CCGB Meeting Agenda, December 15, 2006

1. Approval of Minutes
2. Undergraduate Announcements
3. Continued Discussion of the Curriculum Report
4. Liberal Studies Issues

CCGB Minutes, December 1, 2006

Ex-Officio: B. East, R. Robbins, F. Shumway
Other: C. Pakkala, N. Peterson

Approval of Minutes: The minutes of the 11/10/06 CCGB Meeting were approved as written.

Undergraduate Announcements: F. Shumway mentioned that Advising is dealing with lots of leaves and other issues with students. R. Robbins said that the new Advising Administrative Assistant will be starting on Wednesday, 12/6. Advising is hoping to make an offer within a few weeks for the position that was previously held by Dan Maloney Hahn.

Discussion of Advisor-Approved Electives: C. Seyler stated that he asked that the topic of advisor-approved electives be discussed because currently there are different practices among advisors about flexibility. He read the guidelines in the Courses of Study catalog. Six credits of advisor-approved electives are required, and there is a list of 9 types of courses that can be used as advisor-approved electives, including up to 6 credits of ROTC courses at the 300 level or higher.

The practices are very different in each department. Some advisors in ECE only accept technical courses as electives.

E. Fisher brought in a handout regarding recommended advising practices regarding approved electives in MAE. MAE was concerned about the non-uniformity some years ago, so they got together to discuss the issue. They then wrote up recommendations.

A. Zehnder stated that he wonders if advisor-approved electives shouldn’t just be called free electives.

C. Seyler said that the guidelines are good, but on the other hand advisors need to be empathetic to the needs of their students.

R. Robbins said that the majority of students don’t take electives as freshmen unless they come in with enough AP credit. C. Seyler asked how many students try to petition for a course to be approved as an advisor-approved elective to try to override an advisor’s decision. R. Robbins said that it happens, but they encourage students to go to their advisors. B. East said that if a student wants to take 2 intro courses and then gets into the major and their advisor doesn’t let them use one of the courses, that would be a problem. R. Robbins responded that Advising encourages the student to get approval in writing from their first advisor to avoid precisely that type of situation.

L. Pollack said that currently a student fills out the petition form, she initials it and then passes it along.

A. Center asked if this is a governance issue, or whether departments should talk about it. E. Fisher said that people in some departments might feel that students need more technical classes.
B. East said that if the college has a policy, people should follow it. N. Peterson said that one professor in MAE feels that the wines class is important. B. Isacks said that advisors need to determine how to make sure that a course isn’t so far out that it is useless. It is perverse to make the students take high level tech courses in their major as advisor-approved electives—this goes against the spirit of electives.

L. Pollack stated that she views electives as a student’s opportunity to take advantage of being at Cornell. E. Fisher said that the simple solution is to let the students take whatever electives they want. L. Pollack said that electives allow the students to expand their worldview. She suggested that the discussion be tabled until after the proposed curriculum changes have been decided upon.

B. East stated that in engineering the curriculum is so nailed down that students don’t have any flexibility. A. Zehnder said that one of his students wants to take drawing but it doesn’t seem to fit into the advisor-approved electives guidelines. Maybe the college should change the wording in the courses of study catalog. Some faculty already do what they want. He suggested that faculty discuss the issue in department meetings.

J. Bartsch said that free electives would increase flexibility and would be something that BEE would support.

A. Center asked why free electives initially disappeared. C. Seyler replied that the intent of removing them was to reduce the total number of credit hours required by the students. A. Zehnder said that we need distinction in wording because majors have field-approved electives and technical electives. A. Center suggested that they be called flexibility electives, since the objective is to broaden scope, and it would get the point across to advisors.

Discussion of Request by BEE to Substitute Physics 207/208 for Physics 112/213: L. Pollack stated that she had received a request to consider allowing all students in BEE to substitute Physics 207/208 for Physics 112/213. The substitution has worked (via petition) for them in the past. She discussed the issue with the Physics Committee, the Director of Undergraduate Studies, and instructors in Physics 207.

This substitution issue has a lot of bigger issues. She has a concern that this is going to require students to decide very early (in their freshman year) on their major. This is a red flag regarding affiliation. Physics faculty think that this would have to go to a full physics faculty vote for a decision because Physics 207 is almost at capacity now. Classroom space and laboratory space are issues.

J. Bartsch said that about 10 students a year are currently petitioning for the substitution on the CALS side. He personally is okay with the petitioning process, although it creates more work. It also creates issues in advising pre-meds, but this would help the petitioning process. The BEE Chair feels this is a flexibility issue.

L. Pollack stated that she talked to the Physics 207/208 instructor. There is little difference in the curriculums. Physics 207/208 is not as analytical; it is calculus-based but with an emphasis on intuition and understanding physics. She is curious as to why engineers wouldn’t want an analytical course.

F. Shumway said that the students need to take Physics 314 for the MCATs. L. Pollack said that some material is not covered for the MCATs. Depth is sacrificed for a more qualitative picture. One big concern is class size. There are 300 students currently taking the Physics 207/208 sequence. Physics 112 is taught in both semesters, but Physics 207 is only taught once a year.

J. Bartsch said that about one half of BEE students come in from CALS and one half from Engineering. CALS students take biology and Engineering students take chemistry. The spring/fall sequence works well for physics. Pre-med advisors want this. Advising has approved the petitions for BEE students. R. Robbins said that if an advisor supports a petition, Advising approves it.
L. Pollack said that the current system seems to be working as is except for the petitions load. She is worried about putting the substitution suggestion in the handbook. A. Zehnder wondered if we can make the substitution with the curriculum that we have. C. Seyler said that it is not allowed; their major can’t say it can be done; it needs to go through faculty.

A. Center stated that if someone wants to take Physics 207/208 and BEE signs the slip, it is approved by Advising, and it is done. It doesn’t say in the handbook that it can be done, but it can be done by petition. It is treated as a matter of course for BEE. He wondered if it would be problematic if we say it can be done via petition in the handbook. C. Seyler replied that it would create problems.

L. Pollack said that the focus of the courses is in very different places. Physics 207/208 are geared toward pre-meds. The way the course is currently being taught by the instructor stresses physics as connected to life sciences; this makes it more relevant for the pre-med students. R. Robbins stated that the three-course sequence would prepare students better for the MCAT. F. Shumway said that, from an Advising perspective, not advertising this possible substitution allows them to talk about this with students. This would allow them to discern whether the students are closing doors by taking one sequence versus another.

L. Pollack said that Physics 214 is not required for BEE. If a BEE student wants to be pre-med, they would need an extra physics course. Having to take 3 courses instead of 2 for the MCATs is the issue. J. Bartsch said that for now students will continue with the petitions process and going to Advising.

A. Zehnder stated that the curriculum discussion might supercede this, but it will probably be 1.5 years before we implement any curriculum changes. He is hoping that the CCGB would look at the intro to engineering courses. We need to spend time working on them.

J. Bartsch agreed to report back to BEE that the CCGB won’t do anything about physics right now.

**Agenda issues**

A. Zehnder asked if there were any agenda issues for spring.

A. Center said that his term on the CCGB would end with this meeting and that someone else from CBE will take over for spring. He thanked everyone for being on the CCGB and stated that he has learned a tremendous amount during his tenure on the board.

**Curriculum plan discussion**

E. Fisher stated that she felt that the discussion of the curriculum plan was much too brief and that it should be discussed more. A. Zehnder said that the CCGB can meet again this fall to discuss it, after the faculty meeting on Monday, 12/4. We will try to have a CCGB Meeting on 12/15.

C. Seyler said that ECE has discussed the proposed changes and MAE is halfway through their discussion. A. Zehnder said that the proposed changes would have some impacts for ChemE.

**Math exam results**

F. Shumway said that a discussion of the math exam results will occur at some point. R. Robbins added that there will be review and a report once the final grades have been submitted.

The meeting adjourned at 8:46 a.m.