

**MINUTES OF THE 323<sup>RD</sup> GRADUATE COUNCIL MEETING  
UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME  
JANUARY 27, 2011**

**Members present:** Greg Sterling, Panos Antsaklis, Phil Bess (for Dean Michael Lykoudis), Julia Braungart-Rieker, David Campbell, Greg Crawford, Jennifer DuBois, Steve Fallon, Jeremy Fein, Patrick Flynn, Umesh Garg, Mark McCready (for Dean Peter Kilpatrick), Dan Myers (for Dean John McGreevy), Kasey Swanke, Rich Taylor, Victoria Froude

**Graduate School representatives present:** Brian Flaherty, Barbara Turpin

**Invited Guests:** Jessica Collett, Amber Handy, Kathie Newman, Brian Baker, Holly Goodson, Steve Buechler, Andrew Sommese

**Members excused:** Bob Bernhard, Sunny Boyd, Paolo Carozza (for Dean Nell Newton), Laura Carlson, Dennis Doordan, Bill Evans, Susan Harris, Gerald McKenny, Susan Ohmer, Carolyn Woo

**Reporter:** Mary Hendriksen

Dean Sterling welcomed members to the third meeting of the 2010-2011 academic year. He took up the agenda items as follows:

**1. Minutes of the meeting of October 27, 2010:** The minutes of the Graduate Council meeting of October 27, 2010, were approved as presented.

**2. Announcements:** Ms. Froude announced that the GSU, sponsored by the Graduate School, is holding its annual Research Symposium on Friday, Feb. 4, from 2:30-4:30, in the Great Hall of the Jordan Hall of Science. See: <http://gsu.nd.edu/news/18248-graduate-research-symposium/> She added that before the symposium, at 2:00, also in Jordan Hall, the GSU is holding a panel for undergraduates interested in attending graduate school.

Dean Sterling announced that Graduate Council members are invited to attend two events the Graduate School is sponsoring for graduate students: On Friday, Feb. 4, the film *Pelada*, co-directed by MFA graduate Gwendolyn Oxenham, and on either Friday, Feb. 11 or Saturday, Feb. 12, a performance of the Diavolo Dance Theater. Members should contact Tracy Zielke in the Graduate School office to reserve their tickets.

Dean Crawford asked whether Dean Sterling had announced the award winners for the Graduate School's May Commencement. Dean Sterling said that while awardees were selected by committees of Graduate Council members for the Distinguished Alumnus and the James A. Burns, C.S.C. awards [the Graduate School opens the nomination period for the student awards, the Shaheen and CRC awards, in February],

he is still awaiting confirmation from one award winner about attendance at the event. Once that is settled, which will be no later than Feb. 11, he will announce the winners of the Distinguished Alumnus and Burns Awards.

**3. *Creating a More Family Friendly Environment for Graduate Students report and associated policies:*** Last year, Dean Sterling convened a committee of faculty and students to report on the current environment for graduate students who are parents and to make recommendations for the future. Associate Dean Barbara Turpin chaired the committee. Three of her committee members—Profs. Jessica Collett and Kathie Newman, along with graduate student Amber Handy—attended the meeting to address members’ concerns and questions.

Dr. Turpin said that the report and recommendations (Attachment A) have been approved by several University entities, including General Counsel’s Office, the Office of Risk Management, the Office of Research, and the Directors of Graduate Studies (who gave their unanimous endorsement of the report after it was discussed at both the October and November DGS meetings.) The University Committee on Women Faculty and Students endorsed the report and its recommendations as well.

Dr. Turpin began the substantive part of her presentation by pointing out that work/family issues are no longer only “women’s issues.” Men are concerned with work-life balance as well. Quoting Stephanie Coontz, professor of history and family studies at Evergreen State College in Washington, Dr. Turpin said that most workplace policies are at least 50 years out of date. There has been very little accommodation to the reality of children in the 21<sup>st</sup>-century workplace. She added that the report of her committee is an attempt to deal with the reality of the children of our graduate students.

Dr. Turpin then focused attention on three aspects of her committee’s lengthy report:

(1) A Statement of Commitment (p. 13), which she said was crucial for the community to adopt:

*As a Catholic University, Notre Dame is committed to fostering a family-friendly environment for its graduate students, one that makes it possible for those students to balance successfully their parenting responsibilities and their academic pursuits.*

(2) The proposed Graduate School Childbirth and Adoption Accommodation Policy (Appendix A of the report)

Dr. Turpin emphasized that the proposed policy is not a leave of absence; students are expected to register and enroll full-time and to remain engaged, if at a reduced level, during the accommodation period.

The proposed accommodation would allow “full-time students in good academic standing who are primary and full-time caregivers of a newborn child or a child less than 5 years old newly placed in the home. . . [to be] relieved of **full-time** graduate studies/duties (such as teaching and research), of official academic exams (e.g., oral candidacy exams, master’s comprehensives, etc.), and of coursework deadlines for **one semester** (16 weeks) during or immediately following the semester in which the birth or adoption occurs.” During this time, the student’s academic eligibility clock will stop, effectively adding a semester to the student’s time to degree. The student will work out a set of expectations with his/her adviser and commit it to writing—with the student, adviser, DGS, and department chair or graduate committee all signing the document (and sending it to the Associate Dean of Students in the Graduate School for review). While the details of the agreement can be re-assessed and revised after the childbirth or adoption, it will serve as the guide for the student’s accommodation.

Dr. Turpin explained that the Graduate School has estimated the cost of implementing the accommodation policy to be approximately \$100,000 annually, mainly because the Graduate School will partially fund students on grants. The proposed policy states that if a student is funded by a grant, the level of support is determined by the granting agency. For example, if the student was expected to devote 50 % or 75% of his/her former working hours to research, during the accommodation period, the grant will pay 50% or 75% of the stipend assuming he/she works at full capacity during the newly reduced hours. The Graduate School will make up the difference between what the grant pays and the former stipend, up to 50% of the stipend. If the grant funding is reduced below 50%, the Graduate School will still pay 50%.

(3) Policy for Pregnant Graduate Students in Labs (Appendix B): Dr. Turpin explained that while the University cannot mandate that pregnant graduate students either remove themselves from a laboratory or seek the advice of the Office of Risk Management, this policy states the Graduate School’s strong recommendation that they “immediately inform their advisers of their pregnancy, and then contact the Office of Risk Management.”

Dr. Turpin ended the first part of her presentation by saying that Prof. Collett discovered in her study that graduate students are eager to hear from both their male and female professors how they have successfully balanced work and family. Department chairs might begin this conversation with faculty forums or informal conversations.

Moving on to the report’s recommendations, Dr. Turpin listed some of the main recommendations as:

- Providing a part-time campus advocate for graduate student parents;
- Continuing to work towards a 90% subsidy for graduate student health insurance;
- Providing workshops on time management and how to balance work and family;
- Promoting an HR family-friendly resources website.

Prof. Fallon questioned the decision not to add a semester of stipend support to students who make use of the policy. By not adding a semester, he said, we are essentially giving students only 4.5 years of support. Graduate students already face the issue of a sixth year of support. Adding an additional semester would seem to go far in heading off attrition of new parents.

Dean Sterling said that, as Dr. Turpin stated, the accommodation policy is expected to cost the Graduate School \$100,000 annually—for which it has been given no additional funds. One possibility for “finding” the funding Prof. Fallon advocates would be cutting the number of stipend lines. When asked how he has estimated the cost of the proposed accommodation, Dean Sterling said that while we do not have firm numbers for the number of graduate student children, our best estimate is that 30% of graduate students are married, and that 15% of graduate students have children.

Prof. Fallon said that there is a disconnect between the Statement of Commitment and the failure to add a semester of funding. It is not “family friendly” to lose support as a result of becoming a parent.

Dr. Turpin said that for the Statement of Commitment to gain any teeth, there must be buy-in at higher levels of the University administration.

Prof. Newman added that to do the right thing and follow through on what Prof. Fallon advocates and others support, the Graduate School must receive additional funds—through Development, the President’s allocation, or some other means. She reiterated that the policy was created considering only what is possible with the funds currently under the Graduate School’s control.

Prof. Taylor asked for clarification: In the humanities, are departments permitted to fund students after the fifth year? Can they choose to admit fewer students and fund more students longer? In the sciences, on a yearly basis, departments assess the total funds available and then choose how many students to admit and the level at which to fund them and current students.

Dean Sterling said that, certainly, departments are entitled to make decisions about the number of admits each year. He would not oppose departments making such decisions to take account of a commitment to fund students who access the accommodation policy. The larger question of policy, however, is the extent of commitment on behalf of the *Graduate School*. He has established two priorities for Graduate School funding: increasing the amount of our stipends across the board and maintaining the health insurance stipend for graduate students—even raising it to 90%. He must work other initiatives around these two priorities. While he, too, would support adding a semester of funding, it is simply not possible to do so given the current budget—unless fewer students are supported or stipend levels are cut overall.

Prof. Campbell asked what would happen if the committee's estimates are off and many more students make use of the policy than anticipated. Dean Sterling said that in the short term, the Graduate School has "emergency funds" it can access. It is the long term with which he is most concerned.

Prof. Garg commented that he has witnessed the history of increases to the graduate student health insurance subsidy. The subsidy began at 25% and has increased steadily through the years. At some point, the University realized that the health insurance subsidy was not a financial issue but an academic issue. The money was eventually allocated. With this funding as well, Notre Dame must start somewhere and Graduate School advocates must continue to petition for increases.

After comments by Prof. Bess about differences in policy between Architecture students (who do not receive stipends from the Graduate School) and graduate students under the purview of the Graduate School, Prof. Newman said that many changes can be brought about by paying attention to the report's climate recommendations (pp. 13-15). She asked that circulating these recommendations to departments should become a fourth voting item today.

Prof. Flynn noted that the goal of Appendix B, the Policy for Pregnant Students in Labs, could be accomplished by making it a part of mandatory safety training for graduate students working in laboratories. This was accepted as a friendly amendment to the proposal.

Returning to the question of an additional semester of funding for graduate students who receive an accommodation, members further discussed funding this expense by reducing stipends, say, at a level of \$20/month. Some members pointed out that while \$20/month seems minimal, the cumulative effect of that cut would be \$240 year—a significant amount for graduate students.

Prof. Taylor commented that in the sciences, in which many students are supported on grants, when the Graduate School raises the health insurance subsidy, it is the grant that must support the increase—not the Graduate School.

Dean Sterling called for a vote on the policies and actions associated with the report. In a series of votes, the Graduate Council:

- Adopted the *Statement of Commitment* (unanimous vote).
- Approved the *Childbirth and Adoption Accommodation Policy* (Appendix A) as written, with Dean Sterling saying that this is a starting point and that he will work towards adding a semester of support for students. He also clarified that the support outlined in the policy is the *minimum* level of support required. Departments or the Graduate School can choose to be more generous. (Approved by 11 members, with 2 abstaining).

- Approved the *Policy on Pregnant Women in Laboratories* (Appendix B), with the addition of Prof. Flynn’s friendly amendment that the University incorporate the policy into mandatory safety training (unanimous vote).
- Approved dissemination of the report in its entirety, including its climate, support, and communication recommendations to deans, departments chairs, and directors of graduate studies (unanimous vote) (Dean Sterling said that he would distribute the report to all the University’s deans).
- Approved the revised policy on Medical Separation from Academic Duties for Students in the Graduate School (Attachment B), amended to delete references to situations involving childbirth, now covered by the accommodation policy just approved.

Dean Sterling thanked the committee members for their excellent work in bringing many issues related to graduate students’ work/life balance to a successful conclusion.

**4. New Ph.D. Program Proposal: The Notre Dame Integrated Biomedical Sciences Program (IBmS):** Profs. Brian Baker and Holly Goodson gave a brief overview of their proposal to launch a new Ph.D. program at the University called the Integrated Biomedical Sciences Program. They explained that current research in biochemistry, molecular biology, biophysics, and related molecular/cellular biomedical sciences often transcends the boundaries of traditional academic departments. Many universities have created graduate “umbrella” programs, in which department with researchers in the biomedical sciences participate in joint graduate recruitment and training programs. A defining characteristic of these programs is that new graduate students have access to research advisers in any one of the participating departments. The range of options offered by these umbrella programs appeals to both prospective and admitted students. Faculty are enthusiastic as well because the programs facilitate interdisciplinarity by grouping researchers together across departmental boundaries.

With the proposal already approved by the College of Science’s college council, Dean Crawford spoke in favor of the proposal at the meeting—saying specifically that it will help with student recruiting. Profs. Baker and Goodson agreed—confirming that they hear anecdotally that the ability to explore options in several disciplines influences students’ choice of graduate school.

Dean Sterling endorsed the proposal as well, saying that it has been two years in gestation and is a model of what we want to achieve with interdisciplinarity. The program should help greatly with the University’s goal of ratcheting up the life sciences.

In response to a question from Prof. Campbell, Prof. Baker assured members that while new students will remain outside a department the first year, they will be supervised by a DGS for the IBmS program. The DGS will watch over both individual progress and group cohesiveness.

Attending the meeting for Dean Kilpatrick, Prof. McCready voiced support of the program but asked about specific instances in which students might choose between the integrated degree and a more traditional disciplinary degree from an established department. Prof. Goodson explained that it is totally a matter of student research interest. In some cases, there would be some overlap with existing degree programs; in other instances, no overlap whatsoever. Dean Crawford agreed, commenting that the umbrella integrated biomedical sciences program is a familiar program at other universities. Choosing between a traditional degree and one in an integrated program is purely a matter of specific research interest.

Prof. Baker addressed the concern that the new program might adversely affect established departments in a competition for students. He said that they will need to advertise existing programs along with the proposed one. Applicants can apply to both programs—and should be encouraged to do so.

In response to a second question from Prof. McCready, Dean Crawford and Profs. Baker and Goodson said that they believe that the proposal is tied to major University initiatives—for example, cancer biology and global health.

In response to a question from Prof. Garg, Prof. Goodson clarified that a student's degree will be an IBmS degree—*not*, for example, a physics degree. Dean Sterling said that in this way, the proposed program is much like a degree in Peace Studies or Ph.D. in Literature.

Dean Sterling called for a vote on the proposal to create a new Ph.D. program in the Integrated Biomedical Sciences. Members approved it unanimously. Dean Sterling thanked Profs. Baker and Goodson for their hard work and creative proposal.

**5. New Professional Master's Degree Proposal: Professional Master of Science Degree in Applied and Computational Mathematics and Statistics:** Dean Sterling introduced the advocates of this proposal: Profs. Steven Buechler and Andrew Sommese. They summarized the degree proposal, explaining that the degree includes an intensive curriculum, normally chosen from courses taken by doctoral students, combined with training in business and experience in solving real-world problems. It will train students in mathematical biology, mathematical modeling, or applied statistics for high-impact positions in a wide range of fields.

Prof. Garg commented that he is happy that all courses will be taught by teaching-and-research faculty.

Prof. Flynn asked about components of the proposed degree that relate to the ESTEEM program. (See, for example, p. 12, which lists three credits in an ESTEEM business module in business fundamentals, communications, and ethics as a requirement of the Mathematical Biology and Mathematical Modeling tracks.) He said that there are potential implications for that program.

After Dean Crawford assured members that ESTEEM was on board with the proposal, Prof. Garg suggested that the proposal advocates seek a letter from support from the director of the ESTEEM program. Prof. Buechler agreed.

Dean Sterling called for a vote on the proposal to launch a new professional master's program in applied and computational mathematics and statistics. With members giving their unanimous approval, Dean Sterling congratulated Profs. Buechler and Sommese on the passage of the proposal through Graduate Council and thanked them for their dedication to the program.

With the hour at 5:00 p.m., Dean Sterling adjourned the meeting, saying that he will defer the discussion on outside chairs at candidacy examinations and dissertation defenses until the next meeting of the Graduate Council.