

**MINUTES OF THE 312<sup>TH</sup> GRADUATE COUNCIL MEETING  
UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME  
NOVEMBER 14, 2007**

**Members present:** Peter Holland (chair), Joseph Marino, James Merz, John Robinson (for Patricia O'Hara), Mark Roche, Carolyn Woo, Philip Bess, Gay Dannelly (for Jennifer Younger), Crislyn D'Souza-Schorey, Peter Garnavich, Sandra Gustafson, Angelina Lay, Christine Maziar, Juan Migliore, Dan Myers, Kathleen Pyne, Scott Van Jacob, Tam Chantem, Caitlyn Shea (for Rebecca McCumbers)

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

**Guests present:**

Representatives from the Joan B. Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies:

Scott Appleby, Hal Culbertson, Jaleh Dashti-Gibson, Robert Johansen

Department Chairs: Cindy Bergeman, Rory McVeigh, Michael Zuckert

Associate Dean for Research, Graduate Studies, and Centers, The College of Arts and

Letters: Gretchen Reydams-Schils

**Members absent:** Panos Antsaklis, Robert Bernhard, Peter Burns, Laura Carlson, John Renaud, John Welle, Bill Westfall

**Reporter:** Mary Hendriksen

Prof. Holland opened the meeting at 3:35 p.m., and Prof. Reydams-Schils offered a prayer.

**1. Approval of the minutes of the Graduate Council meeting of September 26, 2007:**

Prof. Holland called for approval of the minutes of the Graduate Council meeting of September 26, 2007. They were approved unanimously, with no amendments.

**2. Announcements:** Prof. Holland made three announcements:

**(a) Subcommittee on graduate students' commencement:**

At the suggestion of Prof. Antsaklis, the Academic Council's liaison to the Graduate Council, Prof. Holland will constitute a subcommittee to meet during the Spring 2008 term on commencement issues. Members will explore both how the Graduate School's

own commencement ceremony might be improved and how graduate students can be integrated more visibly into the University-wide Sunday commencement ceremony.

**(b) Presidential fellowships:**

Last year was the final year of new awards for the Lilly Presidential Fellowships. Beginning with the current admissions cycle, a comparable number of new University Presidential Fellowships will be offered to replace the Lillys.

**(c) Focused-topic DGS meetings:**

In addition to the regularly scheduled fall and spring-term DGS meetings, this year, the Graduate School will hold extra workshop sessions for DGSs on a specific special-interest topic. Later this semester the topic will be recruiting graduate students; in Spring term 2008, it will be mentoring graduate students. Graduate students are participating in the best practices compilation via the Graduate Student Union Web site:

<http://www.gsu.nd.edu/>

**3. Items for information:**

**(a) Graduate students' health insurance:**

Dr. Akai updated members on the topic of graduate students' health insurance: The consulting firm hired to assist the University in analyzing data/trends of peer institutions and making recommendations for the future put forward three possible models for the University's committee on health insurance to consider. The option the committee selected was to continue with the style of insurance currently in place.

Several aspects of the coverage plan are under review, for example, how the amounts of various co-pays affect the size of the premium, and what other coverage could be included in the plan and at what cost. Currently, for all fully funded graduate students, the University contributes a subsidy of \$400 to offset the \$1400 premium. This represents a contribution of about 30%. Dr. Akai noted that the Graduate School has requested an increase to the current subsidy level.

Ms. Chantem asked whether graduate students could have access to the results of the student health-care survey undertaken by the University's health insurance committee. Prof. Holland responded that he will investigate what can be released.

Prof. Merz asked Dr. Akai to describe some of the plans that were proposed and then rejected. Dr. Akai said that while one proposal provided students with more extensive coverage, the premium was so high that it was thought to be excessive. He also noted that on the open market, students could be turned down for coverage on the basis of preexisting conditions. With the University's current plan, all students are covered.

Prof. Merz asked how Notre Dame compared to peers in the consultant's benchmarking survey. Dr. Akai answered that Notre Dame is a little below the sample median in cost of premiums. Premium costs—some as much as two to three times Notre Dame's cost—depend in part on what is covered and on co-pay amounts. He added that among AAU institutions that were sampled, premium subsidies were on average about 70% of cost. Again, Notre Dame subsidizes about 30% of the cost of its students' premiums. The University's intent is to work towards a higher level of subsidy through staged increases over time.

Ms. Chantem asked whether the consultant's benchmarking data can be shared. Prof. Holland responded that the decision lies with the Provost. As Dr. Akai has related, the benchmarking study shows a wide variation in practice. While plans at some universities have more extensive coverage than that available to Notre Dame students, they may offer lower stipends or charge students higher premium amounts—both of which result in a heavier net financial burden on graduate students.

**(b) Apply Yourself:**

Dr. Gonzalez gave a short update on the new on-line application system, *Apply Yourself*, which was implemented this fall. Two of its many advantages over the Banner system are: (1) all materials except transcripts can be sent electronically by prospective students, and (2) staff and faculty involved in the admissions process can track the progress of applications in real time. Thus, DGSs can communicate proactively with prospective students.

**(c) Comparison to Association of American Universities (AAU) institutions:**

Prof. Holland said that, since the beginning of his term as acting dean, he has questioned how Notre Dame's graduate school compares in size to those of the 61 institutions elected to the Association of American Universities (AAU). A Web-based survey by the Graduate School this fall—described by Prof. Holland as somewhat “rough and ready” at the margins but surely revealing in its broad brush-strokes—confirms his initial impression that Notre Dame is strikingly out of line with those universities with which it consistently seeks to compare itself. A spreadsheet distributed to members reveals that, when compared to AAU institutions, Notre Dame has a very high ratio of undergraduate students to graduate students (4.77, or 56<sup>th</sup> of 62 institutions) but a very low ratio of graduate students to faculty (2.24, or 6<sup>th</sup> of 62 institutions). He pointed out that while a low ratio of graduate students to faculty may be advantageous in some disciplines, that is often not the case in science and engineering. Prof. Holland explained that he offers these ratios to inform future discussions on the size of the graduate school.

Prof. Roche noted that the University has identified a set of institutions that, like Notre Dame, are characterized by a heavily weighted undergraduate population—for example, Cornell, Rice, Dartmouth, Brown, and Princeton. He suggested that more insights into Notre Dame's optimum size could be gained by extracting these institutions from the AAU schools and examining two specific points:

- Comparative ratios of students and faculty by division and department
- Percentage of students funded by grants versus the percentage funded internally

Prof. Woo seconded Prof. Roche's suggestion and said that it may be the case that, rather than increasing the number of graduate students across the board, the University might wish to change the distribution of graduate students across departments.

#### **4. Proposal for an interdisciplinary degree in Peace Studies:**

Prof. Holland asked Prof. Johansen, acting director of the Joan B. Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, to introduce the Institute's proposal for an interdisciplinary Ph.D. degree in Peace Studies. The proposed degree program is to be administered by the Kroc Institute in cooperation with the departments of History, Political Science, Psychology, and Sociology.

Prof. Johansen explained that the Institute formulated its degree program because of the very serious need for more rigorous and interdisciplinary study of the causes of war and the conditions for peace, and of all forms of political, ethnic, and religious violence. Notre Dame as a whole and the Kroc Institute in particular are very well positioned to play a pathbreaking role in this domain. At the heart of the proposal is the idea that the methodological rigor of existing disciplines and departments can be combined with the interdisciplinary questions, findings, and theories of peace research. The College Council has approved the proposal.

Prof. Merz asked whether, given the generous gift of Joan Kroc to the Institute, the Graduate School should be asked to absorb the costs of the program's stipends. Prof. Johansen pointed out that, as the proposal states, the intention is for the Kroc Institute to release the Graduate School from its contributions within a five-year period according to a formula involving the University's payout on the endowment. Thus, the Graduate School will not be infusing a huge quantity of financial resources into the program for any great length of time, and perhaps not even for the short term.

Prof. Roche spoke in favor of the proposal, noting that it will enhance the number of Notre Dame graduate students with prestigious placements.

After some discussion about the ability of graduate students to "migrate" from academic departments to the Kroc's program and the assurances by the chairs present that they did not consider migration, if it does occur, problematical, Prof. Holland called for a vote on the Kroc Institute's proposal for an interdisciplinary Ph.D. in Peace Studies. Members gave their unanimous approval. Prof. Holland said that, in keeping with the *Academic Articles*, he would forward the proposal to the Academic Council for its consideration.

## 5. Graduate certificates or minors:

At its September meeting, Council members had held a preliminary discussion on the questions: Is it appropriate for certificate programs to exist at Notre Dame? If so, under whose aegis should they operate?

At this meeting, for which members were provided documentation on existing and proposed certificates/minors both at Notre Dame and at peer institutions, Prof. Holland began the discussion by noting the enormous variety that exists among certificate/minor programs—both within and outside of Notre Dame—as to subject matter and requirements. Despite the variety, it seems possible to establish a clear distinction between:

- *Internal certificates/minors*: offered to current graduate students, usually based on standard departmental coursework; and
- *External certificates*: offered to persons outside the University; usually more akin to continuing education or professional development courses; often providing a revenue stream for institutions.

Thus, Prof. Holland said, among Notre Dame's current offerings, the minor in quantitative psychology (internal) can be distinguished from offerings in the Mendoza College of Business in, for example, negotiation or project management (external).

Prof. Holland noted that it is the clear sense of the executive committee that the Graduate Council should be dealing at this time only with internal certificates/minors. External certificates may be taken up by the Council at a future date, but they will not be considered at this meeting.

Prof. Holland drew the attention of members to the document in their packet titled *Template for Certificate or Minor Program Proposals*. It defines a graduate certificate (or minor) as “either a guided academic course of study that is designed to supplement work in a primary degree program with an additional substantial expertise, or a course of study that is designed to teach pedagogic skills. It is expected that the course of study will be recognized by other institutions as conferring a level of valued expertise.” The template further stipulates that “[s]uch certificate (or minor) programs are available only to graduate students currently enrolled in a graduate program in the Graduate School” and “[t]he Graduate School does not consider proposals for professional certificates or proposals similar to certain existing certificates, such as the certificate in Theology within the MA in Theology program or ACE's certification program in English as a New Language.”

In the discussion that followed, there was no disagreement as to whether internal minor/certificate programs should be approved for Notre Dame graduate students; it was the consensus of members that they should. Nor was there substantial disagreement with the definition of a graduate certificate or minor presented in the template. The discussion

focused instead on whether programs such as the one now existing in Psychology or that proposed by the Program in Gender Studies should be called a “certificate” or a “minor” at Notre Dame and how these courses of study might be distinguished from those that form the basis of certificates offered by the Kaneb Center and the Alliance for Catholic Education.

Prof. Roche stated that while Dr. Turpin’s research indicates that it is moderately anomalous to use the term “minor” for programs like that proposed by Gender Studies, in fact, that would be his preference. There is a vast difference between undertaking an academic program and attending a collection of workshops. Prof. Roche noted that if the Council adopts the term “minor” rather than “certificate” for courses of study like that proposed by Gender Studies, that program’s proposal need not return to the College Council. He will consider such a change merely a matter of nomenclature.

Prof. Holland stated that it would be entirely appropriate to offer *both* graduate minors and certificates at Notre Dame. While it is impossible to expect rigid classifications in this area, he said, the term “minor” could be used for courses of study similar to that proposed by Gender Studies and “certificate” for courses of study similar to the Kaneb Center’s existing certificate programs—for example, the *Striving for Excellence in Teaching Certificate*, for which graduate students attend five teaching workshops and write a two-page reflective paper.

Prof. Woo suggested that the term “graduate minor” be used for programs presenting two concurrent conditions: a course of study that is credit bearing *and* counts towards the completion of a degree. The term “certificate” might be broader, she said. It might cover a course of study that is credit-bearing or not, and counts towards a degree or not.

Ms. Chantem asked if, once approved, there will be accommodations in the Gender Studies program for existing students. Prof. Holland answered that a memorandum of understanding exists that allows some grandfathering of existing students.

Prof. Holland asked Council members to put aside nomenclature for the moment and vote if, on principle, the Graduate School should issue a credential that, as set forth in the proposed template, provides students with a way of demonstrating their efforts to supplement work in a primary degree program with an additional substantial expertise. If the vote is affirmative, he said, new and existing programs at Notre Dame would need to seek approval for such courses of study. As set forth in the template, proposals would contain descriptions such as the necessity for the course of study, requirements for it, and the names and credentials of faculty members involved in teaching courses. The vote was unanimous in favor of allowing and recognizing such courses of study.

In further discussion of the distinction between graduate “minors” and “certificates,” Prof. Maziar suggested that “minors” might be courses of study that appear on a student’s transcript and “certificates” those that are included on a CV.

Members also discussed whether certificate programs like the Kaneb's must be approved by the Graduate Council. Prof. Holland said that he will discuss with Prof. Hahn, director of the Kaneb Center, how to proceed with its existing certificate programs. In his view, the Graduate School and the Graduate Council should be concerned about credentials that appear on graduate students' résumés, whether or not they result in credit.

Prof. Holland called for a vote on the following question: Should courses of study defined by the Graduate School's template as those that "supplement work in a primary degree program with an additional substantial expertise" and that appear on students' transcripts because they result in credit be called graduate "certificates" or "minors"? The term "minor" prevailed. In response to a question from Prof. Woo, Prof. Holland clarified that while the kind of proposal the Gender Studies Program has fashioned will be called a *graduate minor*, other courses of study, such as those offered by the Kaneb Center, may result in a different sort of recognition, one that ultimately may be called a *certificate*.

#### **6. Preliminary Report on the Fall 2006 Survey of Graduate and Professional Students: Academic Life at Notre Dame:**

Dr. Gonzales gave a brief presentation on the Fall 2006 survey of graduate and professional students. He noted a few key findings—for example, overall, 80% of students are satisfied with their academic experience at Notre Dame; 87% are satisfied with their particular field of study; and 91% would recommend Notre Dame to someone else in their field of study. He also noted that no matter how the survey results are "sliced," financial support and the quality of a particular academic program are key factors in students' decision to pursue graduate studies at Notre Dame.

Prof. Holland noted that the next step is for various survey results to be separated out by department. Specific responses of the students, for example, as to the adequacy of mentoring, will inform actions of both the Graduate School and individual departments.

There being no further business, Prof. Holland adjourned the meeting at 5:05 p.m.