coherent and satisfying for undergraduates.
- discussed, at the request of the Registrar, UO policies on making changes to grades after they have been submitted.
- previewed the new online Course Connector meant to provide better information to students selecting Gen Ed courses.
- discussed with the UOCC chair, the CASCC delegate, and the Registrar whether the curricular reform and course approval processes can be streamlined.
- briefly discussed the New Partnership proposed by President Lariviere, so as to relay the Undergraduate Council’s feedback on it to the Academic Council.
- briefly discussed changes to UO admission requirements in their relation to OUS’s “automatic admission” policy.
- discussed the findings of the recent book *Academically Adrift*, which argues that most U.S. college students show little improvement in basic academic skills over two (or even four) years, as measured by the Collegiate Learning Assessment.