Since the 2011 Annual Report to the Riverside Division, the Committee on Courses has approved a total of 111 new courses (78 undergraduate, 28 graduate, and 5 professional). It has approved changes in 374 Courses (331 undergraduate, 38 graduate, and 5 professional); deletions of 105 courses (48 undergraduate, 56 graduate, and 1 professional); restoration of one undergraduate course; and 51 Extension courses and 19 extension instructors. 93 associate-in requests were approved.

Among the courses approved this year were the first explicitly online courses (CS 121, CS 121L, DNCE 007V). These courses were proposed in the context of the University of California Online Instruction Pilot Program/University of California Online Education initiative. Vice Provost Dan Greenstein and Faculty Associate Keith Williams visited UCR on 02/29/12 to provide information on the initiative and to encourage approval of online courses through the Academic Senate. In approving these online courses, the Committee on Courses followed the Guidelines for Remote Learning Courses that were developed jointly by the Committee on Educational Policy and the Committee on Courses at the end of the 2010-2011 academic year.

One of the problems that was encountered, but not completely solved, in handling the online courses was the use of a designator with the course number to identify the courses as online. Use of such a designator was specified in the Guidelines for Remote Learning Courses but was not readily implemented. The problem could be temporarily side-stepped with CS 121 and CS 121L, since no courses with the 121 number pre-existed in CS. A similar side-step with the DNCE course was not possible, since DNCE 007 already existed as a traditional course. After much discussion the Committee on Educational Policy decided, and the Committee on Courses concurred, to withdraw the letter V from use in E-Z segment courses and reserve V (for “virtual”) as the designator for online courses. Thus, the new online course became DNCE 007V. Such use of V will not be possible, however, for all online courses that might be proposed. Formatting of course numbers within the campus SIS, CRAMS, and catalog computer database is limited to three spaces, generally for the number, plus one space for an optional alphabetic modifier. A second space for an alphabetic modifier is not available. Thus, if an upper division course with segments, say 123A,B,C is proposed to be offered as an online version, then an impasse arises because 123AV is not a usable number in the campus computer database. This problem also arises with other designators, such as L for lab or H for honors. The Registrar has developed a solution for lower division courses where a leading zero in the course number can be deleted. For example, when the lab was split from BIOL 005A, the number given to the new lab course was BIOL 05LA. This approach cannot be used, however, for courses numbered 100 or higher. Reprogramming the campus SIS, CRAMS, and catalog computer database to accept course numbers longer than four spaces is certainly possible, in principle, but is considered too expensive, in practice, in the current budget situation. Nevertheless, the Senate should be aware that this problem exists and will likely continue to be encountered. At some point, financial resources will have to be invested to solve the problem.

During the past year, the Committee on Courses and the Registrar’s Office worked together to identify steps or situations where the course approval process might be streamlined or accelerated. Concurrent approval procedures became the focus of this effort because some savings of effort seems possible there. Concurrent approval situations arise when creation of a new course or a change in an existing course generates a need for changes in other courses.
One common example is when the new or changed course is a prerequisite to other courses. Another common example is when the new or changed course requires a credit statement, i.e., the new or changed course overlaps some other existing course to the extent that credit cannot be allowed for both the new or changed course and the other existing course. In either of these situations, current procedures require that course proposals for change in the other affected courses be submitted concurrently with the course proposal for the new or changed course. The requirement for concurrent approval can magnify a small job, perhaps a relatively simple change in one course, into a big job, due to the other courses that must be changed along with this course. As a prime example, creation of an Honors version of an existing course often leads to many concurrent approval requirements because if the regular course serves as a prerequisite to some other courses, then programs will usually want the Honors version of the course to also serve as prerequisite to those other courses. Furthermore, students are generally not allowed to get credit for taking both a regular course and the Honors version of the same course. Programs or departments sometimes become discouraged about proposing Honors courses because of the workload involved with generating proposals for the required concurrent changes in other courses. The Registrar’s Office generated three possible options for improving and streaming the process for concurrent approvals arising in connection with proposals for Honors courses. Relevant Senate committees and the Honors program were asked to opine on the three options, and work is now continuing on the process of implementing the most favored option.

Problems with impacted enrollments in courses across the campus continued to increase during the past year and led to more course proposals containing priority enrollment provisions. The Committee on Course continued to consider these proposals on a case-by-case basis while participating in an ongoing effort by the Committee on Educational Policy to develop campus-wide approaches and policies for impacted majors.

The Committee invited Representatives from the Registrar’s Office (B. Dailey, Registrar, and M. Miller, Courses Specialist) and Catalog Editor (S. Whitestone) to attend our meetings. The Committee wishes to express its appreciation for the information and assistance they have provided. The Committee members also warmly thank Marla Jo Booth for her expert and always efficient and helpful assistance as our Senate staff representative.

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