

**MINUTES OF THE 316<sup>TH</sup> GRADUATE COUNCIL MEETING  
UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME  
FEBRUARY 11, 2009**

**Members present:** Greg Sterling (chair), Panos Antsaklis, Robert Bernhard, Philip Bess, Sunny Boyd, Tam Chantem, Jessica Collett, Peter Kilpatrick, John LoSecco, Rebecca McCumbers, Dan Myers (for John McGreevy), Mark Noll, Cyril O'Regan, John Renaud, John Robertson (for Patricia O'Hara), Pit-Mann Wong, Carolyn Woo

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

**Members absent:** Laura Carlson, Greg Crawford, Umesh Garg, Sandra Gustafson, Mary Keys, Larry Lamm, John Welle, Bill Westfall, Jennifer Younger

**Invited Guest:** Prof. Ke-Hai Yuan, Department of Psychology, Program Director, Quantitative Area

**Reporter:** Mary Hendriksen

Prof. Sterling opened the meeting of the Graduate Council at 3:30 p.m.

**1. Approval of the minutes of the Graduate Council meeting of November 12, 2008:**

The minutes of the November 12, 2008 meeting of the Graduate Council were approved without amendment.

**2. News items:** The news items circulated to members in advance of the meeting are attached as an appendix.

Prof. Sterling expanded on Item 2: *Budgets*. Now that the Board of Trustees has approved the budget, he is at liberty to give particulars:

**Insurance premiums:** A University-wide committee worked for two years to find a more competitive vendor for the University for student health insurance. Next year, the University will switch to Aetna Student Health and be able to provide students with equal or even better health coverage than is provided in the current policy but at a lower rate. For the 2009-2010 academic year, the premium for individual students will fall from \$1,468/year to \$1,239. Moreover, in the next academic year, the University will increase its share of premiums for fully funded students from 50 percent to 70 percent. Taken together, these actions will result in fully funded students paying \$372 for individual health insurance as opposed to the \$734 they paid this year.

**Stipends:** The Board of Trustees approved the Graduate School's efforts to raise most stipends—both for select and regular fellowships.

Among the select fellowships, the Notebaerts will rise from \$23,500 on a 12-month basis this academic year to \$28,000 next year—an amount, Prof. Sterling noted, that is just \$2,000 under an NSF grant.

At the Presidential level, in science and engineering, stipends will rise from \$22,500 to \$26,500. In Arts and Letters, Presidential-level fellowships will rise from \$22,500 to \$25,000.

At the level just below the Presidential fellowships, the Fernández (students from Puerto Rico) and Gaia (doctoral students pursuing Latino studies) fellowships will increase from \$20,000/year to \$22,000. The Diversity Fellowships will remain at the \$20,000 level.

Finally, Prof. Sterling announced, the regular or “base” stipend, which is a nine-month stipend, will also increase in varying amounts depending on the discipline and the place of the student in the program. He explained that he will continue to work to raise the amount of base stipends so that current students will receive stipends equal to those of entering students.

**Dissertation prizes:** Prof. Sterling called members’ attention to News Item 4: Dissertation prizes. The Council of Graduate Schools awards dissertation prizes each year to students in the humanities, fine arts, and the biological and life sciences. He urged members to submit the dissertations of students worthy of consideration. More information on the dissertation prizes is available at the CGS website: <http://www.cgsnet.org/Default.aspx?tabid=131>

**3. Progress report from subcommittees:** This academic year, Prof. Sterling convened three subcommittees of the Graduate Council (with representation as well by Directors of Graduate Studies and Graduate School administrators). Members of each subcommittee provided an update of activities at the meeting:

**(a) Ph.D. Completion:** Prof. Boyd, chair, explained that her subcommittee’s charge is to examine Notre Dame’s rate of completion or attrition and time to attrition, and then to recommend best practices for the Graduate School and departments to follow for attaining higher completion rates.

The subcommittee has determined that Notre Dame’s rate of completion—58 per cent—is nearly identical with that of other American universities, as reported by the Council of Graduate Schools. Members have noted that the completion rate for graduate studies is markedly lower than that for other advanced educational programs, such as medical and law school, which have completion rates closer to 95 per cent. More salient to the subcommittee, however, is that the attrition rate among Notre Dame departments and programs ranges from 20 per cent to 70 per cent. The subcommittee has divided up possible causes for attrition and likely time to attrition into six topical areas, with each member responsible for delving deeper into one topic. To date, members have distributed two surveys to DGSs asking for more comprehensive and personal data on

possible reasons for attrition as well as strategies for combating it. Prof. Boyd said that she expects the subcommittee to deliver a full report to the Graduate Council by the end of this academic year.

In response to a question from Prof. O'Regan, Prof. Boyd clarified that completion rates differ markedly for disciplines and should be compared to national figures in the relevant discipline rather than to each other.

Prof. Sterling said his aim is that each program will set a five-year completion goal for itself.

**(b) External grantwriting requirement:** Prof. Antsaklis read a report prepared by Prof. Blanchette, chair. In sum: The charge to the subcommittee was to explore the possibility of requiring every doctoral student to write (or perhaps to submit) one external fellowship or grant proposal during his or her doctoral program. Members began their work by gathering input from DGSs via a questionnaire on the topic of a grantwriting requirement. Responses to the questionnaire revealed a number of difficulties with imposing such an across-the-board requirement, with the most serious difficulty discovered so far that in many departments, typically in the College of Science, there are no grants or fellowships for which students are eligible. In these cases, the grants available in the field are awarded for large-scale projects with a faculty member as the principal investigator. Other difficulties raised by a number of DGSs indicate that it will be very difficult to frame a universal requirement that is not open to serious objections from some quarters.

The committee's next task will be to investigate (1) ways in which the Graduate School can help provide information, training, and support to departments in order to increase successful grant- and fellowship-applications, and (2) options for incentives for students to write and submit such applications.

Ms. McCumbers raised a concern about the eligibility of international students to apply for external grants. While Prof. Sterling noted the concern, he pointed out that the Graduate School's new fellowship data base contains over 300 possible fellowships. The point of urging a requirement is to create a doctoral program that is holistic, so that Notre Dame graduate students are trained here to do what they will be required to do when they leave. Grantwriting is a critical skill in their future professional lives.

Prof. Myers pointed out that some departments already do require their students to write an external grant. Dianne Phillips, the new advisor for student professionalization and research, has been hired jointly by ISLA and the Graduate School to help students from *all* colleges write grants.

**(c) Stipend Allocation:** Prof. Sterling reported that the focus of this committee, of which he is chair, is how the Graduate School can measure excellence—both its achievement and progress towards it. Members are now examining specific programs

generally agreed to be excellent. In meetings this term, they will try to formulate metrics based on these concrete examples.

**6. Proposal for a Minor in Quantitative Psychology:** [Last year, the Graduate Council approved the offering of minors by departments. Defined as “courses of study that supplement work in a primary degree program with an additional substantial expertise and appear on students’ transcripts because they result in credit,” [See Graduate Council meeting of November 14, 2007 at <http://graduateschool.nd.edu/assets/4051/minutes.gradcouncil.111407.pdf>], the first minor approved was one in Gender Studies. [See Graduate Council meeting of February 6, 2008 at <http://graduateschool.nd.edu/assets/4884/minutes.gradcouncil.020608.pdf>] ]

At today’s meeting, the Department of Psychology asked to receive a formal designation of “minor” for what currently exists as an internal departmental credential. The proposed minor is available to graduate students who are enrolled in the various program areas of the Department of Psychology. As specified in the proposal circulated to members before the meeting, the current internal certificate (and, also, the proposed minor) requires students to take 20 hours of quantitative coursework, which amounts to two courses beyond what is required of all Psychology doctoral students. In addition, students must participate for four semesters in weekly colloquia meetings of the Quantitative Studies Group, and prepare and defend a project of “significant interest to the field.”

Discussion at the Graduate Council began with Prof. Kilpatrick’s question of whether the minor is available to non-Psychology doctoral students. Would a student, for example, with a background in statistics be able to earn the minor? If not, he questioned whether the department should construct this offering as a certificate rather than as a minor.

Prof. Ke-Hai Yuan, program director of the quantitative area and a guest at today’s meeting, answered that the proposed minor is intended for Psychology students. Further, the standard in the field is a minor—a certificate is not enough.

Discussion then occurred between Prof. Yuan and Prof. Boyd about whether programs at other institutions included as examples of the prevalence of minors in this field opened their programs only to Psychology students. Prof. Boyd’s observation was that the program at the University of North Carolina was, in fact, open to non-Psychology students. Prof. Yuan thought it was not.

Prof. Myers, who was generally supportive of the proposal, pointed out that the aim of the proposed quantitative minor is not to turn Psychology into the University’s statistics program. There is most certainly a very great need, he said, for statistics training at Notre Dame for doctoral students in several disciplines. He noted that the Provost’s Office commissioned a study a few years ago on the need for such a statistics program. He urged Dean Sterling to ask the Provost for the study and to convey to him

that passionate voices expressed an intense interest in improvement in statistical training for our doctoral students.

Prof. Wong stated that the Department of Mathematics would be the appropriate department to offer a minor in statistics.

Prof. Yuan replied that all programs in Mathematics are quantitative; however, doctoral students in Psychology choose between Quantitative, Cognitive, Developmental, and Counseling programs. The minor is intended for doctoral students in the latter three areas.

Prof. Sterling pointed out that at one time, Notre Dame's College of Arts and Letters ran the Laboratory for Social Research to meet the need for quantitative training for social sciences doctoral students. When expenses for the lab were perceived to have become prohibitively expensive, the decision was made to disband it and localize resources. Some now question whether individual departments are able to meet students' needs for quantitative training.

Prof. Collett spoke in favor of the proposal for the minor, saying that the University needs to keep itself competitive in the new graduate school environment. She seconded the need for statistical training for students in other disciplines as well.

Prof. Bernhard said that Council members needed a clear answer on one question: is there a precedent for having a minor within a discipline at the graduate level?

Prof. Sterling answered that there is now no such precedent. The first minor approved was in gender studies, for which there is no graduate program. This minor would be precedent-setting in that it is a subfield within one discipline—and, so, unlike the minor in gender studies.

Then, questioned Prof. Bernhard, how will the Council draw the line?

Prof. Wong agreed, asking if the Council might be asked to next approve a minor in quantitative political science.

Prof. Kilpatrick said that he was very much in favor of depth in a program; he is not sure, however, that depth should be awarded the designation of "minor." He also asked for further exploration of the point of disagreement between Profs. Yuan and Boyd. The Council needs to know for certain whether the minor in quantitative psychology at peer institutions is or is not open to non-Psychology students.

Prof. Myers pointed out that there may be nothing wrong with a new wave of minors. At his doctoral institution, the University of Wisconsin, minors are prevalent in many disciplines.

Other members, including Prof. O'Regan, spoke on the question of determining a line between the designation of a "minor" and identification of a subfield of a discipline. He pointed out that Psychology is a very heterogeneous field, with both qualitative *and* quantitative areas. The way in which the minor is constructed offers strong disincentives to other programs to follow suit.

Noting the strength of the Quantitative Psychology program, Prof. Sterling said that it appeared to be the consensus of members that debate should be halted until the empirical questions—primarily, whether peer institutions offer their psychology minors to students in other disciplines—can be answered. He will ask proponents of the minor to attend the next meeting with more information for members.

There being no further business, Prof. Sterling asked members to read on their own the article from the *CGS Communicator* on leadership in graduate education (August/September 2008) and adjourned the meeting at 5:05 p.m.

## **APPENDIX**

### **February 2009: News Items from the Graduate School**

**1. Admissions:** Currently, the Graduate Admissions Office is at the height of the application processing season. The Graduate School has received 3,761 applications, a 9 per cent increase over last year at this time. Several programs have received over 200 applications: Philosophy (286), English (234), Electrical Engineering (221), History (218), Creative Writing (214), Theology (204), and Political Science (200).

As of February 2, 2009, 69 per cent of applications are complete, with the majority of incompletes missing only one letter of recommendation or one transcript.

In an effort to deal with the increased number of applications this year and to minimize delays in the document-uploading process, the Graduate School hired three temporary employees and reallocated time from three current employees to bring the admissions staff total from three to nine.

**2. Budgets:** The Dean has been meeting throughout January and February with the DGS from each department or program to review budgets for the upcoming fiscal year. A number of changes have been implemented in an effort to make the budget more transparent and rational. Pending approval this week by the Board of Trustees, budgeted amounts will become firm.

**3. Intensive Foreign Language Training Program:** As announced at the November meeting, The University has provided the Graduate School with significant funding to facilitate intensive language training during the summer months. The Intensive Foreign Language Training Program will be a three-year experimental project, after which time it will be evaluated and a decision made as to whether or not it will be continued.

Of the 34 applications received in the Graduate School for the summer of 2009, 17 were selected for funding. Although we did have inquiries from Science and Engineering, all applications came from the Humanities, and the winners represented all

departments in that division, with the exception of English. Students selected will be studying German, Italian, Portuguese, Japanese, Polish, and Medieval Greek, just to name a few of the languages represented. Among the places students will study are the Goethe Institute, the Dante Alighieri School in Siena, the Kyoto Institute of Culture and Language, the Jagiellonian University (Poland), and the American School of Classical Studies in Athens.

**4. Dissertation prizes:** Each year at the annual meeting of the Council of Graduate Schools (this year, San Francisco from December 2-5), awards are presented to young scholars in recognition of their work.

[CGS Gustave O. Arlt Award in the Humanities](#) (due date April 1, 2009)

[CGS/UMI Distinguished Dissertation Award](#) (one award given for Humanities/Fine Arts; one award given for Biological and Life Sciences) (due date July 31, 2009)

For more information, please visit the Awards section of the CGS website at <http://www.cgsnet.org/Default.aspx?tabid=170>

**5. Graduate School to host graduate students at a performance of the Kronus String Quartet:** In October 2008, the Graduate School hosted nearly 250 graduate students at a performance of the Hot Club of San Francisco at the DeBartolo Performing Arts Center. We will extend an invitation to graduate students to attend a second event this spring term: The Kronus String Quartet, Friday, March 27, 7:00 p.m. <http://performingarts.nd.edu/index.php?page=detail&event=752>