

**MINUTES OF THE 318<sup>TH</sup> GRADUATE COUNCIL MEETING  
UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME  
OCTOBER 6, 2009**

**Members present:** Greg Sterling (chair), Bob Bernhard, Phil Bess (for Michael Lykoudis), Dan Myers (for John McGreevy), Rick Garnett (for Nell Newton), Jennifer Younger, Sunny Boyd, David Campbell, Ani Aprahamian, Mary Catherine Hilker, Scott Maxwell, Mary Ann McDowell, Mary Frandsen, John LoSecco, Andrew Bramsen, Victoria Froude

**Graduate School representatives present:** Ed Maginn, Nyrée McDonald, Barb Turpin

**Members excused:** Greg Crawford, Peter Kilpatrick, Carolyn Woo, Sandra Gustafson, Larry Lamm, John Renaud, Chris Maziar, Julie Turner, John Welle

**Invited Guest:** Prof. Patricia Blanchette, chair of the Joint Graduate Council/Directors of Graduate Studies Committee

**Reporter:** Mary Hendriksen

Prof. Sterling opened the meeting of the Graduate Council at 3:30 p.m. After introductions, he took up agenda items as follows:

- 1. Approval of the minutes of the Graduate Council meeting of April 21, 2009:** The minutes of the April 21, 2009, meeting of the Graduate Council were approved without amendment.
- 2. Election of the executive committee:** Prof. Sterling first noted that there had been virtually no interest from members this year and last in serving on the Council's executive committee. Thus, he posed the question: Should the Council continue with the executive council (a bylaws provision—not a provision in the *Academic Articles*), or are there sufficient avenues available outside of the executive committee for channeling agenda items to the full Council?

Prof. Boyd said that she was one of the Council members who, in 2007, put forth the idea of an executive committee. The primary goal was that this Council's executive committee would function much like the very effective executive committee of the Academic Council. The idea is that executive committee members would be involved faculty who would go out and, each year, "find a problem to solve."

Dr. Turpin said that she supported the idea of an executive committee in 2007 as well. The idea was that input from the agenda should come from persons other than Graduate School administrators.

After more discussion, Prof. Sterling offered three options to members: Should the Council abolish its executive committee? Should the Council give the executive

committee a try for one more year and then revisit the question? Should the Council continue the committee with no trial period?

Members approved the second option, and three faculty members—Profs. Boyd, Renaud, and Turner—agreed to stand for election. [Profs. Renaud and Turner were not present at the meeting but agreed earlier to stand for election.] Ms. Froude stood for election as the student representative. After ballots were distributed and collected, all four nominees were elected.

**3. Committee activity and appointment of committee on agreements with international universities:** Prof. Sterling often appoints *ad hoc* committees to study various issues. [Last year, joint Graduate Council and DGS committees were appointed to study three issues: Completion/attrition, stipend allocation, and grantwriting requirements for doctoral students.] This summer, he appointed a committee to examine issues around the responsible conduct of research. One outcome will be a template for departments. Prof. Sterling said that the members of the research ethics committee will also look at philosophical principles that underlie ethical decisions on the responsible conduct of research and, possibly, make recommendations as to how those principles might be incorporated into doctoral training.

Prof. Sterling then spoke of a new committee he is forming this term: one to make recommendations on the Notre Dame Graduate School's relationships with universities abroad. These agreements are important in graduate education today. Notre Dame has some agreements already in place—for example, the Naughton Exchange Program in Science and Engineering with Trinity College, Dublin [<http://graduateschool.nd.edu/admissions/financial-support/prestigious-fellowships/naughton-exchange>], and there have been overtures both on the part of Notre Dame and on international universities for the creation of additional partnerships. Thus, the new committee will be charged with examining the pros and cons of various arrangements—for example, when are joint degree programs appropriate? When are faculty exchanges more appropriate? The committee will identify models and principles. The point is to proceed thoughtfully and strategically rather than on an *ad hoc* basis. Any Graduate Council members who would like to serve should contact Prof. Sterling's executive assistant, Mary Hendriksen ([mhendrik@nd.edu](mailto:mhendrik@nd.edu)) by mid-October.

**4. Inclusion of Graduate School associate deans as *ex officio* members of the Graduate Council:** Prof. Sterling explained that, currently, unlike other College councils at the University [see *Academic Articles*, Article IV, Section 4/College Councils, [http://nd.edu/leadership/pdf/Academic\\_Articles2009-10.pdf](http://nd.edu/leadership/pdf/Academic_Articles2009-10.pdf) (p. 31)], the Graduate School's four associate deans are only non-voting members of the Graduate Council, not *ex officio* members. While he is mindful of the ratio between *ex officio* members and elected faculty members on the Council, if the associate deans are added as *ex officio* members, the number of non-*ex officio* faculty—appointed, elected, and selected from the Academic Council—and student members will be 17, with the *ex officio* members numbering only 13.

Prof. Hilkert said that given that four of the faculty members serving on the Council are appointed by the dean, it would be more accurate to portray the Council's ratio as 13 *ex officio* members and 13 faculty members.

Dr. Turpin noted that associate deans were formerly *ex officio* members of the Graduate Council. When the Academic Council was restructured several years ago, the associate deans lost their *ex officio* status.

Prof. Myers said that, at times, a dichotomy is perceived to exist between faculty members and administrators; however, most full-time administrators are themselves faculty. That said, faculty governance is very important. He can envision an issue on which faculty and administrators may be divided. It seems that the crux of the hesitation on the part of members to approve the proposal is that there is no limit on how many associate deans the Dean may appoint; thus, the elected faculty may not always predominate in number. That issue could be solved by either limiting the number of associate deans on the Council or increasing the number of elected faculty.

Prof. Sterling said that in the case of College councils, whenever an assistant or associate dean is added to the College, an additional faculty member is elected to the Council as well. The issue at stake for him is why there is so much asymmetry between the Graduate Council and other College councils.

Prof. Myers suggested a friendly amendment: The number of *ex officio* members on the Graduate Council should not exceed its number of elected faculty—either faculty elected directly or first by way of the Academic Council.

Discussion turned again to the merits of adding the associate deans. Prof. Sterling said that the rationale on his part is to elevate the position of associate dean. He also pointed out that all four associate deans are, in fact, members of the faculty. Two are tenured faculty who also teach and conduct research; two others are Ph.D.s who are full-time administrators.

Members called for a vote. In the first stage, Prof. Myers' friendly amendment was approved 12 to 3. On the second vote, the motion to add the associate deans as *ex officio* members failed 8 to 7.

**5. Report from the 2008-2009 Joint Graduate Council/Directors of Graduate Studies Committee:** Last year, Prof. Sterling convened a joint committee of Graduate Council members and Directors of Graduate Studies to explore the issue of grant and fellowship applications by graduate students. One specific issue the committee was charged with addressing is whether the Graduate School should require all doctoral students to write—not necessarily submit—at least one grant or fellowship application during their tenure at Notre Dame.

At this meeting, Prof. Blanchette, Philosophy DGS and committee chair, distributed the committee's report (Attachment A). After noting that Notre Dame

graduate students do not apply for or receive grants/fellowships in the same number as our peers, she said that committee members recommended against any across-the-board requirement of grant- or fellowship-submission for all graduate students. Quoting the report, she said: “The opportunities for grants/fellowships, the appropriate timing of them during the course of studies, and the mechanisms for obtaining them vary widely from field to field . . . Nevertheless, we recommend that the graduate school encourage departments to adopt reasonable policies of their own design which will encourage, reward, or even require the preparation and/or submission of grant and fellowship applications.”

In outlining the report’s main points, Prof. Blanchette said that the committee’s first recommendation is that the Graduate School institute an Office of Fellowships that would, among other things, maintain a good, accessible database of grant and fellowship opportunities. It would be ideal if students received individualized e-mail notifications of major grant and fellowship opportunities in their field, as ISLA does with faculty members.

Second, the committee recommends continuing Prof. Sterling’s actions in instituting summer grant and fellowship workshops. For example, this past summer, five promising new students were invited to campus, paired with faculty mentors, and then worked to prepare a National Science Foundation (NSF) Graduate Research Fellowship application. The Graduate School could hold summer workshops in grantwriting for other students as well. Perhaps a competition that awarded small stipends for these summer workshops would increase the number of applications Notre Dame graduate students submit.

Third, Prof. Blanchette said, the committee recommends that DGSs submit a list every academic year of the external grants and fellowships applied for, and won, by the department/program.

As for how grant money is allocated between students and the University, Prof. Blanchette said that much clarification is necessary on this point. She drew Council members’ attention to Point 5 of the report: “We recommend that the Graduate School institute a financial policy whose effect is that graduate students will always benefit financially (or in terms of extended research time) from receiving external fellowships and grants.” One good model for incentives, she noted, is Brown University: <http://gradschool.brown.edu/go/grantincentives>. [Brown’s policy, for example, allows students an “incentive award” equal to the first \$3,000 of any external grant, plus varying percentages of amounts over \$3,000.] Prof. Blanchette said that questions arise as well with deferrals of grants. While the committee recommends unequivocally to allow one-year deferrals, the issue is less clear when additional years are at stake. And, along with financial incentives for receiving grants, the committee recommends the institution of financial incentives to *apply* for a grant.

Prof. Blanchette closed with the recommendation to continue Prof. Sterling’s actions this past year in establishing standing committees for the internal competitions

associated with such prestigious fellowships as the Fulbright and the DAAD. These committees should include faculty members who have a history of grantwriting success.

Prof. Maginn asked if Prof. Blanchette could send him information on models other than Brown's for establishing guidelines for allocation of funds. He also said that, presumably, when one looks at deciding between a deferral and additional funding, he would think that most graduate students would prefer the funding.

Prof. Blanchette commented that we should not discount the deferral option. For example, a Philosophy graduate student might need to undertake research in Germany for a year. That research is very important but will not reduce the time needed to write the dissertation. The students winning the grants are our very best students and will most likely need six years to complete what should be a top-quality dissertation.

Prof. Hilkert mentioned that Prof. Mary Ann Mason of the University of California, Berkeley, on campus this week, noted the importance in the context of family-friendly university policies of giving graduate students more time to complete their studies. Too often there is an assumption that those who need more time for their doctoral studies are less academically rigorous than their peers. That assumption must be challenged.

Prof. Sterling thanked Prof. Blanchette and the members of her committee for their work. He noted that he and the Graduate School were already acting upon many of the committee's recommendations—for example, improving the grants and fellowships database.

## **6. Amendment of Graduate School grievance procedures as they relate to the composition of the faculty panel:**

Dr. Turpin led this agenda item. Currently, the Graduate School *Bulletin* provides that a graduate student who has a grievance should send a complaint to the Graduate School's associate dean for academic affairs, "*who then "convene[s] a meeting of an ad hoc academic appeals committee, composed of three faculty members chosen by the associate dean, two of whom will be current members of the Graduate Council (one from the student's college and one from outside the student's college) and one of whom will be from the student's college but not a member of the Graduate Council.*

<http://graduateschool.nd.edu/policies-and-forms/grievance-and-appeal-procedures>

Dr. Turpin said that the pool of faculty from which the associate dean draws the appeals committee—two sitting members of the Graduate Council—is very small. This requirement proves to be particularly onerous in the summer months. The Graduate School proposes to add the phrase "or past" to line 4 above. Thus: ". . .two of whom will be current *or past* members of the Graduate Council . . ." This amendment would ensure that faculty members familiar with the policies of the Graduate School will sit on the faculty panel yet increase the number in the pool.

The proposal was moved and seconded; it passed unanimously.

### **7. National Research Council: Methodology of rankings and uses at the University:**

Three years ago, the University collected and submitted data for the National Research Council's (NRC) important assessment of doctoral programs. [See <http://sites.nationalacademies.org/pga/Resdoc/index.htm>]

On July 9, 2009, the NRC released its methodology guide for the rankings; the rankings themselves will be released this fall, although the NRC is not divulging the date.

Prof. Sterling began this agenda item by explaining that, in contrast to the first NRC assessment (1993), which he characterized as largely “an academic beauty contest,” the current assessment attempts to actually *measure* the components of a successful program. He offered a powerpoint presentation outlining the data collection process and parameters. [Attachment B] Prof. Sterling pointed out that the assessment uses a combination of two systems of weights—one that directly weights the variables for measuring excellence and one that assesses programs and then uses regression analysis to correlate the assessment of the program to the variables—to arrive at a *range* of rankings—rather than an absolute value—for each program. The variables analyzed can be grouped under (1) research activity; (2) student support and outcomes; and (3) student and faculty diversity. The first, research activity, dominates the weights.

Prior to public release of the total NRC data, each program at Notre Dame and at the other 222 participating universities will receive data tables. In this initial 72-hour period, each program director will have an opportunity to review the data—but without reference to any other programs.

As to how the University will use the NRC rankings, Prof. Sterling said that it will definitely establish a benchmark. While there will certainly be critiques of the rankings, he expects that they will be *generally* on the mark.

Members discussed how the size of a program affects its ranking. Prof. McDowell pointed out that the size of a department can affect its productivity. Prof. Sterling agreed, and pointed out that size may have a greater influence on faculty productivity in some departments than others. Prof. Maginn, the Graduate School's associate dean of academic programs, is examining the size of each graduate program at Notre Dame. Prof. Sterling continued that many institutions—Columbia and Emory are just two examples—are reducing their number of graduate students. And examining size in general, if one compares Notre Dame to American Association of Universities (AAU) private institutions, on average, 48 percent of students at AAU privates are graduate or professional. That number is only 28 percent at Notre Dame. We certainly need to expand, but that in itself is not a simple proposition. Where will we put the students? Now, his strategy is to look at each program. He will reward the programs that are most productive with more resources.

Prof. Sterling adjourned the meeting at 5:05 p.m.

