The Faculty Senate met on Tuesday October 2, 2007, at 5:00 p.m. in Wachovia Auditorium. This was the third special meeting of the term dedicated to the General-Education Proposals formulated by the Ad Hoc Committee on General Education.

After Speaker Joe Kelly called the meeting to order, the Senate approved the minutes of the September 18, 2007 meeting. Speaker Kelly then announced that in the revised Gen-Ed agenda he switched the order of the last two items from how they had been listed at the start of the term. Debate and a vote on the entire Gen-Ed Curriculum, he said, will now take place before the Proposal on the Gen-Ed Standing Committee is debated (earlier these two items were listed in the opposite order).

Discussion resumed of Calvin Blackwell’s proposed amendment (pending from the previous meeting) to cut the required science courses from three to two. George Hopkins (History) began the discussion by reading the following statement:

I was disappointed with the tone and content of much (not all) of our debate/discussion last time.

Proponents of the proposal to increase the science requirement by three hours do NOT persuade colleagues when they respond to legitimate questions and concerns by sighing loudly, rolling their eyes, and then adopting a condescending tone in their answer. They alienate potential supporters and undermine their own cause. Others who demonstrate a strong feeling of disdain (intentional or not) toward those with the audacity to question the proposal or its impact on the total hours required for GenEd likewise make opposition to their proposal more likely.

These unprofessional and un-collegial comments bring, not surprisingly, similar responses from some skeptics or opponents of the proposal. I'm sure that I've also contributed to this on occasion.

Sometimes the debate seemed to echo C.P. Snow's assertion that the gulf between what he called "The Two Cultures"--the sciences and the humanities--is too vast to be bridged. I also think part of the problem is that there is not enough real contact between faculty in the different schools. Yesterday I had an interesting and useful conversation with two colleagues in the sciences. That's something that does not happen often enough around here.

The level of debate we've been having on both sides does little to advance our need to seriously examine the proposal. We need to treat each other with the respect and collegiality we all have a right to expect from each other. Disagreements on an issue need to stay focused on the issue, not descend to \textit{ad hominem} attacks.

But I am not just making a simple plea for civility. It's also a call to step back and
consider the proposal--and criticisms of it--on their merits. It's the message, not the messenger, that we should focus on.

I know colleagues in the sciences have worked hard on this proposal. I remain undecided about the proposal. So I invite my colleagues in the sciences to persuade me and others why a third course is needed, how many of these third courses could be made interdisciplinary and connect with colleagues in other schools, and how they be could be doubled-counted [or even triple-counted] to minimize their impact on the overall hours required for GenEd. Critics need to really hear what supporters are saying--and vice versa. In the end, we need to make a decision. When we make it, let's be proud of the result--and the way we got there.

Norris Preyer (Physics/Astronomy), speaking against Mr. Blackwell’s amendment, said that the extra three-hour course is likely to be interdisciplinary. The list of such courses mentioned by Dean Noonan in the last Senate meeting was an invitation to others not in science departments to teach them. Faculty in the School of Science and Mathematics (SSM) won’t be able to teach all the courses. The extra three hours can also be seen as meeting the interdisciplinary course requirement.

Jack Parson (Political Science) said that he and some of his colleagues have not been persuaded by the argument that because scientific knowledge is constantly expanding, another required science course is needed. All disciplines can make that claim, he said. Nor has he been persuaded by the argument that students need an understanding of all areas of natural science. No set of undergraduate courses in any discipline, he said, can aspire to comprehensiveness. He found more persuasive the idea of a third required course that linked science and social behavior. Mr. Parson then read a statement from last year’s Gen-Ed Proposal that stressed the importance of connecting science to other disciplines and explaining the relationship between science and other areas of life. He also said that the view that science just deals with “facts” and “will lead us to the light” is inaccurate. Facts will always be contested, and the connection between science and other areas of life is highly contested. The current proposal, he pointed out, does not speak to this crucial aspect of the issue. On a more practical level, Mr. Parson added that faculty lines that might otherwise go to any number of worthy programs will now go to the First Year Experience and to SSM to staff the added science course. The development of other programs will thus be cut off or curtailed. This is something we need to talk about, he stressed. Given these concerns, Mr. Parson said that he was reluctant to vote against the amendment. If it fails, he announced that he would propose his own amendment to address his concerns.

Mitchell Colgan (guest) spoke about the schism that had developed between the sciences and the humanities. He said that our current Gen-Ed system allows for no interdisciplinary activity among the sciences, let alone between the sciences and the humanities. It is a very constrained system. Members of SSM sat down to think about what students need to learn to attain scientific literacy and came up with a plan to improve the current system, which doesn’t work. Were the amendment to pass, however, we would be left with what we already have and no likelihood of improving it, for the possibility of implementing the kind of amendment that Mr. Parsons has suggested for the third science course would vanish (because there would
be no third course to amend). Mr. Colgan added that the proposed science goal causes more work for SSM. The effort on the part of SSM in developing the goal has not been a frivolous endeavor. He asked that the Senate vote against the amendment and invited the Senate to work with SSM.

Hugh Wilder (Philosophy) moved to extend time by 15 minutes. After receiving a second, the motion passed.

Todd McNerney (at large) said that at the last meeting he expressed his concern about adding more hours to Gen Ed. Since then he did some research and found that the scholarly society of his discipline recommends that 50% to 70% of a student’s credit hours be devoted to Gen Ed. Based on this research, Mr. McNerney now sees the possibility of extending the number of Gen-Ed hours and thinks there is room for expansion.

Mr. Wilder thanked Mr. Norris and Mr. Colgan for their offers to work with the faculty of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS), but was still concerned about the language in the document before the Senate. For example, it doesn’t say anything about a requirement that the extra science course be integrative or interdisciplinary. He would be more comfortable if the document were revised. Also, he didn’t agree that if the amendment passes the two remaining courses would look like our current courses. We aren’t necessarily left with the status quo.

Mr. Colgan replied that we can’t fulfill the stated goal with two courses. It simply can’t be done, he insisted. Therefore the amendment weakens the Gen-Ed science requirement and shuts the door on productive modifications. If the amendment passes, another third course—however conceived—won’t happen.

Idee Winfield (Sociology) asked if it would be possible to construct new courses with required labs that were interdisciplinary and that would involve other departments. Jason Overby (Biochemistry/Chemistry) responded that Harvard has done this, which has eliminated introductory biology, but it requires large courses. Jim Newhard (Classics) thought that such courses could be done and gave the example of a course combining classics and archaeology.

Frank Morris (at large) spoke against the amendment. He thought that a total of 11 hours devoted to science was fine, especially in light of the new ideas that have been mentioned.

Richard Nunan (at large) wanted to re-address the issue of a goal-driven model vs. a distribution model. The Gen-Ed Committee wants to promote a goal-driven model, but the details may not favor such a system. We tend, he argued, to circle the disciplinary wagons. While he was glad that such was not the case tonight, he doubts the changed attitude will last. He was also concerned about how the Gen-Ed Committee “consults” with “experts.” When he proposed his amendment to add more flexibility into the science requirement, Jaap Hillenius (at large) said that the “Defining Characteristics” were broad, which meant that covering them in three or even two courses would be easy. Other faculty in SSM, however, have said that reducing the number of required science courses from three to two would make
Mr. Nunan pointed out. He said he would like to hear which view other science faculty see as more probable. If we keep the third course, he continued, what would count as satisfying it? Would, for example, a current course in Religious Studies dealing with the relationship between science and religion count? He was concerned that only scientists would be allowed to teach these courses. Meg Cormack (at large) said that the course mentioned by Mr. Nunan had been approved by the Faculty Senate, and she assumed that faculty in the humanities would be able to teach it.

Scott Peeples (English) moved to extend debate by 15 minutes. After receiving a second, the motion passed.

Jaap Hillenius (at large) said that he could see certain courses from the Department of Psychology and the Department of Anthropology as qualifying for the science requirement. SSM didn’t have a monopoly on science courses. Other departments not in SSM would be involved in teaching science. Steve Jaumé (Geology) said that he would love to have colleagues from other departments collaborate with him in teaching some of his courses. He also noted that such collaboration is in keeping with the language in “Defining Characteristic” #5: “integrative and synergistic.”

Evan Parry (Theatre) said that he was “torn” over the amendment. While he was in sympathy with his colleagues in SSM to serve our students better by reforming the science component of our current Gen-Ed system, his concern was that students would not be adequately exposed to knowledge in other areas, especially experiential knowledge. Students also need that kind of knowledge in the arts, he stressed. So broadening students’ exposure to the sciences may shrink their exposure to other academic areas. There is also, he added, the issue of resources. These, too, will be made less available for certain disciplines.

Bob Mignone (guest) said that if you look at the entire Gen-Ed Proposal, it is an attempt to provide a “holistic” education to students. If you limit the science requirement, “you open up a Pandora’s Box” in that the Senate, after approving the goals, is denying the means to reach those goals. If the amendment passes, the College won’t be able to meet the learning objectives as spelled out in the “Defining Characteristics.” We thus need to see the Gen-Ed Proposal as a holistic educational package and not chip at it here and there.

Mr. Peeples (English) said that he remained “on the fence” over the amendment for the reasons explained by Evan Parry. He said that he also shared Mr. Wilder’s concern about the absence of language in the Goal II.1/III.1 that would ensure that the added required science course would be interdisciplinary. However, he was generally persuaded by the arguments of Mr. Preyer and Mr. Colgan and was leaning toward voting to keep the third course. He hoped that the Senate could address Mr. Wilder’s concern with another amendment, but thought that it was healthier to reject the amendment to cut the required science courses from two to three. Mr. Hopkins (History) underscored Mr. Peeples’ view and urged that the amendment be rejected.
Mr. Parson remarked that there seemed to be a genuine desire to provide students with an integrative learning experience, but stressed that if we agree to keep the third science course, then we also agree that the faculty takes collective ownership of it, that it won’t just be something that scientists teach, and that we will need to correct the language in the document, specifically in the following sections: “Defining Characteristics” and “Approval Criteria.” He then read a two-part amendment that he would propose if the amendment to cut the required science courses from three to two failed. His amendment, he underlined, would officially require the third course to be integrative and interdisciplinary:

Two amendments to Goal III.1 Knowledge of the Natural World.

1. Amend the Defining Characteristics by adding at the end of clause 5 under “knowledge of the natural world” the phrase “and/or its application to individual and social behavior.”

2. Amend Approval Criteria by adding a third section to read:

“At least half of the content of any non-laboratory course must be defined by the social, political and/or cultural processes through which scientific knowledge becomes effective in individual and social behavior.”

Larry Krasnoff (Philosophy) stated that he would like to speak against Mr. Peeples’ view. He was not convinced that the problems and concerns that Mr. Peeples mentioned would be fixed later. Also, referring to Mr. Mignone’s point, he said that he was not sure that he was bound by an earlier Senate vote on the Gen-Ed goals. Then returning to a point made earlier by Mr. Nunan concerning the various “Defining Characteristics” of the goal, he thought that achieving #4 and #5 were doable, but was not sure that the courses that have been mentioned would meet #1, #2, and #3. Lastly, he said that he thought that one science course and one lab were enough for students.

At this point the Senate voted on Mr. Blackwell’s motion to reduce the number of required science courses from three to two. The motion failed.

Mr. McNerney moved to extend the debate on page 6 of the Proposal by 15 minutes. After receiving a second, the motion passed.

Mr. Parson then moved that the “Defining Characteristics” and “Approval Criteria” be altered and officially proposed the two-part amendment recorded above. In explaining the rationale for the amendment, he said that it was clear from earlier comments in the meeting—especially those made by Mr. Colgan—that there was a willingness to make the added science course interdisciplinary. But he reiterated that it was crucial that the language in the document reflect that attitude and make clear the link between science and social/cultural issues.

David Gentry (at large) asked if the third interdisciplinary course could be a lab course. Norine Noonan (Dean of SSM) said “no.” Such a course was not envisioned as a lab. George Pothering (guest and Chair of the ad hoc Committee on Gen Ed) asked Mr. Parson if his
amendment referred to courses that did not have an affiliated lab. Mr. Parson said that that was correct. Agnes Ayme-Southgate (Biology) suggested that the course in Mr. Parsons proposed amendment be defined as “a course that does not have a required lab.” Mr. Nunan said that he assumed that the third course was not intended to be a regular science lab course.

Paul Young (Mathematics) asked for a clarification. He thought that Requirement #1 should include the phrase “at least” and read “at least three approved courses” and “at least two approved labs.” He also said that he didn’t see that there was a non-lab course required, and wanted to be sure that if a student took three courses with three labs, the student would be officially regarded as having met Requirement #1. Ms. Noonan replied that the key word is not “required,” but “approved.” She added that the Gen-Ed Committee is the body that will approve courses, and that she wouldn’t presuppose the outcome of the approval process. Mr. Pothering added as a point of information that the courses would go to the Gen-Ed Committee for approval first and then ultimately go to the Senate for approval.

John Huddleston (Religious Studies) proposed an amendment to Mr. Parson’s amendment, suggesting that any required science courses count as an interdisciplinary science course so long as it met the criterion that one half of its content included. He moved that the wording in the proposed amendment be changed from “At least half of the content of any non-laboratory course must. . . .” to “At least half of the content of one of the three courses must. . . .” The proposed amendment to the amendment was seconded and debate on it ensued.

Mr. Overby thought that the cumbersome bureaucratic complications were being created. Mr. Preyer pointed out that Mr. Parson’s amendment would allow, say, physics and history to count as an interdisciplinary course, but not physics and biology. The amendment cuts out interdisciplinary courses within the sciences. In response, Ms. Winfield asked why a lab couldn’t be interdisciplinary within the sciences.

Mr. Nunan moved to extend the debate by 15 minutes. After receiving a second, the motion passed.

Mr. Hillenius argued that Mr. Parson’s amendment would result in chaos because it would lead to excessive micro-management. He said that he understood the sentiment behind the amendment, but suggested that what was needed was a broad menu of courses, rather than a proliferation of committee decisions about which courses have the right interdisciplinary mix. Mr. Krasnoff responded that the if the third science course is going to be different, then language in the document has to explain its difference. Gerry Gonsavles (Marketing & Supply Chain Management) suggested that adding the word “approved” to Mr. Huddleston’s amendment might help solve some of problems raised by Senators and make the language of the amendment consistent with the rest of the Gen-Ed document. The Speaker asked for unanimous consent to insert the word “approved,” but unanimous consent was not granted.

At this point, Mr. Peeples called the question. The motion was seconded and passed. The Senate voted on Mr. Huddleston’s motion to amend Mr. Parson’s proposed amendment and the motion passed.
Debate on Mr. Parson’s proposed amendment resumed.

Mr. Nunan warned that if any of the three courses can potentially satisfy the interdisciplinary requirement that is being proposed in Mr. Parson’s amendment, then bureaucratic chaos will ensue. Nevertheless, he said he favored Mr. Parson’s amendment and voted against the earlier proposed amendment to cut the science requirement from three to two courses because the third course was promised to be interdisciplinary, which he thought constituted a significant contribution to Gen Ed.

Michael Gomez (Hispanic Studies) thought the language in the proposed amendment was too specific and left out the relation of the different disciplines within science. He moved that the Senate add language at the end of the last sentence of the amendment to address this issue. He suggested adding the phrase “and its relation to other disciplines in science.” His motion was seconded, and later Ms. Cormack proposed to substitute “and/or” for “and,” but unanimous consent was not granted.

Mr. Overby said he was in favor of adding an interdisciplinary requirement to the science goal, but that it should not exclude interdisciplinary relationships among the sciences. Sorinel Oprisan (Physics/Astronomy) echoed Mr. Overby’s point and stressed the importance of the interdisciplinary dynamic within science. Garrett Mitchner (guest) observed that the language in the proposed amendment seemed to limit interdisciplinary connections only to those between science and the humanities.

In response, Ms. Winfield stated that the purpose of the Mr. Parson’s amendment is to build bridges between the sciences and areas outside the sciences. Jon Hakkila (guest) favored adding an interdisciplinary requirement in this section of the document, but was also nervous about excluding the sciences. Carol Ann Davis (English) asked whether the other two required science courses couldn’t be interdisciplinary science courses. Mr. Parson said that he was uncomfortable with Mr. Gomez’ motion to alter his proposed amendment because the intention of his amendment was to make sure that three of the required eleven hours be devoted to investigating the links between the sciences and the humanities and social sciences. He reiterated the question of why the other two science courses couldn’t focus on interconnections within the sciences.

Mr. McNerney moved to extend debate by 15 minutes. After receiving a second, the motion passed.

Pete Calcagno (Economics) speaking in favor of Mr. Gomez’ motion urged that students be given maximum choice in choosing the kind of interdisciplinary course they wished to take. He thought that the language of the Mr. Parson’s proposed amendment should be as broad as possible.

Mr. Peeples said that since it is possible the other two required science courses could focus on interdisciplinary relationships among the sciences, he thought Mr. Gomez’s proposed amendment was unnecessary, and stressed that it was essential to keep a provision in place that maintained the link between the sciences and the social sciences/humanities.
Mr. Nunan expressed his worry that if Mr. Gomez’s proposed amendment passed, others would follow that would gut the intent of Mr. Parson’s amendment.

Carol Toris (Psychology) was confused about the language of Mr. Gomez’ proposed amendment and specifically wanted clarification on the term “other disciplines.” What are the “other disciplines”? Those in psychology do scientific research on social behavior, so where does psychology fall? Mr. Gomez replied that his intent was to broaden choice, so he wanted the language to be a little vague to increase inclusiveness.

Y. Henry Xie (Marketing & Supply Chain Management) complained that the Senate proceedings had become a “circus.” He remarked on the distinction between policy issues and operational matters, and said that the Senate should concern itself with policy.

The Senate then voted on Mr. Gomez’ proposed amendment, which would add the phrase “and its relation to other disciplines in science” to the end of statement #1 in Mr. Parson’s proposed amendment. Mr. Gomez’s proposed amendment failed.

Discussion of Mr. Parson’s proposed amendment resumed. Mr. Young spoke against it, arguing that it would hurt science majors, who might take many science courses, yet still wouldn’t qualify to graduate if they hadn’t taken the interdisciplinary science course. Mr. Mitchner thought that the Senate shouldn’t be discussing the amendment until reaching page 8 of the Gen-Ed Proposal, where Goal II.3—Interdisciplinary Analysis and Creative Problem Solving—is articulated.

Mr. Hopkins, speaking in favor of the amendment, gave an example of how science and politics intersects. He mentioned his research into the controversies surrounding the history of black lung disease among miners. The science on black disease was contested; it was a political issue with important political implications. Courses that explore the kind of synergy between science, history, and politics are what the proposed amendment is all about. While it’s good to have interdisciplinary courses within the sciences, that is not the point of the amendment.

James Williams (library) also supported the proposed amendment because it would enable students to see how the sciences intersected with other disciplines. Mr. Overby argued that the wording of the proposed amendment was more restrictive than many realized. For example, the amendment seemed to exclude art as a possible area of interdisciplinary relevance. And if one wished to develop a course that linked art and science, who would decide if they go together? The guidelines seem to make things overly restrictive and bureaucratic.

Mr. Hopkins moved to extend the debate by 15 minutes. After receiving a second, the motion passed.

Mr. Krasnoff in part agreed with Mr. Overby and said that if we approve this amendment, then we should perhaps get rid of the interdisciplinary goal on page 8, which, he thought, was micro-specific. But because the Senate decided that a third required science which would be
different from other two was needed, then the Senate was obliged to spell out how it is
different.

Mr. Hillenius, Mr. Mignone, and Jerry Boetje agreed with Mr. Overby that the amendment
was too restrictive. Mr. Mignone reminded the Senate that the Gen-Ed Committee would be
determining what courses would count toward the science requirements, not science faculty.
And to lessen anxieties over the science-humanities divide, Mr. Boetje added that
conversations between the sciences and humanities would build on tonight’s dialogue

In response, Mr. Wilder reminded the Senate that the amendment constituted an attempt to
distinguish the third course from the other two. He said that he was sold on upping the
number of science credit hours from eight to eleven on the promise that the third course
would be different; but if the amendment fails, then we would be left with more of what we
already have. He added that the hypothetical student mentioned by Mr. Young—the student
who took a number of different science courses, yet who would not be eligible to graduate if
the amendment passed—needs the very course that the amendment provides for precisely
because it would force that student to examine the relationship between science and society.

Tim Carmichael (History) said that he didn’t see the language in the amendment as restrictive.
It struck him as fairly broad because it dealt with general categories.

Mr. Colgan said that he would like to see a smaller committee work on the amendment to
bridge the gap between the different views articulated in the Senate tonight. That would be a
more serious way of dealing with the amendment.

At this point, the idea of tabling the amendment came up. Brian McGee, the Parliamentarian,
said that the Senate couldn’t table the amendment now, but that a committee could be
appointed if the proposed amendment were defeated. Mr. Hakkila supported the idea of
forming a committee to sort out differences on how the third course would be defined, and
appealed to the members of the Senate who were divided over the issue to work together.

At this point Mr. Krasnoff called the question. The motion received a second and passed.
The Senate voted on Mr. Parson’s amendment, which failed.

Mr. Krasnoff then moved to table page 6 of the Proposal. The motion passed. The Speaker
said he would form a committee to work on a new amendment that would explain the nature
of the third science course.

Respectfully submitted,

Terence Bowers,
Faculty Secretary