

**Brandeis University**  
**University Curriculum Committee**  
**1999-2000 Report**

Meeting Dates: September 16 & 30, October 14 & 28, November 4 & 18, December 2, January 20, February 3, 10 & 24, March 9 & 23, April 6 & 13, May 2

Members of the Committee: P. Allara, K Canter, A. Carter, J. Hanus, M. Hellyer, S. Lamb, T. Neugut, L. Quinney, J. Samet, R. Sen, S.K. Troster, B. Upton  
Ex Officio: M. Hewitt, M. Kornfeld, L. Morgan, M. Rosenthal, E. Wong

Discussion of 1999-2000 Agenda Items

At the first meeting of the year, 1999-2000 University Curriculum Committee (UCC) agenda items were discussed. Among the possible topics were: review of the Credit/No Credit Grading Option; possible formation of a Subcommittee to Review Four-Year B.A./M.A. programs at Brandeis; consideration of reports from the Standing Committee on Interdepartmental Programs and Concentrations regarding Neuroscience, European Cultural Studies, Film Studies, and the Humanities Interdisciplinary Program; discussion of technology and teaching; the mandated review of general education requirements; review of the 1998-99 UCC Report before its distribution to faculty; credit for distance learning courses, for internships, and for two credit or half course modules (currently available only to GSIEF students); grade inflation; course scheduling and the block system in general; the first year curriculum in the context of freshman retention; the cluster requirement; the writing requirements; the physical education and swim requirements; guidelines for course enrollment limits; the roles of graders and teaching assistants; and the evaluation of courses.

Procedures for the conduct of UCC meetings were also discussed and adopted.

Physical Education and Swim Requirements

UCC members reviewed recommendations from the department of Athletics and Physical Education to reduce the Physical Education requirement to one course, and to eliminate the swim requirement and the option for students to complete the PE requirement by passing a fitness and knowledge test. Committee members asked about the range of courses offered by the department; courses include swimming, basketball, golf, tennis, squash, First Aid and CPR, yoga, and ballroom dancing. Students were concerned that the proposal would reduce the number of courses available to students and student access to facilities. Would resources be reassigned to benefit intramural sports?

While there was no committee opposition to the one course reduction, elimination of the swim test drew mixed reactions. Some committee members view the swim requirement as a valuable life skill, and others see it as arbitrary, anachronistic and a remnant of in loco parentis policies. The latter group asked why the university doesn't also require students to learn to drive a car, or not smoke, in order to graduate.

Judy Houde, Chair of the Physical Education program, Jeff Cohen, Director of Athletics and Physical Education, and Rod Crafts, Dean of Student Affairs, were invited to discuss their recommendations regarding the physical education and swim requirements. The current proposal stays true to the department's philosophy of encouraging an appreciation for fitness and exposing students to physical education, while reducing the bureaucratic hassle of administering the swim test and adding flexibility to course staffing.

The majority of Brandeis students know how to swim, but many wait till the last semester of their senior year, or even the last week of finals, to complete the test. About one student every three to four years fails to graduate because of his/her inability to swim. Four to 5.5 percent of all undergraduates enroll in "Beginner's Swimming" during their Brandeis studies. Frequently, students from poor, urban populations have not had opportunities to learn to swim and wouldn't voluntarily do so without a requirement. UCC members asked why students couldn't be required to take the swim test before the end of the sophomore year. Students who did not comply could be prevented from pre-enrolling or registering, or could be automatically enrolled in swim class.

How many students currently take more than two PE courses? About 75 students entering in the fall of 1994 enrolled in three or more physical education courses during their Brandeis studies. If the requirement were reduced, would the gym be more accessible to students? The four main uses of the facility are recreation, intramural sports, physical education, and athletics. Parts of the gym are closed from 9:00 am-noon in order to schedule the vast majority of PE classes; approximately 60 are scheduled in this time period. Because PE classes meet twice a week for an hour, or once a week for 90 minutes, each class space is available to the general public for a portion of the weekly block period. Popular classes (ballroom dance or karate) are scheduled in the late afternoons and evenings to accommodate students, though this reduces access to the facility for club sports and recreational use. The new requirement would make the gym slightly more accessible in the morning.

First year students receive priority enrollment in order to introduce them to the facilities. The department estimates that only 20 percent of Brandeis students would use the gym if there were no requirement; this percentage is much lower than at other institutions. Of the 74 courses usually offered, 10-12 have unaccommodated demand on an annual basis, although space remains in other classes. Equipment needs and room sizes limit student enrollment in some courses. Certain time blocks and subjects are also more popular than others are.

Committee members asked about the motive for the proposed change. Some departments are trying to "sell" their "product," while this department appears to be overburdened by student demand. The Athletics and Physical Education departments, once united, were divided into two entities about 12-13 years ago. After a review committee chaired by Bernard Reisman recommended that Athletics and Physical Education reunite, inequities in job responsibilities and between part time and full time staff members were reconciled. Some staff members coach for only one season and others for three seasons. Some can only teach certain subjects if retrained and certified by governing boards. The course reduction would enable more flexible staffing assignments.

UCC members asked about the policy regarding class absences by varsity athletes. Athletes are supposed to complete all academic work without special privileges and to miss classes only for sanctioned athletic events. Coaches tell students to obtain permission for absences well in advance of events, but some students are reluctant to inform faculty that they are athletes for fear of discrimination. The University Athletic Association designs its athletic schedules to minimize missed class days. The UCC asked the Athletics department to distribute a letter to all faculty explaining the university's policies about class absences. The letter might also encourage faculty to indicate in syllabi that students who will miss classes for any reason should inform the instructor immediately.

A motion to terminate the swim requirement, effective immediately, was approved. A motion to reduce the physical education requirement to one course and to eliminate the fitness testing option, beginning in

the fall of 2000, was also approved. Both motions were forwarded to the faculty for consideration. (The swim test motion was approved by the faculty; the reduction in the physical education requirement failed.)

### Review of the 1998-99 UCC Report

The UCC approved the release of its 1998-99 committee report.

### Two Credit or Half Course Modules: Guidelines and Trial Experiment

Six-week “modules,” or half courses generating two credits, are an option currently available only to students in the Graduate School of International Economics and Finance (GSIEF). Other two credit courses in the curriculum (e.g., the theater practicum, science laboratories, and the required University Writing Seminar course) provide instruction over 13 weeks. GSIEF modules are used to cover finance topics not requiring 13 weeks of study. Very focused, specialized skills are taught by experts in the field who are often hired as adjunct instructors. The NEJS department now proposes a six-week course on “The Arab-Israeli Peace Process” to be taught by an Israeli instructor affiliated with the Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern Studies at Tel-Aviv University, which annually sends visitors to Brandeis for six-week periods.

UCC members discussed the virtues and disadvantages of six-week courses. Not all knowledge is best taught in 13-week bundles. In Economics, for example, a six-week course in “Sampling” and another six-week course in “Regressions” might be offered. The structure, however, is not appropriate for all courses, particularly those that depend on the development of a group dynamic. Some question the intellectual integrity of short courses. Brandeis does not give credit for one-month intersession courses, and summer school courses must be at least five weeks long with 37 contact hours to be eligible for credit toward the Brandeis degree.

How would modules affect teaching loads and course scheduling? Classrooms might be vacant for half a semester if modules were not matched in pairs. How would enrollment and drop deadlines be enforced? Perhaps student enrollment in modules, even those scheduled in the latter part of the semester, might be allowed only during the first two weeks of classes, with access granted only by signature of the instructor. Each module should meet for at least six and no more than 6.5 weeks, and have 19.5 contact hours. The course approval process would remain the same, still requiring approval by the department, school council, and Dean of Arts and Sciences. Should modules be limited to upper level courses with pre-requisites, or graduate courses?

The Office of the University Registrar presented information about the availability of module courses at other institutions, solicited via e-mail. Eight universities (primarily schools such as Rutgers, Purdue, Kansas, Iowa and Carnegie Mellon, which assign credit on the basis of contact hours) allow modules in all schools and subjects. Nine institutions (e.g., University of Florida, USC, Tulane, MIT, Penn, Oregon, Pittsburgh) limit module offerings to professional schools, and eight universities (e.g., UC Berkeley and Irvine, UCLA, Colorado, Brown) report no modules. The Registrar’s administrative concerns arise from the university’s experience with IEF modules. When may students drop a module course? Some IEF students have asked to drop a module after receiving course grades. Could a student enroll in six modules in one term and complete all coursework by midterm? Guidelines might prevent enrollment in more than one or two modules per term. What about finals? It is difficult to schedule a study day or three-hour exam for modules ending at midterm. Would giving credit for modules require the university to redefine credit guidelines for summer or intersession courses?

A motion to establish guidelines for module courses passed and at its next meeting, the committee reviewed guidelines prepared by Hellyer, Hewitt, and Wong on module course length, enrollment and drop deadlines, approval procedures, and pass/fail and rate of work issues. Much of the discussion focused on which courses should be eligible for module status (only visiting faculty or all faculty? recurring courses or “one time onlys”?). A motion to test the proposed guidelines on one course, “The Arab-Israeli Peace Process,” offered on a trial basis in the spring of 2000, was approved. This trial was reported at the next faculty meeting.

In the late spring, Committee members reviewed student evaluations of the trial module course. Students’ main concerns appeared to be the workload (“The same amount of information was condensed into less time.”) and suspicions that coverage of the subject matter might be superficial. A UCC member suggested that comments about workload might be related to the fact that the instructor was an Israeli university professor who might not be used to the workload of American courses.

Based on the evidence of this one course, the UCC is willing to continue experimenting with modules by considering other proposals, but not yet ready to encourage departments to utilize the option or to make the format available to all students. Some committee members believe the option should be reserved for visiting faculty, although visiting faculty would need to be warned about workload issues. The UCC should revisit its guidelines for modules, perhaps including more specific workload guidelines (e.g., no more than one monograph per week). Future module proposals must be approved by the UCC.

#### Approval of New Study Abroad Programs

In both the fall and spring semester, J. Scott Van Der Meid, the Coordinator of Study Abroad, presented new study abroad programs for UCC approval. About 150-200 undergraduates study abroad each academic year. Students pay fees directly to the sponsoring institution, which may charge more or less than Brandeis tuition. Brandeis financial aid is not transferable for study abroad. Criteria for program approval, formerly granted by the Committee on Academic Standing, include: 1. the program’s academic credentials (i.e., its recognition as an accredited institution of higher education); 2. program duration (a minimum of 65 days or 13 weeks); 3. language requirements (students must take at least one course in the language of the country, except in France, Germany and Spain where all courses must be conducted in the foreign language); 4. sufficient support for student services (housing, program administration, etc.); 5. course offerings, which must supplement the Brandeis liberal arts curriculum, and include courses eligible for credit at Brandeis; 6. faculty support, evidenced by letters from Brandeis instructors in departments where the majority of coursework belongs; and 7. area institutional support (i.e., other American universities recognize and endorse the program). New approvals are not finalized until positive reports from participating students are received. Returning students must complete an eight-page evaluation before their study abroad credit is transferred, and are also interviewed for 30 minutes by the coordinator.

Because Brandeis already recognizes 10-15 other School for International Training (SIT) programs, the committee unanimously approved all SIT study abroad programs, including ones proposed in Vietnam and in Australia. A motion to approve all Boston University programs, including programs in Belize and Quito, Ecuador, was also unanimously approved. (Brandeis participates in a cross-registration consortium with Boston University.) Other programs approved were Syracuse University in Hong Kong; the Technion in Haifa, Israel; Lexia in Buenos Aires, and SUNY Albany at the University of Liege in Belgium (the latter program will be discontinued by SUNY after this year); Institute for Tropical Marine Ecology in Dominica; School for Field Studies’ Center for Coastal Rainforest and Fisheries Studies in British Columbia; the SUNY Cortland program at the University of Salamanca in Spain; the SUNY Oswego program at the Sorbonne in Paris; the Pontificia Universidade Catolica do Rio de Janeiro in

Brazil; McGill University in Montreal, Quebec; University of British Columbia in Vancouver; Middlebury College in Paris; Academic Programs International (API) in Seville at the University of Seville; and Studio Art Centers International (SACI) in Florence, Italy. In discussing the latter program, members of the UCC learned that studio art majors have been exempted from language study in the past. A motion to end this exemption and to require every student studying abroad to complete at least one course in the language of the country before studying abroad was passed by the committee.

The UCC rejected the program offered by the Center for Education Abroad at Veritas University in San Jose, Costa Rica. The CEA program is 12 weeks long and is not approved by any other New England colleges. Because it employs the quarter system, CEA instruction begins on April 10<sup>th</sup> and ends in August. The latest date that any other spring term study abroad program begins is early March. The UCC also rejected The International Partnership for Service Learning in Quito, Ecuador. This program would be the third program located in Quito. Although considerably less expensive than the other two, it provides fewer host services and has not been approved by several other American universities.

### Study Abroad Language Requirements

J. Scott Van Der Meid was also invited to discuss possible changes in other study abroad language requirements. The current policy has three components: 1. students who study in France, Germany, and Spain must have all classes conducted in the language of the country; 2. students who study in Israel and Italy must complete the equivalent of two semesters of study in the language of the country in order to study abroad; 3. all students studying abroad must take one course in the language of the country during each semester abroad in order to receive any credit for the semester. There are no language prerequisites for study in China, Japan, Russia, or other Spanish and French speaking countries. (Many students now study in Latin America or francophone Africa, which have no language prerequisites.) Because of current language policies, outstanding students concentrating in Economics, Politics, Comparative Literature, European Cultural Studies, and History are not able to study in Germany, France, and Spain unless they have strong language skills.

Study abroad credit is decided by the Offices of the Registrar and Study Abroad in consultation with one another. Van Der Meid has discussed removing the “all classes in the language of the country” restriction with faculty in the French program and in Germanic and Slavic languages, and both programs support this change in policy. Representatives from the Spanish program were also consulted. Because individual departments determine which courses count toward their concentrations, language concentrators would not be affected by a change in the rules. It is likely that only a few students would utilize the new policy to study in France, Germany, and Spain, as only a few programs offer classes in English in those countries. Students would still have to take at least one language course each semester.

Members of the UCC unanimously approved a motion to require all students studying in German, French, or Spanish speaking countries to complete at least two semesters in the language of the country before studying abroad, and to eliminate the rule that students who study in France, Germany and Spain must have all classes conducted in the language of the country.

### First Year Retention and Curriculum

UCC members reviewed Professor Gila Hayim's "Comments on the Maguire Report on Retention" which asked that a committee of faculty and staff be established to study the report in the context of the educational focus of the university.

First year curricular issues that might be related to retention were also discussed. The retention rate at Brandeis is about 81% in comparison to 93-99% at some comparable institutions. Do students leave primarily because of curricular or social issues? One committee member believes that faculty connections are a strong force in keeping some students from transferring, but social life is the main problem. 80% of students express satisfaction with academics in student surveys.

Another committee member commented that the best advice received in her first year was to take a small class in the fall semester. Perhaps students should be required to take a small discussion-based course in the fall if they are assigned to a spring USEM. Foreign language and math courses, while small, are not as useful in establishing connections with faculty, because they are not usually discussion-based. Perhaps visiting faculty should not teach USEMs, because they are not available to students in the following year and are not as knowledgeable about the university. Brandeis could also encourage departments with structured curricula to offer introductory courses to concentrations in smaller classes. Spaces could be reserved or a new section added for first year students. Another option would be to add discussion sections to large lecture classes; these sections, which would meet once a week, could be led by professors who are, or are not, offered financial incentives.

At the first meeting of new students with faculty advisors, some faculty convey that they don't want to be advisors. Should only the best teachers be advisors? Does the university evaluate advising in the tenure and promotion process? At another institution, about 15-20 at-risk students (e.g., someone who lost a parent in the last year) are identified by admissions staff, and assigned special faculty advisors selected because they are proactive, friendly, and committed to working with at-risk students. The Office of Undergraduate Academic Affairs is currently reviewing advising possibilities, including peer advising, and also conducting student focus groups. Undergraduates report inconsistencies in what they expect in the first year (small classes) and what they find (some classes of 100-250 students). Many of the 300+ pre-med students studying chemistry and math are stressed and disillusioned if they receive unsatisfactory midterm grades, though students in General Chemistry do not leave the university in greater numbers than do other students.

Members of the UCC suggested that a survey be administered to all first year students and/or to students withdrawing from the university. Questions might include: If you could change anything in your first year experience, what would it be? What most surprised you about your first year at Brandeis, or what were you hoping to experience and what were your disappointments? What faculty members affected you most, and in what ways? Was your advisor helpful, or not, and in what ways? What was your best class, and what was your worst class?

### Proposal for an Interdepartmental Program in Religious Studies

Edward Kaplan, Professor of French and Comparative Literature and Research Associate of the Tauber Institute for the Study of European Jewry, and Jodi Eichler '00' presented a proposal for a program in Religious Studies. This program was conceived by a group of faculty, students and staff who attended a national conference on "Spirituality and Religious Pluralism in Higher Education" at Wellesley College in September of 1998. Brandeis participants were inspired to create a structure for the study of religion as a social and human phenomenon at Brandeis. Over the summer, Eichler in consultation with others searched the Bulletin for relevant courses, researched programs at other institutions (e.g., Wellesley, Tufts and Harvard), wrote the first draft of the proposal, and met with faculty. Both students and instructors express enthusiasm for the program. Kaplan has organized meetings for faculty teaching courses listed in the program and consulted with other instructors by phone. Most courses in the program are taught with regularity (every year or other year, with some on a three-year cycle). The program doesn't assume the

creation of many, if any, new courses, but would help sharpen the focus of some classes. A steering committee, consisting of Professors Parmentier, Staves, McClendon, Abusch, Brooten, Green and Kaplan, has agreed to supervise the program. UCC members suggested that representatives from the history and philosophy departments be invited to join the steering committee.

Other suggestions included adding IMES 104a to the list of core courses. Shouldn't students be required to study more than one religion, to complete at least one course in non-western or comparative religions, and to not double count courses for the concentration? (The proposal already requires at least one non-western course and states that students may not double count more than two courses toward both major and program). UCC members advised that students not be allowed to double count program courses toward minors either, and that students be required to enroll in a core course outside of their major. Members also asked about requiring a colloquium or senior "98" course to synthesize learning in the program, and what administrative support would be needed.

Committee members voiced support for the program, which provides a home for students' increasing interest in comparative religions. It was suggested that the criteria for evaluating programs, written by past review committees, be distributed to all UCC members. At a later meeting, members of the UCC reviewed the revised proposal which incorporated UCC suggestions such as adding IMES 104a to the list of core courses, not allowing students to double count more than two courses toward a minor, and requiring students to complete an independent study course. UCC members suggested that the latter requirement be changed to "a senior research paper on an appropriate topic" before approving the program in Religious Studies and forwarding it to Faculty Meeting for consideration.

### Eligibility Standards for Instructors of USEM

Because USEM instructors can serve as resources in welcoming first year students to the Brandeis community, provide continuity for students beyond the first year, and thus contribute to improving first year retention, the UCC approved a motion recommending to the Dean of Arts and Sciences and the USEM oversight committee that all instructors of USEM courses be expected to be available (i.e., have a Brandeis teaching appointment) in the year following their USEM course. Exceptions proposed by departmental chairs must be agreed to by the dean.

### Course Scheduling and the Block System

Mark Hewitt, the University Registrar, presented an overview of course scheduling problems and a proposal for modifying the current block system of scheduling. The university now has the wrong mix of classrooms for the type and number of courses offered. Brandeis has about 80 classrooms, only a few of which are technologically sophisticated. The Registrar's Office asks departments to spread courses across blocks, according to set rules, but some departments are more cooperative than others, adjunct faculty can sometimes teach only at certain times, and most language and studio courses do not fit neatly into the block system. Even if all departments complied with scheduling rules, problems would continue to exist because Brandeis's undergraduate population has grown since classrooms were built, and classroom needs and teaching styles have changed.

According to scheduling rules, no more than half of a department's classes can be scheduled in the prime time, from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., the hours in which teachers prefer to teach and students prefer to take classes. Instructors do not want to schedule classes before 9:00 a.m. or after 5:00 p.m. The least used blocks are from 2:00-6:00 p.m., particularly on Thursdays and Fridays. A UCC member asked why some

blocks (e.g., noon-1:00 p.m.) are considered prime time when in fact they are not heavily used. Would it be better to simply list the most frequently used or overenrolled blocks as prime time?

The revised block system would schedule more classes on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons, eliminate classes after 1:30 p.m. on Friday, and establish Friday afternoon as the meeting time for faculty, departmental, and committee meetings. The system would replace Thursday sessions with Friday sessions and begin Tuesday and Thursday afternoon classes one half-hour later in blocks N, P, S2, S4, and S5. One two-day-a-week block and one three-hour seminar block would be added, and the likelihood of scheduling classes in N and P blocks would improve. However, the campus might empty on Friday afternoons, standing meetings would have to be rescheduled to a time some faculty might not prefer, and more faculty might utilize a two-day-a-week teaching schedule.

UCC members endorsed the new block system proposal and asked that it be sent to departments for their consideration. If the response warrants it, a general meeting to discuss the proposal will be scheduled. The UCC also asked the Registrar's office to survey departments on the following question: in what time blocks (e.g., three one-hour sessions per week, two ninety-minute sessions, one three-hour session) would faculty prefer to teach courses scheduled for next year, due to pedagogical considerations?

#### First Year Curriculum: Report from the UCC Subcommittee as General Education

In the fall term, Dean Carter announced the formation of a UCC subcommittee to review the general education curriculum. A review and report to the faculty in 1999-2000 was mandated by faculty legislation in 1993. The UCC's first discussion of the first year curriculum focused on the USEM and Writing Lab requirements. Students resent the inconsistent workloads in different USEMs (one book and six films in one class, and Plato, Freud, and Hobbes in another), but like the concept and structure of the program, which enable students to get to know other students and their professors in a small class environment. In an ideal situation, first year students make close friends, and the USEM and WL instructors serve as additional advisors to students. However, coordination of the USEM and Writing Lab is usually less than optimal. Some WL instructors assign readings that build on USEM assignments, while others assign completely unrelated readings. Many students complain about the quality of Writing Lab instruction. The number and type of writing assignments and the teaching methods and course content in WLS are also quite variable.

#### CLUSTER REQUIREMENT

The report of the UCC Subcommittee on General Education recommended changes in two areas of the curriculum: the cluster requirement and the writing requirement. The subcommittee recommended that clusters no longer be a requirement but instead become an option that, upon completion, would be noted on students' transcripts.

A questionnaire designed by the Cluster Oversight Committee and completed by 319 students indicates that about 15% of students would complete the cluster requirement if it were optional. Undergraduates reported that they primarily selected their clusters because cluster courses double counted toward other requirements or related to their majors, minors, or programs. Asked what they liked best about the cluster requirement, students replied that the concept of exploring topics from a variety of perspectives is appealing. They also liked having an opportunity to study new subjects outside of their major or in departments they wouldn't have otherwise tried, and appreciated the wide variety of clusters and the ease of completing the requirement by double counting courses toward majors and programs. Students complained most about the infrequency of cluster courses offerings. Some students dislike all

requirements on principle, or felt forced to take a course they found difficult or in which they had no interest. Others reported that professors made no connections between cluster courses. Many said the requirement prevented them from pursuing another intellectual interest or interfered with other coursework they wanted to complete.

Students suggested that more courses should be added to clusters and that students should be allowed to create their own clusters. They also offered suggestions for strengthening the connection between cluster courses (e.g., by having students write papers on interdisciplinary topics or by having faculty select a few common topics to illustrate different perspectives on the same topic).

The Academic Initiatives (AI) Subcommittee of the Brandeis 2000 Committee also recommended that clusters become an option instead of a requirement. The AI subcommittee recommended that strong clusters grow into programs and that more administrative and budgetary support be provided to interdepartmental programs as an alternative means of encouraging interdisciplinary study.

UCC members discussed the rationale for maintaining cluster listings in the Brandeis University Bulletin if clusters are no longer required. Keeping the program alive allows those faculty and students who enjoy participating in clusters to continue to do so. Clusters provide a map of the curriculum and are attractive to both new students and faculty who read the Bulletin. However, if clusters continue to be listed in the Bulletin, the machinery for managing clusters (e.g., cluster conveners and committees) would have to be continued.

UCC members then discussed the pros and cons of listing clusters on transcripts. Students are currently able to list as many as three concentrations and three interdepartmental programs on their transcripts. The registrar suggested that a student be allowed to list up to three programs and/or clusters in addition to their concentrations. Rules for the double-counting of clusters to programs would have to be established. Some committee members wondered if a cluster is a large enough commitment to merit mention on a transcript.

Lastly, committee members discussed dates for implementing changes in the cluster requirement. The UCC voted unanimously to maintain cluster listings in the Bulletin. This listing might be reconsidered after a three-year period. A motion to note completion of clusters on transcripts failed. By a unanimous vote, the UCC voted to terminate the cluster requirement for all students in the class of 2001 and thereafter.

#### WRITING REQUIREMENT

The committee then turned its attention to the writing requirement. The subcommittee's report recommended a new first year writing program with three components: a writing seminar utilizing three common readings, one of which would be the convocation reading; honors sections of the seminar for more advanced writers; and, on a pilot basis, a writing-intensive University Seminar, offered for no additional credit, and assisted by a teaching assistant who would meet with the class for a fourth hour of writing instruction each week. The last option would require that students complete two additional writing-intensive (WI) courses; students utilizing the other options would continue to complete one WI course. The subcommittee also recommended that the WI program be enhanced by allowing graduate students to teach WI courses through a competition similar to that for University Prize Instructors who are advanced graduate students with excellent teaching credentials. One subcommittee member has strongly urged that a minimum of ten and as many as 20 such courses be offered each year. The subcommittee also recommended increased support for faculty and teaching assistants who teach WI courses.

Why should USEMs be decoupled from writing courses? Students complain about the uneven quality of writing instruction and the lack of connection between USEMs and writing labs. The inequality between the two courses might be the source of student disdain; USEMs are viewed as interesting courses taught by real faculty members, and writing labs as less interesting courses taught by persons in lesser authority. Students also complain about doing four credits of work for two credits. Some subcommittee members believe that writing must be taught as its own subject, while others think it can be taught in the context of another subject. The recommended program reflects a compromise that enables the university to experiment with two models. In the opinion of one committee member, a return to a freestanding composition course crowds the first year with two courses devoted to writing, one of which is a whole course taught by a graduate student as opposed to the previous half course. But making the writing course a full credit course could relieve pressure previously caused by requiring students to take four and one half courses in one term. Premed students with many first year requirements might prefer the writing-intensive USEM.

In subsequent meetings, UCC members discussed a number of questions. Will Brandeis faculty ever teach University Writing Seminars? While theoretically possible, this is unlikely to occur because of staffing issues. Why should the new writing seminar receive four credits if it meets for only two hours per week? The third hour is reserved for tutorials. The new course will still be taught by graduate students, however, and take up a lot of space in the first year curriculum. These two courses leave little room for experimenting, particularly for those students completing language or premedical requirements. Also, some graduate students are good instructors and some are not. Which graduate students would be qualified to teach the honors sections of the seminar? Only those who had earned the best evaluations in teaching the seminar before. How is the new course different from FWS? A subcommittee member noted that writing courses are inevitably unpopular, and cyclically changed. The new courses might be more uniform because of the three common readings. Is the program designed to enhance community by having all first year students read the same books? Won't the writing-intensive USEMs disrupt the common experience? All students will still share the convocation reading, and in any case, not all students will read the books in the same term.

Did the subcommittee consider allowing students to be exempted from the writing requirement? Subcommittee members believe that all students can improve their writing and benefit from writing instruction, and that there are fewer protests about a requirement if there are no exemptions. The honors sections enable better writers to receive appropriate instruction. How will the English department select honors section candidates? Through AP and SAT tests, which aren't always the best indicators. A motion to provide a way of placing out of the requirement received no second.

Why must the requirement be completed in the first year? Students should learn to write at the college level early in their careers. Certain aspects of even second term writing courses (e.g., library tours) need to be rethought. Good writing instruction is essential for the improvement of writing. Current writing-intensive courses often require a lot of writing but provide little feedback on the writing itself. The success of any plan will depend on the preparation of the writing instructors. The new program will still include graduate instructors from outside the English department. A study indicates that graduate students from outside the English department do not receive worse evaluations than those in the department. Perhaps graduate students should have to submit writing samples in addition to completing the mandatory training.

One model of writing instruction does not work for all undergraduates. Allowing students to exempt from the requirement seriously undermines the rest of the writing program, but placing students in different levels is helpful to all. However, placement methods always feel unfair to some. Representatives from

the Intercultural Center have complained that even students with high SAT scores and high grades in high school English classes have been placed in the “Basic Composition” course. Students want to know with whom they can discuss their placement. Perhaps placement procedures might ask students to present their best paper from high school or collect writing samples from students once they arrive on campus. Courses with embarrassing titles should also be renamed (Advanced Composition or COMP, instead of Basic Composition or BCOM) or simply identified by different section numbers.

In theory, one can imagine a writing course in which even excellent writers learn something. In a course on “Rhetoric” or “Discourse” students learn an analytical language for self-reflective writing practice.

Committee members briefly discussed other writing options: permitting students to satisfy the writing requirement in any year; making the Writing Seminar a two credit course to provide more room for experimenting with the curriculum; and allowing students to take a “regular” USEM and three writing-intensive (WI) courses. The Writing-Intensive program would have to be rethought if the latter proposal were adopted. Would the university have enough WI courses? What incentives might be provided to faculty to encourage them to teach the writing-intensive courses? Course relief or cash bonuses for teaching a certain number of WI enrollments were suggested. Other means of supporting WI courses include graduate assistants and trained undergraduate peer assistants.

Ideally, WI courses offer not only frequent writing assignments and opportunities for revision, but also extensive comments on papers, focusing not only on the substance of the papers, but also on the quality of the writing. At the moment, faculty members choose to designate their courses as Writing-Intensive (with Writing Committee approval), and not all faculty who actually teach WI courses choose to do so. Some faculty don’t like the application procedures or don’t want students who are only trying to satisfy the WI requirement in their courses. Students don’t appreciate the arbitrary nature of the designation.

A committee member reminded colleagues that the university’s resources are too limited to fragment and that the administrative costs of some options and procedures might be substantial. Another committee member proposed that the university reduce the options by experimenting with only the TA assisted USEM model for a period of two years. This experiment would ensure a uniform experience for all students and provide continuity with and refinement of the current writing system. Teaching assistants would serve as writing tutors, working directly with faculty members teaching USEMs to offer writing instruction directly linked to the rest of the course. They would attend USEM class meetings and use the additional hour per week for discussions on writing topics, peer review, and individual conferences.

Over the course of several meetings, different motions regarding writing proposals were considered and discarded. At one meeting, Professors William Flesch, John Burt, and Patricia Chu of the English Department were invited to discuss first year writing programs with members of the UCC. Each shared comments about different aspects of the UCC proposal, noting that not all were in agreement on every issue. Flesch praised the USEM program, but then shared his concerns that making all USEMs writing intensive would harm the program. Faculty might not want to teach USEMs if the courses were viewed primarily as writing courses, and it might be hard to integrate the teaching assistants’ writing instruction into course grading.

One way of improving the writing program would be to assign more experienced graduate students, with prior experience as teaching assistants, to teach the writing courses. At present, the first teaching assignment of English graduate students is the first year writing course. Only after teaching writing labs do graduate students serve as teaching assistants in English literature courses. First time teachers are more likely to want to teach “content” courses, which don’t necessarily make writing central. Currently,

English department graduate students do not teach in the first year, teach two courses in the second year and three courses every funded year thereafter. Reversing the order of teaching assignments would thus enlarge the pool of eligible instructors.

Burt believes that a proposal featuring only writing-intensive USEMs would utilize teaching assistants as editors and not writing instructors. Composition as a subject is the laboratory for invention about writing. Such course topics as the narrative persona, genres, imagined audiences, and the appeal to ethos, pathos, or logos are only taught in first year composition courses. He asked committee members to consult composition experts or campus writing instructors before finalizing a proposal.

Writing-intensive courses, by committing faculty to pay attention to writing instead of relegating the task to TA's, are a good way of teaching writing, but should not be the only way. WI programs tend to be loosely administered, and always in the position of begging faculty to teach courses. Chu remarked that a WI program suggests that students should get something "extra" from a course if there is a lot of writing in it. Writing should be a part of all courses.

UCC members asked how the university might ensure that its writing instruction is as good as possible. How do we design a writing course from which students will benefit? It is difficult to prepare writing lab instructors, because no one knows the content of the USEM course to which they'll be assigned.

In most colleges across the country, the English professors teach composition. A UCC member asked if graduate students could be taught enough about rhetoric in six two-hour training sessions to become teachers of that subject. Rhetoric is a field with experts in it, but it is not the specialty of any of our graduate students. The benefits of a "green" staff are that graduate students put time and energy into their courses; lecturers with Ph.D.s in rhetoric quickly burn out. Standardizing course syllabi might alienate the work force.

After thanking Flesch, Burt, and Chu for attending the meeting, UCC members discussed the various writing alternatives.

Committee members urged that any plan include greater oversight of courses so that assignments are more uniform in number. Course quality is a universal concern. How would guidelines for a writing course be enforced? The work force is neither volunteer nor well-compensated. Learning how to teach a writing course can be useful to graduate students in disciplines other than English because they may later teach in one of the writing across the curriculum programs that are becoming increasingly popular in colleges. Should the university consider hiring a permanent teaching staff for the writing program? Funds are not available to do so for the next academic year. Does the university have the resources to offer excellent writing courses? Should the university establish an advisory committee to plan and oversee a new course?

The UCC unanimously approved a motion to recommend a new writing program that would replace the current writing lab with one of two experimental options: 1. a four-credit independent writing seminar; and 2. on a pilot basis, a four-credit writing-intensive University Seminar in Humanistic Inquiries (USEM), assisted by a teaching assistant who meets with the class for an additional hour of writing instruction each week. Students who complete the writing-intensive USEM will complete two additional writing-intensive courses; students who complete the new writing seminar will complete one "regular" USEM course and one additional writing-intensive course. All aspects of this experiment will be reviewed by the end of the 2001-2002 academic year.

To support these efforts, the English department will begin assigning more experienced graduate students, with prior experience as teaching assistants, to writing courses next year. The university will also invite composition experts from other colleges to consult to the writing program this spring.

Information about general education changes will be sent to first year students over the summer, and new text will be included in the Bulletin. Committee members suggested minor revisions to the UCC's "Recommendations on General Education" report, which was posted on the Dean of Arts and Sciences web page and distributed to faculty.

#### Report from the Standing Committee on Interdepartmental Programs: European Cultural Studies (ECS)

UCC members discussed the Standing Committee on Interdepartmental Programs' report on European Cultural Studies, a well-conceived concentration that offers undergraduates an interdisciplinary and flexible major focusing on the European tradition of literature, music, arts, and intellectual history. ECS differs in content from some programs in that it emphasizes the study of literature; the History of Ideas program is philosophy based, and the Humanities Interdisciplinary Program is a path through the humanities.

Interdisciplinary studies are not well advertised at Brandeis. ECS students often reported hearing about the concentration through word of mouth. The review committee recommended that the university redesign the Brandeis University Bulletin and initiate new web-sites and a brochure, perhaps created by the Admissions Office, to provide more publicity for interdepartmental programs. A specific recommendation for ECS was to provide more frequent programming to build community for student participants. A motion to endorse the recommendations of the review committee and continue European Cultural Studies for a period of five years was unanimously approved.

#### Report from the Standing Committee on Interdepartmental Programs: Film Studies

Film Studies is a strong program with healthy course enrollments. While many students express an interest in learning more about the technical aspects of filmmaking, Film Studies instructors do not completely agree on the desirability of expanding filmmaking resources. It would be expensive to improve the technical facilities on campus. Could BTV or editing facilities in the library be utilized? The review committee suggested that the Film Studies faculty meet to discuss the program's next priorities, including the possibility of expanding offerings in filmmaking. Other recommendations included additional administrative support, establishment of a video library, and the hiring of faculty or visiting lecturers who have a sub-specialty in film, particularly non-Western film. Because the UCC planned to address the theater practicum as a separate topic at another meeting, no action was taken on the recommendation that this course no longer be a co-requisite for declared Film Studies participants. The UCC unanimously approved a motion to continue the Film Studies program for a period of five years.

#### Theater Practicum

Barbara Harris, Artist in Residence and instructor/coordinator of the theater practicum course, and Michael Murray, chair of the Theater Arts department, were invited to discuss the practicum course with the UCC. The course requires: 1. 60 hours of production work on theater department plays (e.g., prep or run crews specializing in costume or set construction, scene painting, make-up, sound or light board operation, etc.); 2. attendance of a production forum at which the technical staff discuss their creative decisions and the artistic process; and 3. a one to three page paper. Approximately 125-150 students, including MFA candidates, enroll in the practicum each semester. About 60% of enrolled students are

majors and minors. Majors must complete four practicums, and minors must complete two. The course is also a co-requisite for such classes as acting and movement. Some students also enroll in the course because they need two credits to graduate, while others enroll purely out of interest. A few jobs involving 80 or 90 hours of work are split between two students; in these cases students complete their obligations by doing spot jobs or ushering (a maximum of 20 hours of ushering count toward the 60 required hours). Harris tries to help students understand the process of producing a theatrical work by providing an educational context for what is happening and what students are contributing. Students are required to view a show at different stages (rehearsal, performance, and production forum). Grading includes an evaluation by the immediate supervisor of the crew, who assesses effort and attitude as well as attendance, punctuality, and quality of work. Harris grades all papers and assigns final grades.

The practicum used to be non-credit requirement attached to production courses, but the structure caused problems for both students and instructors in production courses, because instructors did not control the timing of students' involvement in the practicum. The department spent almost a year thinking about course design. Harris coordinates the course, but the entire department contributes. Every other university's theater program has a practicum course, and 60 hours is almost the universal number required. Some universities with variable credit systems offer the course for one credit, and others do not assign letter grades. The hours for the Brandeis practicum are derived from the fact that full credit Brandeis courses require 39-40 contact hours, plus another two or three hours of out of class work for each contact hour, which yields 120 hours for a full course (or 60 for a half course).

Why can't there be a 120-hour full credit option for students who could then complete two practicums in one term? That option might deprive the department of the best and most dedicated students who would thus complete fewer semesters of practicum. Could students who are not theater majors be exempted from one or more practicums? If the practicum were not a required co-requisite, students would not elect to enroll in the course, thus reducing the labor pool.

A Theater Arts instructor met with concentrators this past year to discuss their concerns with the course. UCC members have heard students complain about work hours not carrying over from practicum to practicum, so that some students are completing 90 hours for the same amount of credit as those completing 60 hours. Carrying over hours from term to term would be a bookkeeping nightmare. No one is forced to complete 90 hours of work, but if a light board operator leaves in the middle of a production, the production suffers, because substitutes can't learn the job at the last minute. Students who waive the 60-hour limit receive extra credit for their work. Some students complete all of their work in a two-week period. One quarter to one third of enrolled students work throughout the full semester.

Could the course be given for less credit or graded pass/fail or credit/no credit? Does the paper contribute much to a student's understanding? Some UCC members commented that the grade distribution seems high. The theater department is concerned that pass/fail grading might encourage mediocre effort.

The UCC agreed to appoint a subcommittee to gather additional student input and to make recommendations regarding the practicum course. Late in the spring, the UCC's Subcommittee on the Theater Practicum reported that it had distributed a questionnaire to students enrolled in the practicum course and was awaiting responses. The subcommittee's report will be presented to the UCC in the fall.

#### Accuracy of Brandeis University Bulletin Course Information

Students have complained about courses that are listed in the Brandeis University Bulletin but not offered on the schedule reported in the Bulletin. The Registrar's Office relies on academic departments to

provide accurate information about frequency of course offerings; courses are removed from the Bulletin if not offered in the last four years and placed in “limbo” for a period of time. The Bulletin lists “Staff” as instructor, if more than one member of a department teaches a course or if the last course instructor is no longer at the university. One committee member expressed concern about courses that are offered one time only; these courses, often taught by visiting faculty and thus approved late, sometimes appear in the Bulletin only after they have been taught, when they are unlikely to be taught again. The Registrar stated that all courses must be listed in the Bulletin, a legal document often used to “reconstruct” courses for degree matters.

Committee members proposed that the current course frequency descriptions, (e.g., “Usually offered every third year” or “in odd years” or “in even years”) be replaced by “Usually offered every year” (or two, three or four years as appropriate). “Last offered in spring of 19xx,” would be replaced by “Last offered in 1997-98” for all courses offered less frequently than every year. If a course was not offered in the past four years, it would not be listed in the Bulletin, but placed in the limbo category, from which it could be reactivated without the use of a new course approval form.

UCC members discussed other descriptions related to limiting enrollment and course prerequisites. Some faculty do not know that course prerequisites must be enforced by the instructor, and are not enforced by Office of the Registrar. Committee members suggested that the Registrar’s Office distribute a sample list of wordings that departments might use to instruct students about enrollment matters, since many faculty members and departments are unaware of some wordings. Examples found in the current Bulletin include: "Open to all students." "Open to first year students." "Seniors and juniors have priority." "Enrollment limited to advanced undergraduates and graduate students." "Prerequisite: one course in politics."

UCC members also asked if web addresses with more course information could be included in the Bulletin. Committee members briefly discussed the desirability of putting all syllabi on the web. Some faculty objected to this practice, because syllabi are viewed as intellectual property, but did not object to putting longer course descriptions or password protected syllabi on the web.

#### Rabb School of Summer, Special, and Continuing Studies Proposal for “Advanced Certificate in E-Commerce Technology”

Amy Grossman, Assistant Provost of the Rabb School, and Ray Guillette, Director of Continuing and Professional Studies, presented a proposal for a new certificate program in e-commerce technology. The Rabb School began offering continuing education courses in the fall of 1997, following Rabb School Council, UCC, and faculty approval of a new Master’s in Software Engineering degree. Growth has far exceeded projections in terms of course enrollments (400 in the first year, 800 last year, and 1000-1200 in this third year, with a wait list for some courses). Students tend to be highly motivated individuals working at “high tech” companies such as Raytheon and Parametric (on-site courses are offered at EMC); many students receive tuition reimbursements from their employers. Others are career changers in transition. 60% of enrollees have B.A. degrees only, 20% have M.A. or M.S. degrees, 7% have M.B.A.s and 8% have Ph.Ds. While there is open enrollment for courses, admission to the Master’s program requires an application and a B.A degree. Over 120 students have been accepted into the Master’s program.

Rabb School courses are offered for three credits, meet in three hour sessions for ten weeks with an 11<sup>th</sup> week for exams and presentations, and are offered in fall, spring, and summer terms. No Brandeis undergraduate or graduate students are currently enrolled in these courses. A “firewall” exists in that

credits do not transfer between the Rabb School and the School of Arts and Sciences, and “regular” undergraduate and graduate tuition cannot be applied to the Rabb School. Only junior and senior undergraduates in good academic standing may enroll in Rabb courses, with the approval of their deans.

The curriculum, which focuses on graduate level application by emphasizing critical thinking, problem solving and transferable knowledge, has grown to 20 courses, including six undergraduate level prerequisite courses for career changers. All faculty members have backgrounds in industry, and either an M.A. or Ph.D. There is very little faculty turnover, and constant dialogue about curriculum and students.

The Rabb School already offers an advanced certificate in software engineering. The five course e-commerce technology certificate would require a core elective in a programming language such as Java or Perl; three required courses in database management, web security, and e-commerce application development; and one elective (e.g., web economics or computer networks and data communications). The curriculum is structured so that individuals can complete the certificate by itself, or on the way to completing the Master’s degree, or in addition to the Master’s.

Why offer a certificate program? Certificates signify that students have completed a coherent, intentional curriculum, and serve as credentials for job seekers. If a student works very hard, the certificate can be completed in two or three semesters. A year ago no programs in e-commerce existed, but Boston University now offers a business oriented Master’s. Brandeis’s niche is e-commerce technology.

The Rabb School’s long-term plan may include programs in marketing and web design. Most Rabb courses are offered in regular classrooms after 6:00pm; a new computer classroom was recently equipped through Rabb funds.

The UCC unanimously approved the certificate program in e-commerce technology.

#### Proposal to Terminate the Engineering Physics Track

The Physics department proposed to terminate the engineering physics track of its concentration, because of small enrollments in the engineering physics lab course, a lack of resources, and the new 3/2 combined program with the Columbia University School of Engineering, which provides another outlet for students with an academic interest in engineering. The UCC unanimously approved the motion to drop the engineering physics track of the physics concentration.

#### Proposal to Revise the NEJS Minor Requirements

The NEJS department proposed that at least one of the five courses required for the NEJS minor focus on the period before 1750 and at least one other course focus on the period after 1750, in order to provide NEJS minors with some breadth of knowledge. The UCC unanimously approved this change, with the proviso that courses be clearly categorized.

#### Four-Year BA/MA Program in Politics

The Politics department proposed to establish a four-year BA/MA program limited to the most outstanding students in the department. Admissions to the program would require two letters of recommendation from Politics department faculty, and an overall GPA of 3.33 and a GPA of 3.5 in at least six Politics courses. Six courses, beyond the 32 required for the BA, would be required for the MA, including two Politics graduate Field Seminars, two upper level graduate Politics courses, and completion

of the two semester Master's Project (POL 350a and B). There are currently about 84 seniors and 90 juniors majoring in Politics. The department expects less than 5% to apply and be accepted to the program. The university offers several other BA/MA programs, mostly in the sciences. The Politics requirements meet the guidelines set for these programs.

A motion to approve the four-year BA/MA program in Politics was passed.

### Review of Credit/No Credit Grading

Mary Campbell of the English and American Literature Department and James Olesen of the Music Department were invited to discuss their departments' views on maintaining the credit/no credit grading option in certain performance and creative writing courses. An e-mail message from Olga Broumas, the Director of the Creative Writing program, reported the strong consensus of the creative writing committee in support of the option, because it facilitates experimentation, independent thinking, and risk-taking in writing courses. The program attracts a self-motivated group, and is led by teachers who present an example of effort and self-discipline. The music department also supports continuing use of the option. In music courses, grades are not needed as incentives. Grades emphasize product, and not the process of doing.

According to credit/no credit guidelines in the Brandeis University Bulletin, a student may not utilize this grading option unless his or her course program includes at least two courses (eight semester hour credits) enrolled on a regular letter grade basis. The option is thus not available to part time students. While the Office of the Registrar has received no complaints or comments about this policy, the 2000/2001 UCC may wish to consider the number of credit hours in which students must be enrolled for letter grades in order to utilize both the credit/no credit and the pass/fail grading options.

A motion to continue the credit/no credit grading option in ENG 19a, ENG 109a and b, ENG 119a and b, MUS 95c, MUS 96c, and MUS 192a passed unanimously. Proposals to utilize this option in any other courses must be approved by the UCC.

### Report from the Faculty Meeting: Cluster Listings and the Writing Requirement

At the last faculty meeting, the first reading of the motion to terminate the cluster requirement was approved. A sentence stating that "Clusters will continue to be listed in the Brandeis University Bulletin" was separated from the motion and referred back to the curriculum committee. The UCC could propose to: 1. delete sections of the Bulletin describing clusters, 2. delete cluster sections from the Bulletin, but make this information available in some other place, or 3. rewrite Bulletin text to describe clusters as an option instead of a requirement, review cluster course lists to eliminate courses that are tangential to the topic or not offered with great frequency, and eliminate all mention of cluster conveners and cluster numbers from the catalog.

One reason for leaving clusters in the Bulletin is to provide a map of the curriculum or a guide to a few of the many pathways through the curriculum, especially those not represented by interdepartmental programs (e.g., the cluster on Aging). The listings are also a bridge to the old curriculum and hold a place for clusters that might evolve into programs. Those who prefer to eliminate clusters from the Bulletin believe that cluster references would be confusing to students and would clutter the Bulletin with needless information. Clusters are false advertising, because many clusters are not active. But all of the cluster courses are offered, though not always with great regularity. One UCC member proposed that the

university create a mechanism for approving “independent programs” which might be based on clustered courses.

Other committee members suggested that the university include cluster information in a new brochure on interdisciplinary studies. Cluster information could also be provided in the Undergraduate Academic Affairs and First Year Services’ guide to the curriculum sent to matriculating students in the summer before their first year at Brandeis; this same information could also be provided to first year advisors.

A motion to include information about clusters in the Bulletin failed.

A committee member urged the UCC to establish procedures for introducing its legislation to the faculty. Before each faculty meeting, a faculty representative of the UCC will be selected to present the committee’s rationale for proposed legislation.

Criticisms of the writing proposal from the last faculty meeting include the following: first year requirements are increased by two credits, which crowds the first year. The new four credit writing course will replicate problems in the old Freshman Writing Seminar. Why not separate the writing lab from the USEM and try to improve the writing lab? How will the two options be evaluated?

The writing options will be evaluated by collecting and comparing papers from students in the new writing courses and writing-intensive USEM courses, by surveying students and faculty about their experiences in the programs, and by other measures suggested by the consultants.

The UCC’s rationale for the new writing requirement is based upon the following. Both writing options address student complaints about the lack of integration between USEM and writing lab, either by separating the UWS and USEM, or by fully integrating writing assignments and instruction in the writing-intensive USEM. Student complaints about the amount of work required by the writing lab are addressed by giving the course full credit. Problems with inconsistent quality of writing labs are addressed in two ways: by assigning more experienced graduate students to writing courses, and by discussing ways of improving courses with two consultants from other universities (James Slevin of Georgetown University and Lad Tobin of Boston College). Experts do not agree on a single way to teach writing. The two options provide the opportunity for experimentation and enable faculty to commit to their own preferences. Students may be more constrained in the first year, but will experience much more freedom throughout their four years at Brandeis due to the elimination of the cluster requirement.

### Proposal to Change the Drop Deadline

Michele Rosenthal and Joy Playter from the Office of Undergraduate Academic Affairs presented their Office’s proposal to extend the drop deadline to the Friday closest to the 50<sup>th</sup> day of instruction. Because the current drop deadline is so close to the date when midterm grades are due, students do not always have enough feedback before the deadline to make good decisions about dropping or staying in courses. Extending the deadline would provide students and those advising them with the benefit of greater information, resulting in more thoughtful planning.

UCC members noted that many of the schools listed on the proposal’s accompanying information sheet appear to have drop deadlines of three weeks or 15 days, after which courses can be dropped only with a “W” (“withdrawn”) notation on transcripts. At Brandeis, students may petition to drop courses after the 40<sup>th</sup> day of instruction for documented extenuating (e.g., medical) circumstances. “I realized I was failing the course” is not considered a valid reason for dropping after the deadline. The last time legislation to

extend the drop deadline was brought before the faculty, it lost by one vote on the second reading, because Committee on Academic Standing members were unable to attend the faculty meeting due to a conflicting meeting.

Some students panic and drop classes prematurely after receiving C+ midterm grades. Others delay dropping courses they are no longer attending until the last minute. Faculty members object when students drop courses to protect their GPAs after instructors have invested their time in teaching them. Faculty members consistently support students' late drop requests, because they do not like to fail students. Some students feel that a "W" or "WL" ("withdrawn late") notation is punitive; administrators tend to view the notation as a matter of record. "W" notations on transcripts can be used to track a pattern of dropped courses, and may encourage students to address the accuracy of their course schedules at an earlier date. It would be difficult to move the submission date for midterm grades to an earlier time.

The UCC unanimously approved a motion to extend the drop deadline to the 50<sup>th</sup> day of instruction. Courses dropped by the 25<sup>th</sup> day would disappear from transcripts; courses dropped between the 26<sup>th</sup> and 50<sup>th</sup> of instruction would receive a "W" notation on transcripts. Courses dropped by petition after the 50<sup>th</sup> day would also receive a "W" notation. The 25<sup>th</sup> day was selected, because there are no tuition refunds for students who withdraw from the university after that date.

### Tutorials

In the fall of 2000, the university will initiate a three-semester trial tutorial program, to enable sophomore and junior students to study in a small group environment (4-8 students) with a member of the faculty. UCC members reviewed draft tutorial guidelines discussing enrollment procedures, compensation, the number of contact hours, writing assignments, grading, and evaluation of the program. Tutorial courses will carry full credit, and will have a workload equivalent to other full credit courses. The University Registrar has reviewed the guidelines and believes that tutorials should follow the same approval process as other 90 level courses. These courses will thus not require School Council and departmental course approval.

The following concerns about the tutorial program were presented. Tutorials will operate in a limbo between independent study and regular classes; they are like advertised independent study courses. The program will allow faculty members to teach topics that might not be approved by their departments. Is the university's goal to have all students take classes with small enrollments? Some students go out of their way to avoid small classes. This proposal may not help those students who most need a small class experience. Faculty may just recruit students they already know. The students who seem to have the most difficulty in getting to know their instructors are pre-med students in large enrollment science courses. The majority of instructors participating in the program are not science faculty. In many social science departments, the faculty are open to independent study courses, and in many humanities departments, course enrollments are already small.

The main incentive for faculty participation might be the stipend. What will happen to this experiment in the long run? The faculty must have an incentive to participate (either compensation or a teaching load reduction, perhaps by counting tutorials as half courses).

The appeal of tutorials to faculty might be that the teaching could be more free ranging and spontaneous. Tutorials could also contribute to a faculty member's own research or enable experimentation with course topics and assignments. Students find the tutorial concept very attractive, because it ensures greater interaction with instructors for students who are not taking advanced level or thesis courses. Too many

students feel that their instructors do not know them well enough to write a letter of recommendation. The tutorial program fits in well with students' expectations of academics at Brandeis, and provides them with new learning opportunities.

A UCC member urged that the tutorials include one on one meetings for each student with the instructor.

### Review of the Humanities Interdisciplinary Program (HIP)

Karen Klein and Luis Yglesias, co-chairs of the Humanities Interdisciplinary Program (HIP), met with the University Curriculum Committee to discuss HIP's review by the UCC's Standing Committee to Review Interdepartmental Programs.

Rather than begin with an opening statement, Klein and Yglesias chose to respond to committee members' questions. What is the "logic" of the program? HIP evolved from the University Studies in the Humanities program, and is distinguished by its emphasis on interdisciplinarity, and by its attention to humanities on a global level. Interdisciplinary studies challenge disciplinary boundaries. Would students interested in focusing on the humanities of purely European cultures be able to do so in the program? No, those students could study Comparative Literature.

In a written response to the review report, the HIP Steering Committee asked for a one-year continuation of the program to allow for development of a new core course and rethinking of the requirement structure. The current structure requires: HIP 20a or b or an equivalent course; a course in the comparative study of arts and letters from more than one era, culture, or discipline; a course exploring myth, ritual, religion, folklore and philosophy; a course examining responses or alternatives to Western tradition or a critique of a culture from within; and an independent study focusing on themes and methodologies central to the study of humanities. The reading list of HIP 20a once focused on foundational texts, but Yglesias now views these texts as stories, and asks such questions as "what role do stories play in the culture?" and "how do people use stories?" What would the new core course be like? The program needs a course that teaches interdisciplinary methodologies; Yglesias plans to utilize ancient and contemporary works from Africa, Japan, Euro-America, and Native America to study the relationship between ancient and modern texts and between European and non-European texts from an interdisciplinary perspective. Why not use HUM 10a, "The Western Canon," as a core course? HUM 10a is not an interdisciplinary course and focuses only on ancient western texts. How else might the curriculum change? The steering committee might eliminate categories of courses and substitute a list of interdisciplinary courses from which students would select three.

Does the program anticipate any difficulty in being able to offer the new core course, given the problems other programs face in making sure that courses for interdepartmental programs are offered with sufficient frequency? No, as the current chair of his department, Yglesias has been teaching HIP courses as an overload.

At a later meeting a motion to continue the Humanities Interdisciplinary Program for a period of one year was unanimously approved by the UCC. Next year, the HIP Steering Committee expects to present the UCC with a proposal for a revised curriculum. Members of the UCC believe that HIP's curriculum should be re-approved by the faculty as a new program because the current curriculum has changed significantly from that which was originally approved by the faculty in 1993.