The Faculty Senate met on Tuesday October 23, 2007, at 5:00 p.m. in Wachovia Auditorium. This was the fourth 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, he announced that his decision to allow a motion to table p. 6 of the Gen-Ed Proposal (Goal II. Scientific Reasoning and Analysis, and Goal III.1 Knowledge of the Natural World), which the Senate passed at the end of the last meeting, was not in order. After researching the issue with Parliamentarian Brian McGee and other faculty colleagues, he ruled that a paragraph (i.e., page) of a document that is being examined *seriatim* cannot be laid on the table. To do so, the Senate must suspend the rules, which requires a two-thirds vote, and then move to lay a part of the document on the table. The speaker thus declared that the motion to table p. 6 as invalid, and said that if there were no objections, the Senate would resume its discussion of p. 6. No objections were made.

Tim Callahan (Geology) then proposed an amendment to p. 6 that Jack Parson (Political Science) and some other faculty had crafted and circulated before the meeting. After the motion was seconded, Mr. Callahan pointed out just how the amendment changed p. 6. In Defining Characteristic #5 and Approval Criterion #5, the amendment added the words “within and outside of scientific disciplines,” so that both lines read as follows: “integrative and synergistic nature of scientific knowledge within and outside of scientific disciplines.” The amendment also added the following statement at the bottom of p. 6: “One of the three approved courses must be defined by an interdisciplinary approach involving the relationship of scientific knowledge to societal needs, cultural values and/or creative expression.”

Meg Cormack (at-large) thought the wording of the added sentence could be improved and asked for unanimous consent to substitute the phrase “to societal needs, cultural values and/or creative expression” with the phrase “knowledge of human culture and society.” She then read a definition of the word “culture” provided by an anthropologist. Denis Keyes (at-large) asked why it was necessary to include the word “human.” Unanimous consent was not granted. Ms. Cormack then made a formal motion to amend Mr. Callahan’s amendment.

Jerry Boetje (Computer Science) said that he would like to include in p. 6 the definition of “culture” that Ms. Cormack read. The Speaker responded that the Senate would first have to deal with Ms. Cormack’s amendment; then his suggestion could be addressed. Jack Parsons (Political Science) said that he would be happy to include the definition and thought that it would provide guidance for others in the future.

The Senate then voted on Ms. Cormack’s motion, and it passed. Mr. Boetje then moved to amend Mr. Callahan’s motion by adding the definition of “culture” read by Ms. Cormack. His motion was seconded, and the Parliamentarian then re-read the definition. Doryjane Birrer noticed that the word “man” was in the definition and asked for unanimous consent to use non-sexist wording. Maureen Hays (Sociology/Anthropology) voiced some concern about this suggestion and said that the definition is a direct quote from the anthropologist
Edward Tyler, and that it would be useful to include the attribution and awkward to alter the quotation. Unanimous consent was thus not granted. Larry Krasnoff (Philosophy) said that adding the definition was not needed and not appropriate for this kind of document.

George Hopkins (History) moved to extend debate on p. 6 by fifteen minutes. The motion, after being seconded, passed.

John Huddlestun (Religious Studies) agreed with Mr. Krasnoff and pointed out that after defining “culture,” the Senate would need to define “society,” and that such elaborations were unneeded. Jason Overby (Biochemistry/Chemistry) joked that the next step would be to attach the dictionary to the document. The Senate then voted on Mr. Boetje’s motion, which failed.

Hugh Wilder (Philosophy) said that he had looked at a number of existing courses—such as The History of Science and Technology—to see if they accorded with the language of the proposed amendment, and wondered if the scientists in the Senate thought they were appropriate courses for Goals II.1/III.1. Bob Mignone (guest) wished to respond to Mr. Wilder’s question and to give his overall opinion on the amendment. He began by thanking those who put the amendment together, but said he opposed it. He thought the amendment would end up excluding courses and creating confusion, and didn’t see a need for it. He thought that the amendment would include the courses that Mr. Wilder mentioned, but would exclude a number of science courses and thus be restrictive. Richard Nunan (at-large) said he was surprised by Mr. Mignone’s interpretation of the proposed amendment. He saw the amendment as being expansive in that it included courses that are not typically in science departments as well as those that are (such as the History of Chemistry).

Darryl Phillips (at-large) said that Mr. Wilder’s question—asking scientists whether certain courses counted toward a science focused goal—revealed a fundamental issue, which is that we are trying to make a goal-driven Gen-Ed model match our current distributive model. He thought that now would be a good time to ask whether we aren’t better suited to our present distributive model of Gen Ed. Let’s stick with what we have, he urged. Let’s let scientists settle their portion of the curriculum and trust our colleagues in each discipline to teach their sections of the curriculum. If we can’t decide on what courses count toward Gen Ed, we will hurt the quality of our courses. He added that the new proposed Gen-Ed scheme would increase our bureaucracy, and that the Gen-Ed Committee would become a battleground of endless arguing. It would be better to stay with our current system and modify incrementally, rather than make radical, sweeping changes.

Mr. Parson responded that such comments would be more appropriate after the amendment process was completed. He added that he doesn’t see the amendment as ensuring that the third science course would necessarily come from departments outside the sciences. The point of the amendment is to connect science and society. The courses that will satisfy this requirement can come from science departments. This amendment, he stressed, is important and is line with the white paper that the School of Science and Mathematics gave to the Gen-Ed Committee.
Paul Young (Mathematics) said that the proposed amendment seemed not to be aligned with the original rationale. Jim Deavor (guest) next urged the Senate to defeat the proposed amendment. He agreed with Bob Mignone that it dictates what courses must be taught and is too restrictive. It would be better to suggest what courses may be taught.

Mitchell Colgan (guest), one of the persons who helped draft the proposed amendment, spoke of how the committee tried to define the third required course for Goals II.1/III.1. He first reminded the Senate that at the last meeting there was general agreement that students needed more exposure to science, that our present system of science education needed to be reformed, and that science courses aren’t currently meeting the needs of students. He added that the Senate had desired some assurance that the third course would be different from the other two. The proposed amendment specifies how it is different. He said, too, that we needed to trust each other, and that most of the negative comments stemmed from a lack of trust between those in science and those in other disciplines. He expressed confidence in the faculty’s ability to work together, and emphasized that the amendment helps us do that and will provide for courses that explain how science intersects with social and cultural issues. He thought that the amendment, far from being restrictive, as some had suggested, was just the opposite.

At this point, a Senator called the question. The motion was seconded and then passed.

Scott Peeples (English) moved to extend debate on p. 6 for fifteen minutes. After receiving a second, the motion passed.

The Senate then voted on Mr. Callahan’s proposed amendment, and it passed.

Mr. Nunan then proposed an amendment to the amendment that passed. He moved to modify the last sentence on p. 6 in the following way: “The third (non-lab) course One of the three approved courses must be defined by an interdisciplinary approach involving the relationship of scientific knowledge to culture and society.” He explained that the purpose of his amendment was to address the problem of increasingly complex “combinatorial logistics” stemming from the course-tagging required by the Defining Characteristics of the Goal. He said that there are four content criteria that students must meet to satisfy the Goals of p. 6—(1) “The origin and evolution of the Universe,” (2) “The origin and evolution of the Earth,” (3) “The nature of the physical world,” (4) “The nature of the biosphere and how it evolves over time”—as well as two process criteria (“The processes of inquiry in science” and “The integrative and synergistic nature of scientific knowledge”). The newly passed amendment increases this complexity because it adds another content criterion that must be met by one of three required science courses. Mr. Nunan provided a chart that diagrammed the problem of combinatory logistics, and stressed his worry over the complex scheduling and planning problems that students would be facing to meet the science goal. He explained that his amendment, which specifically designates the third course as the one that meets the science—society/culture criterion, would help reduce this complexity.

Mr. Boetje remarked that the term “third course” suggests a sequence, but noted that we are not dealing with a sequence of courses. He also said that the issue of combinatorial logistics
would be easy to solve, especially with the aid of the appropriate software, which already exists. Mr. Young wondered what was meant by the phrase “non-lab course.” Nothing in the document, he said, stipulates that one has to take a non-lab course. Mr. Deavor asked if the amendment meant that current lab courses would not satisfy the third-course requirement.

Mr. Nunan replied that that was correct: he was assuming that non-lab courses would satisfy the third-course requirement. He said that students are required to take two lab courses and that because their content is pure science they would not count toward the third-course requirement, in which the interrelationships between science and society/culture are explored. He said, however, that the word “third” is not crucial for his amendment. It can be removed.

Ms. Cormack responded that she could imagine a science course with a lab that yet explores a content area outside of the sciences. She said that she would not want to see such a course excluded from meeting the goal on p. 6. Mr. Mignone again voiced his concern that things were becoming more restrictive—now labs were being shut out. He thought we were headed in the wrong direction.

Mr. Nunan responded that the intent of his amendment was not to exclude science courses, but to address a logistical problem. In response to one of Mr. Boetje’s earlier comments, he said it’s not that simple to say we can rely on computers to solve the problem. The issue is complexity and the solution is to reduce the complexity in the Gen-Ed requirements. Students, he added, don’t plan out their courses four years in advance and don’t use sophisticated software to do their course planning.

Mr. Boetje moved to extend debate on p. 6 by twenty minutes. After receiving a second, the motion passed. He then said that by cutting out lab courses as a way of satisfying the third-science course requirement, we are cutting out possibilities. Many faculty, he added, will be coming up with new courses, and some of these may satisfy the requirement and yet also have labs.

The Senate then voted on Mr. Nunan’s proposed amendment, which failed.

Mr. Krasnoff announced that he would like to propose an amendment to change Goal II.3 on p. 8 (Interdisciplinary Analysis and Creative Problem-Solving) and require two interdisciplinary courses, thus increasing the required credit hours from three to six, and reduce the number of credit hours for the science requirement from eleven to eight. The rationale for this change, he suggested, in part stems from the fact that the Senate has allowed that science content can be taught in two courses and that a third course should be interdisciplinary.

At this point Speaker Kelly ruled that such a motion was out of order because it would mean treating the Gen-Ed Proposal out of sequence, thus violating the procedure of viewing the document in seriatim.

Mr. Overby then moved to overrule the Speaker’s decision. The motion was seconded and debate on it ensued. Mr. Nunan said he was not sure that Mr. Krasnoff’s motion was
appropriate because we haven’t arrived at p. 8 of the document and we don’t know how people will view it until they have seen how pp. 6-7 have been modified. Mr. Overby responded that this was a “bell-weather moment” because it went to the issue of whether the Senate really wanted a third science course. Jennifer McStotts (at-large) in part agreed, but advised Senators not to overrule the Speaker because the issue in question is one that would be more appropriate to look at in the end, when all pages would be considered together. Mr. Boetje echoed her comment and said that the issue is turning into a global one, and that this is not the point for such a discussion. Let’s wait until the end, he advised, when we know what the whole document looks like. He urged the Senate to support the Speaker’s ruling. Mr. Krasnoff asked if his motion would be accepted when the Senate reached p. 8, and the Speaker said that it would.

The Senate voted on the motion to overturn the Speaker’s ruling. The motion failed.

Discussion of p. 6 resumed. Mr. Wilder mentioned some other kinds of science courses, such as those in physical anthropology and in neuro-science (often in Psychology Departments). In many schools with goal-driven Gen-Ed programs, he noted, such courses, which are very good science courses, satisfy the science requirement. He asked how they would fit into the new Gen-Ed system, and whether they would be excluded if they didn’t have a lab.

Mr. Mignone replied that he didn’t see why such courses would be excluded, and thought the Gen-Ed Committee would accept them. Mr. Parson was also not concerned that they would be excluded.

At this point, the Senate was ready to move to p. 7 of the Gen-Ed Proposal, but before discussion of that page began, Jon Hakkila (guest) announced that he had enjoyed the discussions on the science and math goals in the Senate. He felt that the discussions had opened up an important dialogue on campus that had not heretofore existed, and was confident that it would continue to be fruitful and bring faculty together. He concluded by thanking all who had participated in the discussions.

Mr. Phillips began discussion of p. 7 (Goal II.2 Social and Cultural Analysis) by commenting on the fact that Goal II.2 has no required courses. If one key aim of the new Gen-Ed Proposal, he said, is to make things clearer, then p. 7, which states a goal with no courses required to meet that goal, makes things less clear. He urged the Senate to clean up parts of the Gen-Ed document like p. 7 and to make the Gen-Ed requirements clear to students. Mr. Pothering (guest and chair of the ad hoc Committee on Gen Ed) replied that the point of p. 7 is to highlight that there is such a thing as social and cultural analysis, which will be specified in detail in the next section. Rohn England (Mathematics) remarked that what exists on p. 7 may not clearly apply or correspond to what follows in the next sections of the document once those sections are amended. In response to Mr. England’s concern, Todd McNerney (at large) said that the Senate could always return to p. 7 and amend it to accord with other parts of the document. Mr. England replied that it was odd to be voting on something that applies to sections that haven’t been approved.
Mr. Overby suggested that it would be better to deal with p. 7 after the Senate’s discussion of Goal III. He thus made a motion to suspend the rules and to move p. 7 and examine it after the Senate completed its discussion of the document through p. 12. After being seconded, the motion passed.

The Senate next turned its attention to p. 8 concerning Goal II.3: Interdisciplinary Analysis and Creative Problem-Solving. Mr. Parson began discussion by proposing an amendment. In light of the changes made to p. 6, which now requires that students take an interdisciplinary course that involves science, he argued that it was appropriate to change the requirement for Goal II.3. He thus proposed that the Requirement be changed to read as follows: “Students will not be required to complete additional coursework to fulfill this goal, which will be accomplished through coursework required to satisfy goals II.1 / III.1.” His proposed amendment also would replace language in the Approval Criteria with the statement “None required.”

Mr. Pothering spoke against the amendment, arguing that if the new science requirement doesn’t survive the entire amendment process, then we will have to return to p. 8 to put back the language that Mr. Parson’s amendment seeks to remove. If we leave the existing language in, he added, then nothing it lost. Moreover, if, say, in five or six years the science requirement is changed, the interdisciplinary requirement won’t be lost with it and will remain in the Gen-Ed requirements. Mr. Parson responded, saying that since we agree that the new third course requirement in the sciences must be interdisciplinary, then the language on p. 8 is redundant and potentially confusing to students. It is logical, he thought to remove the redundancy. Also, if the science requirements were to change, we can at the same time make the appropriate changes to retain an interdisciplinary course requirement.

Ms. Cormack expressed her support for the motion, but Mr. Peeples, though agreeing with Mr. Parson in principle, thought it was better to leave in the redundancy about an interdisciplinary requirement as a safe-guard to insure that it won’t be lost if the science requirements were to change.

Mr. Overby agreed with Mr. Peeples, and added that the existing language on p. 8 sends a message to students about the importance of interdisciplinary courses. He thought that the interdisciplinary course requirement was already far too low. Rather than one interdisciplinary course, he would like to see five or six required. He also observed that the amendment locked students into taking an interdisciplinary course involving science, thus discouraging students from taking other kinds of interdisciplinary courses.

Evan Parry (Theatre) agreed with Mr. Overby. He added that p. 8 also encouraged collaboration among departments to create and offer interdisciplinary courses. He said that he would like to see more interdisciplinary courses.

Paul Young (Mathematics) desired a little more clarification on what the motion would do, and said that he saw a potential problem in the fact that the interdisciplinary course is required on p. 6, but much of the language specifying the interdisciplinary goal is on p. 8. Mr.
Krasnoff remarked that two separate issues had emerged, one about redundancy in the document, the other about whether there should be more interdisciplinary courses.

The Senate then voted on Mr. Parson’s proposed amendment, which failed.

Ms. Cormack then made a motion to move the discussion of p. 8 till p. 18 had been discussed. The motion received a second, but did not pass.

Mr. Krasnoff next suggested the idea of changing the interdisciplinary requirement from three to six hours. Mr. Overby spoke in favor of the idea. It’s important, he added, to show how knowledge of all areas interconnects. He reiterated his desire to see four or five interdisciplinary courses. Mr. Nunan reminded the Senate that increasing the interdisciplinary-course requirement would exacerbate the problem of combinatorial logistics that he had discussed earlier in the evening. He urged the Senate to be realistic about this problem. George Hopkins (History) said he liked the idea of increasing the interdisciplinary-course requirement, but was also concerned about feasibility. However, despite this problem, he said that he would like to see one more interdisciplinary course required.

Mr. Krasnoff then moved to increase the interdisciplinary course requirement from one to two. The motion was seconded.

Maureen Hagood (Elementary and Early Childhood Education) asked why the Gen-Ed Committee had decided on only one interdisciplinary course, and not more. Mr. Pothering responded that up to the formulation of the Gen-Ed Proposal there had been none, and that the Committee thought it was wise to begin modestly, especially given some complaints voiced earlier in the process that too many hours were being added to the Gen-Ed requirements. Ms. Hagood added that if the interdisciplinary goal is a serious one, the Senate should devise requirements to help students really reach the goal. She also suggested that the phrase “two courses” was a little vague and asked for unanimous consent to change it to “six hours,” but unanimous consent was not obtained.

Ms. Cormack suggested that the Senate might want to talk about the Approval Criteria before adding courses.

Mr. Overby stressed that because the third science will count as the interdisciplinary course requirement, students won’t have much choice in terms of the kind of interdisciplinary course they may take. Now is the time, he said, to give them more choice and to send a signal about the importance of interdisciplinary learning. Mr. Parry wondered if Goal II.3 would require substantive involvement of different disciplines and interaction among departments; and Steve Jaumé (Geology) wondered whether the new interdisciplinary science course added to p. 6 would fit the “Approval Criteria” for interdisciplinary courses as specified on p. 8. In response to these questions, Mr. Mignone said that the Senate now seems to be saying that two faculty members will be expected to teach an interdisciplinary course for it to meet the “Approval Criteria.” If that is the case, then that is a high standard and the new science course wouldn’t count as an interdisciplinary course.
Mr. Peeples thought that if the Senate is going to add another required interdisciplinary course, then it should relax the Approval Criteria. To expect every interdisciplinary course to be team-taught would be too taxing on resources and end up discouraging the practice of team-teaching.

Mr. Hopkins moved to extend debate by fifteen minutes. The motion passed, after being seconded. Mr. Hopkins then pointed out that one person can teach an interdisciplinary course and pointed to the example of Introduction to American Studies, an interdisciplinary course regularly taught by one faculty member. Mr. Krasnoff thought that the notion that two faculty would be required to teach an interdisciplinary course was a “straw man,” and was certain that the Gen-Ed Committee did not intend all interdisciplinary courses to be team taught. George Pothering (chair of the Gen-Ed Committee) confirmed this point. But Mr. Krasnoff added that he did not see a problem in relaxing the standards in the Approval Criteria to make that intention clear.

Edith Ellis (Health and Human Performance) asked for unanimous consent to insert the words “at least” in the amendment to the Requirement: “All students must complete at least two approved courses.” But unanimous consent was not obtained.

Tim Carens (English) noted that the problematic phrase in the Approval Criteria seemed to be “disciplinary grounding” found in #2. To relax the standard for interdisciplinary courses, he suggested that that phrase be changed or removed. Mr. Parry stated that wanted to retain the possibility of teach-teaching, which, he thought, would greatly benefit students and offer exciting teaching and learning opportunities.

Garrett Mitchner questioned how firm and useful the definition of interdisciplinarity was. He suggested that some disciplines—such as history, which takes knowledge from other disciplines (e.g., economics and sociology)—are by nature interdisciplinary. In that respect, nearly all courses from such departments would be interdisciplinary. In response, Mr. Pothering said that though a number of history courses might make use of knowledge from economics and sociology, that is different from providing students a grounding in those disciplines. Unless such courses do that, they are not really interdisciplinary.

At this point, the Senate voted on Mr. Krasnoff motion to increase the number of required interdisciplinary course from one to two. The motion passed.

Mr. Wilder then returned to the issue of the language in the Approval Criteria of p. 8. He pointed out that the Approval Criteria on p. 6 for the interdisciplinary science course was different from the Approval Criteria for all interdisciplinary courses on p. 8, and said that this difference could create problems. One solution, he suggested, was to drop all the Approval Criteria on p. 8, except #1, which would still need some modification.

Mr. Overby argued against this suggestion. He thought it would be better to have clear and strong language in the text about what constitutes an interdisciplinary course. Mr. Krasnoff said that he agreed in principle with Mr. Overby, but he also agreed with Mr. Wilder on practical grounds. He added that we needed to trust the Gen-Ed Committee to insist on and
select courses that are strongly interdisciplinary. Mr. McNerney agreed with Mr. Overby and said that he would like to see the criteria on p. 8 applied to the third science course on p. 6. Mr. England argued that keeping the existing Approval Criteria provided good, needed guidance. He noted the use of words such as “must” and “should” in the current language of the Approval Criteria.

Mr. Peeples then moved to delete Approval Criterion #2, arguing that the criteria needed to be simplified. He added that he saw a significant distinction between the ideas expressed in Approval Criterion #1 (“to explore a topic from the perspective of more than one academic discipline”) and those expressed in Approval Criterion #3 (“to demonstrate advancement through integration”), and thus thought that they needed to stay in the document; but he urged the Senate to remove Approval Criterion #2, which contains the phrase “disciplinary grounding” and suggested a much higher standard for what would count as an interdisciplinary course.

Mr. Nunan was also concerned about the language in Approval Criterion #3 and thought that the term “to demonstrate” might need to be revised.

Mr. McNerney moved to extend debate by 15 minutes. His motion, after receiving a second, passed. It was now 7 p.m., the scheduled end of the meeting, and the Senate adjourned. Debate on Mr. Peeples’ motion was scheduled to resume at the next meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Terence Bowers,
Faculty Secretary