TO: Simon Bott, Chair
             Undergraduate Council

APPROVED DEC 07 2011

FROM: Richard Scamell
             Academic Policies and Procedures Committee

SUBJECT: Undergraduate Catalog

DATE: November 28, 2011

The Academic Policies and Procedures Committee met on Wednesday, November 2, Wednesday, November 9, and Wednesday, November 16 to discuss a variety of issues associated with the Undergraduate Catalog. Participating in one or more of the discussions were committee members Leonard Bachman, Bill Dupre, Tamara Fish, Richard Scamell, Kevin Simon, Steve Soutullo, and Jerry Waite. Simon Bott, Cathy Burkholder, Debbie Henry, Heidi Kennedy, Jeanette Morales, and Dave Shattuck attended one or more of the meetings as guests. This report briefly summarizes the outcome of these discussions.

Creating a PDF Version of the Undergraduate Catalog

Our peer public universities in the state of Texas (i.e., The University of Texas at Austin, Texas A&M University and Texas Tech University) provide students, faculty and staff a downloadable PDF version of the "current" undergraduate catalog that is comparable to what would be their printed catalog. Of the three institutions, only Texas Tech also offers a printed catalog to the public for $5.00 a copy and provides all incoming freshmen and transfer students a printed catalog free of charge. The University of Texas at Austin no longer offers printed catalogs to the public but does make copies available within the institution on an as needed basis. Cathy Burkholder, Web Project Manager with University Information Technology, indicated that a PDF version of the Undergraduate Catalog could be created in a reasonable amount of time and at what appeared to be a reasonable cost. After listening to the comments of the committee members and guests, Cathy agreed to define the scope of the project and estimate its cost while the committee agreed to clarify whether or not the content of the PDF version of the catalog needed to be the same as what used to be in the printed Undergraduate Catalog or if some material formerly in the catalog was no longer necessary.

Ownership of the Undergraduate Catalog

During each catalog discussion, two comments were made time and time again. One was that under the current online version of the catalog a policy duplicated in different places on the University of Houston website may not always be stated the same way. For example, in some cases one statement of the "same policy" may be out of date. The second comment was that the Undergraduate Catalog is a legal binding document of authority for all students. However, since moving to our current online catalog, it appears that there has been no clear owner of the catalog on the academic side. The Committee feels that the Undergraduate Committee should own the content of the Undergraduate Catalog and recommends that consideration be given to adding a sixth "subcommittee" to the Undergraduate Committee with responsibilities that might include the content of the catalog's index and making sure that online key word searches go immediately to the right places.

Academic Catalog/Curriculum Management Tools

Debbie Henry introduced the Committee to two commercially available catalog management system products: Acalog (www.acalog.com) and CourseLeaf (www.leepfrog.com/courseleaf). Each product enables the creation of an online catalog with searchable features and management of curriculum approval workflow. These features include advanced search options to quickly find programs, majors, and courses; intuitive navigation; and a personal portfolio where each user (student, faculty or staff) can store favorite programs and courses. Although accompanied by an initial cost of approximately $150,000, both Acalog and CourseLeaf are widely used by colleges and universities nationwide as a way to streamline the development and maintenance of the catalog. The Committee encourages the Office of the Provost to investigate the acquisition of an academic catalog/curriculum management tool as a long-term solution to providing students, faculty and staff with an authoritative and up-to-date undergraduate catalog.