

**DRAFT MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COLLEGE COUNCIL  
COLLEGE OF ARTS AND LETTERS**

**April 27, 2009**

**3:30 P.M.**

**McKenna Hall Auditorium**

**ATTENDANCE**

Deans: Associate Deans: Greene, Seidenspinner-Núñez.  
Assistant Deans: Stanfiel, Toumayan.

Chairpersons and Directors: Cachey, Constable, Crafton, Fallon, McVeigh, Pinderhughes, Schurr, Sitter, Zuckert.

Elected Faculty: Cole, Collins, Cross, Davis, Deane-Moran, Dibble, Fagerberg, Frandsen, Jensen, Krostenko, MacKenzie, Matovina, Monroe, Noble, Norton, Pilkinton, Rice, Scott, Vanden Bossche, Weber, Welle.

Graduate Student Representatives: Leavitt.

Undergraduate Student Representatives: Long, Nesi.

Invited Guests, Observers, and Resource People: Doug Archer, *University Libraries*; Aedin Clements, *University Libraries*; Gay Dannelly, *University Libraries*; Laura Fuderer, *University Libraries*; Sylvia Lin, *Executive Fellow, College of Arts and Letters*; Kathleen Opel, *Office of International Studies*; Margaret Porter, *University Libraries*; Donald L. Stelluto, *Executive Assistant to the Dean*; Marsha Stevenson, *University Libraries*; Jennifer Younger, *Edward H. Arnold Director of Hesburgh Libraries*.

Excused: *Deans:* Myers, Ryan, Nemecek, Penagos, Preacher. *Chairpersons and Directors:* Barber, Bergeman, Cavadini, Doss, Dumont, Fox, Gaffney, Mazurek, Murray, Warlick. *Elected Faculty:* Donnelly, Duffy, Dutt, Dreyer, Gustafson, Haimo, Harris, Keys, Kuijt, Menes, McKenna, O'Callaghan, Schlegel, Sheridan, Turner. *Graduate Student Representatives:* Prevot.

Dean McGreevy called the meeting to order at 3:34 p.m.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The March 26, 2009 College Council Minutes were approved, as submitted.

**COLLEGE BUSINESS**

### Questions or Comments Concerning Email Announcements

Agustin Fuentes, Director of the Institute for Scholarship in the Liberal Arts, noted that faculty in the College have received several updates regarding the ISLA survey and he urged all Council members to urge their colleagues to participate.

Dean McGreevy thanked all members whose terms of service on the Council will end this semester for their contributions to the College of Arts and Letters. These individuals include Cindy Bergeman, Psychology; Clayton Cole, Film, Television, and Theatre; Austin Collins, C.S.C., Art, Art History, and Design, Noreen Deane-Mora, English; Kevin Dreyer, Film, Television, and Theatre; John Duffy, English; Amitava Dutt, Economics and Policy Studies; Mary Frandsen, Music; Charles Leavitt, Graduate Student Representative; Scott Monroe, Psychology; Jennifer Nemecek, Assistant Dean; Andrew Nesi, Undergraduate Student Representative; Dianne Pinderhughes, Africana Studies; Andrew Prevot, Graduate Student Representative; Siiri Scott, Film, Television, and Theatre; Susan Guise Sheridan, Anthropology; John Welle, Romance Languages & Literatures; and Michael Zuckert, Political Science.

### Discussion About Recent Developments in the University Libraries

Dean McGreevy welcomed Jennifer Younger, Edward H. Arnold Director of Hesburgh Libraries, and Librarian Gay Dannelly. Ms. Younger thanked the Council for the opportunity to discuss with them several issues regarding the Library. She explained that renovation issues are related to the Library's effort to build and sustain library collections. Building sustainable library collections includes not only acquiring materials but also the proper housing and preservation of these materials for posterity. Like other research libraries that highly value the preservation of world heritage, Notre Dame is attempting to sustain this heritage through books and journals as well as in digital and other formats. She noted that there are significant changes occurring in the research environment; among these changes are that no research library is attempting to sustain all of the world's heritage on its own. The Library should consider the idea of sustainable collections as it builds collections for the Notre Dame community.

The Library has two primary goals. First, to be excellent in meeting the knowledge needs of all Notre Dame faculty and students in all disciplines on campus. Second, to build rich and comprehensive collections in certain subject areas that will attract the very best scholars to Notre Dame as faculty and as researchers.

She noted that like other research universities, Notre Dame must confront the limits to its financial and spatial resources. Therefore, the University must consider what are its most important collections to preserve and how much space is needed for these collections. She further noted that these issues were raised this year within the context of investigating the Library's duplicate content and how much of this the Library needed to retain. For example, there are 50,000 duplicate monographs in the Library currently but it has not yet been determined how many of these should be retained. She explained that the space issues affect only duplicate materials; all of the Library's unique content will continue to be housed and preserved. Unfortunately, the duplicate materials issue became linked with the renovation project when the Library Committee, faculty, and students began to express additional ways that space might be utilized in the Library.

She explained that the Library is working to build a sustainable collection at Norte Dame and to consider how the Library can house and preserve the collections we need. To better understand what duplicate content is necessary, the Library will engage, during the next year, all T&R faculty who are subject librarians to identify where there is duplicate content and to determine how that duplicate content factors into what the Library must house and preserve.

Ms. Younger responded to several questions raised by members of the Council. Ms. Younger explained that the duplicate content is made up of exact duplicates and does not include subsequent editions of materials. Duplicate copies could be sold to other libraries or individuals, used as exchange materials with foreign universities to acquire materials we do not have, or to send to foreign libraries that are attempting to build collections.

Electronic and paper copies of materials are not always considered duplicates as the quality of copies may vary. Digitization quality may result in better or poorer copies of paper materials or a duplicate may only have been digitized in part. Moreover, usage and access needs at Notre Dame may suggest a preference for either electronic or paper. Addressing this question requires the collaboration of the subject librarians and faculty.

The Library's goal of building sustainable collections does not limit the University's aspirations for growth in new academic areas that have not been traditional strengths, such as Latin America, Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. This may require a consideration of whether access to materials in new subject areas requires the Library to build, house, and maintain a print collection in addition to a digital collection at Notre Dame. She noted that sustainability relates to these multiple areas and that different collections may be shaped by different needs and priorities.

Renovation of Library space for the café and the meditation chapel will not displace collections. The café, similar to a small airport snack bar, will occupy the space currently housing vending machines and addresses a longstanding request from students, faculty, and Library staff. The meditation chapel will be located on the first floor in an area where collections would not be located.

The Library is currently working to develop ways to maintain and make accessible collections of "gray" literature and other electronic or digital materials not generated by journals or publishers. This includes its participation in several collaborative efforts, most notably those with the Center for Research Libraries, and its initiatives on infrequently held materials focused on Latin America, South Asia, and Germany, and the World Newspaper Archive.

Dean McGreevy encouraged Ms. Younger to continue to explore strategies for developing those collections in areas in which Notre Dame has a national or international reputation, such as Irish studies and medieval studies and for building credible collections in areas in which the University has not enjoyed this same reputation, such as Arabic language, Islam, and Chinese language. He noted additional concerns including how the University might expand opportunities to receive existing external collections and long-term strategies for identifying duplicate

materials. For example, current need for a particular monograph might dictate a need for duplicate copies whereas in the future, with decreased need, no duplicate copies might be required.

Renovation of the first and second floors will improve the way that the building functions. These include improved services on the first floor, coordination among multiple service points, and greater services for interaction with classes on the second floor.

Special Collections was not included in this renovation. It was included in the lower level renovation, which doubled the capacity for collections and added space for 750,000 volumes. Gay Dannelly noted that the Library will obtain the space currently occupied by ND Vision and that this space will be renovated as a seminar room for Special Collections.

Journals that are held in both paper and digital format will follow the same strategy as that for reviewing duplicate monographs. This strategy will include assessing University needs in terms of access and usage.

Dean McGreevy thanked Ms. Younger and Ms. Dannelly for their contributions to the Library and their willingness to collaborate with faculty on the several issues currently being studied.

#### Election of Honorary Degree Nominee Finalists for Commencement 2010

Mark Pilkinton, Arts and Letters Awards Committee Chair, noted that the Council had received the list and biographies of all nominees.

The Council voted for finalists in the three divisions of the arts, the humanities, and the social sciences. The names of these three finalists will be forwarded by the College to the Office of the Provost.

Dean McGreevy thanked Mark Pilkinton and the other two members of the Arts and Letters Awards Committee, Professors Susan Blum, Anthropology, and Paul Weithman, Philosophy, for their work reviewing and selecting this year's nominees.

#### Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Senior Theses

Associate Dean Greene thanked the members of the Ad Hoc Committee for their work this year and for their contributions to understanding the many related issues in the College. He also thanked the members of the Undergraduate Studies Committee and the department chairpersons for their ideas, their analysis of proposals, their comments, and their enthusiasm for this very beneficial initiative. He explained that the Ad Hoc Committee was charged with investigating what other universities and peer institutions are doing and to do some benchmarking. Associate Dean Greene noted that the writing of a senior thesis is one of the most significant moments in the undergraduate experience and more students in the College could be benefitting from this experience. At present only 10-12% of all Arts and Letters students are pursuing and completing a senior thesis.

One of the major charges from Dean McGreevy to the Ad Hoc Committee was to develop a common definition for the senior thesis; Associate Dean Greene noted that last year, as he queried departments about the number of theses students completed, he discovered that there was no College-wide standard and that criteria used to distinguish these types of projects varied across departments or, in some cases, were vague or undefined. The Committee considered a common definition that would cut across disciplines. He noted that it is important not only to consider how the College might increase the number of theses but also how it might provide the kind of support and mentoring to students that will help them understand what it means to aspire to make a contribution to a field.

He explained that the Committee recommends a year-long thesis process but has not defined it rigidly in order to provide departments with the flexibility necessary for disciplinary creativity and for building a meaningful process in each of the wide range of disciplines in the College. For example, in English the senior thesis process includes student participation in a graduate seminar yet this feature might not be desirable or possible to include for senior thesis experiences in all majors.

The Committee is not requiring that departments create new structures; rather departments should build on existing structures such as work students might have begun prior to their senior year such as seminars or research (as in the social sciences) undertaken during the sophomore or junior years. However, departments should also consider the senior thesis as being more than a seminar paper unconnected to other elements of the senior thesis experience. Associate Dean Greene noted that students need support, encouragement, and one-to-one mentoring from the beginning of their undergraduate career and senior thesis processes that work together to develop a cohesive and progressive experience for them.

To encourage the senior thesis culture, the Ad Hoc Committee also recommended the adoption of a common due date for all senior theses in the College as well as awards that would recognize the best theses in the arts, humanities, and the social sciences.

Associate Dean Greene noted that as the initiative moves forward, the Council might consider how it will assess the success of thesis programs, the importance of sharing best practices and developing further strategies for encouraging students, where will the additional faculty resources come from and how will faculty be compensated for their contributions and mentoring. The Committee concluded that due to the importance of the thesis experience, it was something that faculty should be invested in. However, in many departments, the more immediate issue might be a more equitable distribution of faculty investment and more effective use of faculty resources. He noted that this past year there were more 1,000 independent study courses in the College. He also invited the College to consider larger questions of purpose for the senior thesis and the purpose of an undergraduate education; in the end, the senior thesis initiative is less about the finished product and more about the process of developing student skills and capabilities.

Dean McGreevy explained that the College Council would be conducting an advisory vote at today's meeting on two principal recommendations from the Ad Hoc Committee. These are:

- (1) the basic definition of an undergraduate senior thesis is a year-long, one-on-one experience with a faculty member or a graduate student that includes some aspiration to original research; and*
- (2) each department in the College of Arts and Letters that does not currently have a senior thesis experience should develop one of these programs.*

Questions and comments were presented by Council members.

It was noted that department cultures, disciplinary demands, the range of student creativity, and the mentoring would result in a wide range of demands on faculty investment. Consequently, departments may need to more closely monitor faculty investment in individual projects and some flexibility in determining what might constitute a reasonable faculty load or investment.

A concern was raised about the impact of year-long senior thesis projects on enrollments and the sustainability of 400-level courses in small departments if 30% of students were enrolled in six credits of senior thesis work during their senior year. The Committee was asked for more direction on how the senior thesis project would work in concert with curriculum demands within the major. Related to the larger issue of the purpose of undergraduate education is the issue of student professionalization within a discipline. It was noted that the initiative should provide greater discretion to departments to determine the proper form of professionalization; in some disciplines, proper professionalization might instead suggest additional 400-level courses to improve critical skills, such as language capability, especially for students who desire to pursue graduate studies. Agustin Fuentes, a member of the Ad Hoc Committee, noted that the initiative provides flexibility to departments so that the six credits occur within the major and could consist of a course within the major plus a supervised mentored research. The year-long experience should involve six credits worth of engagement but departments have the ability to determine how best to configure this engagement according to the department's programmatic and curricular offerings and the types of outcomes being sought. Associate Dean Greene noted that the year-long experience is not intended to undermine the credit structure of the major. Rather, the intent is to work within a department's structures to provide students with the kind of mentoring and sustained collaboration with others to complete a thesis.

A question was raised about how to quantify the amount of work that faculty would invest in senior thesis projects. It was suggested that a robust mechanism for quantifying work be developed so that the majority of these projects would not regularly fall to associate professors. Dean McGreevy noted that the question of equitable distribution is both serious and important. He further noted that if each of the 480 faculty in the College had advised one senior thesis during the past year, the College would have increased four-fold the number of senior theses completed this year. He concluded that monitoring faculty investment in senior theses is a College concern and that it may fall to the Office of the Dean to ensure that the responsibility of mentoring and advising undergraduate theses falls more equitably to all faculty, not just to junior faculty. Information on which faculty advised theses this year and how many was obtained

during discussions of salary recommendations with department chairpersons. Dean McGreevy noted that a more rigorous and formalized processes for identifying this information might be developed in the future as part of the evaluation of a faculty member's teaching.

A concern was raised about the idea that the selection of a research topic be made during a student's sophomore year. It was suggested that sophomores may be too inexperienced to make this type of decision this early in their undergraduate career. Agustin Fuentes noted that the intent of the Ad Hoc Committee is not that students would make a conclusive decision about their research topic but would, instead, begin their trajectory towards their topic and to begin developing during the sophomore year the tools and exposure to fields that would enable students to make an informed and insightful decision about their topic during their junior year.

A question was raised about the idea that a student would conduct a thorough review of the literature within the topic of their research. It was noted that this would be a difficult task for undergraduates in many fields. Moreover, this is a charge for students pursuing graduate education. Associate Dean Greene explained that the variety of disciplinary experiences makes terminology difficult but that the review of literature would be conducted at a level appropriate for an undergraduate and would be done in the manner that students are currently mentored about literature within their major.

Another concern was whether the College possessed the resources to provide grants to 30% of Arts and Letters students for undergraduate research conducted in furtherance of their senior thesis. Associate Dean Greene noted that the Undergraduate Research Opportunity Program (UROP) and Learning Beyond the Classroom (LBC) would be able to provide the necessary resources.

It was suggested that April may be too late for a due date and the subsequent process by which thesis might be judged and awards made for the best thesis submitted.

A question was raised how the senior thesis initiative will co-exist with the existing honors programs or honors theses in many departments. Associate Dean Greene explained that currently the College is not making a distinction between these types of programs though the complex system of programs that overlap and/or utilize the same language to describe different types of programs necessitates that the College spend the next year assessing these programs carefully. Rather, the College is articulating the thesis in broad terms, with a basic definition, and to include students who are not in honors programs as well as those who are.

It was suggested that the investment of graduate students in the thesis process would not be a good idea.

A question was raised about the implications of the initiative on teaching loads and course offerings in the foreign languages. It was suggested that the Ad Hoc Committee review the possible tensions or conflicts that would arise from the year-long requirement, especially the impact that this requirement would have on the curriculum structures and 400-level course distribution in foreign language and literature departments. It was noted that foreign language

and literature majors, as a whole, are not at a proficiency level that would enable 30% of the students to do this type of research in their respective foreign language. There is a fear that the initiative would marginalize the foreign languages and literatures, especially upper-division enrollments. If the senior thesis were to substitute six credits in the major for the year-long experience, students in foreign languages and especially those wishing to continue on to graduate school would be disadvantaged in their major and in preparation for graduate work. It was suggested that additional strategies be developed that will bolster or uphold languages at the advanced level; in most cases this would include more course work.

A question was posed as to whether 30% of students are interested in pursuing a senior thesis. Given a choice about whether or not to complete a thesis, many students might decline due to other pressures and requirements. Student representatives to the Council recommended that the very best students in a department should be told that they are required to complete a senior thesis unless they can make a clear and compelling case for not doing so. This approach could change the senior thesis culture more broadly in that it would tell students that they *should* rather than they *could* do a senior thesis.

Another suggestion to increase student interest in completing a senior thesis would be to accord summa honors for those who complete the thesis satisfactorily. Dean McGreevy endorsed a further discussion of this option, especially as it might encourage a broader University-wide senior thesis culture. He cautioned the Council that Latin honors are a University issue and the Council would have to engage a much wider University discussion of this idea to affect changes. However, one option for the University to consider is that Latin honors could only be accorded if a student completed a senior thesis experience. Student representatives noted that Latin honors are not viewed as highly as faculty and that this might not provide a significant incentive to students to pursue a senior thesis.

Another suggestion was that the College consider the option of blind readers.

Dean McGreevy noted the reluctance among some faculty regarding the investment of graduate students in the senior thesis experience. He amended the first recommendation accordingly. He then called for the advisory vote of the Council on the two principal recommendations from the Ad Hoc Committee as amended:

- (1) *The basic definition of an undergraduate senior thesis is a year-long, one-on-one experience with a faculty member that includes some aspiration to original research. The option to invest graduate students to advise and mentor undergraduate students completing senior theses is left to the discretion of departments.*

The Council passed the first recommendation.

- (2) *Each department in the College of Arts and Letters that does not have a senior thesis experience should develop one of these programs.*

Some discussion ensued regarding whether approval of this recommendation would lead to conflicts with department honors programs, especially those like some foreign language departments that currently include seminar papers. Associate Dean Greene noted that department programs with honors seminar papers and include ongoing one-to-one mentoring of students could utilize these existing structures in defining their senior thesis experience.

An amendment was suggested by Don Crafton and accepted by Dean McGreevy that the language be inclusive of department honors theses:

- (2) *Each department in the College of Arts and Letters that does not have a senior thesis experience (or honors thesis experience that also complies with the basic definition, as noted in recommendation no. 1 above) should develop one of these programs.*

The Council passed the second recommendation, as amended.

Dean McGreevy again thanked member of the Council for their hard work this year and he wished them a productive summer break.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned by Dean McGreevy at 4:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Donald L. Stelluto, Ph.D.  
Executive Assistant to the Dean