1. Approval of minutes
2. Undergraduate announcements
3. Poll of majors on whether it is important to have thermodynamics covered in the required physics sequence (Pollack)
4. Vote on Gries proposal on math credits (Gries). Note that the text of the motion is given on p. 2 of the 10/24 minutes, below.
5. Motion to change the GPA requirement for Dean’s list from 3.4 to 3.5; to be voted on at next meeting.

CCGB Minutes, October 24, 2008

Ex-Officio: K. Dimiduk, B. East, L. Schneider, F. Shumway
Other: D. Bell, B. Howland, M. Hutson, M. Louge, C. Pakkala, N. Peterson

Approval of Minutes: The minutes of the 10/17/08 CCGB Meeting were approved as written.

Undergraduate Announcements: B. East thanked people for their participation in the hosting programs; everything went well.

F. Shumway said that First-year Parents Weekend begins today. There will be a panel presentation tomorrow, and L. Pollack and C. Seyler will be the faculty representatives. The Majors Fair will be held on Monday, 10/27 from 4:00-5:30 in the Duffield Atrium.

Further Discussion of the Possibility of Changing the Criterion for Dean’s List:
R. Bland said that the ORIE Chair is positive about increasing the GPA for the Dean’s List. S. Baker said that feedback from his department indicated that they would prefer that a fixed percentage (top of the class) be on the Dean’s List.
D. Gries said that a fixed percentage would increase competition.
D. Bell said that the ARTS College likes the dean’s list at 25-33%; they review student records by credit. The more credits a student has, the lower the GPA needs to be. They are also worried about credit loads.
B. East asked what the disadvantage would be of having a higher percentage of students say they are on the Dean’s List. When they arrive they are at the top of the university in SAT scores in math and number 2 in verbal. She wondered what the impact would be on women and URMS.
R. Bland said that it is important that hard-working students should feel good about their work. The Dean’s List should be an honor. It is interpreted as outside the university as something that’s selective. We should keep it that way. B. East added that there are also honors degrees to go along with this.
M. Louge indicated that there has not been much talk in MAE about this issue, and that the faculty did not feel strongly one way or the other. Some colleagues recognize the pressure already put on students, while others suggested that the Dean's list should include a certain fraction of students at the top of their class.
S. Baker said that if we have a Dean’s List, we should be saying that some students are better than others. Otherwise the distinction is meaningless. R. Bland said that no student has ever mentioned being stressed due to not being on the Dean’s List.
S. Baker asked why there are more students on the Dean’s List during the spring than the fall. D. Bell replied that maybe it is due to the new freshmen in the fall or maybe fall classes are harder. A. Center suggested that it is due to a decrease in the number of juniors between both semesters. Some students go off on co-ops during their junior year, so maybe the class is smaller. M. Walter added that co-ops require that the students maintain high GPAs. R. Bland suggested that there are probably fewer electives during one term.

M. Louge stated that he sees the effects on students who must have higher GPAS due to scholarships. They do not have a good time. They are driven. Anything that makes us more competitive than we already are is a mistake. Our students are much better than average university students. We don’t need to ratchet up the pressure. D. Gries said that he doesn’t see this as increasing the pressure; it is just a number. Some students don’t even know they are on the Dean’s List.

B. East wondered what the impact would be on international students, women and URMs if we increase the requirement. A. Center said that if Singapore students don’t get an A- or above, there is weeping and wailing. They become worried about being in trouble. They do feel pressure.

L. Schneider said that the Dean’s List is celebrated in Diversity Programs and it would be good to get their perspective.

S. Baker said that he agrees with the GPA requirement, but his department wants about 30% of the class on the Dean’s List. M. Walter, M. Louge and A. Center said that the current criteria should be used. L. Pollack said that the AEP hasn’t yet discussed the topic. W. Philpot agreed to talk to colleagues in his department.

B. East said that she will discuss the issue with M. Hammer.

**Further Discussion of Motions on Number of Credits Required for Math Courses:** Gries, at earlier meetings, had brought up this possible motion:

**Motion**

The core math requirement is currently Math 1910; Math 1920; Math 2930 or Math 2940; and a CCGB approved, 3-or-4 credit, math course designated by the major. The following rule applies to the transfer of courses from other institutions to satisfy this requirement. The total number of credits taken for the first three courses must be at least 11; otherwise, another math course is required. Transfer credit for a course equivalent to the fourth, CCGB approved, math course, must be 3 or 4 credits.

In the case of a Cornell student transferring in a course taken elsewhere, the judgment of equivalence to a Cornell course is made by a Math Department representative. In the case of a transfer student, the judgment is made by a person authorized to do so (e.g. a departmental Undergraduate Director).

R. Bland said that ideally it would be good to measure what students have taken from a course, but this can’t be done. For students who completed 4 semesters but haven’t affiliated, if they took a course somewhere else, a department could approve or disapprove of the course. Courses taken elsewhere typically don’t prepare them for work here.

A. Center said that math is required as a platform to allow us to do other things. The requirement should be strictly a content issue, not a credit issue. If the content of a course is insufficient, we need to let students know, and they will need to take courses to become competent. This is not a CCGB issue; it is a department issue. D. Gries said that the Math Department makes the content decision. The credit issue generally arises when students are trying to graduate and find they are a credit short in math.

S. Baker said that the Engineering Handbook says 15 or 16 credits of math are required because the assumption is that the fourth math course could be replaced by another course. D. Gries added that the replacement for the fourth course chosen by a major could be 3 credits.
F. Shumway said that the 15 or 16 credits requirement is based on Cornell courses. The problem is when a course is transferred in and a student tries to substitute a 3 credit course from elsewhere for a course at Cornell which is 4 credits. Departments at Cornell need to approve a 3 credit Cornell course. D. Bell said that some transfers have asked for approval for a course with high math content for the extra credit. F. Shumway said that if the current rules remain, we would need students to identify an extra math credit in the curriculum to fill the 1-credit slot.

M. Louge said that if a course taken elsewhere is equivalent, we should approve it. We seem to keep adding credits to the curriculum rather than decreasing them. L. Pollack stated that in the past she has forced students to take another course with math content and use 1 credit of it. She tries not to make exceptions because then the floodgates will open. Until the rules are changed overall, we need to enforce them the way they are. We need to be fair. She will poll the AEP faculty on this issue.

A. Center wondered what happens if someone wants to transfer in at the end of their freshman year and took the equivalent of Math 191 and 192, but the courses are 3-credits. L. Pollack replied that she tells them that they need another credit from another course; this is a rule. R. Bland said that the problem is with higher level math. A. Center asked why it would be a problem if a course equivalent to Math 294 were approved and was only 3 credits. The credits should be content-based.

S. Marschner said that we should focus on whether the rules are implementing the requirement. Having the students find another credit doesn’t seem to help them with learning extra material; credit counting doesn’t really seem useful.

S. Baker said that MSE seems to want the student to be made to take Cornell math classes. He suggested that we have a placement test for every class (a final) to see if the students pass. Some students don’t do well in math and take a summer class elsewhere because they think it will be easier. Faculty members think it is bad to encourage the students to take easier classes elsewhere. L. Pollack said that it is hard to evaluate content even with a syllabus. It is hard to say that courses are equivalent, even with the same book we use.

F. Shumway said that many times students need to take courses elsewhere in order to stay on track. The Math Department (Lars Wahlbin) needs to approve courses before students take them elsewhere. Some students would be seriously impacted if they couldn’t take courses elsewhere. L. Schneider asked if students could take a placement test for math after taking a course elsewhere.

M. Louge said that we do not really have a way of evaluating the understanding that students have achieved in courses taken elsewhere. Although placement tests may be impractical (and disappointing if students fail them), they are the only way to gauge such achievement. Because US Universities cling to an antiquated, qualitative, letter-based grading and credit system without a uniform nationwide standard, we cannot evaluate students adequately without a placement test.

S. Baker said that he would prefer to have the option for his students to take a math class elsewhere if he thinks they will otherwise be successful. He agrees with colleagues that reducing credits is not good, though. Peeling off a credit from another course as currently required is good.

A. Center said that we need to define the problem we’re trying to solve. We should decide what the math platform is and make it independent of credit. The problem seems to be that we want the students to have a good grounding of math. The number of credits is an imperfect way of ensuring that this happens. S. Baker said that how students get to 15 credits of math needs to be defined.

D. Gries said that a content requirement would be good. If students do poorly in a math course and take it elsewhere, it should be fine as long as it is approved by math and the content is good. S. Baker said that it is hard to tell what the content is elsewhere. A. Center said that if the Math Department preapproves a course, that eliminates the problem. L. Pollack asked how the Math Department knows that a
course is equivalent. Her assumption is that they ask about the textbook and list of topics. R. Bland said that all the Math Department can do is compare syllabi.

M. Louge said that we should give the students a 10 minute placement test. We could measure their knowledge when the students return after taking a class elsewhere. He has done a test with advisees. He gets a quick idea of their knowledge. We could do this with transfer students. F. Shumway said that testing would involve a significant number of students that want to transfer in credits. It would include all of the math courses, CS, physics, chemistry, etc. R. Bland said that placement exams are helpful, but it would be hard on students if they took a course elsewhere and passed it but then returned to Cornell and failed our placement exam.

L. Pollack asked how many transfer courses are used for satisfying the math requirement. F. Shumway replied that Advising would need to look into this. It would be a large number. D. Gries said that the majority of students take classes elsewhere because they have done poorly here. Anyone who does poorly in math is looked at by ASPAC. L. Pollack responded that those are the students who are struggling here. A. Center suggested that we require students to initially take a course here and, if they don’t pass it, we should allow them to take it elsewhere. S. Baker asked if there are 3-credit courses elsewhere that are equivalent to our 4-credit courses. A. Center said that transfers don’t take Math 191 and 192 here. L. Schneider said that some students place out of them.

D. Gries stated that if we use content and not credit, that seems easiest on everyone. People should talk to colleagues in their departments about this. F. Shumway said that she would ask Lars Wahlbin how he evaluates courses. For now we will proceed as usual on this issue.

The meeting adjourned at 8:58 a.m.