COMMITTEE ON COURSES AND GENERAL EDUCATION
ANNUAL REPORT 2014-15

To the Faculty Legislature, Santa Barbara Division:

Executive Summary

Purpose (per Bylaw 92): To authorize, supervise, and regulate all undergraduate courses and monitor the General Education Program.

Issues of General Concern to Faculty:

• The Committee on Courses and General Education (CCGE) sought ways to improve the process for submission and review of Associate Appointment Proposals, and created a comprehensive proposal form that has been recommended to the Office of Academic Personnel as a replacement for the currently used Department Chair’s Letter.

• The Committee on Courses and General Education (CCGE) played a key role in the revision of policy and procedures for the review of online course proposals.

CCGE held 14 regularly scheduled 90-minute meetings during the 2014-15 academic year and consulted as needed with faculty executive committees, academic deans, and other campus administrators. The Committee also benefited from the participation of regular consultants from the Registrar’s Office, College of Letters and Science Advising, and College of Engineering Advising. The Chair of CCGE met periodically with the Chairs of the Undergraduate Council and the Committee on Admissions, Enrollment and Relations with Schools to discuss shared undergraduate concerns.

Recurring Business

Course Requests

CCGE has final approval authority over the establishment, modification, and discontinuation of all undergraduate courses, including those that are taught online. On behalf of the Committee, individual members review and act on course requests via the Master Course Approval System, forwarding any requests about which they are uncertain for full-committee review and final action by the Committee Chair. Several hundred requests are reviewed each year.

CCGE approved 8 proposals for fully online courses, 5 of which were approved for a period of one year, with the expectation that future offerings will require renewed approval, based on assessment of the effectiveness of the initial offering(s). The remaining 3 proposals received unconditional approval.
The Committee approved 13 General Education course proposals, 4 UCSB Extension proposals, and several requests for changes to the final exam schedule.

Associate Appointment Appointments

CCGE reviewed 185 Associate appointment proposals, as compared to 178 in 2013-14 and 163 in 2012-13. All but 2 of the appointments were approved. In several instances, the Committee Chair contacted the chair of the proposing department to discuss concerns about below average performance in previous teaching assignments. In some cases, additional evidence of the candidate’s qualifications was requested and/or individual faculty mentoring was recommended.

Having observed a high degree of inconsistency and inefficiency in the course of reviewing associate proposals, CCGE considered potential changes to the submission process that would address these concerns. Using examples from other UC campuses, the Committee created a form that could be used in place of the currently required Department Chair’s Letter that is included in proposal packets. Adoption of this change would, of course, require broad consultation and endorsement by multiple campus groups and individuals. CCGE’s Chair pursued a preliminary discussion with Academic Personnel Director Cindy Doherty and learned that her office is exploring enhancements to the policy and procedures for various non-ladder faculty appointments. It was suggested that the form developed by CCGE for associate proposals might be adaptable for multiple types of appointments. CCGE will request an update from the Academic Personnel Office in Fall 2015, as CCGE strongly believes that use of the recommended form would result in significant improvements for all users.

Upon evaluating records of appointment proposals submitted over the past four years, the Committee observed that a small number of departments hire associates at a considerably higher rate than all other departments. Associate appointments have historically been considered a temporary measure to be used in the event of extenuating circumstances. While most departments cite instances such as faculty sabbaticals, medical leaves, and administrative appointments as justifications for hiring associates, some cite long standing resource shortages in response to which the department has fallen into a pattern of regularly hiring associates to teach certain courses. CCGE questions whether the routine hiring of associates is the best long-term solution for addressing budgetary and enrollment related concerns.

Local Campus Issues

Continued Assessment of UCSB’s General Education Program

In Fall 2014, CCGE met with Associate Dean Linda Adler-Kassner who currently serves as Assessment Liaison for the GE Program, primarily in conjunction with WASC expectations for UCSB’s next accreditation review cycle. She advised the Committee of her plan to survey all faculty who were assigned to teach GE courses from Winter 2014 to Winter 2015. CCGE members provided input regarding the proposed survey instrument.
Survey respondents who teach courses in Area E (Culture and Thought) found the existing learning outcomes for that area to be especially problematic. Some of those respondents were invited to form a workgroup charged with exploring potential revisions. Following broad consultation with faculty who teach Area E courses, this group has recommended a substantial revision of the Area E learning outcomes, which will be reviewed by CCGE and the Undergraduate Council in Fall 2015.

As part of its ongoing effort to improve the GE course approval process and to ensure compliance with approved GE learning outcomes, CCGE carried out a significant revision of the GE Course Proposal Form.

Policy and Procedures for the Review of Online Courses

CCGE participated in a broadly consultative assessment of the current policy and procedures for submission and review of online course proposals. The Committee recommended several changes aimed at streamlining and improving the overall quality of the supplemental review process and endorsed revisions proposed by the L&S Faculty Executive Committee (FEC). A select group of Senate representatives and academic deans ultimately agreed on immediate implementation of all recommendations offered by CCGE and the FEC.

Course Hibernation Policy

In consultation with the Office of the Registrar, CCGE finalized revisions to the UCSB Policy on Course Hibernation.

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