

**MINUTES OF THE 324th GRADUATE COUNCIL MEETING  
UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME  
APRIL 27, 2011**

**Members present:** Greg Sterling, Panos Antsaklis, Philip Bess (for Dean Michael Lykoudis), Brian Blake (for Dean Peter Kilpatrick), David Campbell, Bill Evans, Steve Fallon, Patrick Flynn, Victoria Froude, Umesh Garg, Dan Myers (for Dean John McGreevy), Gerald McKenny, Susan Ohmer, Kasey Swanke, Carolyn Woo

**Graduate School representatives present:** Brian Flaherty, Ed Maginn, Nyrée McDonald, Barbara Turpin

**Members excused:** Bob Bernhard, Sunny Boyd, Julia Braunart-Rieker, Dennis Doordan, Jennifer DuBois, Jeremy Fein, Susan Harris, Paolo Carozza (for Dean Nell Newton)

**Reporter:** Mary Hendriksen

Dean Sterling welcomed Graduate Council members to the fourth and final meeting of the 2010-2011 academic year. He took up the agenda items as follows:

**1. Minutes of the meeting of January 27, 2011:** The minutes of the Graduate Council meeting of January 27, 2011, were approved as presented.

[<http://graduateschool.nd.edu/assets/40877/minutes.gradcouncil.012711.pdf>]

**2. Announcements:** Dean Sterling announced the winners of two new Graduate School awards: Bill Carbonaro (Sociology), the 2011 Director of Graduate Studies, and Shari Herman (Physics), the 2011 Graduate Administrative Assistant. Created to honor and showcase exemplary contributions to graduate education at the University, more information on the awards and the 2011 awardees is on the Graduate School website at <http://graduateschool.nd.edu/news/21899-bill-carbonaro-sociology-and-shari-herman-physics-awarded-inaugural-graduate-school-honors/>

**3. Report on Graduate Programs in the Mendoza College of Business:** Dean Sterling introduced Carolyn Woo, the Martin J. Gillen Dean of Business and the Ray and Milann Siegfried Professor of Entrepreneurial Studies, and asked her to provide members with a brief overview of the four graduate programs in the Mendoza College of Business.

He said that it is important for members of the Graduate Council to know something about the graduate programs in the professional schools, as well as the programs in the Graduate School, since all are part of the Graduate Council.

Dean Woo provided an overview of the four graduate programs in Business: the Master of Business Administration, the Executive Master of Business Administration, the Master of Science in Accountancy, and the Master of Nonprofit Administration. She invited members to view the college's website, <http://business.nd.edu/>, for a more in-depth view of its overarching theme: "With a footprint that is all-encompassing in today's

world, business has the potential to create lasting economic value and enduring benefit for people throughout the world.” Three subthemes serve as the foundation of the college’s academic programs: individual integrity, establishment of effective organizations, and service of business in the greater good.

Dean Sterling asked Dean Woo about the possibility of a doctoral program in business. In response, she provided a brief overview of the history of the discussion.

While the Academic Council approved such a program in the mid-1990’s, the college has chosen not to establish it. Initially, college administrators decided that there were at least three reasons to postpone the establishment of a doctoral program: existing programs—both undergraduate and graduate—needed attention; a doctoral program would require significant financial resources; and supporting programs throughout the University were weak or non-existent. The issue was re-examined in 2001 and 2007. Both times, establishment of a doctoral program was deferred. She noted that the first and the third initial concerns had now been addressed.

**4. Proposal to require the electronic submission of theses and dissertations:** Dean Sterling explained that electronic submission of publications had become such a standard procedure in publishing that the Graduate School now thought that it was time to require electronic submission of theses and dissertations. Very few students now submit a paper dissertation. Thus, he proposed that, beginning with the 2011-2012 academic year, the Graduate School require electronic submission of theses and dissertations. With support from Prof. Ohmer, who said that ProQuest is the best way for our students’ work to be disseminated, the Council voted unanimously to amend the *Bulletin* to require electronic submission of theses and dissertations.

**5. Proposal to eliminate the requirement of outside chairs in candidacy examinations and dissertation defenses:** Dean Sterling introduced the next issue by noting that, over the last two years, the Graduate School has received a significant number of requests from faculty to reconsider the requirement of an outside chair. Currently, the Graduate School *Bulletin* provides: “A faculty member appointed by the Graduate School from a department other than the student’s department” chairs candidacy examinations and dissertation defenses.

<http://graduateschool.nd.edu/assets/29023/bulletin.1011.pdf> [pp.20-21]

In order to address this concern, the Dean had asked Associate Dean Barbara Turpin to compile some data and to present it. She had been collecting information on the usage of outside chairs from August 2007 through April 2010—showing that the total number of outside chairs requested during that period was 922. Dr. Turpin said that in only one instance did a student allege that he/she was “bullied” in an exam or defense. She also circulated a summary of outside-chair procedures at AAU graduate schools—revealing that of all the AAU privates, only Syracuse and the University of Southern California employ an outside chair.

Additionally, Dr. Turpin pointed out that the issue of outside chairs has arisen before in the Graduate Council. At the Council meeting of April 11, 2007, two subcommittees discussed the conclusions they had reached on the question of abolishing outside chairs. Members of one committee argued that the function of the outside chair was merely to keep time and to submit a report on the conduct of the examination—a role they thought did not justify two to three hours of faculty time. Members of the other committee believed that it was important to maintain the position of the outside chair to ensure that students were treated fairly in exams and defenses. The latter view prevailed, and the Council voted to retain the position of outside chair.

<http://graduateschool.nd.edu/assets/4049/minutes.gradcouncil.041107.pdf>

Dean Sterling said that he favors abolition of the requirement. Faculty members' time is too valuable for them to devote hours to what is essentially a timekeeping role. If there had been a record of substantial problems, he would think differently; however, one case in three years does not warrant the amount of time required of faculty.

At the same time, Dean Sterling said that the Graduate School must guarantee the fairness of examinations and defenses; it must also provide students with recourse if they believe there to be unfairness. In regards to guaranteeing fairness, Dr. Turpin has listed four possible mechanisms that might replace the outside-chair requirement—and there are certainly others:

- Increase the size of the examination committee from a minimum of three to a minimum of four or five, on the theory that additional “perspectives, opinions and egos” will prevent any one faculty member from overbearing behavior;
- Require all members of the committee, plus the DGS, to sign the examination form and thereby document their agreement with the results;
- Record examinations either by audio or video recording;
- Increase students' awareness of departmental and Graduate School appeal procedures.

Prof. Garg spoke in favor of retaining the requirement of an outside chair. As to whether Notre Dame stands virtually alone in this requirement, he might question the list Dr. Turpin distributed compiling practice at AAU institutions. Some of the universities listed [for example, Brandeis and Case Western] *do* require outside involvement in defenses—for example, a faculty member outside the student's committee is required to sit on the committee. While this faculty member is not called an “outside chair,” the function is the same. Also, he and others believe that the outside chair requirement allows faculty to learn what goes on outside of their department—both procedurally and substantively. Prof. Garg also noted that a colleague in Physics suggested that the Graduate School retain the practice of outside chairs for dissertation defenses but abolish it for candidacy examinations.

Prof. Campbell spoke in favor of abolishing the requirement, maintaining that it is not only superfluous but results in a great deal of inequity in who serves. It is striking, he

said, how frequently he will see the same outside chair at defenses. The burden of the requirement is carried disproportionately by faculty.

Prof. Ohmer also spoke in favor of abolishing the requirement. She pointed out that Dr. Turpin's Appendix 1 shows that, over a nearly three-year period, nearly 1000 outside chairs were utilized. That is roughly one-third of the entire Notre Dame faculty every year. In addition, the workload for Graduate School staff members in *finding* those outside chairs is substantial. She has served as outside chair and, yes, found the defense interesting; on the other hand, she contributed nothing to the defense. If the concern is misbehavior, an outside chair from another department who has not been part of the candidate's development and who does not know the department personally is not the best person to point out its existence.

Prof. Myers was also in favor of abolishing the requirement, saying that it is not supportable that it is the existence of the outside chair that keeps a defense fair. The same faculty members who might be unfair in one defense are charged with maintaining fairness in other defenses. The University does not conduct training for "dissertation cops."

Ms. Froude, Graduate Student Union (GSU) president, said that the GSU had polled students and discovered that they are in favor of maintaining the *status quo*. Students do understand the burden the requirement places upon faculty; nevertheless, the fairness of the exams and defenses is of vital concern to them. If the outside-chair requirement is to be abolished, students would prefer that the replacement mechanism to be mandatory audio or video recording.

Prof. Flynn said that while he is sympathetic to students' concerns about fairness, he, too, is not sure that it is the outside chair who guarantees fairness. He recommends adopting a provision that each committee member must certify fairness of the examination or defense. Alternatively, DGSs could be charged with the responsibility of recognizing problematical situations in exams or defenses and attending those events if necessary. As for audio recording as a safeguard, he would be comfortable with that practice if the Graduate School would retain the tapes only for a limited period of time.

Dean Sterling said that given the existence of only one problem in 922 cases, he is not sure if it would be a wise use of University resources to record exams and defenses.

Prof. Campbell agreed. He also pointed out that some of the logistical challenges of audio recording may not be recognized. Even if a recording does exist, its existence might not definitively answer the question of unfairness in particular cases. Issues abound in our courts over similar recordings.

Prof. Fallon asked about Dr. Turpin's suggestion that an alternative to outside chairs might be all faculty members signing the examination form. Is the intent of this proposal that faculty members certify the result of the exam or defense itself, or only its fairness?

Dean Sterling said that, while both, the primary intent of such a requirement would be to certify fairness.

Prof. Evans said that he favors abolishing the requirement of an outside chair for candidacy exams but maintaining it for defenses. He pointed out that just because reports are *not* filed in 921 cases does not mean that the outside chair is not serving a purpose. In fact, perhaps it is precisely the presence of an outside chair that has kept the number of appeals low. He recommends that departments take on the task of finding the outside chairs. There would be some *quid pro quo* involved—making the process easier for departments than it is for the Graduate School.

Prof. Blake recommended that students have the opportunity to request an outside chair.

Ms. Swanke said that students would oppose being put in the position of flagging a potentially adverse situation. That would be a precarious position for them. We need to require outside chairs in all exams and/or defenses or in none.

Prof. Antsaklis called for the question and moved to eliminate outside chairs on both examinations and defenses. With a show of hands, the motion carried 8 to 5.

Dean Sterling then turned to how the Graduate School should implement safeguards for fairness.

Prof. Antsaklis supported the option of all committee members signing off on the examination form. He suggested that the DGS sign the form as well. While the DGS need not be present for every exam or defense, he or she could certify fairness in every case.

Prof. McKenny and Ms. Froude both voiced their opposition to the DGS signing the form. Dr. Turpin pointed out that the DGS is the first person a student consults when an appeal is signed; thus, he or she should not sign off on an examination form.

Some discussion ensued over whether, by signing, members of the committee are certifying the fairness of the exam or only agreement with the result. Dean Sterling said it is both. The statement might be: “In signing my name and the grade, I am also certifying that, in my opinion, the exam was fairly administered.”

Prof. Fallon asked whether faculty members signing a document might add an additional hurdle to an appeal.

Dean Sterling said that it must be clear that the basis of an appeal can only be how an exam is administered—not on the basis of its content or the judgment of the faculty on the student’s performance.

Prof. McKenny questioned whether a faculty member will signal that an exam was administered unfairly in the presence of fellow committee members.

Further discussion led to Dean Sterling's wording: "All members of the committee will sign their names with their votes." The vote in favor of its adoption was unanimous.

Members next discussed wording for the provision giving students the right of appeal. Prof. McKenny suggested: "A student has the right to appeal an examination or defense on procedural grounds. If a retake is granted, an outside chair appointed by the Graduate School must be present." His motion was approved unanimously.

Ms. Swanke asked how students will be made aware of the changes. Dean Sterling said that they will be contained in new *Bulletin* provisions. Others suggested that departments include the new procedure in their manuals and e-mail students before an examination with the rule—to ensure that all have proper notice.

Dean Sterling noted that the Council had approved two of the proposed safeguards (committee members' signatures and the right of appeal on procedural grounds), but not the other two (faculty signatures increasing the size of the committee or audio/video recording) and asked if any members of the Council wanted to support these or other measures. The members of the Council were content with the two measures already adopted.

Given the late hour, Dean Sterling said that he would defer discussion of a new Academic Code for the Graduate School until the 2011-2012 academic year. He adjourned the meeting at 5:10 p.m.