

Minutes
Undergraduate Studies Committee Meeting, August 30, 2006, 3:00

Members present: Craig Bertolet (chair), Chris Forhan, Jim McKelly, Bonnie Jean Shamp

General Announcements

Student Project Guidelines

The chair announced that, in part as a consequence of certain widely-reported irregularities in directed reading assignments in a department elsewhere in the college, new, more restrictive regulations have been put in place for individual student projects completed for credit. These changes are designed to ensure proper criteria for, and oversight of, these projects. For ENGL 4960 (Directed Readings), students are now required to secure approval for the project no later than ten working days prior to the semester in which the directed readings will be undertaken. This requirement puts the timetable of ENGL 4960 in line with that of other individual student projects: ENGL 4967 (Readings for Honors) and ENGL 4920 (Internship in English). For the latter course, a form listing guidelines is now downloadable from the web, and the guidelines are similar to those for ENGL 4960 (Directed Readings) in requiring of students an approximately 500-word explanation of the proposed project.

There was some brief discussion among committee members about minor ways in which the written guidelines for the three courses might be made even more consistent and communicated to students more efficiently.

Enrollment and Number of Majors

The chair announced that, overall, the department has been successful in meeting student demand for courses for Fall 2006. Of 73 students on waiting lists, 63 were eventually able to enroll in their desired courses.

The committee discussed the statistics—and our possibly limited ability to meaningfully interpret the meaning of such statistics—that show some courses, notably ENGL 4200 (Fiction Writing I), drawing consistently high interest from students during the registration period. The chair noted that in Spring 2007 two sections, not the usual one, of Fiction Writing I will be offered.

The chair reported that the number of English majors continues to rise, or at least to hold steady. There were 323 majors in spring semester just before graduation, and there are 333 at last count.

Assessment

The chair reminded the committee that its most pressing obligation is to complete the current round of assessment, and he noted that a continuing challenge for the committee has been to collect a sufficient number of student work samples to produce meaningful data for evaluation. The latest strategy for collecting samples has been to ask graduating seniors to submit portfolios

of at least three papers completed for their English course work. Only eight portfolios have been submitted for this year's assessment.

In preparing to assess these portfolios, all of the committee members will first evaluate the same sample portfolio and then discuss their responses in order to arrive at a shared sense of the criteria to be used in assessing the remaining portfolios.

The next USC meeting is scheduled for September 8 at 2:00

The meeting adjourned at 4:15

Reported by Chris Forhan