The Faculty Senate (FS) Executive Committee had a special meeting with the administration on 12-14-04 to discuss the processes whereby the General Studies (GS) program might be revised.

Present: Chancellor Kristensen, SVCAA&SL Finnie Murray
Senators Bridges, Darveau, Kruse, Miller, and Unruh

Issues: Revision process regarding the GS program
Informing faculty who are not on the GS council of the council’s work
Clarifying some vague language in governance documents regarding the work of the GS council

FS President Bridges opened the meeting with two observations: 1) the value of the GS program to UNK, and 2) a lack of general understanding regarding the process whereby any necessary revisions to the program can occur

1. President Bridges noted that the GS program is one of the few campus-wide initiatives we have. The program serves as the anchor of the liberal arts foundation, allowing for intellectual experimentation and helping define UNK as a student-centered environment. On a more pragmatic level, the GS program saves students’ tuition dollars—common requirements allow flexibility in choosing or changing a major—and thus serves as a marketing tool.

2. The College of Fine Arts and Humanities has proposed a structural change in the GS program. It is unclear how proposed changes go forward. Why are changes now being pursued? Does something need to be fixed? Are objectives not being met? Faculty would appreciate a full discussion of any structural revisions.

Discussion: Does the administration agree with the premises of the GS program? We do not want to see each college stipulate its own GS sequence, though Board of Regents policy does allow that option. The 2001 Academic Program Review raised issues that should be looked at. This may be a good time to examine the whole GS program, with an eye toward making any necessary changes. Ideally, this discussion will focus upon substantive issues rather than turf battles. What is best for our students? Outcomes assessment procedures are in place; after collecting this data we will be in a better position to facilitate campus-wide discussions.

Dr. Murray distributed the “General Studies Governance Policy”; Section II outlines the duties of the General Studies Council. Consensus that this section should be clarified before proposals for revisions are considered. Proposing a campus-wide examination of the GS program, Dr. Murray put forth the following question: What do faculty of this institution believe students should know? He would like to avoid “piecemeal tinkering” or addressing concerns about student credit-hour production at this point in favor of a re-
examination of the entire program and its objectives. For example, perhaps the foundation of the GS program should not lie in currently existing courses. Rather, it might be preferable to build it from scratch, perhaps with more cross-disciplinary courses.

What’s next?
   1. The FS Executive Committee will meet to discuss these issues.
   2. The FS Exec Committee will coordinate with the GS Council.
   3. We should make sure that everything we do accommodates the directives of the NCA.

Following one or more campus-wide fora, the next likely step will be a committee appointed by the administration for the purpose of examining the issues listed above, with a goal of completing the preliminary work by the end of Spring 2005.

Martha Kruse, recorder