CCGB Meeting Agenda, November 16, 2007

1. Approval of minutes
2. Undergraduate announcements
3. Report on ABET review of ENGRI courses (B. Isacks)
4. Vote on ChemE proposal to allow CEE 304 as an alternative to Math 294 (M. Duncan)
5. Discussion of and vote on changes to handbook wording for advisor approved electives (B. Fisher)

CCGB Minutes, November 2, 2007

Ex-Officio: B. East, R. Robbins, L. Schneider, M. Spencer
Other: C. Pakkala, N. Peterson

Approval of Minutes: The minutes of the 10/19/07 CCGB Meeting were approved as written.

Undergraduate Announcements: D. Gries mentioned that the Engineering Ethics Play would be held on 11/3 and 11/4 at 7 P.M., and he encouraged everyone to come. He also spoke about the KAUST Discovery Scholarship, which would provide full tuition funding for students to finish their undergraduate programs at Cornell and then do masters degrees in King Abdullah University of Science and Technology, Saudi Arabia. Interested students should contact M. Hutson in the Advising Office. The KAUST fields of study are Chemical Engineering, Civil and Environmental Engineering, Applied Math, Computational Sciences, Electrical and Computer Engineering, Mechanical Engineering and Applied Bioscience. We already have an application from a student in CEE. L. Schneider said that she saw a presentation about KAUST at the ASCE Conference. This looks like a self-contained school.

L. Schneider stated that the applications for faculty grants for undergrad research ($3,000) are due soon. Emails have gone out about this, and information is on the Engineering web page under Undergraduate Research.

B. East mentioned that departments should communicate with their faculty about the STARS Project. Information about the STARS Project will also be put in the Information Update. Faculty will have a different interface for faculty advisors. The system looks pretty good and easy to use. More information about it will come out in January or February. R. Bland said that student records will go to a new system in the spring, which seems like a terrible time to do this due to impending graduation decisions that need to be made. He envisions a nightmarish situation in the spring. B. East said that the only way they could make all of the systems fit together is in the spring. J. Bartsch requested that the STARS information be sent to him so that he could share it with the advisors in BEE. W. Philpot also asked for the information. B. East agreed to send it.

ChemE Proposal for a Substitute to Math 294: M. Duncan is proposing CEE 304 as an alternative to Math 294 for ChemE majors. He stated that ChemE likes CEE 304 because it is a nice blend of probability and statistics (50/50). A. Zehnder asked if linear algebra is not important to ChemE. M. Duncan replied that it is important, but the students learn it in other classes. Many students in ChemE don’t take Math 294 until their 4th semester, which is too late for the part of the curriculum that requires it. Their ideal course would consist of 1 or 2 credits of linear algebra and 1 or 2 credits of statistics, but there is no class of that description. R. Bland stated that ORIE is the primary provider of probability and statistics, and they want time to take this issue to their curriculum committee. The instructor of ENGRD 270 sees a problem with the substitution and wants the ChemE people to talk to the ORIE Curriculum Committee. E. Fisher asked if the CEE 304 instructor, J. Stedinger, had been contacted about this. M. Duncan replied that he had spoken with J. Stedinger, who is enthusiastic about having ChemE students take
his CEE 304 course. J. Bartsch said that J. Stedinger’s course has been touted by the students as having more of an engineering flavor than ENGRD 270, and it serves the students well. He sees more biologists and environmental engineering majors take CEE 304. D. Gries said that currently college requirements are that students must take Math 191, Math 192, Math 293 or 294 and a fourth course determined by the major. M. Duncan said that the ChemE students would like to take ENGRD 270, but they would be required to take it in their fourth semester. R. Bland said that he sees no problem with this and that likely ORIE couldn’t accommodate extra students in 270, but his colleagues would like input on this. A. Zehnder said that ChemE must have considered making CEE 304 a fifth math course. M. Duncan responded that it would entail committing a major-approved elective for the course. They are troubled by the lack of flexibility they have now and are afraid that eventually there will be no electives. In ChemE they hear complaints from the students about the lack of room to negotiate. Students are told they should have probability and statistics, and they have a linear algebra course that is not valuable for them. E. Fisher requested that the CCGB members discuss this issue with their colleagues and revisit it at the next meeting.

Proposed Revision of Advisor-Approved Electives Description in Handbook: E. Fisher stated that the proposed revision started because she and D. Gries were concerned about how each department has differing opinions of what constitute advisor-approved electives. They heard that some advisors accepted only upper-level engineering courses as advisor-approved electives. E. Fisher and D. Gries asked A. Zehnder and B. Isacks to work on new handbook wording to change the emphasis of the instructions. The proposed wording also has input from E. Fisher. D Gries said that he reviewed the legislation on the electives. There used to be 6 credits of free electives, but they were changed to approved electives. The proposed modification was rewritten to highlight a variety of courses that might be approved. The CCGB can take this as a first step. If a more substantive change is desired, the CCGB can act on that later and would need to take a substantive proposed change to the college faculty.

R. Robbins said that one of the issues is timing of the approved electives. Some students take extra ENGRD or ENGRI courses and want to use them as approved electives. He asked if it would be okay for the advisor of a freshman to approve courses as advisor-approved electives. D. Gries replied that if a freshman advisor says a course is approved, it is approved. Later advisors can’t do anything about it. E. Fisher said that in MAE they encourage the students to defer electives until they know what they want to do, but that freshman advisors’ approval is viewed as binding. J. Bartsch said that he feels that if major advisors could make these decisions, that would be good. There is already precious little freedom in the majors. He doesn’t feel that any engineering advisor is torpedoing any programs by giving the students flexibility in the 6 credits. A. Zehnder asked how the advisor approved electives are accounted for. When you advise the students, you don’t get a paper with what was used as electives. R. Robbins replied that he has advisors email the Advising Office when approvals are done, or has the student submit a formal petition, which provides documentation of the approval. B. Isacks asked if progress is tracked and courses noted. R. Robbins replied that Advising reviews the students’ transcripts and ensures that they’re making progress. J. Bartsch added that Advising works from official transcripts, and the majors work from checklists. Some students probably had a course or two that they shouldn’t have had when they graduated. BEE has allowed ROTC courses and ENGRI courses that they counted.

E. Fisher asked if this issue should be addressed in the handbook. R. Robbins agreed that it would be a good idea. There have been cases where a change of advisor was requested because an advisor and student didn’t agree about a course being allowed as an advisor approved elective. E. Fisher said that she feels that the CCGB members want to allow advisors to make the decisions. R. Robbins asked how a course is identified as an advisor approved elective. E. Fisher said that MAE has a form. R. Bland said that ORIE has a form also. R. Robbins said that the process should be uniform across the college. If peo-
ple email him the forms that they are currently using, he can come up with a generic form. L. Lee said that CS would prefer free electives. D. Gries said that he would like them also. A. Zehnder stated that the CCGB talked about it before, and the consensus was to keep them as advisor approved electives. B. East said that if you asked Student Services people, any way that we can make the curriculum more flexible would be a good thing for them. D. Gries said that almost any course would be possible if an advisor approves it. B. Isacks said that if a student picks a course and an advisor doesn’t approve it, the student does not benefit. M. Duncan said that he advises each person individually and gets to know them. He helps them form a plan of study to help them graduate, but it is not necessarily the path of least resistance. He gets to know the students in ENGR 150. R. Bland said that he went through a period where there were essentially no electives; it was terrible. The current curriculum is far better because of the increased flexibility. B. East said that if everyone advised the way M. Duncan does, nobody would have trouble with the curriculum now. But not everyone advises that way.

R. Bland asked if the Handbook for Undergraduate Advisors still exists. R. Robbins replied that it exists and is for the first-year advisors. R. Bland said that some faculty don’t have any idea what advisors are supposed to do, but some are good at it. Many faculty members come here from other parts of the world that are unlike Cornell. D. Gries said that last year new faculty were asked to come to an ENGR 150 orientation. M. Duncan said that he gives the information about advising in the Undergraduate Handbook to new advisors. A thick handbook would never be read, but the concise information in the handbook is useful. E. Fisher said that this issue will be worked on more. R. Robbins said that whatever the wording is, all advisors need to practice it. E. Fisher said that the wording can be put in a handbook, but it would be tough to enforce it. She asked that any additional comments be sent to her. She and D. Gries will take them and modify the proposal for next time.

D. Gries stated that Richard Felder and Rebecca Brent will be here to hold workshops on teaching January 17 and 18. On Friday afternoon (1/18) there will be a session for chairs and administrators to talk about evaluating teaching.

D. Gries said that he wants to make sure that everyone knows whether or not they have a GPA requirement. E. Fisher said that MAE has a cumulative GPA requirement of 2.0. W. Philpot said that CEE has no requirement, although a 2.0 is required each semester. J. Bartsch said that BEE requires a 2.0 cumulative. L. Lee said that there is no requirement in CS. B. Isacks thinks 2.0 is required in EAS. R. Bland said that ORIE requires a 2.0. E. Fisher said that S. Baker stated that MSE expects a cumulative GPA of 2.3. B. East said that Engineering was asked as a college to say what the college requirement is because the Financial Aid Office wants us to check GPAs and determine if students can still get financial aid.

The meeting adjourned at 8:54 a.m.