

**THE MEETING MINUTES OF THE COLLEGE COUNCIL  
COLLEGE OF ARTS AND LETTERS  
April 26, 2012  
3:30 pm  
McKenna Hall Auditorium**

**ATTENDANCE**

Deans: *Dean:* John McGreevy; *Associate Deans:* JoAnn DellaNeva, Peter Holland, Maura Ryan, Mark Schurr; *Assistant Deans:* Paulette Curtis, Ava Preacher, Nicholas Russo, Joseph Stanfiel, Vicki Toumayan

Chairpersons and Directors: Tom Anderson (for Rory McVeigh), Matt Ashley, Susan Blum, Olivia Remie Constable, Jim Collins, Richard Jensen, Daniel Lapsley, Elizabeth Mazurek, Peter McQuillan, Robert Norton, Valerie Sayers

Elected Faculty: Laura Carlson, Noreen Deane-Moran, Denise Della Rossa, Joshua Diehl, Richard Donnelly, Kevin Dreyer, Margot Fassler, Mary Frandsen, Lionel Jensen, Maria McKenna, David Nickerson, Deborah Rotman, Siiri Scott, James Sullivan, Elliott Visconsi, Shauna Williams

Graduate Student Representative: Katie Buggyis, Karrie Fuller

Undergraduate Student Representative: Mariel Lee

Regularly Invited Guests, Observers, and Resource People: Marie Blackey (Dean's Office), Matthew Capdevielle (University Writing Center), Patrick Clauss (University Writing Program), Maria Di Pasquale (Academic Advancement), Essaka Joshua (College Seminar Program), Tom Merluzzi (Institute for Scholarship in the Liberal Arts), Matt Zyniewicz (Dean's Office)

Excused: Katherine Brading, Richard Cross, Robert Dowd, Robert Fishman, Patrick Griffin, Joseph Kaboski, William Krier, Rory McVeigh, Jessica Payne, Ava Preacher, Robin Rhodes, Maura Ryan, Marcus Stephens, David Thomas, Kristin Valentino, John Welle

Dean John McGreevy called the meeting to order at 3:35 pm.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The minutes from the March 20, 2012 College Council meeting were approved without corrections.

**COLLEGE BUSINESS**

**Honorary Degree Nominations**

Dean McGreevy noted that the nominations from the nominating committee had been handed out to the College Council members before the meeting. He invited the nominating committee members (Profs. Lionel Jensen, Gabriel Radvansky, and Kevin Dreyer) to offer any comments. Two members (L. Jensen and K. Dreyer) offered brief contextual comments for the nominations. The Council members then took time to vote and submitted their votes for each division (Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences). After the meeting, the Office of the Dean tabulated the votes, resulting in the following names that were in turn forwarded to Fr. John Jenkins,

C.S.C., for consideration of an honorary degree from the University: Annie Dillard (Division of the Arts), Marilynne Robinson (Division of the Humanities), and Samantha Power (Division of the Social Sciences).

### **Proposed Name Change for the College of Arts and Letters PreProfessional Supplementary Major**

Dean McGreevy asked Assistant Dean Vicki Toumayan to explain the rationale for the proposed name change for the College of Arts and Letters PreProfessional supplementary major. V. Toumayan noted that the name “preprofessional” can be misleading (e.g., could indicate pre-law studies) and that there has been a recent trend nationally to change the name from “PreProfessional” to “PreHealth”.

Marie Blakey (Sr. Director of Communications, Dean’s Office) asked if there is a preprofessional program in the College of Science and will they change the name as well? V. Toumayan confirmed that the College of Science will change the name of their program as well, including changing the requirements for the major.

Elizabeth Mazurek (Chairperson, Department of Classics) asked if there was a preprofessional law program or prelaw program. J. McGreevy confirmed that no such prelaw major exists at Notre Dame, although there is a prelaw club.

Margot Fassler (Departments of Music and Theology) asked if the College should wait to see what the College of Science does. V. Toumayan responded that we should not because the College of Science titles typically do not translate well to an Arts and Letters context. V. Toumayan noted that the new title that the College of Science will use will not translate well for students in the Arts and Letters PreHealth program, yet the programs themselves will be synchronized.

Kevin Dreyer (Department of Film, Television, and Theatre) welcomes the new title of “prehealth” because the title, “preprofessional,” has always been unclear.

After discussion, Dean McGreevy asked for a vote. All votes were in favor of the name change.

### **Enrollment**

J. McGreevy introduced the topic of enrollment across the colleges, pointing to a chart that was handed out that showed intended college data for first-year students. The data indicate that there has not been a notable change in the trend of students intending to pursue a business degree rather than a degree in the College of Arts and Letters. As of April 2012, the percentage of first-year students intending to pursue an A & L degree was 28%, whereas last year at the same time it was 27%. For the MCOB [Mendoza College of Business] this year shows 33%, last year 34%, and the College of Science is experiencing a slight decrease at 19%.

Robert Norton (Chairperson, German and Russian Languages and Literatures) wondered if the College and the University should act soon before the MCOB gains more faculty and the changes in the number of faculty become permanent. J. McGreevy thought it might be prudent to wait to see if the shift in enrollment adjusts itself, because there have been shifts before and then subsequent corrective shifts. A counter argument might be that the University is now experiencing a new “normal”, where the enrollment numbers will stabilize and remain at the current levels for some time.

Noreen Deane-Moran (Department of English) wondered why more students are pursuing business degrees. Are there greater student academic interests in business or are students pursuing business for other reasons?

J. McGreevy did not know exactly why students are migrating to business. One argument is that very savvy students are manipulating the admissions process, indicating one interest yet pursuing another once they arrive on campus. We do not have much evidence to support that argument. The number one ranking of the undergraduate business school is another probable reason for the increased interest in a business degree.

David Nickerson (Department of Political Science) recalled the website, *College Confidential*, that updates by self-reports who has received letters of admissions and other topics about colleges and universities. That site might show if some discussions among students about gaming the system. J. McGreevy assumed that Don Bishop who heads up admissions would know about the site. Further, could the University begin to track patterns or types of students who apply and react to that? J. McGreevy mentioned that the College pursued a focus group of students who switched from A & L to MCOB, and found that students were basically utilitarian in their decisions about education, and some noted that they also tried to avoid taking economics because it seemed too demanding in terms of advanced algebra and higher level statistics.

Assistant Dean Paulette Curtis noted that some students do come to Arts and Letters after April, and so the Arts and Letters percentage will increase over the summer, perhaps moving closer to 33%. J. McGreevy agreed that even over the course of the sophomore year we see more students drifting toward Arts and Letters. She also asked what Notre Dame would be like if the undergraduate business degree was phased out completely. In her experience, students want to be Notre Dame students, and not necessarily business students. J. McGreevy generally agreed, though pointed out that international students, for example, are particularly attracted to the number one undergraduate business school.

Assistant Dean Joseph Stanfiel observed that the College graduates more students than the MCOB every year. There are essentially structural issues at play: A & L students are not able to double major in MCOB but MCOB are able to double major in the College of A & L. And, notably, almost half of business students have Arts and Letters majors. Further, it is difficult to enroll initially in A & L and then switch to MCOB because the MCOB curriculum is tightly arranged. Indeed, J. McGreevy agreed that it is a complex issue.

Elizabeth Mazurek (Chairperson, Classics Department) inquired about whether or not the College has been in conversation with other similar institutions about this issue. J. McGreevy stated that there has not been much of an inter-institution conversation because Notre Dame's situation is so unique. Some other peer institutions have gates at different points of the admissions/enrollment system or later during the undergraduate experience, and some institutions do not have business schools but economics then plays a larger role in the undergraduate education curriculum. The only place with a business school with no gate is Notre Dame. E. Mazurek had heard that college has increasingly become an investment in one's earning capability. The question: "What is the value of a college education?" is frequently raised in the public arena these days, and Notre Dame needs to be in the national conversation to construct an argument. It would appear that the media do not have access to counter arguments expressing the significant value of a college education. J. McGreevy agreed, noting that parental anxiety is more acute now, and parents become nervous, and understandably so, with a \$50k per year investment in education. We must continue to attempt to education parents about majors and job opportunities.

Maria McKenna (Department of Africana Studies) suggested a recent article in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* about Stanford's new approach to the liberal arts. She also mentioned that the College should reach out more to alumni to ask them to return to campus to talk about their respective careers. The Career Center might also assist more in this endeavor. J. McGreevy offered that Northwestern University has recently hired someone to specifically work on connecting alumni from various disciplines with current students in the disciplines for networking purposes, to make more visible the possibilities and prospects for employment with concrete

examples. Marie Blakey (Sr. Director of Communications) indicated that in an effort for ongoing improvement her office recently met with College of Arts and Letters Advisory Council members to assess the communication efforts and outreach to parents and to the Career Center.

Maria Di Pasquale (Academic Advancement Director) suggested that the College could also seek conversations with benefactors who are A & L graduates. She and the Development Office are working on creating such opportunities.

Karrie Fuller (Graduate Student Representative) suggested that the College also begin to work with the students during their first year. J. McGreevy agreed that the College needs to have the best teachers teach the first-year courses. In addition, we need to use the first-year seminars better as opportunities to recruit students to pursue Arts and Letters majors.

K. Dreyer suggested that we need a faculty member to oversee the University Seminars similar to how there is a faculty member who oversees the College Seminars so that there are more opportunities for student recruitment to Arts and Letters.

### **Grade Inflation**

J. McGreevy introduced the issue of grade inflation by summarizing a draft of a letter prepared for the College faculty. He recognized that grade inflation is a serious issue (though that is not a universally held view), and that more differentiation among students is needed. The Deans and Chairpersons for the most part agreed that stronger, more aggressive action on grade inflation is necessary. Some data indicate that our students are not working exceptionally hard, and grade inflation might be a partial explanation for that. The data also indicates that inflation is increasing. Further, the ACPET guidelines ask peers to evaluate each other on how they each evaluate students. Do faculty use a reliable, balanced approach for assessing student achievement? High expectations for student performance? Provide students with helpful feedback? In 2007, then Associate Dean Stuart Greene distributed a thoughtful study on grade inflation both at Notre Dame and nationally. J. McGreevy wants to build on that study with some concrete steps, and one step was to discuss grades with department chairperson, inquiring about courses with very high grades. Further, he may wish to take three additional concrete steps during the fall semester: (1) ask each department to discuss grades as a department (very few departments have discussed grades at least recently); (2) ask departments to report on their discussions and about a target for average grades for undergraduate courses; and (3) discuss grade inflation at the College Council level informed by the departmental discussions.

Joshua Diehl (Department of Psychology) asked what role students have played in this discussion, and is there a plan to get feedback from students once the plan is implemented? Further, the College would have to publish information to let employers know that we are fighting grade inflation. J. McGreevy indicated that he would make sure that if a plan is implemented, there would be much publicity about it. If the plan worked and drove down grades, that would have an impact on students. J. Diehl suggested that if we do pursue such a plan, the University should perhaps publish a statement on student transcripts to let employers know of the change.

Olivia Remie Constable (Director, Medieval Institute) wondered if it would be possible for departments and faculty to break down what faculty instruments are being used and the grades related to the different grading instruments. Perhaps we should look at what the target is for the grades: Is it papers? Is it multiple choice tests? J. McGreevy responded that there would probably be a small number of courses that use multiple choice exams, perhaps economics and a few other departments, mostly testing on problems sets, etc. The mechanism of assessment connected to the grades, however, would be interesting to pursue.

Elliot Visconsi (Department of English) speculated that there might be a correlation between data and class size. The smaller classes are likely to have higher grades. J. McGreevy agreed that the upper-level (usually smaller) undergraduate courses have higher grades than other lower-level undergraduate courses. Departments can include that consideration in their respective grade rubrics.

J. McGreevy worries about distancing the College from the rest of the University and about not being able to truly differentiate student success.

D. Nickerson observed that if one or two students become upset with a course or with an instructor, their CIF participation can drive down scores. Perhaps the College needs a tough grading rubric that would systematically address the issue, and that, in turn, would eliminate student influences on course evaluations.

Lionel Jensen (Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures) noted further that we need to ask what we are measuring when we apply grades. We ought to include discussion about learning outcomes while we address grade inflation.

M. Fassler stated that it would be terrible to impose bell-curve, especially if an instructor can motivate students to master the content and skills in a class.

Deborah Rotman (Department of Anthropology) suggested that the College should also track who drops courses. Academic advisors even recommend at times that students drop courses. J. McGreevy noted that he had a query out to Erin Hoffmann Harding's office (Strategic Planning Office) about this very issue. In the past Dennis Jacobs (former associate provost) indicated that the number of students who drop courses has not been significant. Perhaps the College should consider the drop/add policy. P. Curtis added that the drop form as it is written provides opportunities for students to convey why they are dropping a course.

Valerie Sayers (Chairperson, Department of English) stated that faculty complain about how students are grade-obsessed and that a focus on grade inflation would make the students even more grade-obsessed. J. McGreevy asked V. Sayers if she worries about the growing distance in the average grades among the colleges. V. Sayers responded that she does not have concerns about grades.

Associate Dean Mark Schurr remained skeptical and suggested that the College needs a hard metric with regard to grade inflation because, based on his experience, grades depend on a grading philosophy of each instructor. J. McGreevy thought that the initial step of having departments reflect on grades and assessment would help at least surface the different grading philosophies.

Susan Blum (Chairperson, Department of Anthropology) stated that she would be very interested in having a conversation about grades with the Department of Anthropology because it is a part of educating and motivating students. She is less concerned about establishing a grading rubric. Louis MacKenzie (Chairperson, Department of Music), however, was very hesitant to consider such a conversation with his department and wondered what would happen if a rubric is imposed.

Mariel Lee (Undergraduate Student Representative) thought it is a sense of justice that the College should pursue with regard to grade inflation. It is only fair to those who work hard and truly have distinguished their work from others' work.

## **Conflict of Interest Policy**

J. McGreevy initiated the conversation by describing the document shared among the Council members before the Council meeting. He highlighted on page 3, section F, when a substitute chairperson or dean is named, because of a conflict of interest, then the case will proceed to the PAC independent of our CAP/Dean/Chairperson rule of 2 out of 3 votes negative mean.

Matt Ashley (Chairperson, Department of Theology) noted that there does not appear to be a conflict of interest policy involving the Provost. J. McGreevy responded that such a policy can be found at the bottom of page 3 ("e"), "In the event that the Provost has a conflict of interest, the President will select a member of the PAC to oversee the discussions."

V. Sayers wondered what the phrase "close personal friend" means found on page 2. J. McGreevy recognized the concerned but offered that it would be a professional judgment about the case as to whether or not one could be a fair evaluator of a candidate.

Laura Carlson (Department of Psychology) asked if the burden of judgment about the conflict of interest is from the person doing the evaluation? Is there a mechanism for the person being evaluated to claim that there is or might be a conflict of interest in the case? J. McGreevy did not see language in the draft that would indicate such a mechanism.

Tom Merluzzi (Director, ISLA) the Conflict of Interest Policy should extend to cases that are being reviewed after a successful appeal, especially one that was being re-reviewed on the basis of bias. All that would need to be done to accommodate that instance would be to emend the introductory sentence "...on faculty promotion, tenure, renewal cases and those being reviewed after an appeal process has mandated re-review." Could be that as it stands it covers appeal cases, but being more explicit may help.

R. Norton noted that when a case goes to appeal the only grounds for an appeal would be procedural error which would be attributed to one or more of three factors: impingement of academic freedom, sexual harassment, and personal bias. It seems that the conflict of interest document was developed in view of the grounds of "personal bias".

Tom Anderson (Department of Romance Languages and Literatures) noted that when salary is an issue and the chairperson has a spouse on faculty, the chairperson should not be permitted to make salary recommendations. J. McGreevy agreed, and in fact, chairpersons are not permitted to make recommendations for respective spouses. Typically a small committee of peers in the department is formed to make a salary recommendation for the spouse in question.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 4:50 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Matthew C. Zyniewicz  
Dean's Executive Administrator