GRADUATE COUNCIL MEETING  
April 24, 2003  
3:00pm, Kerr Admin. Bldg. 650

Present: Bird, Brauner (chair), Ciuffetti, Collins, Feller, Francis, Gobeli, Markle, Pedersen, Rettig, Sanchez, Strickroth  
Absent: Bond, Fisk, Selker, Watrous  

I. Approval of Council Minutes  
The minutes of the April 10, 2003, meeting of the Graduate Council were approved as distributed.  

II. Graduate Level Learning  
The Graduate Council held open faculty forums to discuss graduate level learning proposals on April 17, 2003, and again on Monday, April 21, 2003. The purpose of the open forums was to solicit input from Graduate Faculty to inform the Graduate Council as it affirmed or revised (1) the “50% rule” (minimum of 50% of all graduate credits [excluding capstone activities such as thesis, research in lieu of thesis, and internship] on graduate programs of study must be stand-alone graduate courses, (2) criteria for differentiating the 500 component of slash courses, and (3) possible inclusion of a few 400 level credits on graduate programs of study.  

People invited to the forum were provided a three-point rationale. First, concerns had been identified during Graduate Council program reviews. Of 15 Graduate Council Program Reviews conducted between fall, 1999, and spring, 2002, 11 mentioned the issue of slash courses. Generally, graduate students report disappointment with the graduate quality and rigor of slash courses particularly when enrollment in such courses consists of a large majority of undergraduate students. Second, in its final report (6/12/01), the Task Force on Graduate Level Learning recommended that the numbering system be redefined to eliminate the “slash” model and that 6-12 credits of non-blanket 400 level credits be permitted on a graduate program of study. Third, the report of the evaluation committee of the Northwest Association of Schools, Colleges and Universities (April, 2001) included the following as its recommendation #7: “Even though a Graduate School policy exists that articulates intended quantitative and qualitative distinctions in expectations for undergraduate and graduate students enrolled in combined 400/500 level courses, students and faculty from a variety of programs indicate that these courses frequently fail to adhere to those distinctions. In such cases, these bi-level courses appear not to constitute genuine graduate level educational experiences. Therefore, the Committee recommends that the University conduct a thorough analysis and evaluation of all bi-level courses and syllabi and then take appropriate steps to guarantee compliance with the requirement that a minimum of 50% of all courses in a student’s graduate program be genuine graduate-level experiences, as articulated in Standard 2.F.4.”  

Accreditation Standard 2.F.4 states, in part: “Graduation requirements for advanced degrees offered by the institution are determined by the faculty teaching in the applicable graduate
programs. At minimum, the policies governing these graduation requirements include:…the minimum number of graduate-level credits, normally at least 50% of those required for the degree…."

Those attending the forum were told that the 50% rule would apply to students entering Fall 2004 or thereafter, that the Council had adopted a slash course differentiation policy, and that the possibility of 400 level courses was still under consideration.

The recently adopted slash differentiation policy reads as follows:

**Expectations for Graduate-Level Teaching and Differentiation between Undergraduate and Graduate Components of “Slash” Courses**

It is expected that all courses at OSU, both at the graduate and undergraduate level, will be designed around well-defined objectives or student learning outcomes. Instructional opportunities should be designed to help students achieve these outcomes. Student learning outcomes encompass the range of student attributes and abilities that students should be able to demonstrate after successful completion of the course.

The primary distinction between undergraduate and graduate courses should be in the quality of learning outcomes as opposed to the quantity of work. Given the range of subject matter taught at Oregon State University, it is impossible to establish a single standard for graduate-level teaching. However, for many courses, Bloom’s taxonomy (Bloom, 1956; also see appendix 1) provides a useful basis for determining the quality of cognitive learning outcomes. These are (from lowest to highest-order), 1. knowledge, 2. comprehension, 3. application, 4. analysis, 5. synthesis, 6. evaluation.

Learning outcomes in undergraduate courses are likely to focus primarily (although not exclusively!) on knowledge, comprehension and application; learning outcomes in most graduate courses, including the graduate component of 400/500 dual listed courses should primarily emphasize analysis, synthesis and evaluation. Where these learning outcomes categories are not appropriate, instructors should develop comparable categories.

Expectations for learning outcomes in the graduate component of dual listed (400/500 level) courses are the same as for stand-alone 500-level courses. In syllabi and course proposals, a distinction should be made between learning outcomes for students taking the course for undergraduate credit (400 level) and those taking the course for graduate credit (500 level). In most cases this distinction should include emphasis on developing skills in analysis, synthesis, and/or evaluation for the 500-level credit, as opposed to, or in addition to, acquisition of knowledge, comprehension and application of information, which are more characteristic of undergraduate curricula. The different student learning outcomes should be accompanied by appropriate differences in instructional opportunities and evaluation procedures.
David Brauner (Liberal Arts) distributed email and letter responses to the issue of graduate level learning and slash courses. Lynda Ciuffetti (Science) said that she sent an email to all the chairs and associate chairs in the College of Science asking them to send email responses to Brauner. The email messages that were distributed came from Steve Esbensen, John Ringle, Roger Nielsen, and Don Armstrong. Brauner noted that the messages reflect the lines of discussion that the Graduate Council has pursued itself over the past several months both in terms of concerns about the policy and reasons for implementing change.

Elaine Pedersen (Health and Human Sciences) asked about the feasibility of one suggestion made at the forum—to offer the 500 component of a course with one more credit than the 400 component to reflect the additional class meetings and work undertaken by an instructor in a slash course. Sally Francis (Graduate School) reported on a conversation with Leslie Burns. Francis understood from that discussion that the two components are considered two separate courses. Consequently, if one was to be worth three credits and the other four credits, this change could be made using a Category II proposal.

Bruce Rettig (Graduate School) said that, in response to a Graduate Council recommendation a year ago to eliminate the slash model, the Curriculum Council had asked whether 400 and 500 courses could meet in the same room at the same time. If so, what would be the value gained from eliminating slash courses? Robert Burton had suggested at the Thursday forum that this and other questions indicated that the Curriculum Council had assumed that the two bodies would continue to explore that policy change (elimination of slash courses). Brauner said that if the conversation returns to the option of splitting slash courses, which had been recommended by two people who had submitted email comments, resolution of this issue would take another year. He assumed that another Graduate Council would have to start over again from square one.

Brauner noted that several people at one forum suggested that the 50% rule would cause the elimination of some graduate programs on campus. Those raising this concern argued that, if any programs are to be eliminated, this should come through a university-wide planning process and not through actions such as the one taken by the Graduate Council. Brauner said that the Council had never intended by its action to weed out weak graduate programs. He added that there seemed to be many misconceptions including what the 50% rule was. Brauner noted that slash courses are not being eliminated. The few stand-alone courses that would need to be created would not be a drain on departments. David Gobeli (Business) and Brauner both noted that they had presented the Graduate Council policies to their departments and those departments had no problems with the idea.

Alex Sanchez (Education) reported that one person at one of the forums said that the English Department has not been able to recruit some top prospective graduate students because those students note the the lack of stand-alone courses, both by observing the OSU web site and by talking to current graduate students.

Pedersen asked whether it would be possible to adopt the Graduate Council policies, but allow those departments that lack stand-alone courses to phase into the policy later. Brauner pointed out that there are already some measures under consideration to make it easier to make a
transition, including increasing the number of blanket hours on programs and increasing the number of slash courses permitted.

Doug Markle (Agricultural Sciences) said he understood one suggestion to be that a minimum number of stand-alone courses be required rather than setting a specific percentage of all credits for the degree. Percentages in some departments would call for four to five courses as stand-alone, while in other departments/programs, the 50% rule could be satisfied with only two credits of regular non-blanket stand-alone coursework. Francis pointed to the accreditation standard (2F4) “including the minimum number of graduate level classes, which is normally 50% of the total.” Francis suggested that if a minimum number of stand-alone credits were established, it could then be reported to the accreditation team that two stand-alone courses are now required, the criteria for graduate level learning experience has been revised and that the Graduate Council would continuously monitor syllabi of slash courses. Markle suggested student evaluation forms to be used for all 500 level courses, not just the slash courses.

Ciuffetti recalled that this discussion was motivated by two goals: 1) to respond to the concerns stated by the accreditation team and 2) to satisfy students who are unhappy with the slash courses as they now stand. She also supported the suggestion to increase thesis or blanket hours. She supported the suggestion to increase thesis or blanket hours. She also supported the concept of allowing extra credit for the graduate students in a slash course when the professor meets alone with graduate students to make sure they have a true graduate level experience. The example given was for four hours of credit for a course with three contact hours with undergraduates and graduate students plus an additional class meeting involving the professor meeting with only the graduate students. Francis suggested that for the sake of ease and clarity, graduate students could register for one credit of 507 instead of making slash courses three credits for the undergraduates and four credits for the graduate students.

Wendé Feller (Student) said that an instructor in a slash course told her that undergraduate students who cannot gain entrance to some 400-level courses with capped enrollment are attempting to get into the class by registering for the 500 level of the course. Rettig reported being contacted by an instructor facing this problem. He advised the instructor to work with the Registrar to block enrollment in the 500-level course and allow students to enroll in that component only with the permission of the instructor.

Sanchez concluded that the costs for instructors, undergraduates and graduate students of the 400/500 system has become so large and complicated that they exceed the benefits reaped by the program. Brauner said that the door to revisit the elimination of slash courses was opened by Bob Burton at the forum reporting that the Curriculum Council would be open to discussion of this issue. Last year the Graduate Council proposed that the slash course system be eliminated, but that 18 credits of 400 level course work be allowed on a graduate program. The units that are upset now with the 50% rule would be even more upset with the elimination of the slash system because they would have to come up with even more stand-alone graduate courses. Francis noted that a majority of the expressions of concern have come from the College of Liberal Arts. For example, a majority of those attending the Thursday forum and all except one person at the Monday forum were faculty in the College of Liberal Arts.
Sanchez suggested that the long-range goal should be to eliminate slash courses, but that colleges need time to proceed to develop stand-alone graduate courses. Pedersen noted that several people stated that eliminating slash courses would negatively impact Baccalaureate Core courses. For example, a faculty member from Women Studies suggested that, if they had to choose either graduate or undergraduate offerings, they might elect graduate level courses. Women Studies, which makes a significant contribution toward undergraduate Baccalaureate Core needs, would be placed in a very difficult position.

Sanchez reiterated that the Council should listen to the graduate students’ concerns about slash courses. Ciuffetti asked whether the studies carried out by the Graduate Level Learning Task Force distinguished between master’s students who were unsatisfied with slash courses and doctoral students. Francis reported that roughly 5% more masters’ students were dissatisfied with slash courses.

Markle, said that, although the Graduate Council would like to eliminate slash courses, the 50% rule serves as a reasonable transition because of increasing the number of allowable blanket hours and including capstone completely as part of the calculation of stand-alone credits; the Council needs to adopt those measures today. Brauner read the current “50% rule”, which subtracts the credits used as a capstone before estimating the number of allowable slash credits.

Sanchez suggested a joint meeting with the Curriculum Council to discuss the long-term future of slash courses. He said that individual departments must be involved in making these changes and the Graduate Council cannot legislate departmental planning.

Markle asked how graduate advisory committees would know which courses are slash and which are not. Rettig suggested that instructors of stand-alone courses provide documentation for students to use to prove which courses are stand-alone. Work load will be increased in Graduate School for program of study evaluations because all courses would need to be checked to see whether they are slash or stand-alone. Ciuffetti asked whether “extra credit” (the one credit of 505 or 507 added to slash courses as discussed earlier in the meeting) would count as stand-alone hours. Pedersen reported that the Department of Apparel, Interiors, Housing and Merchandising is already providing opportunities for students in slash courses to enroll in those one-credit courses, although doing this is currently an elective option for students. By registering for the additional credit, the instructor’s academic department would receive credit for the work their faculty member is doing and for the enhanced learning experiences that students receive. Under the university’s budget model, all work carried out deserves appropriate recognition. Markle said that many faculty members and students might be shocked to discover that an extra hour is tied into slash courses. Gobeli said that these changes are not helpful in eliminating slash courses in the future.

Pedersen wondered if it would be advantageous to make formal adjustments to the policy before meeting with the Faculty Senate Executive Committee. Gobeli suggested that another task that could be useful preparation for meeting with that committee would be to conduct more research on how other universities treat this problem.
The following motion was approved unanimously.

- Change the 50% rule from “Minimum 50% of all graduate credits (excluding capstone activities such as thesis, research in lieu of thesis, and internship) on graduate programs of study must be stand-alone graduate courses. The remaining credits may be the 500 component of 400/500 slash courses.” to “Minimum 50% of all graduate credits on graduate programs of study must be stand-alone graduate courses. The remaining credits may be the 500 component of 400/500 slash courses.”

Markle suggested changing the percentage to credit hour numbers, so that departments would be encouraged to offer more stand-alone courses. He suggested that 50% should be considered a goal rather than an absolute requirement and that the way to achieve this goal is to require two stand-alone graduate level courses. Rettig noted that some programs do not want to have more than six thesis hours on programs of study. Yet some of these departments also do not want to or cannot offer more stand-alone graduate courses.

Francis wondered whether it would be easier for programs to comply with the policy if the target date of implementation were moved out to three years from now. This would provide ample transition time and reduce the need to monitor how departments meet the new requirement. Francis understands that Dean Schaffer’s single concern regarding this policy is timing. Department chairs have reported to Schaffer that they can do this, but that more time is needed. Pedersen asked whether Schaffer indicated how much time would be needed. Francis seemed to think that two to three years of additional time to implement the policy would be acceptable. Francis also urged that everyone should comply on the time schedule and the policy should go into effect fully for all students at a specific time, as opposed to “grandfathering” some students, which has proven to be a very difficult problem for the two-year transition for continuous enrollment. Brauner reported that the Geosciences Department told him that two years would be an appropriate time period to use for phasing in this policy.

The following two motions were approved unanimously.

- Implement the 50% policy, as approved today, to any program of study submitted Fall 2005 or thereafter.

- Raise the maximum number of blanket credits from 6 to 9 on a 45-credit masters’ degree program effective Fall 2005.

Brauner said that policies adopted today will be reported to the Faculty Senate Executive Committee and discussed with that group at a meeting in May.

Francis said that the College of Liberal Arts appears to be the source of the largest number of departments that may have a problem meeting this policy currently. Although some departments have several stand-alone graduate courses, it still would be difficult to determine the impact, because not all those stand-alone courses might be elected by every student in the department. Don Armstrong, during the Thursday forum and again in his email to the Graduate Council,
suggested that research be done to determine how the policy change would impact each department. Rettig suggested that this be done through an internal audit by each department to study the impact of this policy on their curriculum. He asked council members whether they wanted the impact analysis to be carried out through a survey conducted by the Graduate School before the meeting with the Executive Council. Ciuffetti asked whether the survey would be based on the modified 50% rule. She suggested a question such as “Based on the curriculum you have, what additional classes would you need to create to comply with this policy?” The consensus of the Graduate Council was that this survey should be done. Mary Strickroth (Graduate School) pointed out that the increase in blanket hour numbers made today will not affect the Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies students because the maximum blanket hours for that degree is already nine. The survey to study the impact of this policy may discover a substantial difference between departments regarding this policy, because departments have used the combination of lecture courses, seminars, research, and other learning activities quite differently.

Appendix 1. Explanation of the 6 levels of cognitive competency in Bloom’s Taxonomy*

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<tr>
<th>Competence</th>
<th>Skills Demonstrated</th>
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<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>• observation and recall of information • knowledge of dates, events, places • knowledge of major ideas • mastery of subject matter • Question Cues: list, define, tell, describe, identify, show, label, collect, examine, tabulate, quote, name, who, when, where, etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>• understanding information • grasp meaning • translate knowledge into new context • interpret facts, compare, contrast • order, group, infer causes • predict consequences • Question Cues: summarize, describe, interpret, contrast, predict, associate, distinguish, estimate, differentiate, discuss, extend</td>
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| Application; the use of previously learned information in new and concrete situations to solve problems that have single or best answers. | • use information  
• use methods, concepts, theories in new situations  
• solve problems using required skills or knowledge  
• Question Cues: apply, demonstrate, calculate, complete, illustrate, show, solve, examine, modify, relate, change, classify, experiment, discover |
| Analysis; the breaking down of informational materials into their component parts, examining (and trying to understand the organizational structure of) such information to develop divergent conclusions by identifying motives or causes, making inferences, and/or finding evidence to support generalizations. | • seeing patterns  
• organization of parts  
• recognition of hidden meanings  
• identification of components  
• Question Cues: analyze, separate, order, explain, connect, classify, arrange, divide, compare, select, explain, infer |
| Synthesis; creatively or divergently applying prior knowledge and skills to produce a new or original whole. | • use old ideas to create new ones  
• generalize from given facts  
• relate knowledge from several areas  
• predict, draw conclusions  
• Question Cues: combine, integrate, modify, rearrange, substitute, plan, create, design, invent, what if?, compose, formulate, prepare, generalize, rewrite |
| Evaluation; judging the value of material based on personal values/opinions, resulting in an end product, with a given purpose, without real right or wrong answers. | • compare and discriminate between ideas  
• assess value of theories, presentations  
• make choices based on reasoned argument  
• verify value of evidence  
• recognize subjectivity  
• Question Cues: assess, decide, rank, grade, test, measure, recommend, convince, select, judge, explain, discriminate, support, conclude, compare, summarize |