In the first of a series of special meetings this term dedicated to the General-Education Proposals formulated by the *Ad Hoc* Committee on General Education, the Faculty Senate met on Tuesday, September 18, 2007, at 5:00 p.m. in Wachovia Auditorium.

Speaker Joe Kelly called the meeting to order and entertained a motion to limit the debate on each paragraph of the General-Education Proposals to 30 minutes. Trish Ward (at large) offered the following motion, which was seconded by Meg Cormack (Religious Studies):

> Mr. Speaker, I move that, for any main motion considered by paragraph at a special meeting of the Faculty Senate occurring between the present time and January 31, 2008, no paragraph or subdivision of such a main motion shall be debated for more than 30 minutes, except that the Senate by majority vote may extend debate for that paragraph or subdivision only beyond the original limit of 30 minutes and for a number of minutes to be specified in the motion to extend debate.

The motion could not be debated, but some points of order were raised. Richard Nunan (at large) asked what in this context constituted a paragraph. The Speaker answered that a paragraph equaled one page of the document. Another Senator asked if time was automatically extended when discussion on an amendment of a paragraph was in progress. The Speaker answered “no.” Calvin Blackwell (Economics) asked what the consequences would be if the motion failed. Would the Senate just proceed as it had last spring? The Speaker said that that was correct, except that the Senate would not vote on each section of the proposal for approval (after the amendment process the Senate will vote on the entire document).

The motion to limit debate passed.

George Pothering, chair of the *Ad Hoc* Committee on General Education, then moved that pages 4 to 18 (the first Gen-Ed Proposal) be adopted. The Speaker then officially declared that the Senate would consider the motion *seriatim*, i.e., paragraph by paragraph (or page by page), starting with page 4 of the proposal. The Speaker then reminded Senators of the time-limit rule and said that each Senator could only speak twice per paragraph (or per amendment) and for no more than five minutes. He also advised Senators that the proposal before them should not be seen as a struggle between the Senate and the *Ad Hoc* Committee on Gen Ed. The Committee had done its job. Their proposals were now in the hands of the Senate.

**Discussion of Page 4, Goal I.3: Foreign Language**

Mr. Blackwell moved to strike requirement 2 of Goal I.3, which states that all students must take one foreign language course at the College, even if they have passed a test demonstrating competency at the 202 level. After the motion was seconded, Mr. Blackwell explained that the requirement does not accord with the “Defining Characteristics,” which lays out what students must be able to do to meet the foreign language goal. If students have already
demonstrated that they have met the goal, why should they still have to take a foreign language course? Such a requirement penalizes students already competent in a foreign language for choosing to attend the College of Charleston.

The amendment to delete requirement 2 passed.

Frank Morris (at large) offered as a friendly amendment that the word “department” in requirement #1 be changed to “program” because the term “program” was a little broader. The Speaker declared that no friendly amendments were allowed, but that such a motion could be approved by “unanimous consent.” The Senate then gave unanimous consent to Mr. Morris’s suggested change.

Todd McNerney (at large) and Jack Parsons (Political Science) wondered about the purpose of item #2 under “Approval Criteria.” Mr. Pothering noted that it no longer serves any purpose given the approval of Mr. Blackwell’s earlier amendment. Mr. Blackwell moved that approval criterion #2 be deleted. The motion was seconded and the amendment to delete approval criterion #2 passed.

Norine Noonan (Dean of SSM) remarked that since there was only one requirement and one approval criterion, there was no need to number them. Her suggestion to delete the numbers in each section was approved by unanimous consent.

**Discussion of Page 5, Goal II.1: Mathematical Reasoning and Analysis**

Hugh Wilder (Philosophy) presented on behalf of the Philosophy Department the first of two amendments. The first amendment proposed to modify the “Defining Characteristics” and “Approval Criteria.” It would change the first statement in both sections from

(1) Master some of the theoretical underpinnings of an area of mathematics relevant to society at large, and demonstrate an understanding of abstract mathematical objects separate from any particular application.

to

*Understand* some of the theoretical underpinnings of an area of mathematics and *develop an appreciation of* abstract mathematical objects; *mathematical reasoning and analysis encompass more than practical applications.*

The amendment would also replace the word “and” with the word “or” in #2 and #3 of the “Defining Characteristics” and the “Approval Criteria”:

(2) Engage in mathematical modeling of varied phenomena (i.e., applying the abstractions described above to concrete problems in a variety of disciplines), along with the quantitative, symbolic, or computational methods necessary to answer questions, understand the significance of the results, and judge their reasonableness.
(3) Read and comprehend mathematical arguments, formulas, or graphical representations, and use these to present clearly and justify effectively mathematical conclusions and results.

After the motion was seconded, Mr. Wilder explained the rationale for the changes: first, the amendment makes clear that mathematics is an abstract enterprise, an idea that is slightly contradicted by the phrase “relevant to society at large” used in the original version. Second, to insist that math courses at once be theoretically oriented and yet also be “relevant to society at large” and have practical value is overly restrictive. Some courses might not qualify as meeting the goal, if both theoretical and practical criteria are required. Third, the current language (e.g., “master,” “demonstrate an understanding”) is too ambitious and unrealistic. We need more modest and flexible characteristics that courses can more easily cover.

Arguing against the amendment, Bob Mignone (guest) said that we should be setting a higher standard than what we currently have. He also said that to “understand” constitutes a passive kind of learning, but that to “master” something requires active learning. For example, one can understand how to play a piano, but that doesn’t mean one can play the piano. To master the piano, however, means that you know how to play it and requires a higher level of learning. He also argued that we should put in place a complete set of goals, not something you can select or pick at. The amendment would weaken the comprehensive nature of this part of the Gen-Ed proposal. We don’t want to be “breaking this thing into pieces.” He also objected to removing the term “college-level” from the document, saying we don’t want “remedial courses.” On a conciliatory note, Mr. Mignone said that he did approve of removing the split infinitive from the original document, changing “to clearly present” to “to present clearly.”

Paul Young (Mathematics) argued that the term “appreciation” goes against the fundamental goal. Mathematics involves critical reasoning. To appreciate mathematical objects is not the same thing as being able to engage in mathematical reasoning.

Gary Harrison (Mathematics), responding to the amendment’s proposal to substitute “or” for “and,” said that much of the thrust of modern mathematics is to combine analytical arguments and graphical representations; so the use of “and,” rather than “or,” is important.

Mr. Nunan noted that in other sections of the Gen-Ed Proposal you don’t find language this strong (terms such as “master”). He urged that we be more realistic, and noted that it is hard to evaluate mastery. It would be “more prudent not to go there.” The disjunctive approach (i.e., using “or,” rather than “and”) will make it easier for courses to meet the approval criteria and will be easier to for students to meet their Gen-Ed requirements and easier for planning and advising. To this last point, Mr. Mignone retorted that if advising is the highest priority, then the Advising Center would devise our Gen-Ed curriculum.

On the issue of the difficulty of evaluating mastery, Mr. Young remarked that it was just the opposite of what Mr. Nunan asserted: mastery is easy to assess; assessing how well one appreciates something is harder.
Jerry Boetje (Computer Science), returning to the “and”-vs-“or” issue, said that we need to combine quantitative, symbolic, and computational methods because these are all of a piece now and can’t easily be separated. Mr. Wilder then asked whether some areas of mathematics aren’t always quantitative. If so, then that would suggest that quantitative, symbolic, and computational methods don’t always go together.

Glenn Lesses (guest) pointed out that the amendment isn’t about advising, but about giving flexibility to students to meet the requirements. Ms. Noonan, arguing for the conjunctive view, said that in a biology course, she doesn’t expect that students know either statistical analysis or graphical representation, but both. They go together and can’t be divided. Mr. Blackwell asked whether in a class one could discuss graphical representational alone without one of the other areas. He thought that they all go together.

Returning the issue of mastery vs. understanding, Evan Parry (Theatre) suggested that more consideration be given to the idea of understanding, and that we should ask if it is strong enough and how one sufficiently demonstrates understanding. Mr. Boetje thought that mastery indicated not only that you learned the knowledge, but also that you could put it to use. He thought that in computer science at least it was important that students could put what they had learned to good use.

Edith Ellis (PE & Health) suggested an amendment to Mr. Wilder’s proposed amendment that would replace the word “appreciation” with the word “competency.” She moved that in item #1 of the “Defining Characteristics” and “Approval Criteria” that the phrase “develop an appreciation of” be replaced with “develop competency in the use of.” This amendment to the original amendment was seconded and was then approved by a vote.

Mr. Wilder, revisiting to the “and”-vs-“or” issue, observed that the “conjunctive” approach would exclude some symbolic logic courses, which currently count toward the math Gen-Ed requirement.

As the 30-minute debate limit was approaching, Todd McNerney moved that the debate be extended by 15 minutes. After being seconded, the motion passed. Jason Overby (Biochemistry/Chemistry), commenting on the term “master,” said we are creating students who are “Jacks of all trades,” but not masters of any. He thought the distinction between “master” and understanding” was crucial.

John Hakkila (guest), addressing the “and”-vs-“or” issue, remarked that in every Physics and Astronomy course there is some form of mathematics used. The disjunctive approach (i.e., the use of “or”) would suggest that all such courses would satisfy the mathematics requirement. By this reasoning, a course that requires some reading would also satisfy the English requirement.

Jack Parson moved that the Senate divide the amendment, that the “master”-vs-“understand” issue be treated separately from the “and”-vs-“or” issue. The motion was seconded and approved.
Mr. Lesses argued that “understand” and “master” mean different things to different people, and that the Gen-Ed Standing Committee will ultimately be making the decision. Mr. Young next re-iterated his earlier point that in terms of this specific Gen-Ed goal, mastery accomplishes the goal; understanding does not. Carol Toris (Psychology) spoke in favor of the language of mastery, arguing that it is important that students experience some mastery of some things. Richard Nunan responded that the current wording makes the mathematics goal appropriate for a math major, but not for general education. He also reminded the Senate that the amendment clears up the distinction between theoretical and applied knowledge of mathematics.

At this point, the question was called and seconded. The motion to call the question failed. After a little more discussion, Jack Parson then moved to extend the time-limit for debate. After the motion was seconded, it was voted on and failed. This meant that the entirety of Mr. Wilder’s original amendment failed. Mr. Nunan pointed out that other amendments dealing with Goal II.1 would not be voted on at all, and that the Senate should have been aware of this when they voted for the motion to limit debate to thirty minutes per page. Mr. Wilder then commented that he thought that many Senators didn’t realize what exactly they had just voted on. After a number of Senators confirmed Mr. Wilder’s assessment, Mr. Wilder moved that the Senate re-consider the time-limit for discussion of Goal II.1. His motion was seconded and then passed. Mr. Wilder then moved to extend the debate on Goal II.1 by 15 minutes. The motion was seconded and then passed. Debate resumed.

George Hopkins (History) argued that we would expect a person in a major to “master” material in the major, but not a non-major. To expect mastery by non-majors is unrealistic. Mr. Mignone pointed out that the language in the goal says “master some” things in the discipline, not all. He saw this as a doable, realistic goal. Mr. Boetje commented that mastery at the Gen-Ed level is different from what is expected by major. At the Gen-Ed level mastery means that you could do something with the knowledge learned and do more than just spout back what’s been taught. Mr. Lesses re-iterated that understanding means different things to different people. Plato, for example, had a very high standard for his definition of understanding. Ms. Cormack asked at what grade a student is deemed to have achieved mastery. Does an A signify mastery, a B, a C?

At this point Mr. Blackwell called the question, which was seconded. His motion passed and a vote was taken on the amendment: The first part of Mr. Wilder’s proposed amendment, which was to change the wording of “Defining Characteristic” #1 and #1 of the “Approval Criteria,” failed.

The Senate now focused its attention on the second part of the amendment, which concerned items #2 and #3 of both the “Defining Characteristic” and “Approval Criteria.” At this point, Reid Wiseman noted that the phase “Read and comprehend” in item #3 of the “Approval Criteria” was superfluous: to comprehend mathematical argument implies the ability to read them. His suggested change to strike “Read and” was accepted by unanimous consent.

Mr. Mignone thought the proposed changes to items #2 and #3 were of even greater consequence than the earlier proposed change to item #1, and emphasized the importance of
not changing the wording. He also thought that the original language does not exclude or diminish the importance of symbolic/mathematical logic. Mr. Lesses responded that he appreciated Mr. Mignone’s comments, especially in light of the fact that mathematical logic has historically been taught at the College by both the Math and Philosophy Departments. He hoped that the Senate would respect the fact that the Philosophy department has taught this branch of mathematics and will continue to teach it, and that those courses the Philosophy Department has taught in mathematical/symbolic logic will continue to count toward the Gen-Ed mathematical reasoning goal. Mr. Mignone said that he never wanted to exclude Philosophy.

Darryl Phillips (at large) commented that part of the bigger problem is that the Gen-Ed Proposal is breaking a system that didn’t need to be fixed. Now we’re in the position of trying to make the Gen-Ed Proposals conform to and look like the system we have now. Mr. Hakkila responded that just because something has always been is not a reason to continue it.

A vote was taken on the second part of Mr. Wilder’s proposed amendment and the amendment was defeated.

The Senate now considered a second amendment from the Philosophy Department, which Mr. Wilder formally proposed, and which was seconded. The amendment proposed to add a sentence in requirement #1, so that the entire requirement would read,

All students must complete two approved courses in mathematical reasoning and analysis. Coursework in formal logic (a branch of mathematics) enables students to develop valuable mathematical reasoning skills.

Mr. Wilder explained that the added sentence was included in last year’s Gen-Ed report and in its rationale, that it was helpful to retrieve the sentence, and that it makes explicit that formal logic is a branch of mathematics. Mr. Mignone responded that he agreed with Mr. Wilder that formal logic is a branch of mathematics, but did think that this Gen-Ed document is an appropriate place for “product placement” or for advertising certain subjects.

Idee Winfield (Sociology) moved that the new sentence proposed by Mr. Wilder’s amendment be moved from the “Requirement” section to “Approval Criteria” in item #1. The motion was seconded.

At this point, Mr. Wilder moved to extend the debate time by 15 minutes. The motion was seconded, and the Speaker reminded the Senate that if the motion fails, then the Senate would move to the next page of the Gen-Ed Proposal. The motion passed.

Ms. Noonan commented that she was troubled by the amendment because it seemed to privileging a set of courses over others. All courses will have to meet the “Approval Criteria” and some courses in mathematics will have to be revised to meet them, but we shouldn’t privilege any set of courses in advance. Mr. Wilder responded that the courses in question aren’t tied to a single department. Moreover, one key function of the amendment was to send a message to future Gen-Ed Committees that symbolic logic is a part of mathematics. The
amendment will be helpful to future members of the Committee. Mr. Mignone replied that if a course meets the “Approval Criteria,” it will qualify; therefore the amendment isn’t necessary. He also reminded Senators that courses in other departments (e.g., Physics/Astronomy) might also qualify for the math goal, but they aren’t being privileged. Mr. Young added that the proposal doesn’t list every sub-branch of mathematics. So why should symbolic logic receive special treatment?

The Senate then voted on Ms. Winfield’s proposed amendment and the amendment failed. Mr. Nunan then called the question on Mr. Wilder’s amendment, which was seconded. His motion to call the question passed and the Senate voted on Mr. Wilder’s amendment: the amendment to add a sentence on symbolic logic into the first requirement failed.

Mr. Nunan then withdrew an amendment on Goal II.1 that he had planned to make a motion on because it was contingent upon the Senate approving the first amendment proposed by the Philosophy Department.

**Discussion of Page 6, Goal II.1/Goal III.1: Scientific Reasoning and Analysis/Knowledge of the Natural World**

With 25 minutes left in the meeting, Mr. Blackwell asked what would happen with respect to the time limit for page 6 of the Proposal, if the meeting were to end in mid-discussion. The Speaker said that the remaining time would be carried over to the next meeting.

Mr. Nunan then proposed his amendment, which consisted of three parts: A, B, and C. He asked that part B—which would modify “Requirement” #2 by inserting the words “at least” (“Coursework must be done in at least two different departments”)—be approved by unanimous consent, since those words should have been in the Gen-Ed Proposal, but were inadvertently omitted in a transcription error. The Senate approved the insertion of the words in the document by unanimous consent.

Mr. Nunan then moved that the other two parts of the amendment be adopted. Part A would change the first line of second group of “Defining Characteristics” under the heading “Knowledge of the natural world” as follows:

> Students should acquire the **following areas of knowledge of at least some of the natural world following:**

Part C of the amendment would eliminate “Requirement” #4.

> 4) Students must select three approved courses and two approved labs that, either separately or in combination, cover all five areas of knowledge designated under “knowledge of the natural world.” Courses will be tagged to indicate the topics they cover.

The motion was seconded and Mr. Nunan explained the key reason for the proposed changes is flexibility. As currently configured, Goal II.1/III.1 on page 6 is too restrictive in terms of what
students can do. For example, if a student takes a physics course, then that might cover only one of the required “areas of knowledge,” and the student might have to take more than three courses to cover all the areas. Mr. Nunan argued that students need to have more flexibility. Ms. Noonan responded that each science course will have to be vetted and re-introduced to meet the new Gen-Ed goal and its defining characteristics. Faculty in the SSM understand this and believe that the goals can be met and that flexibility is already in place. Moreover, she said that she was troubled by the tenor of the debate, which suggested that students are incapable of reaching a higher standard. If we want to be a “first-rate” institution, she argued, then we need to set higher expectations. Mr. Nunan said that he “took issue with every point” made by Ms. Noonan. He does not assume that courses will remain identical to what they are now or that they won’t undergo some change. He said that the attempt to cover comprehensively the areas of scientific knowledge in just three courses was unrealistic, and rejected the claim that there was an effort to “dumb down” standards. The issue is flexibility and the problems that stem from imposing a rigid system on students.

Mr. Mignone commented on how the SSM worked with the Gen Ed Committee on the science goals. He said that SSM embraced a spirit of change, that it came up with a list of goals and realized that an extra course was needed to achieve those goals. There was no attempt to get another course for any other reason. Mr. Hakkila added that the current science portion of Gen Ed is inadequate; so SSM had to come up with a set of goals and then match it with an appropriate structure. He noted that there was much disagreement among SSM faculty because many did not want to increase the required number of science credit hours for students. Some SSM faculty were reluctant to take on another Gen Ed science course, but there was also an acknowledgement that the current system isn’t adequate and doesn’t provide a good science education for our students. It is also outdated: science has changed a lot, and we need to change our Gen Ed system to keep up with the changes in science. Phil Dustan (Biology) wished to reinforce Mr. Hakkila’s last point and brought up the example of the theory of natural selection, noting that South Carolina ranks near the bottom in terms of how well the public understands this theory.

At this point, 7 PM was fast approaching and the meeting was adjourned. Discussion of Mr. Nunan’s amendment is set to resume at the next meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Terence Bowers,
Faculty Secretary