BRANDEIS UNIVERSITY
Undergraduate Curriculum Committee
2011-2012 Report

Meeting Dates: September 23, October 21, November 4, November 18, December 2, January 20, February 10, March 2, March 16, March 30, April 27

Members of the Committee: Gannit Ankori (fall), Robert Art, Susan Birren, Jonathan Decter (spring), Seth Fraden, Laura Goldin, Jane Hale (fall), Usman Hameedi, Arthur Holmberg (spring), Pengyu Hong, Siddhi Krishna, Esther Ratner, Suzanne Rothman
Ex Officio: Mark Hewitt, Kim Godsoe, Elaine Wong

Procedures for Conduct of UCC Meetings

The UCC reviewed procedures for the conduct of its meetings this year.

Appointment of Subcommittee for Independent Interdisciplinary Majors

Gannit Ankori and Laura Goldin volunteered to serve on the joint UCC/COAS subcommittee to review Independent Interdisciplinary Majors.

Report on Summer and Fall 2012 Justice Brandeis Semesters

Three Justice Brandeis Semesters, all previously approved by past UCC’s, will be offered in the summer or fall of 2012: Ethnographic Fieldwork, and Web Services and Social Networks (both summer 2012), and Environmental Field Semester (fall 2012).

Approval of New Study Abroad Programs

In the fall, J. Scott Van Der Meid, Assistant Dean of Academic Services and Director of Study Abroad, presented four programs for the provisional approval of the UCC. All of these programs met the criteria for new program approval (academic credentials, program duration and credit hours, language requirements, student services, course offerings, faculty and peer institutional support). The UCC granted provisional approval to: CIEE/Jordan, Diplomacy and Policy Studies at Jordan Institute of Diplomacy in Amman, Jordan; CET/Intensive Japanese Language & Culture Studies at Osaka Gakuin University in Osaka, Japan; SIT/France, Language Community and Social Change at the Institut Catholique Toulouse in Toulouse, France; and Michigan State University/Forensic Anthropology and Human Identification in London, England.

In the spring, Van Der Meid reviewed the criteria for study abroad approval before the UCC approved the following programs: Sarah Lawrence in Havana, Cuba; EUROScholars (at University of Geneva, Switzerland; University of Helsinki in Finland; Lund University in Sweden; Ruprecht Karls University in Heidelberg, Germany; Leiden University in The Netherlands; Universita degli Studi di Milano in Italy; Leuven University in Belgium; University of Zurich in Switzerland; Ludwig-Maximilians University in Munich, Germany; Karolinska Institutet in Stockholm, Sweden; Utrecht University in The Netherlands; and Universiteit van Amsterdam in The Netherlands); CET/Central European Studies in Prague, Czech Republic; CET/Film Production in Prague, Czech Republic; and IFSA-Butler, Egypt University Program in Cairo University, Egypt. About 420 programs in 70 countries are now available for student enrollment.
Large Enrollment Courses in the Curriculum

UCC members discussed data prepared by the Registrar’s Office on the distribution over the past 11 fall terms of courses with enrollments larger than 50. This data showed that in the fall of 2011 first year students were more likely to enroll in classes of 50+ than were sophomores, juniors or seniors, even though the majority of 50+ classes enroll more upperclass students than first years. The largest courses in each of the past three years have enrolled from 254-272 students. The Biology department offered the greatest number of courses with 50+ students in this time period.

Some departments (Mathematics, Romance Studies) have not offered a 50+ course in the last five to ten years. For example, calculus and upper level math courses are relatively small (20-25), and calculus is intentionally taught in multiple sections by graduate students. The Brandeis mean class size is now 26, up from 23 three years ago.

What are the experiences of students enrolled in large courses? Some students in the sciences may avoid small classes because of their expectations that these courses would be graded on a curve. A large class can be comforting to first year students, because they will not be forced to speak up in class or to interact with professors, but interacting with professors is a learned skill that Brandeis is trying to promote. The perceived approachability of instructors in big classes directly influences first year students’ interest in seeking out faculty interaction. Students must be encouraged to take the initiative.

First years don’t always know that they can and should enroll in smaller classes, including seminars. Some think that they should primarily take introductory, large enrollment courses in their first two semesters. If Brandeis wishes to ensure that students are able to enroll in small (20-25) classes, would we aim for more small first year classes (e.g., more optional First Year Seminars?) or more seminars for juniors and seniors in their majors, or both? Is it more meaningful to have small classes within one’s major, given that students also take courses outside their majors? How much do students want to interact with faculty in the first year?

The Registrar’s Office, Academic Services, first year advisors, Roosevelt Fellows and Community Advisors could choose to actively promote and advertise small classes for first year students. Are we asking departments and programs to think carefully about the classes they recommend in the first year enrollment guide?

In departments with multiple sections of courses, strategies to provide more small classes could include offering a single large section instead of multiple sections, and then redistributing teaching resources to “required” seminars or smaller capped courses. In some other departments, faculty may believe the only option is to increase the number of instructors. Students believe that more rigid sets of requirements do not allow them to elect smaller classes.

Committee members asked that the Chairs and/or Undergraduate Advising Heads, curriculum committees and Undergraduate Departmental Representatives from the departments of Economics, Psychology and Biology be invited to separate UCC meetings to discuss these enrollment issues. The UCC would also like to distribute a questionnaire to undergraduates to learn more about their perspectives on large and small enrollment courses. Committee members were asked to send their survey questions to Elaine Wong, so that the committee could review all questions at a future meeting. The Office of the Registrar was also asked to assemble data on the distribution of classes (1-20, 21-49) in as many majors as possible.
Discussion of Class Size with Psychology Faculty and Students

Professor Ray Knight, a member of the Psychology department’s curriculum committee, and Undergraduate Departmental Representatives Lauren Grewal, Daniel Shimansky, and Adina Weissman were invited to discuss their perspectives on class size in the Psychology major. The courses taken by the majority of majors are very large (that is, over 100 students in “Developmental,” “Social” and “Abnormal Psychology” and “Introductory Neuroscience”). When asked what would be considered a small course in Psychology, one UDR said 20 students, and another said “less than 50” students. Majors are required to take two “seminars” but the enrollment in these classes is usually 25-30. “Research Methods” is also taught in classes of 25. Thus about one third of courses completed for the major have enrollments of 25-30, while most other courses are much larger. Knight wishes that “Statistics,” capped at 70-80, could also be taught in small classes, because research shows that quantitative skills are best taught through hands-on, experiential methods. Once a course is larger than 50 students, Psychology instructors no longer utilize teaching techniques such as cooperative learning and requiring papers of all students. When Knight teaches certain courses, he offers discussion sections, in which the Teaching Fellows are trained to discuss carefully selected topics, but sections are not offered in most other large PSYC courses. Knight also offers optional papers, which can improve a student’s grade (and are a requirement for an “A” grade, but not for an “A-”). About 30-40% of students write these papers, which Knight is able to grade by himself. Last year, Dean Jaffe asked the department to uncap several courses, although some were later capped for pedagogical reasons.

Students reported that they would rather have large classes than be closed out of courses, and also noted that many social psychology courses aren’t offered frequently enough to satisfy demand. Some advanced neuroscience courses are smaller, because there is less interest in them. A UCC member asked if course availability isn’t as large an issue for this department as class size.

When asked if tenure track or contract faculty status mattered to students, UDRs replied that they were more interested in good, caring teachers who were willing to meet with them during office hours. The department offers separate meetings to introduce laboratory opportunities to undergraduates, and even first year students can participate in laboratory research, so students learn about laboratory opportunities through means other than small courses.

Discussion of Class Size with Biology Faculty and Students

Biology Professors Sue Lovett, Jim Morris, and Joan Press and Undergraduate Departmental Representatives Dipal Savla and Shailee Vora discussed their perspectives on the size of courses in Biology. Lovett also presented data that shows that Biology enrollments have increased by 54% in the last ten years, with the number of courses offered to undergraduates also increasing by 52% (from the low to mid 20’s to around 40 courses per year). The additional courses have been facilitated by an increased number of permanent teaching faculty who teach four courses per year. The largest enrollment gains have occurred in lower level electives numbered below 100, such as “Physiology,” “Evolution,” “Diet and Health,” “Autism,” and “Biostatistics.” Overall enrollments have grown due to new masters students, more Biology majors, the introduction of a BS degree requiring more electives, and the creation of the “Health: Science, Society and Policy” major, which requires Biology and/or BISC courses. The number of large (50+) courses is now at an all time high of eight per year.

One third of all sophomore students take science courses. The core biology courses, BIOL 22a/b and its labs, BIOL 18a/b, are taken in the sophomore year, after students have completed a year of “General Chemistry.” These courses are almost at the seating capacity of our largest science lecture hall, Gerstenzang 123, and of the new Shapiro Science Center laboratories, which were not designed for the
current size of the student body. In the past, entering students came to Brandeis knowing more organismal than molecular biology, but this has changed over the last 20 years, so that more students now have better preparation in molecular biology and less exposure to organismal biology.

The department has not for the most part set limits on course enrollments, other than for “Project Labs” and other courses, which have space constraints. A very few courses enroll 20 or fewer students. The curriculum committee is currently considering requiring students to take more upper level “seminar” courses, which would be writing intensive and based on reading research papers. BS candidates could also be required to complete either “99” or “Project Lab” courses. About 15-20% of all majors now enroll in “99” courses. Past curriculum reforms have removed the biology lab and “Organic Chemistry” co-requisites from BIOL 22, and allowed students to take “Cell Biology” and “Genetics” in any order. Some 100 level courses, where enrollments vary from about 15 to 35 students, are taught primarily for undergraduates, and provide opportunities for the closest interaction with faculty. The curriculum committee would like to offer more lower level electives, including courses that address organismal, plant and ecology topics. Very recently, the department voted to allow first year students to count a BISC course toward the major, if taken before BIOL 22. The Biology curriculum is expected to change yet again when new MCAT changes are implemented.

The UDRs noted that students cannot take biology electives until their junior year. Both felt that they were capable of completing BIOL 22 in their first year, along with the “General Chemistry” requirement. Students would prefer for courses to be uncapped so that they are allowed to enroll in them.

Review of Class Size Data and Undergraduate Survey Questions/Responses

UCC members decided to distribute an undergraduate survey on class size in late January or early February of 2012. Siddhi Krishna and Pengyu Hong volunteered to serve on a subcommittee to select and revise questions for the survey. Committee members also discussed the reasons for larger class sizes and waiting lists, which include the overall growth of the undergraduate student body (now about 3300-3400), and the growth of MA programs and resulting enrollment growth in 100 level courses. While students are not encountering problems in completing course requirements for their studies, they may not be happy with course availability or class size.

At a subsequent meeting, UCC members reviewed a new table prepared by the Registrar’s office, which compares class sizes for first year students in the falls of 2008 and 2011. During this period, the CARS recommendations to grow the size of the entering class while reducing the size of the faculty were implemented. In these three years, the percentage of first year student enrollments in classes 50-99 rose from 15% to 26%, while the number of classes from 10-19 shrunk from 45% to 32%. For 54% of fall 2011 first year students, the average class size was 50-99, as opposed to 42% of first years in the fall of 2008. A UCC member asked if it would be possible to run the same reports for sophomores, juniors, and seniors, and/or sorted by major.

Committee members then further revised the survey instrument to be administered in the week before students return to class. This survey included questions asking if class size influenced behaviors such as class attendance, completion of reading assignments, and active engagement in the class, and if students would have preferred the incorporation of pedagogical elements designed to make large classes seem smaller (e.g., sections led by teaching assistants, small group work). Many of the questions in the longer survey could instead be asked in the senior survey distributed in the spring.

After the class size survey was administered, committee members reviewed the responses from roughly 900 students, more or less evenly divided among sophomores, juniors and seniors, with somewhat higher
participation from first years. Because of their enrollments in language and UWS courses, responding first years were the most likely class to enroll in smaller courses of 10-19, but also likely to be in classes of 50 or larger. Sophomores (followed by first years) were the class most frequently enrolled in courses with 50 or more students. While the vast majority of participating students found their classes in all size ranges to be valuable learning experiences, the percentages reporting “valuable learning experience” decline from around 90% in classes with enrollments below 49 to about 82% in classes of 50 and above. From 47 to 57% of students report that their learning experiences in specific classes would have been better if classes were smaller when class sizes rise to 40 and over. At class sizes of 40 and above, students also begin to report more negative than positive impacts on such behaviors as regular attendance, active engagement in class discussions, completion of reading assignments on time, and getting to know the professor and other students in the class.

UCC members requested that the data be reported in several new ways, and next reviewed a new summary of the survey data, sorted by University Writing Seminars, language classes, and eight selected departments from all four schools. Students reported that, in the aggregate, their courses in all categories were “a valuable learning experience” with percentages varying from a low of 70% in one department to a high of 94% for language courses. Two departments and one program had no courses in which a majority of respondents reported a preference for a smaller class size. These were Anthropology, for which reports were received on 15 courses, including one with enrollments above 100, and FA for which reports were received on 12 courses including one with an enrollment above 50 but less than 99, and UWS classes, all with enrollments of 10-19. The size of the class at which students begin reporting a more negative than positive influence on completing reading assignments was 40-49 in half of the departments and 50-99 in the other half. In four of eight departments, the size of class at which students began reporting a more negative than positive influence on utilizing professor’s office hours was 100+ (other departments reported a more negative than positive influence at either 50-99 or 40-49 students in a class).

UCC members also discussed student comments about classes with 50+ enrollments, before deciding to draft a set of recommendations for faculty who teach large classes, departments which offer large classes, and senior administrators. Committee members suggested that successful teachers of large classes be invited to an upcoming UCC meeting to discuss their pedagogical methods. Future committee actions might include making recommendations about how to set class size, and/or providing information to faculty about course design or effective pedagogical methods for large classes. In what situations is it important to cap a class, and what should be the maximum enrollment? What information has the UCC gathered that would be useful to faculty, and how should it be formatted and released? The UCC has learned that large classes can be well-taught and valuable learning experiences for our students, and that every student, no matter how large the class, wants a positive relationship with his/her professors.

Proposed Curricular Changes to the Economics Introductory Sequence

Kathryn Graddy, Chair of Economics, and Scott Redenius, Undergraduate Advising Head, presented their department’s proposal to introduce two new introductory courses, ECON 10a, “Introduction to Microeconomics” and ECON 20, “Introduction to Macroeconomics,” and to change the requirements so that these courses, taken in sequence, would become the main entry points for the major and minor, rather than ECON 2a and 8b. ECON 2a would continue to be offered every semester as a service course, and students who earn a B+ or better in 2a would be allowed to substitute it for 10a. ECON 8b, “The Global Economy,” a course which focuses on international trade, would also continue to be offered as a lower level elective, but no longer in multiple smaller sections. Most other Economics departments across the country offer a two course introductory sequence, which provides more background in macroeconomics, and better prepares students for intermediate courses in micro and macro. The number of courses
required for the major and minor would not change and all other requirements (e.g., ECON 80a, 82b, 83a and Econometrics) would remain the same.

About 560 students currently take ECON 2a each year, with about 260 completing ECON 8b, and 140 students completing the major. UCC members asked how the new courses would affect those interdisciplinary programs that either require ECON 2a or have electives that require 2a as a prerequisite. The department is reaching out to these programs, and will clearly list new prerequisites for existing ECON courses.

The UCC approved the revisions to the Economics major and minor, which had also been reviewed by the Social Science School Council. It was suggested that the department may wish to review in three years time how students who enter the major with a B+ in ECON 2a do in later courses in comparison with those who enter via ECON 10a.

**Discussion of Class Size with Economics Faculty and Students**

Economics Undergraduate Departmental Representative Daniel Graulich, and two economics majors, Sidak Pannu and Dave Bernstein, joined Professors Graddy and Redenius in a discussion of class sizes in the department. Graddy stated that she would prefer for ECON classes to be smaller across the board. Upper level electives and core requirements other than 2a are currently mostly capped at 35, but 2a, 10a, and 20a will not be capped in the future. Most Economics faculty teach courses with about 40 students, but Professor Coiner’s total enrollments each year can be as high as 750 students, and Redenius’s courses average around 80 students per course. The department’s strategy has been to appoint really good teachers for the largest classes. Economics would like to offer senior level courses with enrollments of 20-25 students, but cannot do so because of resource constraints. Currently 7-12 majors per year write senior theses, which also require a prerequisite cumulative GPA of 3.5.

A UCC faculty member asked about the teaching load of Economics faculty, and the number of total faculty full time equivalents (FTE). There are currently 11-12 FTEs in the department; tenure-track faculty teach three courses per year, and faculty on multiple year contracts teach five. At some liberal arts colleges, the course load is four, but at schools which demand scholarship, most faculty teach three courses per year. If four courses per year were the standard teaching load for Economics professors, the department would have more classes available, but would experience difficulties in retaining its faculty.

UCC members also asked: Would it make a difference in students’ experiences to cap some courses at 20-25 and others at 40-45, instead of most at 35? Could recitation or discussion sections become required, rather than optional? The department is considering requiring papers in some classes, but Econometrics, which tends to have smaller enrollments, is a difficult course in which to write a paper. The department is also concerned that some quantitative classes need to be small so that weaker students can be better assisted. Students noted that ECON majors worry most about falling out of the cycle of introductory and then intermediate courses (e.g., 8b, 80a, 82b, etc.). In lecture based courses, does size matter? What will the rise of the business major do to the Economics major? Will more students double-major, or will the number of ECON majors decline?

**Report from the Subcommittee on Independent Interdisciplinary Majors (IIMS): Approved Majors**

In November, Katie McFaddin, the Academic Services IIM Coordinator, reported on the procedures for approving Independent Interdisciplinary Majors. The UCC’s Subcommittee on Independent Interdisciplinary Majors then approved the IIM proposals of Beneva Davis ’13, “Social Justice and Global Development” and Gabe Distler ’13, “Urban Studies.” In March and April, McFaddin again reported on

Report from the Standing Committee on Interdepartmental Programs: Health: Science, Society, and Policy

After reviewing the report from the chair of Health: Science, Society, and Policy and the report from the Standing Committee on Interdepartmental Programs, the UCC approved a motion to continue the HSSP program for five years. The review report praised the growth of the program, the cooperation among its major partners (Heller, Biology, Anthropology, Psychology and Sociology) and its invaluable interdisciplinary focus on health issues, but agreed with the program chair that HSSP 100, “Introduction to Epidemiology, Biostatistics, and Public Health,” should be completed in the junior year to better prepare students interested in pursuing a senior thesis. UCC members also supported this recommendation, noting that students from other majors would benefit from taking Epidemiology if it were available to them.

Report from the Standing Committee on Interdepartmental Programs: Medieval and Renaissance Studies

The UCC continued the program in Medieval and Renaissance Studies for a period of five years after discussing the report of the program chair and the Standing Committee on Interdepartmental Programs. The review committee report commended program faculty for their attempts to interest students in the study of past eras and for their entrepreneurial efforts to enroll minors, but suggested additional endeavors to create community among its students. A UCC member noted that these efforts might be as simple as faculty inviting minors out for lunch at the Faculty Center, or dinner at the Stein.

Summer School Residential Credit Proposal

Mark Hewitt, University Registrar and Gwenn Smaxwill, Summer School Director, presented a proposal to remove Brandeis Summer School from External Credit and count it instead as Residential Credit. When residency requirements were last revised about ten years ago, credits from the Brandeis Summer School were categorized as “external credit sources” even though these courses are taught on the Brandeis campus, primarily by Brandeis faculty, PhDs, or graduate students, and drawn from Brandeis’s approved curriculum. Every year more Brandeis students, including midyears, are enrolling in Brandeis Summer School (e.g., 29.6% of the Class of ’11). This past summer, about 400 total (and 320 Brandeis) students completed Brandeis Summer School courses.

UCC members asked about the financial implications of the proposed change, which will probably increase degree acceleration to some extent. Before students were required to complete (and pay for) at least seven “Brandeis” semesters, 10 to 11% of each class graduated early; this percentage now hovers at 5 to 6% of the graduating class. Summer School courses cost 42% of fall/spring courses, but no financial aid is available. If 2 to 3% more students graduate early, this would translate into a tuition loss from 20-25 students. This proposal would not change the maximum number of Summer School courses that could be completed in one summer (three) or over three summers (total of nine), but would change the number of semesters for which a student would have to pay Brandeis tuition.

Brandeis Summer School credits (up to 16 in combination with other credit sources) have always counted toward the 128 credits required for graduation. Summer school courses taken abroad, but not at other
universities, count for numeric and purpose credit. Midyears are allowed to take fall courses before they arrive at Brandeis for numeric and purpose credit. AP, IB, and the summer Hebrew program at Middlebury also count toward the 16 allowable “external credits,” as do courses completed while on medical leave.

The UCC approved the proposed changes, which will be allowed to count retroactively for current students. The Bulletin text describing Semester and Credit Requirements for Graduation was revised according to UCC suggestions, and a new document describing the financial ramifications of the change was prepared for Dean Birren’s review. At a subsequent meeting, Dean Birren reported that she had reviewed the revised copy for the “Semester and Credit Requirements for Graduation” section of the Bulletin and more detailed information about the financial ramifications of the Brandeis Summer School residential credit change, before announcing the new policy at a faculty meeting.

Pedagogy Discussion with Instructors of Large Classes

The UCC invited four professors who successfully teach high enrollment classes to discuss their pedagogical techniques and approaches for making large classes work well.

Sarah Lamb, Professor of Anthropology, teaches ANTH 1a, which regularly enrolls 160 students. Since she began teaching this course, she has added discussion sessions after learning from her course evaluations that students wanted opportunities to discuss course material in smaller groups, and also wished to know who was grading their work. She assigns each student alphabetically to a 20 student section, which meets every other week, six to seven times per semester, in one of the course’s hour-long meeting blocks. Students are asked to post possible discussion topics in Latte the night before the section meets. TFs meet to assemble a common, student-generated agenda, although each section has some flexibility in addressing topics, all of which relate to the curriculum. The TF/section leader (Lamb also leads a section) is available to review drafts of papers, and also grades that section’s papers. Exams are “blind-graded” by Lamb and all TFs. Attendance in sections is excellent, but less good in the main lecture class. Lamb posts an outline of her lecture topics, but not the actual lecture notes, so that students have to come to class to hear/experience the lecture. She also takes attendance (participation is 10% of the course grade) by asking for student signatures on a class list of names, but acknowledges that some students want to “disappear” in their large classes. Lamb believes that it’s worth it to offer some “super big” classes if this enables a department to have some classes with enrollments of 20-25.

Michael Coiner, Associate Professor of Economics, teaches two sections of ECON 2a in the fall, with about 190 students in each section. In his lectures, Coiner asks frequent questions to find out if the students are “staying” with him. He believes that preparation, use of humor and a high level of energy are essential attributes of effective lecturers. He puts an outline on the board, but only posts lecture notes when he needs to clarify or better explain a topic. He estimates that attendance is about 75-80% on most days, though better on days closer to exams. ECON 2a has optional evening recitation or review sessions, listed in the course schedule as a required time block, as this is also the time when exams are scheduled. Undergraduate TAs schedule office hours throughout the week to provide help in reviewing the material. Some students would benefit from better attendance at both TA office hours and recitations. Weekly problem sets (supplemented by “Aplia” online problem sets offering immediate feedback) are used to both teach material, and to hold students accountable. Exams are almost entirely based on what is taught in class.

Jason Pontrello, Assistant Professor of Chemistry, teaches the Organic Chemistry lecture and lab, with enrollments of about 160-240. During the weekly recitation hours, he offers Structured Study Groups, or sections of 40 students led by undergraduate TAs, who gives peer reviewed quizzes, which provide very
challenging opportunities to learn applications and prep for exams. Students work by consensus in small TA supervised groups to decide on quiz answers handed in for 10% of one’s grade. Pontrello also posts previous exams with two answers (one correct and one which exemplifies students’ misunderstandings from previous exams) to each question, and requires students to post comments on what is wrong about the incorrect answer. This assignment helps students understand potential mistakes better than supplying an answer key, which might be memorized, without real understanding. Pontrello doesn’t post lecture notes or use power points, but does ask 20-30 questions per lecture to encourage student engagement, active learning, and faculty student interaction. Pontrello believes that students must see that they are “getting something” from attending lecture, so he offers different examples and ways of explaining problems and solutions that are not found in the readings.

The largest class taught by Dan Perlman, Associate Provost for Assessment and Innovation in Student Learning and Associate Professor of Biology, enrolls about 75 students. Perlman tries to learn all 75 names so that he can call on students in class. Using the ”Just-in-Time-Teaching" model, he asks students to write a comment about the reading the night before each class session. By reviewing these comments, he comes to class knowing what was unclear or exciting, which enables a new level of conversation with his students. Because the comments are not anonymous, he can ask a student by name to repeat the comment in class (although for sensitive subjects, the comments can be submitted anonymously). He also utilizes “think pair share,” asking students to take a minute to think individually about a question, then pair and discuss with a partner, before calling on students to share with the entire class what was discussed in the pair. Post-class musings through an online form or “minute papers” at the end of class asking, “What did you find most interesting, or most confusing?” also help him learn what students are not understanding. Undergraduate TAs don’t lead sections, but do have office hours to provide assistance in understanding concepts. Perlman lectures in little chunks, telling stories through videos and photos. He finds that these techniques encourage students to keep up with the reading, because they must read for the pre-class postings. Professors using the "Just-in-Time-Teaching" model at other schools in classes larger than 75, use multiple choice questions to quickly learn what students are understanding.

A UCC member told of another teacher who asks all students to close their eyes, and answer a question by raising their hands, as a way of checking in on student understanding without embarrassing students. Since students have asked for the opportunity to have smaller sections, do we know how many large classes have small section meetings? Could the Registrar’s office identify which courses ask for classrooms to be scheduled for section meetings? Would it be possible to correlate student course satisfaction with opportunities for smaller sections? Even if these techniques improve student experiences, how do they affect faculty workload? Some techniques (asking frequent questions, “think pair share,” posting a wrong and right answer to an exam) are not that time consuming.

A student representative of the UCC praised those faculty who are available to and caring about their students, and passionate about what they are teaching. Why should students dedicate themselves to working hard and learning if their professors aren’t also dedicated? If a teacher is supportive, it builds the student’s confidence and reduces her/his anxiety in learning course material. A student’s perception that s/he matters to the professor is crucial to learning.

Report from the Standing Committee on Interdepartmental Programs: European Cultural Studies

After reviewing the report from the chair of European Cultural Studies (ECS) and the report from the Standing Committee on Interdepartmental Programs, the UCC approved a motion to continue the ECS program for five years. The review report praised the quality of the core course, ECS 100a, and noted that ECS majors, who are independent and highly self-motivated, enjoy the program’s flexibility and multidisciplinary approach to interpreting the arts. Concerns about the program include the decline in the
number of majors over the past six years (from 17 to 6), the continuing “invisibility” of ECS, and the absences of a history course on 20th century Europe, a “senior experience,” and a gathering place for majors. Both the reviewers and UCC members agreed that the program should appoint a member of the history department to the ECS oversight committee, and that this faculty committee should meet at least once per semester. In addition, UCC members suggested that a room in the Mandel Center (conference room or reading room) could be booked for one afternoon/evening per month to give students a place to gather (and a location for meeting ECS faculty). The program should also design a senior experience, which does not need to be a required thesis or capstone course, but could simply bring senior majors together to share what they are working on. ECS may also wish to reach out to International and Global Studies (IGS) and History for co-sponsorship of events, and to consider adding a minor with a specific interdisciplinary focus to its curriculum.

UCC members asked: Is IGS drawing students away from ECS? Has the importance of non-western studies made “European” less attractive? The committee then discussed ways of increasing the visibility of all small majors and interdisciplinary programs. Ideas included featuring these majors more prominently during training for Roosevelt Fellows and during “Sophomore Year Experience” events. Academic Services could highlight different small majors in its weekly announcements, and a banner for a different major could be hung each week near the stairway entrance to the North Quad. Announcements about majors could be sent to student broadcast listservs, and there could be an Orientation event focusing on majors less well known to first years, or on interdisciplinary programs in general. Hiatt programs throughout the year could emphasize that students can gain the same liberal arts skills in any major, and don’t have to major in “XXX” to get a job. Majors such as ECS and Comparative Literature could be advertised in required foreign language classes.

Recommendations for Instructors of Large Classes, Department Chairs & Senior Administrators

UCC members reviewed and revised draft recommendations for instructors of large classes and their department chairs. In addition, UCC members suggested that the Dean of Arts and Sciences host a dinner or lunch meeting for fall instructors of large courses and their chairs to discuss these recommendations and to share summarized data and student comments from large classes (after removing identifying information such as course titles). The suggestions about large class pedagogy should also be distributed to all faculty in August, with a note emphasizing that the document will continue to be revised as new suggestions are made.

Approval of New Summer Study Abroad Program

The UCC granted provisional approval for one new summer study abroad program, Sinoway International Education Group at Nanjing University in China, presented by Study Abroad Advisor Allyson Goose.

In the fall, the UCC will consider the university’s policy on summer school credit for international undergraduate students who wish to study in their own home countries.

Report from the Standing Committee on Interdepartmental Programs: Comparative Literature

Committee members discussed reports on the Comparative Literature program submitted by both the program chair and the Standing Committee on Interdepartmental Programs, before asking the review committee to resubmit its report in the fall with additional information (e.g., proposed length of continuance, specific recommendations for improvement, and an assessment of the leadership and general engagement of the faculty with the program). Committee members asked: Does the current mission and structure of the program position it for future success? Should the requirements and/or the design of the
core course be revised? What are impediments to the success of the program? Is there a logical progression of courses, which would provide a commonality of experience for COML students? UCC members hope that the review process will be used to strengthen the program, and/or to provide benchmarks for deciding on the program's long range continuance.