CCGB Minutes, November 30, 2007

Ex-Officio: B. East, L. Schneider
Other: C. Pakkala, N. Peterson

Approval of Minutes: The minutes of the 11/16/07 CCGB Meeting were approved as written.

Undergraduate Announcements: D. Gries announced that M. Duncan had been awarded New York State Professor of the Year. M. Duncan added that L. Pollack had received the Pan-Hellenic and Interfraternity Council Award for Professor of the Year. D. Gries said that Cornell faculty members have won the New York State Professor of the Year award 4 times, more than any other college or university, and all of the winners have been from Engineering.

B. East stated that this is the time of year when students are stressed, and the Advising Office has been working with lots of students. We need to pay extra attention to our students and, if anyone is concerned about a student, they should call the Advising Office and/or talk to the student.

Discussion of Proposed Protocol for Parental Notification of Academic Trouble for Affiliated Students: Last spring, the Deans and Associate Deans reviewed Cornell’s policy and practices regarding student records, in particular communication with parents. As part of our efforts to identify students who may be in distress and to enhance our safety net for such individuals, we have made some changes. They can be found on page 7 of the Courses of Study online (http://www.cornell.edu/academics/docs/Courses_of_Study_0708.pdf) or on page 6 of your hard copy of the Courses of Study book.

The significant change is that Cornell University will now assume that undergraduates are DEPENDENT on their parents (as defined by the Internal Revenue Service) unless they tell the University Registrar differently (Graduate and professional students will continue to be considered independent of their parents.). For dependent students, education records CAN be released to parents without the student’s prior permission. We will not release such information as a matter of course, but if we believe it is in the best interests of the student to do so, we will. Such determinations will be made by the Dean of the student’s college, the Dean of Students or the Vice President of Student and Academic Services, or their designees. In Engineering the Dean’s designees are David Gries, Assoc. Dean, Betsy East, Asst. Dean, and Rich Robbins, Dir. of Advising.

Directory Information which includes whether the student is officially registered or not registered is public information and can be shared with parents by the Advising Office or Associate Directors of Academic Departments/Schools without prior approval.

It has been agreed University-wide that parents will be notified when students are no longer registered as students. This will be done in Engineering by the Advising Office for unaffiliated students and by the
Associate Directors of Depts./Schools for affiliated students. We will also be notifying parents when students have conditions to meet in the current semester in order to be enrolled in the following semester. Because this includes information from the academic record, this may only be done by the Dean or his designees. For this purpose only, Kent Fuchs has added the Associate Directors in Depts./Schools as his designees.

We will automatically notify parents in 4 situations: (1) when students are withdrawn either voluntarily or involuntarily from the University; (2) when they take or are placed on a leave of absence; (3) when they are given some conditions to meet for continued enrollment at the University; and (4) when they are not registered after the fifth week of the semester. (Advising Office will manage #4.)

At the end of each semester the students’ grades and records need to be reviewed. If action is to be taken, it is suggested that students be called first, then emailed and then sent an official letter. Letters should be sent with a return receipt requested so that we know students received them. The appeals process should happen in a timely fashion so that students can register somewhere else if they need to. If students meet conditions 1, 2 or 3 above, you should send the official letter to students first and then the letter to parents, giving students several days to communicate with their parents. Sample letters have been approved by University Counsel’s Office and are attached at the end of these minutes and are available from Engineering Advising.

L. Pollack said that if students in AEP fall below good academic standing, they typically don’t come back. M. Duncan said that he typically gives his students three strikes. B. East said that sometimes a student does so badly that we think they should be placed on a leave immediately. Everyone is different. M. Duncan said that when his ChemE students are not in good academic standing, they are warned of that. They are told that they need to do better or they will be out, possibly in the next semester. B. East said that if the students might be withdrawn the next semester, parents should know about that. M. Duncan expressed his concern that notifying students and their parents will be time-consuming, possibly consisting of 20-30 hours of work between phone calls (phone tag) and letters, etc. B. East responded that it shouldn’t be that much work. Some parents think students are enrolled in the University, but the students have been withdrawn and they’re just living in this area. E. Fisher said that MAE generally does a three strikes thing, but sometimes they cut to the chase for real problem students. B. East stated that departments should be reviewing records in a timely manner; we need to be fair to the students. E. Fisher asked if Engineering Advising should be notified when departments send out letters to the students and their parents. B. East replied that copies of letters should be sent to the Engineering Registrar. We will need to go through this notification process for a year or two to see how it goes. We may make changes later. E. Fisher said that it would be better if we could say something in a letter to the parents such as “not registered for SP 08”.

N. Peterson asked whether the warning letters should be sent to the student’s local address, to their parents’ address, or both. B. East replied that the decision is up to departments. If we know that the students are not home, we should use their local address. E. Fisher said that if a letter is sent to the home address, we are essentially notifying parents. If parents choose to open student’s mail, that is between the student and the parent. R. Bland asked if we have fulfilled our obligation if we use a local address. B. East replied that the suggestion is to send a return receipt requested letter, so you will know if the student received it. Generally students are at home at the end of semesters, so the default procedure should be to send it to the home address. J. Bartsch said that he has sent letters via email and mentioned sending letters to a home address, and students respond quickly to that. B. East said that we need to do more than make one phone call prior to sending the letter to parents. She added that we will discuss at a future meeting how to manage students who are conditionally affiliated.
Feedback to D. Gries / D. Cox on streamlining the ABET course assessment process (CCGB members involved in ABET course review): E. Fisher said that some CCGB Committees discussed the ABET review of various courses, and some people were commenting on the fact that faculty who were writing the assessments weren’t producing what we were looking for. They apparently didn’t understand what they needed to do. L. Lee and others had some thoughts about ways to make it easier for faculty to write an acceptable course assessment. D. Gries stated that he has a 2-page set of instructions which specifies what needs to go into the assessments. He could also make up a form. Some departments have their own form because they are ABET accredited. CEE has their own form. L. Lee said that many assessment samples were not compliant. It would be a big help if we have a T.A. separate out data because faculty don’t seem to have the time to do it. B. Isacks said that there was tremendous variation between the assessments. Some people seemed to be carefully attempting to complete the assessment correctly, but others submitted a catalog of the course. D. Gries said that sometimes faculty members don’t look at outcomes on the syllabus. Another factor is that faculty members differ sometimes from year to year. E. Fisher said that it would be more helpful if each faculty member got a form with their own outcomes on it. They don’t want to do the ABET stuff at all. If we want them to address each one of the outcomes on the syllabus, it is more likely that they will do it if the form has outcomes listed and they just describe how they were evaluated. A. Zehnder stated that faculty should take more responsibility for doing this. Maybe we could have more concrete examples for them. E. Fisher said that the bottom line is that people don’t want to do this. If we tell them to look up their syllabus on a website and look at examples, this is irksome to them. B. East suggested that departments make it as easy as possible for faculty. This is not a college accreditation; it is department accreditation. They might not want to do it, but if they don’t, their department won’t be accredited. L. Lee suggested that maybe TA’s could assist with the accreditation work. They could track the data from the beginning of the semester. R. Bland said that maybe instructions or guidelines could summarize things an instructor ought to do before the term begins to prepare for ABET. Maybe department chairs should lean on faculty a bit. D. Gries said that half of the engineering departments want to be accredited. He will revisit the assessment form and letter, the instructions that we send out, and he will pass them around to be reviewed. L. Lee said that if a sample was minimally compliant instead of huge, it wouldn’t be too bad. E. Fisher added that the current ABET process allows a variety of choices, but we’d rather do something in the simplest possible way. J. Bartsch stated that it helps to keep outcomes to a minimum—1 or 2 really good ones.

L. Pollack said that she will be on sabbatic during the spring 2008 semester and that B. Kusse will likely be the CCGB representative for AEP. She will reassume her role on the CCGB and the Math & Science Committee next fall.

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 a.m.