

**MINUTES OF THE 327th GRADUATE COUNCIL MEETING  
UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME  
JANUARY 31, 2012**

**Members present:** Greg Sterling, Panos Antsaklis, David Bennett, Sunny Boyd, Dave Campbell, Ellen Childs, Thomas Corke, Mark Cummings, Darren Davis, Michael Desch, Margaret Doody, Jeremy Fein, Roger Huang, Peter Kilpatrick, A. Graham Lappin, Gerald McKenny, Marvin Miller, Peter Kilpatrick, John McGreevy, Sam Rund, Jeffrey Schorey, Mark Schurr (for Dean John McGreevy), Rich Taylor (for Dean Greg Crawford), Diane Parr Walker

**Graduate School representatives present:** Brian Flaherty, John Lubker, Ed Maginn, Nyrée McDonald

**Members excused:** Bob Bernhard, Laura Carlson, Greg Crawford, Michael Lykoudis

**Reporter:** Mary Hendriksen

Dean Sterling welcomed Graduate Council members to the third Graduate Council meeting of the 2011-2012 academic year. He took up the agenda items as follows:

**1. Minutes of the meeting of November 15, 2011:** The minutes of the Graduate Council meeting of November 15, 2011, were approved as presented.

<http://graduateschool.nd.edu/assets/59458/minutes.gradcouncil.112011.pdf>

**2. Decision on changing graduate student diplomas from Latin text to English:** Dean Sterling asked Council members to decide whether Notre Dame should change its Graduate School diplomas from Latin text to English. He circulated a handout listing 12 peer institutions and the language of their diplomas. Eight are English; four are Latin.

Dean Kilpatrick pointed out that because Notre Dame's undergraduate and master's diplomas are already printed in English, he would favor standardizing the diplomas' text.

The counterargument, Dean Sterling, said would be tradition.

In a show of hands, 7 members favored retaining Latin; 13 favored a change to English. Thus, once the current supply of diplomas is exhausted, the Graduate School diplomas will be printed in English text.

### **3. Announcements**

**(a) Ethics Seminar:** Dean Sterling gave a brief recap of the Graduate School's inaugural ethics seminar for first-year graduate students, held Monday, January 16, at the Hilton Garden Inn. The seminar enabled the students to meet the requirement for introductory ethics training passed by the Graduate Council the year before. Nearly 300 students attended the event—with morning events consisting of presentations and small-group discussions—then lunch and a keynote

address by Prof. Alasdair MacIntyre. Students from the professional schools were invited to the latter.

**(b) Admissions:** Dean Sterling announced that admissions are up significantly this year in the Graduate School. He estimates that the percentage increase will be in the 17 or 18 percent range. For comparison's sake, the Graduate School received 3,515 applications in the 2008 admissions cycle. In 2012, for the fall term alone, the number is just over 5,200. He is pleased that the quality of applicants is increasing as well.

Dean Sterling said that in some cases, the increase in applications for a department is directly related to the work of the director of graduate studies. Other spikes in numbers can be attributed both to the specific efforts in recruiting, as well as programmatic changes, additions to the faculty, and the like.

Dean Huang added that admissions are up in the Mendoza College of Business as well.

**4. Academic Code:** Discussions continued on a proposed *Academic Code* for graduate students. Until this time, undergraduate and graduate students have shared an academic code. Given the significant differences between the two groups, the Graduate School was asked to develop a code for graduate students alone. The Council discussed some provisions of a draft proposal at the November meeting [<http://graduateschool.nd.edu/assets/59458/minutes.gradcouncil.112011.pdf>]. There have been significant changes to some sections from that meeting.

Before beginning discussions, Dean Sterling pointed out that the Graduate School will continue to publish/post a *Bulletin of Information* that will expand on the provisions of the Code. He added that, once approved, the Code is intended to set a baseline. Every program may have its own requirements—even ones that are more rigorous than the Code. Programs cannot, however, relax the requirements of the Code.

Finally, Dean Sterling said that the Code has been discussed and vetted by numerous groups—including directors of graduate studies, the GSU, the Faculty Athletic Board, and the leadership of the Graduate School.

He then took up specific sections:

**(a) Incompletes (p. 8)** Currently, graduate students receiving an *Incomplete* must complete the coursework for a grade prior to the beginning of the final examination period of the next semester in which the student is enrolled. The obvious challenge with this procedure is that students with *Incompletes* are, in effect, taking an extra course or two the following semester. He is proposing a change to a provision that *Incompletes* are to be given “only in exceptional circumstances” and that students have 30 days from when grades are due for the semester in which the course is taken to complete work for that course.

Dean Sterling added that, currently, we do not have adequate records for a longitudinal analysis of *Incompletes*, because records of these notations have been deleted once a grade has

been awarded. Beginning this year, however, the Graduate School will maintain a record of *Incompletes*.

The matter of *Incompletes* was discussed with DGSs yesterday. In a straw vote, Dean Sterling said:

- Seven DGSs favored the proposed shortened 30-day window;
- Four DGSs favored a rule of no more than three *Incompletes* allowed overall in any program with two years of coursework;
- Two DGSs favored a rule of no more than two *Incompletes* allowed at any one time;
- Six DGS favored leaving the rule as it currently stands.

Dean Sterling further explained that the reason some DGSs gave for the necessity of *Incompletes* was an expectation that seminar papers result in publishable material.

Prof. McKenny said that while he endorsed the proposed rule, he would like clarification on one point—that the student must *submit* the completed work within 30 days to the instructor; not that the instructor must turn in the letter grade to the Registrar within 30 days. Dean Sterling agreed with this refinement and said that, if approved, he would ask Associate Dean Lubker to work with the Registrar’s Office to fix a date a certain length of time from the 30 days for faculty to submit grades.

Prof. Doody said that she was concerned with the proposed rule. In her experience, students take *Incompletes* either because of a minor hitch or because of a very serious event—death of a family member, depression, etc. She thinks that in the latter case, students need much more than 30 days to complete coursework.

Dean Sterling said that serious illness or life events are extenuating circumstances that would nearly always result in an extension. Prof. Doody asked that the Code provide clarification of the possibility of an extension and the procedure for obtaining one.

Mr. Rund said that there is much sentiment among students for the new rule. They do not like the current policy and feels that it “sets them up” for semesters of double work.

Dean Kilpatrick said he would argue that we do not know what problem we are solving with the proposed change. He would advocate that the Council approve the change for one year. Then, with careful data collection, it could revisit the issue.

Some discussion followed on whether the current high number of *Incompletes*—146 out of approximately 1000 students took *Incompletes* in Fall 2011—is due in part to faculty members’ overly high expectations for the quantity and/or quality of students’ work.

Prof. Maginn pointed out that there are concerns of equity involved in the matter. Some students in any course complete the work on time—despite similar demands of multiple courses, teaching demands, labs, or research responsibilities.

Prof. Taylor said that he believes the faculty member should consider equity when assigning the grade. In his experience, it is the weaker students who request an *Incomplete*. They are trying merely to meet minimum requirements.

Dr. Lubker said that, in actuality, a very high number of *Incompletes* convert to “A”s.

With the friendly amendment that the Graduate Council revisit the entire matter of *Incompletes* in Spring 2013, Dean Sterling called for a vote. Twenty members supported the proposed rule, with one abstention. Thus, *Incompletes* are to be awarded only in exceptional circumstances, with students permitted 30 days from the date that grades are due to complete their work. Dean Sterling noted that before any provisions become final, the Academic Council will take up the entire *Academic Code*.

**(b) Dismissal (pp. 11-15):** Dean Sterling then took up the issue of students’ dismissal. The issue was discussed at the last Graduate Council meeting, and members were almost evenly divided over whether a formal three-step procedure (warning/probation/dismissal) or two-step (warning OR probation/dismissal) is preferable. DGSs, he said, asked for as much flexibility as possible here and preferred the two-step procedure. The GSU asked for written notification to the student in advance that the program is considering putting him/her on probation—which, both now and in the proposed Code, results in the loss of financial support.

Dean Kilpatrick clarified that the most common scenario for dismissal is a cumulative grade point average under 3.0 in any two semesters.

Prof. Antsaklis offered a friendly amendment: In the section On Warning/On Probation, the words “the program,” rather than “the advisor,” should be inserted in the portion dealing with how it is decided whether a student meets the stipulations set forth in a warning letter.

Members approved the wording of this section, as amended, by a show of hands.

**(c) Falsification of Academic Credentials (p. 16):** Dean Sterling said that this section codifies that one may not represent academic credentials—either as to degrees necessary for admission or that a degree has been earned.

There was some discussion about ascertaining when a doctoral degree is actually awarded. Dean Sterling said that this provision is meant to address not confusion over dates but whether a degree was awarded at all.

Members decided to change the wording from “represents oneself as holding said degree” to “who then claims to have earned said degree.”

Dean Sterling confirmed that the previous degrees of all students admitted to the Graduate School are verified over the summer, as well as their GPAs, GRE scores, etc.

Council members approved the language of this section, as changed by the friendly amendment.

Before voting on the proposed code as a whole, Prof. Fein asked about the section in the proposed *Code* dealing with residency requirements – “Degree students must be registered and enrolled during the semester in which they plan to graduate.”

Dean Sterling said that the wording of this section is intended to conform to the University’s regulation that a student must be registered to receive a degree.

Mr. Flaherty clarified that the change to Graduate School requirements in the section at issue is that, previously, a student was required to be registered for credit. With the proposed rule, a student can register for a 0-credit or non-resident class.

Dean Sterling clarified that the semester at issue is the one in which the dissertation is submitted.

Dean Sterling also clarified that when students from the professional schools take graduate-level courses through the Graduate School, the *Academic Code* of the Graduate School applies.

Prof. Lappin asked about whether departmental policy prevails over the *Academic Code*. What if, for example, a department said it does not allow *Incompletes*. Dean Sterling said that while there could certainly be a discussion between the Graduate School and the department, there would be some cases –for example, a medical emergency—where the department would need to recognize that an Incomplete is warranted.

With the motion made and seconded to adopt the proposed *Academic Code* for the Graduate School, the vote was unanimous in favor.

Dean Sterling said that the approved Code would be sent to the Advanced Studies Committee of the Academic Council, the Faculty Senate, and the deans of the professional schools.