1. Approval of Minutes
2. Undergraduate Announcements
3. Electronic Add/Drop
4. Update from Liberal Studies Committee

CCGB Minutes, October 4, 2002


Absent: D. Cox, M. Duncan, B. East, K. Fuchs, J. Saylor, D. Worley

Ex-Officio: K. Athreya, P. Beebe, D. Maloney Hahn, K.M. Smith, T. Thompson

Other: J. Belina, G. Gabriel, C. Pakkala, J. Powell (for J. Saylor), F. Shumway (for B. East)

Approval of Minutes: The minutes of September 27, 2002 were approved with a slight modification.

Undergraduate Announcements: F. Shumway (Admissions) stated that it is now the traveling season for the Admissions staff, which is visiting schools around the country. She mentioned that on 10/19/02 they would be hosting underrepresented minority students. They are also doing several information sessions on Saturdays in 102 Hollister Hall, and she said that faculty are welcome to attend them.

Update from Technical-Writing Subcommittee: J. Belina (ECE), Chair of the subcommittee, stated that the technical-writing subcommittee met every two weeks throughout the spring semester and is meeting weekly this fall, to better understand the realities and goals of the committee. ABET will have communications as one of their objectives. The subcommittee feels that the ENGRC courses dramatically improve the students’ communications skills, but these courses alone cannot serve all engineering students. The subcommittee is examining flexible, creative and alternative ways that students can satisfy the writing requirement. Some students have satisfied it with courses taught by the Communications Department (Science Writing for the Public and Organizational Writing), but those courses don’t focus on engineering and sometimes the engineering students are shut out of the courses if they are too crowded. Reliance on these courses can make it difficult for the ECP to plan ahead.

**Information submitted by ECP after the CCGB Meeting: In August 2001 the Communications Department cancelled a fall section of 263; Engineering understood that the section would not be reinstated in the spring and that another section might be cancelled as well, so we set about determining both how many seniors still needed to meet the requirement and what options we could find to help them do that. The Communications Department ultimately returned the section in question to its spring course offerings.

The results of last year’s survey indicated that the engineering departments believe that writing and speaking skills are important for success. J. Belina said that the subcommittee would return to the CCGB with their recommendations in early spring, hopefully in time for catalog copy. T. Jordan (Assoc. Dean) stated that the spring deadline is late because the College needs time to line up teaching faculty. She wondered whether there could be incentives in graduate requirements that would make a T.A.’s participation in writing-intensive courses beneficial to them. She also wondered if we might be able to work with Communications to have some of its
sections better reflect our technical-writing requirement, rather than simply send our students to Communications’ existing courses. T. Healey (T&AM) asked if the committee feels that ties should be severed with the Communications Department or whether the ties should be made stronger. J. Bartsch (BEE) stated that flexibility is a big issue, i.e., whether a student could meet the requirement many ways. C. Van Loan (CS) mentioned that flexibility is good for the students, but he doesn’t think that co-op students should get credit for the writing requirement while participating in the program. He added that he was curious about what the technical writing requirement entailed. B. Kusse (A&EP) explained that in AEP 264, one of the courses that satisfies the technical-writing requirement, the students write up 5 experiments (about almost everything), and then participate in critiques and re-writes. P. Beebe (Eng. Comm. Prog.) added that students in writing-intensive engineering courses must write 15-20 pages of finished work in any of various forms—instructions, lab reports, etc. C. Van Loan asked what ENGRC 350 covers. P. Beebe said it includes a proposal and two progress reports for a library- and Internet-research project, a final report, and other assignments such as explaining technical information to non-technical people, an ethics paper, an interviewing assignment that includes some discussion of cultural and gender issues, and two or three oral presentations.

In response to the question of why the subcommittee is even considering whether to reduce our use of the Communications courses, P. Beebe (ECP) stated that there is anecdotal evidence that the engineering faculty feel that the subcommittee and the Engineering Communications Program have a double standard; i.e., the Communications courses are not held to the same standard as that used for writing-intensive courses. Also petitions are not accepted, even if a faculty member feels that a student has done enough writing in an “unapproved” course to meet the requirement. She mentioned receiving hostile e-mails and calls about petitions and about the “hurdles” that the program and the subcommittee “like to put up.” F. Gouldin (M&AE) suggested that graduating seniors be polled to see how they’ve handled the requirement prior to determining if a problem exists. R. Kay (EAS) asked how the writing requirement is usually satisfied. J. Belina replied that roughly one-third of the students satisfy it through engineering writing-intensive courses, one-third through the ENGRC courses (taught by the Engineering Communications Program), and one-third through the Communications Department courses. D. Dalthorp (OR&IE) said that the general consensus among his colleagues is that the writing skills of their students are okay, but their technical skills are lacking. J. Belina added that the main goal of the technical-writing subcommittee is to incorporate flexibility when looking at ways to satisfy the requirement. He stated that other faculty members are welcome on the subcommittee.

The meeting adjourned at 8:58 a.m.