

Undergraduate Committee Meeting Minutes

September 5, 2014

Attendees: Tatiana Loboda (Chair), Klaus Hubacek, Giovanni Baiocchi, Keith Yearwood, Ruibo Han, Kristen Bergery, Rachel Berndtson, Evan Ellicott, Katelyn Dolan, Paul Torrens

1. Undergraduate committee overview and charge:

The UG committee will work throughout the year to:

- a) Streamline the curriculum within new and existing minors and concentrations,
- b) Grow the number of majors per BSOS College direction
- c) Ensure the best fit between the developing GIS center and our undergrad program

2. New directions and activities for the upcoming year

a. Growing Geography majors

- i. Current number of undergraduate majors: 260.

Action 1: Ask the Undergraduate Director to provide for the next meeting:

- a) the breakdown by major and concentration
- b) BSOS-based desired numbers for our growth over the next few years.

- ii. Outreach activities in STEM-oriented High Schools in Maryland

- a) Paul Torrens has an on-going contact with Ann Arundel County senior HS – STEM coordinator. The school boasts an engineering focus and strong students where Paul presents within the STEM capstone class curriculum.

- b) College Park Academy (CPA) – a charter school under the UMD/Prince George's County collaboration near the Campus with a focus on technology and on-line learning

- c) Friends community school – a private elementary and middle school with a focus on sustainability and technology (Paul, Tatiana, Ralph have contacts who can help to build a collaboration)

Action 2: Kristen to work with GTU and honor students for outreach with these target schools.

Action 3: Kristen to compile a list of Maryland STEM-focused High and Middle School to consider for further outreach.

Action 4: Tatiana to approach CPA for outreach and potential extra-curricular activities guided by GTU and honor students in GIS.

b. "Geography awareness week event" November 16-22, 2014

- i. A one day event during that week open to the Campus, Community, and High School/Middle School students from Maryland
- ii. Open house for GIS day in various labs throughout the Department (in LeFrak and Hartwick)

- iii. Open house for MPS in GIS program
- iv. Invite an exciting key-note speaker
- v. Poster presentations for honors and GTU
 - Action 5: Paul Torrens and Jack Ma to lead the agenda for the event, Rachel Berndtson will coordinate the event
- c. Big introductory classes are the primary recruiting source for the majors.
 - i. The quality of teaching and instructor interaction is paramount.
 - ii. Many courses are wait listed despite large enrollments:
 - a) Waitlist for 201 (Keith - Fall and Spring and Winter),
 - b) 140 has a wait list (Keith - limited by discussion sections Fall + newly added to Winter),
 - c) 202 (Martha- Spring + 2 in the Summer and the enrollment is high),
 - d) 130 (Ron)
 - Action 6: Ask the Undergraduate Director to provide a list of all undergraduate courses, their enrollment, and the waitlist for the first day of classes for Fall 2014 for the next meeting.
 - e) Geog170 (Paul Torrens): offers 240 seats but enrolls 70 people. As a result the insufficient number of TAs is assigned to handle 10 lab sections (only 1 is filled the rest 46 are evenly distributed among the other 9 sections). Paul has to cancel sections which are not filled leading to disgruntle attitudes from students, potential loss in majors, and damage to the reputation of the Department's teaching program.
 - Action 7: Ask the Undergraduate Director and the advising office to check the regulations on the format of this class, come up with a solution for avoiding cancellation of the discussion sections in the future, and report at the next committee meeting
- d. Strategizing for the next level of increased demand for technical courses
 - i. Research faculty as back-up teaching instructors.
 - Action 8: Evan Ellicott will survey research faculty members and compile a list of potential instructors and courses in the current curriculum they are interested in teaching.
 - ii. Increased enrollment will raise pressure on already overburdened technical courses.
 - Action 9: Ask the Director of the Administration to give an estimate of costs associated with more frequent offering of a course vs increased TA assignment.
 - iii. Online sections for technical courses could potentially be offered alongside the in-class sections during the regular semester:
 - a) Allows flexibility in enrollment numbers
 - b) Managed by additional TAs (UG are a viable option)
 - c) Requires technical capabilities to record the live lecture during the class to avoid effort duplication.

Action 10: Tatiana Loboda will invite an MPS in GIS instructor and a summer technical course instructor to share their online teaching experience for the next committee meeting.

3. Maintenance topics:

- a. Update on 5 year masters: 2 students are currently enrolled in the 1.5 MS program and 5 are currently in the senior year who will start MS next year.

Action 11: Rachel and Klaus will draft the action regarding the timing of BS/MS students enrolling in 601. Exact wording will depend on the current experience Klaus has with these students.

- b. Undergraduate TAs:

- i. The program is in its 2nd year and has grown substantially to include 16 UG TAs.

- ii. With strong reliance on UG TAs new concerns have surfaced:

- a) Lack of experienced graduate TAs to mentor, train, and oversee UG TAs

- b) Quality of UG TAs is somewhat lower: too many are needed and thus a large pool of candidates is considered

Action 12: Keith will work with the Undergraduate Director to draft a policy outlining the most efficient and beneficial to the program use of UG TAs in large classes. One of the discussed options includes identifying an “anchor” graduate TA for each of large classes to provide continuity to the course content and structure over 3 years and train and oversee UG TAs in the course.

- c. Honors:

- i. The honor program has 17 students this year: 8 are writing the theses, 9 are in their first semester.

4. A.O.B.