

Arts and Sciences Council
9 April 2009
139 Social Sciences
Chair: Prof. Suzanne Shanahan

Prof. Shanahan convened the Council at 3:33 p.m., ascertained that the minutes of the previous meeting might stand without correction, and then briskly broached the first and already-much-discussed proposal that Duke offer undergraduate students a major in Neuroscience. She was pleased to note that following some alterations of the proposal as presented in the Fall of 2008, the Executive Committee of the Council had carefully examined and unanimously approved the proposal. Certainly it was not premature: some 240 other schools already offered graduate programs in the field, and, all in all, she was very pleased now to have it presented to the Council by Professors Keith Whitfield (Psychology and Neuroscience) and Jennifer Groh (Psychology and Neuroscience, Neuroscience, and Center for Cognitive Neuroscience).

Prof. Whitfield (Chair of the Curriculum Committee) explained that both the minor and major now being proposed drew and depended upon a wide range of fields, including Biology, Psychology, Chemistry, Engineering, Linguistics, Philosophy, and more. In fact, it was an institute rather than a specific department that was involved here. And the subject matter to be studied concerned many and diverse elements relating to the brain and brain processes, including the generation of behavior in both humans and animals. He was glad to report that the Curriculum Committee had been both unanimous and enthusiastic about approving the revised proposal.

Prof. Groh, coming forward, added that Neuroscience was an exciting and fast-growing field. Already about 30,000 people now belonged to the Society for Neuroscience. Here at Duke the plan was to create a “gateway experience” that

would enable students not only to gain a good sense of the nature of Neuroscience but also alert students to the need for quite a few pre-requisites in order to make good progress in one of several possible professional sub-fields. Among other comments, she noted that each of our students would be involved in several laboratory courses and a final capstone work. She then named a number of colleagues in various fields who were not only very supportive of the proposal but also present at this afternoon's meeting.

Prof. Leslie Digby (Anthropology), noting that the requisites for an A.B. and B.S. were very similar, wondered "What is the reasoning there?" Prof. Groh replied that the requisites for an A.B. were a little softer. Perhaps most notably, not having to take Organic Chemistry could be considered "a big deal." As the proposed A.B. was structured, students working toward it would be working instead in courses involving the History of Neuroscience, Ethics and Neuroscience, and Philosophy of the Mind.

A second query came from Prof. Margaret Humphreys (History and History of Medicine): Who would be teaching the course on Ethics and Neuroscience? She herself would be glad to help with such a search. Prof. Groh replied that this "would take some time," but she would welcome Prof. Humphreys' offer.

Dean Lee Baker (Academic Affairs of Trinity College) wondered whether any particular thought had been given to the 21-22 sequence in Chemistry. A very complex answer to this question indicated that, indeed, a great deal of thought had been expended on the subject, the result being an "Okay" from Dean Baker. He then asked what sort of career trajectories Prof. Groh might foresee for students who earned the degree under consideration. Prof. Groh could not say for sure, but felt that it would open a variety of routes in medicine, industry, and graduate school.

Dean Michele Rasmussen (Academic Advising Center) then inquired whether it had been determined who would be serving as major advisors. Prof. Groh responded with a qualified "yes." At present about a hundred and forty Duke faculty members were engaged either in whole or in part in relevant teaching, and a

beginning had been made in contacting them.

At this point Prof. James Bonk (Chemistry) pointed to (and was then instantly thanked for spotting) a verbal blooper in the Neuroscience documents that suggested a student might sign on for either Organic Chemistry 151 or Organic Chemistry 152.

Rather more seriously, Dean Dan Scheirer was interested in learning what thought might have been given thus far to Neuroscience's siphoning off of students from other fields. It turned out that a certain amount of thinking had, indeed, been given to the subject, and though certainty could not be claimed until after the fact, Prof. Groh tended to think that the three main losers might be Psychology, Biology, and Biomedical Engineering.

After a brief pause, Dean Norman Keul, one of the Academic Deans of Trinity College, offered not a question but a comment. He had noted that the writing on graduation with distinction in Neuroscience was a little scant, and at some point there would need to be more discussion and writing to flesh out the matter in greater detail and generally assure its equivalence with other fields. Prof. Groh thought that sounded great.

Dean Baker had another question: What was the plan for dealing with our sophomore and junior students who had taken some of the required courses and were interested in joining the Neuroscience throng? Would they have to start from scratch or would we cobble something together to enable them to emerge with a Neuroscience major? Prof. Groh's reply: We will have to deal with this case by case. Some students would want to switch and some would not. Advisors would have to take a major role in planning. One of her own advisees would need to take only two courses in order to comply. To help think about the matter, in any case, she and her colleagues had already put up a website that addressed what probably would prove to be the most frequent questions. The major, of course, was really designed for students who would enter Duke in the fall of 2009, and for earlier students the proposed stance of the faculty was to be "welcoming but not unrealistic."

Dr. Ron Grunwald (Biology) was interested in the Neuroscience overlap rule, which he considered a good one. Nevertheless, though it was designed to prohibit a student's getting false credentials by counting the same set of courses twice, he wondered whether it was "implementable." Prof. Groh, who was aware of possible problems regarding the matter, declared her lack of experience in dealing with it, but said she intended to stay alert concerning it. In particular, she hoped to work on it with the help of Dean Mary Nijhout.

Following a brief exchange about other various details, Dean Baker, sensing that the conversation was coming to a close, remarked that a number of people had worked long and hard, carefully and closely, in the process of trying to create this major without a department. Duke was mounting a very aggressive program, however, at a time of tightening belts. Considering the sobering budgetary environment, "Was this okay?" Though the question gave her pause, Prof. Groh responded "I think we can do it." Pause. "And, yes, I think we can do it better if the funds are available."

Before the conversation ended, however, Prof. Bonk wanted to point out that the presentation as now printed included some dead Chemistry courses (21, 22, 23) and omitted others that would be offered (Chemistry 31 and 43). Prof. Groh: Yes, unfortunately that table was constructed some time ago. It would be brought up to date.

Prof. Shanahan then put to a vote the proposal to create a new major in Neuroscience, and, there being no dissent, she proceeded to thank all the many people who had worked so hard and long to shape and bring it to life.

Next, she turned to say a few words about the "superb" and "masterful" job that Vice Provost Judith Ruderman had performed in monitoring the latest "Reaccreditation Review Process" at Duke University. Dr. Ruderman had kindly agreed to give a brief review this afternoon of what itself was a task that often must have seemed to be both harrowing and endless.

After expressing her thanks for Prof. Shanahan's kind acknowledgement, Dr.

Ruderman proceeded to thank all the Duke people—many of whom were then present in Room 139—who had helped in the complex process of reaccrediting.

Dr. Ruderman thought a brief résumé might be in order for describing the two-and-a-half-year process (begun in 2006) that was involved. Basically it was comprised of two components, the first being a Compliance Certification Report entailing about eighty-eight standards. This component, monitored by an offsite review team with which Duke was not allowed to communicate, proved to be both time-consuming and onerous. As it turned out, that first team found many areas in which Duke clearly was not in compliance concerning the QEP (Quality Enhancement Plan) and was therefore obliged to “effect change” of some sort. After a good deal of work, Duke submitted its responses in September, 2008. In November the offsite review team sent back its response: Duke was not in compliance in ten different ways. Sometimes this proved to mean simply that the reviewers did not understand something. Sometimes they had not looked at the right documents. And there was to be no “partial compliance” regarding whatever subject was at hand.

When all this was sorted out, a visible and palpable onsite team chaired by President John Kasteen of Tulane came onboard. Furthermore, Duke was allowed to nominate a second university president, who turned out to be Tulane’s President Scott Callen, a friend of President Brodhead. This onsite committee focused on QEP, and the short of the matter was that they were in the main very positive. Even here, however, Duke did not emerge altogether unscathed insofar as the reviewers wanted to see that Duke could demonstrate that it had a robust “cycle of assessment of student learning outcomes.” Trinity College, Dr. Ruderman was glad to say, had already emerged with very high marks on all counts, and during the oncoming summer Duke would continue to work so that by September of 2009 we might be able to articulate specific learning objectives for all of our programs. And in December, when presumably that goal had been achieved, Duke University would be reaccredited without further ado.

All this being said, Dr. Ruderman also felt the urge to add an audible

postscript to express the fact that she was less than pleased by the negative misunderstanding about Duke's accreditation that had been manifested recently in Duke's student *Chronicle*. The students had written of what they knew not, and perhaps her response here this afternoon would somehow filter down to them. In any case, the bottom line for us all was that "You should be very proud of your institution."

After considerable applause for the work and words of Dr. Ruderman, Prof. Shanahan introduced Dean Inge Walther (Director of the Office of Curriculum and Course Development), who was slated this afternoon to provide a "sneak preview" of a draft proposal concerning course renumbering at Duke.

Most simply, Dean Walther proposed that everybody at Duke should look on the renumbering of courses as "a good thing." Having arrived at Duke in 1994, and having previously studied and taught at several other institutions, she had soon perceived Duke's course-numbering to be "a little weird." On the other hand, even though there were peculiarities and inconsistencies of various sorts, there seemed at the time to be no pressing need to address them. When she became a Director of Undergraduate Studies, however, and then the chair of a department, and most recently the person in charge of Curriculum and Course Development, her mind had changed so much that she found herself proposing at a meeting of Directors of Undergraduate Studies that something really should be done about Duke's course numbering. On that occasion, to her amazement, she received "thunderous applause."

Now this afternoon, starting with a timely cartoon about course numbering that appeared in a recent issue of the *Chronicle* (20 March 2009), Dean Walther noted that for a variety of reasons Duke was running out of available numbers. Moreover, there often was a lack of "transparency" or coherence, and there was widespread graduate/undergraduate confusion concerning the nature of 200-level courses. Duke needed to create a numbering of courses that would be "comprehensible and transparent" to everyone, enable departments and programs

alike to indicate levels and sequencing, and maintain consistency across departments, programs, and even schools within Arts and Sciences.

The hope was that a new numbering scheme could be created in the spring of 2009, to be followed in the fall semester by a re-numbering of all courses. The results would then be carefully reviewed in the spring of 2010, thus preparing the way for implementation in the fall of 2011. As the matter was currently perceived, the proposed numbering scheme would be as follows:

- 0-99: Advanced Placement credit; House Courses; First-Year Seminars, First-Year Writing; Registrar / Department special purpose
- 100-199: Introductory-level undergraduate courses; basic skills / activity courses; foundation courses; Focus Program courses
- 200-399: Undergraduate courses above introductory level
- 400-499: Advanced undergraduate, senior seminars, capstone courses, honors thesis courses
- 500-699: Graduate courses open to advanced undergraduates
- 700-999: Graduate only courses (not open to undergraduates)

Dean Walther then proceeded to note and briefly define some general principles relating to curricular coherence. These included transparency and consistency across departments, schools, and programs; consistency and flexibility; clarity of “mindsets” concerning undergrad/grad; clarity of purpose as reflected in undergraduate and graduate bulletins; and clarity of the course-approval process.

Despite the time, thought, and care of her stellar committee that had thus far been involved in laying out the foregoing plans (some borrowed and some paralleled from conversations with UNC-CH), the ideas and words of the preview laid out this afternoon had not yet been carved in stone. A good many Directors of Undergraduate Study had already expressed their “joy” to learn of the proposal, however, and it was to be hoped that a final version of the plan would be in place in

early May.

Prof. Leslie Digby remarked that the whole “grad-undergrad plan” had taken her by surprise. Her department had a new 200-level course which somehow got listed in an undergrad plan. How had this happened? Dean Walther replied that she had no idea how that had happened. Obviously some details needed more attention.

Though some problems were bound to arise, Dean of the Faculty George McLendon observed that, overall; the changeover of course-numbering was not likely to be too daunting. Directors of Undergraduate Studies and Directors of Graduate Studies probably could sit down together and take care of most of the business in a few hours. The greater intellectual challenge (which this process could facilitate) lay in the opportunity to study and reshape the mapping of our curriculum. To be sure, some thought would be involved. No one should just sit down and add a hundred to every existing course number.

Dean Walther: “That’s my fantasy!” In fact, she had already created a set of guidelines that she hoped would encourage and further the matter throughout our various departments.

Dean Lee Willard said she would like to connect this matter with one of Dr. Ruderman’s accreditation compliance issues, namely the need to demonstrate how the level of courses was built on increasingly complex work. “We got by this time around,” but it was a serious matter calling for more attention.

Prof. David Malone (Education): Could we be sure that Special Topics courses would be considered regarding this issue? Dean Walther thought so. She also hoped that better handling of some such courses might actually benefit the nature of regular courses. At any rate, now clearly would be a good time to take a wide-ranging look at our curriculum. Prof. Malone suggested also that the present might be a good time to “rethink writing courses.”

Prof. Shanahan thanked Dean Walthers for her animated and helpful preview of course renumbering (it was “always nice to have a little clarity of purpose”), and turned next to Dr. Ron Grunwald (Biology) for a discussion on revising Duke’s

policy for graduation with distinction.

Dr. Grunwald began by acknowledging that his co-worker on the matter had been Dean Norman Keul and that the subject at hand could be traced back to Dean Baker, who early in the semester had broached the subject at a meeting of the Executive Committee of the Council. The whole matter had subsequently been thoroughly mulled by the Council, then more recently and finally set down in words by Dean Keul. Dr. Grunwald then read and commented on the following opening paragraph of the proposal:

In order to recognize scholarly achievement by students pursuing interdisciplinary studies outside their declared major(s), i.e., in conjunction with certificate programs, minors, or other elective curricula, Trinity College offers an honors program leading to Distinction in the Arts and Sciences. These awards are not intended to supplant Graduation with Distinction in a major, and therefore will not be considered for double honors, i.e., honors awarded in two units for a single thesis. Nor will students be considered eligible candidates for Distinction in the Arts and Sciences if they are eligible candidates for Distinction in a major and for distinction in the Arts and Sciences based on different and independent theses.

The rest of the document (made available to everyone then present) described the procedure for selecting students to be honored (an overall grade point average of 3.3 and a 3.5 in the core courses would be required for eligibility to participate in the interdisciplinary honors program leading to Graduation with Distinction). A “significant project” would be “required with a written report or paper in the style of a publishable article,” and possibly there might also be an oral evaluation. Further

guidelines specified the nature of the evaluative body, the evaluative procedure, and levels of distinction.

Prof. Digby wondered how (or whether) this would work for students who were trying to take courses in the Medical School. Response: This was an interesting question that deserved some thought, but a good answer had not yet been defined.

While Prof. Ruth Day (Psychology and Neuroscience) thought the whole idea of the award to be “great,” she thought also that it was badly in need of a more accurate name than “Distinction in the Arts and Sciences.” Dean Baker responded helpfully that various ideas for the name had been “tossed around.” At the moment he himself thought a simple “Graduation with Distinction” might suffice.

As both the conversation and the afternoon were steadily waning, Dean McLendon requested a minute or two to let Council members know that he had felt the need for and was currently in the process of creating an Arts and Sciences Budget and Priorities Committee. In fact, he had already begun tapping participants, one of the tapped being Prof. Shanahan.

He then moved on to an “honorific” phase, first praising all the works and days of Prof. Shanahan’s now closing two-year term of chairing the Council, then suddenly producing a handsome, four-legged, wooden chair that, accompanied by kind words, he presented to the startled but pleased and now-retiring Executive Secretary, who had served the Council from 2003 to 2009.

At this point, all the business of the day having being attended to, Prof. Shanahan reminded members that a light reception for them was to follow in the lobby of Allen Building. Then, at 5:10 p.m., she quickly closed the Council’s meeting and its year.

Respectfully submitted,
Dale B. J. Randall
Executive Secretary