

**MINUTES OF THE 313th GRADUATE COUNCIL MEETING
UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME
FEBRUARY 6, 2008**

Members present: Peter Holland (chair), Robert Bernhard, Ed Conlon (for Carolyn Woo), Peter Kilpatrick, Joseph Marino, John Robinson (for Patricia O'Hara), Mark Roche, Philip Bess, Gay Dannelly (for Jennifer Younger), Peter Garnavich, Juan Migliore, Dan Myers, John Renaud, Scott Van Jacob, John Welle, Bill Westfall, Tam Chantem, Rebecca McCumbers

Graduate School representatives present: Terry Akai, Jarren Gonzales, Barbara Turpin

Guests present: Eileen Hunt Botting, Associate Professor of Political Science and Director, Gender Studies Program

Members absent: Panos Antsaklis, Peter Burns, Laura Carlson, Crislyn D'Souza-Schorey, Sandra Gustafson, Angelina Lay, Christine Maziar, Kathleen Pyne

Reporter: Mary Hendriksen

Prof. Holland opened the meeting at 3:35 p.m., and Ms. Chantem offered a prayer.

1. Approval of the minutes of the Graduate Council meeting of November 14, 2007:

After Prof. Roche made one minor correction to the minutes concerning peer institutions with which Notre Dame could profitably compare itself in terms of size of the graduate student population, members unanimously approved the minutes of the meeting of November 14, 2007.

2. Items for Information:

(a) Formation of the Graduate Council Commencement Committee:

Prof. Holland reported that, as requested by the Graduate Committee of the Academic Council, he had formed a committee of the Graduate Council to discuss Commencement issues. Its members are Profs. Panos Antsaklis, John Welle, and Rich Taylor (a member of last year's Graduate Council) and Ms. Rebecca McCumbers, president of the Graduate Student Union (GSU) and *ex officio* a member of the Graduate Council. Prof. Holland noted that it is extraordinarily unlikely that the University will fold the Graduate School Commencement back into the University-wide ceremony, at least in the immediate

future. At their meeting earlier today, committee members discussed both how the Graduate School's Commencement might be improved and how Notre Dame's masters and PhD graduates are recognized at the University-wide Commencement ceremony. He would take up suggestions on the latter point with Dr. Harold Pace, University Registrar.

(b) *Apply Yourself*:

Dr. Gonzales reported on the first year of the new on-line application system, *Apply Yourself*. There are many positives with the system; however, as might be expected, some of its functions have presented certain challenges. At the end of this admissions cycle, directors of graduate studies (DGSs) and administrative assistants will be asked to offer input on what worked well with the system and what they found problematical.

In response to a question from Prof. Welle, Dr. Akai clarified that, in consultation with the Graduate School, departments are free to choose the admissions deadline they believe to be best for their discipline and/or department. While Dr. Akai noted that many departments have moved their deadline from February 1st to early or mid-January, he cautioned against fixing deadlines in December. Students will not have grades from the fall term at that point; thus, departments might evaluate applicants with less than optimal information.

(c) Graduate student survey:

Dr. Gonzales reported that the Graduate School is now in the process of breaking down the data gathered from the comprehensive graduate student survey of Fall 2006 (and shared with Graduate Council members at the meeting of November 14, 2007) for individual departments. This will give a finer grain to the survey results and inform actions of both the Graduate School and departments.

(d) Graduate Studies metrics:

Prof. Holland reported that he and other members of the Graduate School have met individually with the deans of the colleges to discuss metrics collected for this first year on various measures for graduate students and departments. He clarified that each college determined the metrics appropriate for its own departments. During this first year, the metrics are purely informational; no direct actions will result from them. The next step will be for the Graduate School to meet with the deans again to establish guidelines and principles that might, in the future, hold implications for the allocation of resources. Prof. Holland emphasized that not all consequences of the metrics will be negative. Departments that could be considered to be underperforming may, in fact, need further investment rather than less. His aim is to ensure that decisions related to metrics will be made collaboratively with the colleges.

(e) Best Practices:

Prof. Holland further reported that as a result of discussions with DGSs, the Graduate School held two focus sessions during the Fall 2007 term on best practices for recruiting graduate students. The Spring Term 2008 workshop topic will be mentoring and evaluating graduate students. Prof. Holland explained that the aim of the exercise is for DGSs to share both the positive and negative outcomes of various practices. Results are being collated in draft form now; eventually, they will be polished and posted on a section of the Graduate School Web site reserved for DGSs. He observed that practices related to topics being explored—recruiting, mentoring, preventing attrition, etc.—are often specific to disciplines; thus, there is no one-size-fits-all strategy for any topic. The idea is to share possibilities with fellow DGSs. Incrementally, the Graduate School will accumulate data on what constitutes good practice for Notre Dame.

Ms. McCumbers noted that the Graduate Student Union (GSU) is participating in the best practices compilation as well. It posted questions on its Web site for current students, and their responses will be folded into the Graduate School's compilation.

(f) Notebaert Fellowships:

Prof. Holland then reported on the Graduate School's new, prestigious fellowships: The Richard and Peggy Notebaert Premier Fellowships, which will provide significant financial support to the most promising doctoral students enrolled at Notre Dame. He noted that the gift is the largest amount donated to graduate education in the history of the University. The fellowships will fund five to seven doctoral candidates every year at a stipend level higher than any of the prestigious fellowships now available. In addition, the recipients will have access to a professional development fund for travel and research. Prof. Holland explained that the Notebaert fellowships are "plus-up" stipends; thus, in every year of the fellowship, the department supplies the base stipend and the Graduate School adds the extra stipend amount.

(g) Health insurance:

Dr. Akai announced that the Provost has agreed to increase the subsidy for graduate students' health insurance to 50 percent of its cost, beginning with the 08-09 academic year—an increase from the current level of \$400/year for a \$1400 policy to, roughly, \$700/year. The University is currently beginning the process to invite proposals for the next cycle of health insurance schemes. Also on the health front, the GSU and the Graduate School's business manager are exploring various wellness initiatives, particularly for spouses and children, to be funded by the Graduate School. This fall, the fund was used to underwrite a flu-shot clinic for graduate students and dependents. Immunizations, wellness visits, and laboratory screening tests are all possibilities for the future. Prof. Holland added that the University will be anxious to see if, with the added

subsidy, more graduate students will choose to purchase the health insurance. If so, there are several potential benefits, for, as consultants have explained, there are benefits to the scheme as a whole if more students join the group as well as through increased university subsidy.

Dr. Akai noted that subsidies are charged to the source of stipend support (e.g., grants).

In response to a question on why the subsidy for the premium is less than 100 percent, Prof. Holland said that, in fact, benchmarking has demonstrated that it is not the norm to fully fund graduate students' health insurance premiums. Certainly, coverage at 50 percent of the premium's cost is *not* the University's ultimate goal; rather, it should be seen as an interim stage along a continuum. The norm for subsidy among institutions in the Association of American Universities (AAU) is 70 percent—but there are radical differences in the scale of coverage and the amount of the premium, as well as requirements for student buy-in.

3. Proposal for a minor in Gender Studies:

Prof. Holland explained that at the meeting of November 14, 2007, Council members voted to approve the concept of “graduate minors”: courses of study that “supplement work in a primary degree program with an additional substantial expertise” and appear on students' transcripts because they result in credit. Also at that meeting, Council members discussed but did not approve nomenclature or requirements for other courses of study for graduate students, such as the Kaneb Center's certificate programs, that may result in a different kind of recognition, one that Prof. Holland noted at the time may ultimately be called a “graduate certificate.”

Prof. Holland reported to Council members that when the results of the Graduate Council's vote were conveyed to the executive committee of the Academic Council, that body decided that the Graduate Council had full authority to establish policies and procedures for graduate minor programs in general, to approve specific graduate minor programs in concert with the appropriate college, and then to oversee such programs. Thus, the Academic Council did not need to approve either the general decisions of November 14th concerning graduate minors in general nor will it need to approve the vote on the Gender Studies minor proposal in particular. Prof. Holland noted that the executive committee did ask, however, that the Graduate Council should: (1) give greater clarity to the distinction between certificate and graduate minor programs, and (2) include a review process in any minor or certificate programs it approves.

Prof. Holland then introduced Prof. Eileen Hunt Botting, associate professor of political science and the director of the Gender Studies Program, to answer questions about the proposal to offer a graduate minor in Gender Studies. While the proposal was fully explained in documentation provided to members in advance of the meeting, a thumbnail description of the requirements for the minor follows:

- Terminal master's degree students will complete three 3-credit hour graduate courses cross-listed in Gender Studies or approved by the Gender Studies Graduate Minor Committee, including the "Interdisciplinary Core Seminar" in Gender Studies (for a total of 9 credit hours). Double-counting of courses for the requirements of the minor program and another graduate program at Notre Dame is permitted.
- Doctoral students will complete the same number of courses, plus show evidence of "substantial research" in a gender-related area. Students might meet the requirement of "substantial research" by devoting a significant portion of their dissertation or fieldwork to a gender-related topic, or publishing an article or a master's qualifying paper on such a topic.

Prof. Roche spoke in favor of the proposal. Approved by the College Council last spring, a graduate minor in Gender Studies should broaden students' expertise as well as help with professional placement. He said that his question at this point concerns the courses that, when added to the required "core seminar," complete the three-course requirement for the minor. He questioned whether all the courses listed in the appendix to the proposal had sufficient gender content to qualify for the minor. He also commented that when looking at the number of courses required at peer institutions, it appears that three courses may be on the low end of the spectrum.

Prof. Botting responded that she, as director, has reviewed the content of all courses listed in the appendix to the proposal and verified that they engage the topic of gender studies in a significant way—whether or not their titles obviously indicate such a level of attention. As for the number of courses required for the minor, Prof. Botting said that several peer institutions, particularly Princeton, which was used as a model for Notre Dame's own program, *do* require three courses. One reason for Notre Dame to adopt that same level of coursework is that many of the departmental homes of doctoral students expected to earn the minor—for example, Theology, Political Science, and Philosophy—mandate a significant number of required courses in doctoral candidates' first three years of study. If too many more courses are added to the requirement for this minor, Prof. Botting said, she feared that many students—particularly students from some of the University's premier graduate programs—will not be able to earn the gender studies minor. Thus, if Notre Dame wants the graduate minor in Gender Studies to be a viable program, with 15 to 20 students participating every year, she would argue that a requirement of three courses *is* sufficient. An ideal opportunity to assess the rigor of the three-course requirement would occur at the time of the minor's three-year review.

More discussion followed on the rigor of the three-course requirement. Prof. Myers pointed out that courses with gender content can be double counted; thus, he questioned how much effort students need to give to earning the minor. Prof. Welle as well advocated a four-course requirement. Ms. Chantem queried the effect on "the market" of requiring five versus three courses.

Ms. McCumbers said that, perhaps for this minor, a greater emphasis should be placed on research rather than coursework. The proposal's inclusion already of an optional research seminar might hold the key to solving members' concerns about rigor.

Prof. Botting said that she would be willing to agree that participation in the research seminar could be mandatory. The core seminar is a theory and methods course that provides professional training in gender studies at the graduate level across at least two scholarly disciplines. In the research seminar, modeled after the University of Chicago's successful Political Theory Workshop, students present their work to each other and to faculty. As described in the proposal, its purpose is "to create a sense of scholarly community among the students and faculty involved in the graduate minor program, to foster norms of professional scholarly interaction among the students, give graduate students opportunities to serve as role models for senior thesis students, and expose students and faculty to current interdisciplinary research in the field of Gender Studies."

Prof. Botting then returned to the question of how the Gender Studies Program would approve courses for the minor. At the end of each year, she said, members of the Gender Studies Steering Committee would look over the entire curriculum and vet courses by examining course descriptions and, when necessary, syllabi. This is analogous to the work of committees that examine undergraduate courses for fulfillment of distribution requirements.

Prof. Roche recognized the analogy but noted that the core curriculum committees review courses in advance of being approved. He said that his concern for rigor springs from the fact that the proposed minor in Gender Studies will be the first minor approved by the Graduate Council. [Psychology now offers a minor in quantitative methods, but it was initiated by the department on its own and has not yet been formally approved by the Graduate Council.] The University is creating a genre here; thus, his concern is less about gender studies than about creation of a standard. He then asked whether requiring an oral examination might be an option.

Prof. Holland observed that when looking at the chart provided to members on peer institutions' requirement for coursework, three courses are at the lower end of the requirement but certainly within the acceptable range.

Prof. Botting argued against the requirement of an oral examination. First, she said, Gender Studies is a program rather than a department. Trying to orchestrate oral exams for 15-20 students every year would impose a significant administrative burden on the program. It is perhaps a task departments with faculty lines could assume, but not an interdisciplinary program such as Gender Studies.

Addressing various members' concerns about the best possible way to ensure that courses other than the core seminar have gender studies content sufficient to meet the minor's requirements, Prof. Holland suggested that this concern need not hold up approval of the proposal. The Program can work with the Graduate School to resolve this issue.

Prof. Myers spoke in favor of pre-screening courses, as courses change with the instructor. He also spoke against oral exams, pointing out that they are a large addition to a minor—in fact, more so than requiring a fourth course. Not only do examinations create an administrative burden, they create a burden on students. Oral exams would add a layer of gravitas to the minor more than one might legitimately expect.

To resolve concerns about the rigor of the three-course requirement, various members of the Council and Prof. Holland constructed the following amendment to the proposal for a minor in Gender Studies: Masters students will be required to participate regularly in the Gender Studies Research Workshop for two semesters; PhD candidates for three semesters.

With the requirement for participation in the research workshop added, the Graduate Council then gave unanimous approval to the proposal for a graduate minor in Gender Studies.

Prof. Holland said that, given the lateness of the hour, he would e-mail Council members for their thoughts on the “identity” of the Graduate School that would need to be created as part of the redesign of the Graduate School’s website. He then adjourned the meeting at 5:00 p.m.