GRADUATE COUNCIL MEETING
May 8, 2003
3:00pm, Kerr Admin. Bldg. 650

Present: Brauner (chair), Feller, Fisk, Francis, Gobeli, Markle, Pedersen, Rettig, Selker, Strickroth

Absent: Bird, Bond, Ciuffetti, Collins, Sanchez, Watrous

I. Approval of Council Minutes

The minutes of the April 24, 2003, meeting of the Graduate Council were approved as distributed.

II. Science and Mathematics Education Follow-up Report

Steve Esbensen (Oceanic and Atmospheric Sciences) reported on a discussion that he and Claire Montgomery (Forest Resources) conducted with Larry Enochs, chair of the Department of Science and Mathematics Education (SMED) as a follow-up to the 2001 review of the SMED program. The full text of the report resulting from that visit follows:

Graduate Council Follow-Up Review Report
Science and Mathematics Education Graduate Program
11 March 2003

On 4 March 2003, Professors Steve Esbensen (Oceanic and Atmospheric Sciences) and Claire Montgomery (Forest Resources) met with Professor Larry Enochs, Chair of the Science and Mathematics Education (SMED) department, to follow up on the Graduate Council’s 2001 graduate program review. Professor Enochs and a senior SMED faculty member reviewed a draft of this follow-up report and provided additional comments and corrections of fact.

A major issue at the time of the 2001 review was the relationship of the SMED graduate program to the emerging education unit on campus. Other issues raised by the review were faculty communication with graduate students and the advising of new students; collegiality, communication and committee structures among faculty members; and new faculty hires and facilities. The reviewers find that significant progress has been made on the recommendations, but that the challenges and opportunities are much greater than those found at the time of the review.

Since the time of the Graduate Council review, one faculty member has resigned and two faculty members have turned in their retirement papers. This presents major personnel issues and opportunities that are discussed in more detail below. We note here, however,
that unless new hires occur, the SMED faculty will be reduced by half—from 6 at the time of the Graduate Council review to 3 when the retirements take effect in 2004.

Our report is organized by the responses to five questions that were posed to Professor Enochs at the follow-up review meeting. These are presented and discussed below. The committee's summary and recommendations can be found at the end of the report.

1. How is the School of Education initiative progressing from SMED's perspective?

The new education unit is in very early phases of development and its future is uncertain. SMED is actively involved in defining that future. Three issues were addressed in our discussion:

(a) Foundation classes: SMED views the new education unit as an exciting opportunity to strengthen graduate education research on campus. The Graduate Council review noted that essential courses in foundations of education, educational psychology and educational research are currently taught by the SMED faculty, at the expense of more topical courses that link science and math content to science and mathematics pedagogy. This problem could be solved by building a general education faculty in the School of Education having expertise befitting a Category I research university.

(b) Licensure: The very successful and high quality 5th year teacher licensure program in science and mathematics education, currently administered by SMED, is at risk due to the pending retirements of Profs. Niess and Erickson. Prof. Enochs and Dean Bloomer agree that the licensure program must change for the success and survival of the SMED graduate program. The new education unit presents an opportunity to transfer support for coordinating and administering the teacher licensure program to the School of Education, while the SMED faculty continues to play the major role in the science and mathematics education component of the licensure program.

(c) SMED’s home: SMED continues to believe that its primary mission of research and graduate instruction in science and mathematics education is most likely to be successful within the College of Science for the reasons cited in the Graduate Committee Review Report at the time of the initial review. However, SMED intends to actively advise and, when appropriate, participate in School of Education initiatives at both the undergraduate and graduate level. In general, SMED is supportive of the concept of an undergraduate teaching "pathway" with international flavor that is being discussed as part of the School of Education proposal.

2. What is the current state of the faculty?

This is the most immediate of the new challenges faced by SMED. Since the Graduate Council review, one of the active faculty members has resigned (Lederman), and the two mathematics education experts on the faculty have turned in their retirement papers
(Erickson and Niess). The two pending retirees carry the bulk of the responsibility for administering the licensure program.

SMED views the personnel crisis as an exciting opportunity to hire the next generation of energetic and high quality educators in mathematics education. The reviewers applaud the faculty's resolve and optimism. The stakes are high, however. If SMED is unable to follow through with new hires or cannot obtain relief from the responsibilities of administering the teacher licensure program, it may be unable to sustain its prominent position as a nationally recognized leader in content-based math and science education. The College has, in the past, invested in this highly productive unit and, hopefully, will continue to do so. The University’s development of a high quality general education program in the School of Education is also a key to SMED’s future success.

Prof. Enochs reports that collegiality and communication among the faculty have improved significantly in the past two years. Morale is high. The five current faculty members have increased their efforts in seeking new grants to compensate for the loss of research income ($538K in FY'01 vs $376K in FY'02) that resulted primarily from the departure of Prof. Lederman. Seven proposals are currently under review and several others are being written. Another positive development is a more even distribution of high quality graduate students among the current faculty members.

Discussions are underway with a group of 5-6 researchers seeking courtesy faculty appointments to begin a graduate "free choice" education research program. This program would focus on education provided through museums or other institutions with an education component. An example would be research on optimizing educational opportunities at the Hatfield Marine Science Center.

3. What is SMED's current hiring strategy?

Hiring priorities have changed since the Graduate Council Review. At that time, the review committee suggested adding a faculty member in the area of college and university education. Now, with the pending retirements in the department, the area of mathematics education research has become the top priority and is crucial to the continued success of the department. Prof. Enochs identified two strategies: (a) using College of Science instructional funds from the two impending retirements to fund at least one mid-career mathematics education expert, or (b) using a combination of CoS instructional funds and SMED research buyouts to hire two new faculty members. The reviewers support the idea of recruiting a mid-career mathematics education research expert who could bring major grant support to OSU and “hit the ground running.” SMED is a nationally recognized leader in science and mathematics education, and may be able to draw a top-quality mid-career candidate. In any case, the Dean and the Prof. Enochs are in agreement regarding the need to hire a mathematics educator. The reviewers feel that such a position should be opened at the first possible opportunity.
4. Are the SMED faculty and the College of Science dean in agreement with respect to the teacher licensure program?

Prof. Enochs reports that the Dean Bloomer and he now agree that the 5th year teacher licensure program must change to insure the success and survival of the SMED graduate program. The commitment to this high quality and popular program is unquestioned. The Dean supports the continuation of the Teachers in Residence program for the supervision of the preservice teachers participating in the licensure program. However, expansion of the licensure program within SMED appears to be no longer under consideration. The primary issue is the allocation of the cost and time involved in coordinating and administering the existing program. This must be addressed if the department is to achieve its primary objectives as a high quality research and graduate education program. There are many options for the teacher licensure program involving SMED and the School of Education. These options must be prioritized and developed as soon as possible, in conjunction with the OSU 2007 planning efforts.

5. What steps have been taken by the chair and faculty to improve communications and advising for incoming and continuing graduate students?

Prof. Enochs is very pleased with the progress that has been made in this area since the review. Despite the loss of an active graduate faculty member, the number of SMED graduate students is holding steady (74 registered students as of Summer 2000; 80 registered students as of Summer 2002). The faculty has recently reviewed and revised all course syllabi and has produced an advising document that clarifies graduate examination and research expectations. There are plans to put this information on the departmental web page, but it has not yet occurred. Given the large “off-campus” component of the graduate student population, we encourage the development of web-based communication as soon as possible.

As a result of the new advising materials and greater collegiality among faculty members, Prof. Enochs believes that the orientation of new graduate students has improved. The structure of graduate student orientation remains the same. The chair continues to meet with each doctoral student on arrival, and there is a general orientation meeting for all graduate students. Prof. Enochs believes that the effectiveness of the advising is much improved. One example of improvements offered by Prof. Enochs is related to international students. In the past, international students were at a considerable disadvantage in developing projects for a required graduate seminar. The expectations were not clear, and the opportunities for participating in externally funded research projects in fulfillment of these requirements were limited. Part of the problem was a long-standing assumption that international students could not be in Oregon classrooms to carry out their research projects. Occasionally students would feel obligated to make special trips to their home countries to carry out research for the seminar. These issues have now been addressed. The faculty is actively seeking to provide research opportunities on externally funded projects.
and it is now explicitly recognized that international students can perform research in Oregon classrooms.

Other areas receiving attention since the review are continued efforts to expand the number of GTA opportunities outside SMED and a recent successful upgrade the hardware in the SMED graduate student computer laboratory. Teaching and advising off-campus students are a continuing challenge. The main effort in this area is a pilot program organized by Profs. Gummer and Flick to develop SMED capability for distance delivery of existing SMED courses and seminars.

Summary and recommendations

SMED remains a high quality graduate program, but the college and the university must move quickly to rebuild and strengthen the graduate mathematics education faculty that is disappearing next year due to retirements. We recommend at least one new hire in the area of mathematics education, effective no later than Fall 2004. The integrity of the department and its graduate program are at stake. Unless this hire occurs, SMED will have 3 faculty members by the end of the 2003-04 academic year, none of whom are experts in mathematics education. We also recommend either hiring a coordinator for the licensure program or developing a cooperative administrative arrangement with School of Education. If the latter course is pursued, SMED should retain curricular control of the science and mathematics component of the program. We continue to support the major recommendation of the 2001 Graduate Council review that SMED remain in the College of Science.

Significant progress has been made in terms of departmental collegiality, communication, and clarity of program objectives since the 2001 Graduate Council review. Prof. Enochs reports that course syllabi and graduate research and examination structures have been completely reviewed and revised. Related documentation and advising materials have not yet been completed. Prof. Enochs also reports a more even distribution of Ph.D. research and advising responsibilities across the faculty. We urge the chair and faculty to complete the implementation of the plans to improve graduate program documentation and advising as soon as possible for the benefit of all SMED graduate students.

<end of the report>

In response to a question about undergraduate education and changing pathways to licensure, Esbensen said that the SMED department planned to advise and participate as much as possible in the undergraduate licensure program. John Selker (Engineering) asked whether the Dean of the College of Science is committed to replacing the faculty needed by the program. Esbensen believed that the Dean had expressed support, but was not sure that he had directly stated that a faculty member would be hired. Options have been explored between the department and Dean Bloomer regarding this new hire.
The Graduate Council accepted the report as presented.

III. Graduate Level Learning

Open forums on graduate level learning were held on Thursday, April 17, 2003, and on Monday, April 21, 2003. In response to recommendations at these forums, the Graduate Council modified its policy on graduate level learning in three ways: 1) graduate-only credits will be calculated against the gross total credits on the program of study; 2) the number of blanket-numbered credits allowed on a master’s degree program was increased from six to nine; and 3) the policy will be effective Fall 2005. In response to one other comment made at one of the two forums and at the request of the Graduate Council, the Graduate School conducted a survey of departments/programs to determine the impact of the policy. The results of the survey were discussed by the Council.

Handouts to the Council included 1) raw data consisting of narrative responses to the survey, 2) a one-page summary of points represented within the comments, and 3) a table summarizing the responses. Approximately 44% of the units with graduate programs (N = 35) responded. However, some of the responding departments did not answer the questions in the survey instrument, but did comment on the issues involved. Some departments appeared to not understand how to make the requested calculations. For example, the MS/MA examples given on the questionnaire suggested that 23 out of 45 graduate credits must be standalone graduate credits and noted that up to 12 credits of thesis or 6 credits of research, plus an additional 9 credits of blanket-numbered courses and an additional 6 credits of internship could count toward this 23. The question was how many new courses would be needed to complete the rest of the 23 required standalone credits. One unit indicated that 36 credits would have to be created to sustain the graduate program with this new policy and another indicated that 45 credits would have to be generated. These two responses suggest master’s programs of much greater than 45 credits even though current program requirements do not suggest such high numbers.

One response that appeared more than once was, “What needs to be fixed?” On the other hand, other survey respondents argued that the policy did not go far enough and that it would lower the standards of graduate education at Oregon State. The most common concern, which previously had been expressed at the forums, related to the adequacy of faculty resources to comply with the policy. In addition to the concern about inability to offer graduate standalone courses, there were concerns that meeting that requirement would lead to a reduction in the number and variety of classes available to undergraduates. Interdisciplinary programs were identified as an area where compliance would be especially difficult.

Sally Francis (Graduate School) told the Council that she had shared plans to carry out the survey with the Provost’s Council. She also shared a comment from the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts regarding a meeting of CLA department chairs. Dean Schaffer indicated that CLA is committed to graduate education and, at the same time, wants to maintain the high quality of undergraduate education at OSU; CLA chairs are struggling with how to maintain quality in both arenas, but not at the expense of one over the other. CLA Chairs and Directors are also
concerned about low enrollments when graduate courses are offered as standalone courses as compared to slash courses. Dean Schaffer indicated that CLA Chairs and Directors are appreciative of the Graduate Council’s changes to the graduate level learning policies, including moving the starting date forward to Fall, 2005, increasing the limit on blanket-numbered courses from 6 to 9, and including thesis hours and capstone courses, etc., in the total credits against which the 50% would be calculated. She will appoint a CLA task force that will work on a plan to try to phase in these proposed changes by Fall, 2005.

Bruce Rettig (Graduate School) reported on the history of slash courses at OSU. In the late 1980s, the State Board of Higher Education decided that all public universities in Oregon should convert from the quarter system to the early semester system, which is the predominate calendar in higher education in the United States. After an extended planning period and with new catalogs ready to print and distribute, this decision was rescinded. Academic units, which had spent many hours examining their curricula, were encouraged to keep as much of the new ideas as possible rather than simply moving back to their old curricula. At the same time, the state system adopted a new course numbering system, which included the option for each university to use a new slash numbering system. However, in most cases, the slash courses that appeared in the new catalogs appeared to be simple replacements for 4XXG (undergraduate courses that could be accepted for a graduate major) and 4XXg (undergraduate courses that could be accepted for a graduate minor but not a graduate major) courses. Many of the units that currently have only slash courses and no standalone courses (other than blanket numbers) had no 5XX courses prior to that curriculum change.

David Brauner (Liberal Arts), noting that the original version of the 50% policy adopted in November triggered much anger, especially in Liberal Arts, suggested that many responses to the survey showed more confusion than anger. Brauner said that the message from Schaffer is quite positive, reflecting the gratitude of CLA administrators for the additional time to comply with the policy and additional leeway to find ways to make changes in curricula.

The next step appears to be a joint meeting between the Graduate Council and the Faculty Senate Executive Committee.

Selker noted that one serious issue identified at the forums was the difficulty of compliance for some specialized graduate programs (for example, a one year master’s program in Forest Engineering). He suggested the need for a process to deal with special cases. Brauner said that the idea of exceptions was discussed at the last Graduate Council meeting. Selker would like to see, as a part of the communication of the policy to the campus, that the Graduate School could grant exceptions in certain cases. Selker also would like to see some group identify opportunities for service courses (e.g., statistics) that would become standalone graduate courses. Because one logical group to do this would be the Graduate Council, he suggested that it should take an active role. Brauner said that the task force to be created in Liberal Arts will also be looking at the same issue. He also observed that the Graduate Council would have almost two years to work with groups that come up with creative new ideas to comply with the policy. Doug Markle (Agricultural Sciences) and Elaine Pedersen (Health and Human Sciences) discussed planning
efforts in Health and Human Sciences to develop courses that would meet the needs of the entire college for statistics courses geared to their shared research needs.

Francis supported the development of a procedure for granting exceptions. Selker explained that he is interested in an appeal process for an entire department and argued that criteria for exceptions should be publicized at the same time that the policy is explained. Francis noted that all policies at Oregon State University are open to appeal. Although an explicit statement is not necessary, it could be added. When an accreditation team asks how exceptions are made to policies, they are looking for a defensible rationale and general, although not absolutely universal, compliance.

Selker suggested that Associate Dean Rettig could craft a procedure for exceptions based on the information from past Council deliberations including today’s meeting. He also suggested creation of a subcommittee of the Graduate Council. That group would address the issues of communication to departments and improvement of service level courses. Francis said that undertaking the coordination of courses such as the variety of statistics courses on campus would be a challenging task and might be beyond the available time of this group. Markle suggested adding a sentence stating: “Appeals within the spirit of the policy should be directed to the Graduate School.”

Because the bottom line is what students tell accreditation teams and other reviewers, Fisk argued that changes that meet the expectations of the students should meet the spirit of the policy. Brauner said that setting up criteria assumes that we might know in advance what the departments might need in the way of exceptions. Rettig said that students need to be a part of the exception process, so that student opinions of the graduate level learning are heard. Fisk suggested that graduate student evaluations of slash courses be an important way to assess whether exceptions to the policy should be granted. Brauner said that those who are passionate about their programs would fight to make sure that they will “survive” this policy requirement.

Explaining the full policy to departments and how it can be implemented could be the responsibility of either the Graduate School or the Graduate Council. Selker asked whether the Council was going to take this opportunity to argue for changes in courses offered by the Statistics Department. Rettig reported enrollment statistics for Spring 2003 registration in ST 412/512 and ST 413/513. In both of those courses, many more graduate students are enrolled than undergraduates. Fisk asked whether this might imply that the courses are viewed by graduate students as graduate level learning and whether this would be a basis for an exception. Or should these courses be converted to standalone graduate courses?

Renee Windsor (Graduate School) was asked to contact Vickie Nunnemaker, who provides staff support for the Faculty Senate Executive Committee, to tell her that the Council has conducted and discussed feedback from departments. Whether and when a joint meeting between the Graduate Council and the Faculty Senate Executive Committee will be left to the Faculty Senate Executive Committee to determine.
IV. Graduate Certificates

Rettig reported that three Category I proposals to establish graduate certificates have been submitted to Academic Affairs for preliminary review. All preparers would like to have their proposals reviewed by the Graduate Council this term. The three proposal preparers are hoping to discuss both approval of the proposal and the number of credits needed for the certificate. Those Category I certificate programs are (1) Sustainable Natural Resources, submitted by Steven Radosevich in the College of Forestry, (2) Advanced Instructional Practices, submitted by Juanita Lamley in the School of Education, and (3) Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), submitted by Don Prickel, School of Education.

Several faculty members considering preparing graduate certificate proposals are interested in learning whether the Graduate Council would consider reducing the number of credits required for a graduate certificate from the current 24 credits to some lower number, such as the 15 minimum credits required at Portland State University and the University of Washington. Radosevich is particularly interested in that question as are the deans.

Selker asked about the allowance for transfer credits. Rettig answered that the fraction of allowed transfer credits is the same (1/3) as it is for a 45-credit master’s degree (1/3) of the credits. If the number of credits were reduced from 24 to 18, the number of transfer credits needs to fall from 8 to 6. If the number of credits were reduced to 15, the number of transfer credits should be limited to 5. Markle asked whether 18 credits is an appropriate number for a certificate to be fully earned in one term (Radosevich wishes his certificate program to be completed during Summer term). Rettig noted that registration over 12 in summer may be feasible given the intensive nature of the Sustainable Natural Resources program, which includes field trips and work done on weekends. Selker asked whether any accreditation issues were involved. Rettig said there were not. Mary Strickroth (Graduate School) noted that the lack of questions about the number of credits in earlier discussions may reflect the lack of experience with certificate programs at Oregon State University. Brauner asked whether, if the Council holds to the 24-credit minimum, proposals would include requests for an exception to the number of credits required. Rettig argued that this would not be an issue. The minimum credits would be analogous to the minimum of 45 credits for a master’s degree, for which no exceptions are ever allowed. Selker, believing that the point of a certificate is to show mastery, asked what minimum number of credits would demonstrate that mastery. Selker said he would be comfortable with 18 credits if they are in the area of the student’s background, but 24 credits would be needed if it were in an area outside of the student’s background.

Because the Council lacked a quorum at this stage of the meeting, no action was taken. However, Council members encouraged Radosevich to present his proposal and to explain how it would be modified if he could reduce the number of credits from 24 to 18.

V. End of Year Issues and Summer Category II Reviews
Rettig briefly explained that the Council needs to address two end-of-the-year issues. First, how will Category II proposals be reviewed during the summer? A committee could work on the proposals over the summer if all or some of the current members are available or if replacements can be identified. One summer, the Council delegated the responsibility to the Associate Dean for the period during which the Council would not be meeting. These and other options need to be discussed. Second, how will the minutes from June 12 be approved? Last year, that was handled by emailing the minutes to committee members, asking for changes and, once a reasonable time for changes passed, they were declared to be approved.