

**THE UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME
ACADEMIC COUNCIL
MEETING OF APRIL 19, 2006**

Members Present: Rev. John I. Jenkins, C.S.C., Thomas G. Burish, Dennis Jacobs, Jeffrey Kantor, Rev. Mark Poorman, C.S.C., Panos Antsaklis, Steven Buechler, John Cavadini, Austin Collins, Philippe Collon, Olivia Remie Constable, Tom Cosimano, Katie Crossin, Mary Rose D'Angelo, Kenneth DeBoer, Neil Delaney, Nasir Ghiaseddin, James Grace, Frank Incropera, Jennifer Keegan, Joseph Marino, Collin Meissner, McRae Miller, Robert Nelson, Carolyn Nordstrom, Patricia O'Hara, Hugh Page, Ava Preacher, Vijay Ramanan, John Robinson, Mark Roche, Jennifer Warlick, Carolyn Woo.

Members Absent: Seth Brown, Manish Kelkar, James McAdams, Richard Taylor, Bill Westfall

Members Excused: John Affleck-Graves, Jean Ann Linney, Christine Maziar, Gilberto Cardenas, Stephen Fredman, Hope Hollocher, Michael Lykoudis, Christian Moevs, Teresa Phelps, Ram Ramanan, Valerie Sayers, Scott Van Jacob, Jennifer Younger

Observers Present: Kevin Barry, Mary Hendriksen, LTC Kelly Jordan, Harold Pace, Daniel Saracino

Observers Absent: Dennis Brown, Don Wycliff

Observers Excused: Joy Vann-Hamilton

The Reverend John Jenkins, C.S.C., opened the meeting at 3:05 p.m. Prof.

Nordstrom offered a prayer.

1. Minutes of the meetings of March 29, 2006: The minutes of the meeting of March 29, 2006, were approved without change.

2. Announcement regarding changes in the academic calendar: Fr. Jenkins announced that the change to the academic calendar approved at the last meeting [dealing with years in which the first class day for the fall semester is August 28] will not apply to Fall 2007, as a prior commitment made by the University for August 2007 would cause a conflict with orientation for first-year students. The change will first take effect in the fall of 2012.

3. Changes to the *Academic Code*: (a) Changes other than Advanced Placement

credit: To align the *Academic Code* with actual practice, the Registrar's Office has proposed changes to various sections—for example, those dealing with class loads, the University's course numbering system, midsemester deficiency grade reporting, and final grade reporting. In advance of the meeting, members were given a handout with current and proposed language for the relevant sections.

At today's meeting, comments concerned only the course numbering system. A member asked about the use of "freshman" rather than "first-year student" in Section 10.1. Dr. Pace said that while the designation "first-year student" is generally preferred, in this instance, the term "freshman" is used to distinguish undergraduate entry-level courses from those taken by first-year *law* students.

After a motion to approve was made and seconded, the Council voted unanimously to adopt the suggested changes. They will be incorporated into the faculty handbook and *du Lac*.

(b) Advanced Placement credit (Section 15.2(c)) Prof. Preacher explained that the proposal at hand, an amendment to Section 15.2(c) of the *Code*, has been working its way through the Undergraduate Studies Committee for two years. Its impetus is in the realization by several faculty members and administrators, supported by data compiled by Institutional Research, that Notre Dame is out of step with its peers in the way it applies Advanced Placement (AP) credit. Now, Notre Dame essentially allows *all* entering students' AP credit to be applied toward University and college requirements or to be counted as electives. She then asked Prof. DeBoer to explain the provision further.

Prof. DeBoer reiterated that Notre Dame is more liberal than its peers in accepting

AP credit. In addition, as Prof. Preacher noted, a recent report by the Office of Institutional Research verified that the sheer amount of AP credit grows every year. Many more first-year students enter the University with AP credit, and they are bringing more credit with them than ever before. Thus, nearly 25% of the students who enter with credit have more than 15 hours of it. [See report of the committee, attached as Appendix A.]

Prof. DeBoer said that while the committee began discussion of the problem by thinking about how the University might limit the amount of students' AP credit, they ran into difficulties in establishing new guidelines and also in thinking about how those guidelines might complicate graduation audits. Thus, on the recommendation of one of their number, committee members decided to approach the problem from the other direction. The proposed *Code* section—"A minimum of 60 credit hours at the University and a minimum of 90 credit hours earned after high school graduation through college and university courses" [are among the requirements for graduation]—tightens graduation requirements but does not limit the amount of AP credit students may bring to the University. If passed by the Council, the provision will allow the University to continue to treat AP credit just as it has in the recent past. Thus, all credit earned will be posted and can count toward graduation requirements. The change is that no matter how much AP credit is earned, every student must take 90 credits of *college-level* courses. This, committee members, believe will enhance the academic engagement of students and challenge them to take more courses here at Notre Dame—all without complicating either graduation audits or putting excessive demands on upper-level courses.

Seeing no discussion of the proposal, Fr. Jenkins called for a vote on amending Section 15.2(c) of the *Code* to add that students must earn 90 credit hours from college and university courses after their graduation from high school. It passed unanimously.

4. Endorsement of the report “How Can We Better Inform Students at the Time of Course Selection?”, a proposal to the Notre Dame community from an *ad hoc*

committee of members of Student Government, the Graduate Student Union, and

the Faculty Senate: Prof. Jacobs began by providing a short history of the proposal

prepared by the committee. For many years, he said, Notre Dame students have expressed concerns about how they can obtain accurate and comprehensive information about course offerings. One way Student Government sought to meet that concern was to make a formal request to the Academic Council, in September 2003, for student access to data from the University’s Teacher Course Evaluations (TCEs). The students suggested that access to TCEs could occur via a secure login on IrishLink, with instructors having the opportunity to provide additional comments about their courses in an adjoining text box.

Prof. Jacobs then reviewed the ways that students currently find out about courses. First, the University’s *Bulletin of Information* contains course descriptions. Frequently, however, those descriptions are outdated, and because the entries are generally not written by the course instructor, they often fail to contain the kind of detail that would allow a student to fully understand or appreciate the scope of a course. Second, students glean anecdotal information about courses in which they are interested—for example, by talking to someone in their residence hall who might have taken the course or even with someone who has *not* taken it. Third, an advising system

exists which, at times, is very good but, at other times, can be quite spotty. Even when the system works well, though, students are not always able to collect the detailed information many of them desire about a particular course—especially if that course is outside their own major or outside of their advisor’s area of specialization. Finally, students may look for information about courses in places like NDToday.com, an independent Web site, or rateyourprofessor.com—sites, he said, that have very low response rates, even as low as one percent, have poorly written and unvalidated questions, and do not truly represent a systematic way of looking at what is involved in a course.

While trying to address students’ concerns about more complete course descriptions, Prof. Jacobs said, many faculty and administrators involved in the conversation pointed out that the TCEs have a very specific purpose—primarily, to provide information for confidential personnel decisions on tenure, promotion, and salary increases—and many faculty feel that they should not be distributed widely across campus. Yet, given the legitimate need to provide students with more and better course information, a faculty/student committee was brought together to explore the matter further. Two student members of the Academic Council, Rae Miller, a second-year law student, and Vijay Ramanan, Academic Commissioner for Student Government, were on that committee and can speak today to its methods and proposal. From his perspective, Prof. Jacobs said, the committee worked very effectively in first identifying the kinds of information students desire and then prioritizing it.

Prof. Jacobs next distributed a mock-up of a proposed course information form with simulated data for a hypothetical course. In addition to the information itself, the

mock-up revealed the source for each item of information. Thus: (1) The instructor provides a course description; primary learning goals; a description of how class time is used (e.g, lecture, small group, discussion); and information on the kinds of assignments and types of reading materials students should expect, the role of teaching assistants, and any additional comments [“yellow” data] (2) The Registrar and Institutional Research provide information on prerequisites and enrollment (e.g, the class size and some demographic information about who has taken takes the course over the last three years) [“pink” data]. (3) Student ratings from the course in years past are presented on a sliding scale for five measures [“blue” data]:

- The instructor promoted my learning in this area.
- The assignments and activities of this course promoted my learning in this area.
- I felt engaged in this course.
- The instructor was respectful of students and their points of view.
- The instructor was accessible to students outside of class time.

Prof. Jacobs explained that the proposed course information form was developed by Institutional Research (IR) and piloted in two stages—first by six faculty members and their students and then by about 50 faculty members. In most cases, rather than an absolute number, the form provides data in a way that is intended to show subtleties and emphasis rather than absolutes. For example, in the student ratings section, responses are represented on a sliding scale—from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”—rather than by mean scores. This is intended both to provide a more detailed and nuanced view of a course and professor, and to discourage students from ranking courses by simple numerical means. He pointed out that even if a student is not trying to distinguish between courses but knew that she was going to take a particular course taught by a particular instructor, the course information form would be valuable in that it provides an

outline of the instructor's ambitions for the course and informs the student what components of the course are most important.

Before opening up the proposal for discussion, Prof. Jacobs noted: (1) Responses from students in the pilot stage were very positive. Moreover, the Student Senate has reviewed the form and strongly endorsed its use. (2) Concerning the student data, Prof. Jacobs said, it is important that if the course information form is adopted, the information it contains should remain distinct from the TCEs. Data from course information forms should not be crossed over into personnel decisions.

After saying that he liked the form very much, Prof. Roche offered a few technical suggestions—including “dialogues” in the list of course materials, changing “class participation” to “class contribution,” and standardizing the form's rankings information.

In response to a question from Prof. Warlick, Prof. Jacobs clarified that the items listed on the color-coded hand-out are only a select subset of questions. Thus, in its final form, Question 4, for example, listing the ways that classroom time is utilized, would include 15 choices, not only the four displayed on the mock-up.

Prof. Antsaklis noted that the course information form will be an evolving document. Even if all Council members agreed today on the selection of questions, he said, five years from now, the form will need adjusting. He suggests that faculty members be given an opportunity to offer feedback periodically on the types of questions that produce a good description of their courses.

Prof. Jacobs responded that one way the committee tried to add flexibility to the form was by adding “other” after each question, followed by an open text box in which

instructors can be very specific—for example, as Prof. Roche said, specifying “dialogues” in the lineup of readings. If certain responses appeared in those boxes frequently, they could be added to the actual list—which is what occurred at the pilot stage.

Prof. Constable offered a suggestion for Question 3, which asks instructors to list their “five most important learning goals.” Rather than a numerical ranking system, she said, it would be preferable to list the goals in a bullet format, so that students would not be misled into thinking that an instructor’s goals for a course had an absolute rank.

Prof. O’Hara asked if any law classes were included in the pilot study.

Ms. Miller answered that while she does not know if any law professors participated in the pilot study, the survey has been reviewed by law students for their feedback. Some of their suggestions, which were quite specific to law classes, were added to the questionnaire.

Prof. O’Hara then noted that while the sample Course Information Form has a space for “number of respondents,” frequently, with TCEs, a pronounced difference exists between actual enrollment in a course and the response rate. This discrepancy would be a concern with these forms as well if the information collected for them will supplement TCE data. Yet, Prof. O’Hara said, it is her understanding that the course information form is *not* intended to cross over into the evaluative sphere. She asked if it is correct that deans and department chairs would not have access to any of the student ratings information.

Prof. Jacobs responded that, on the implementation side, he and the committee are working with Office of Information Technology (OIT) personnel, Institutional Research,

and the Registrar on the particulars of a campus roll out. It was the committee's intent that students would access the course information from the Banner system by using their Net ID. If that is the case, the option exists of allowing only students—and not faculty—to access the data. Thus, for any particular course, any University faculty member could see the description, learning goals, use of class time, etc., but the faculty member's "blue" ratings—i.e., the ratings on whether "the instructor promoted my learning in this area," or "the assignments and activities of this course promoted my learning in this area"—would be available only to students.

Prof. O'Hara said that there could be real difficulties if students have access to information unavailable to faculty and administrators. For example, in the Law School, students take a significant number of required courses. If there is a disparity in the "blue" student ratings section for instructors of these courses, she can imagine that students will complain. She recalls raising this question at a deans' cabinet meeting.

Prof. Jacobs said that one of the things being tested in the current pilot study—which includes courses ranging from small seminars to large lectures—is how much variation exists between responses for the questions listed in the "student ratings" portion of this form and responses collected for the same instructor's TCEs. As a dean, Prof. O'Hara would have access to the distribution of responses for all 19 questions on the TCE. Students would have access to separate information—the information collected for this course information sheet. An important issue and one he hopes will be resolved in the pilot study is whether there is a significant disconnect between the two sets of information.

Then, Prof. O’Hara asked, a first-year student who is assigned to one of two required sections would have access to data on how *both* the professors teaching the course scored in this “blue” area?

Prof. Jacobs said that would be true.

Yet, Prof. O’Hara asked, none of that information would be available to administrators?

Prof. Jacobs answered that is the committee’s intent.

Prof. Nordstrom noted that most of the questions in the student ratings section are nearly identical to questions on the TCE. She agrees that it would be very problematical if there proves to be a large disconnect between this information and TCE data.

Prof. Jacobs agreed—and said that underscores why the pilot stage is important. Roll-out of the course information form could not occur, he estimates, for another year and a half. If there is a huge disparity in how students rate professors on the course information forms and the TCEs, then the committee will need to go back and look at these particular questions and what they are measuring.

Prof. O’Hara said that it appears to her that the data collected for the course information form is tantamount to the TCEs. The difference is that the ratings are not reduced to a numerical score.

Prof. Jacobs responded that the course information forms deal with a subset of questions—and the answers to those questions greatly influence students’ course selections. The information they provide is quite different from the information needed to make a decision on whether to promote a faculty member or not. And, Prof. O’Hara is

correct, within the context of course information, the answers collected for this form are not reduced to a numerical score.

Prof. Constable observed that while it appears that every effort is being made to be extremely honest and honorable about the issue, information is not truly protected by a stipulation that it can be accessed only with a student ID. If administrators or other faculty members want the information collected in connection with the course information sheets, they could certainly be able to obtain it—even by asking a student worker to “please print up all the evaluations for such-and-such a list of courses.”

Prof. Jacobs said that it is true that once information relevant to course information is available to a sub-population it would be nearly impossible to prevent it from going beyond that select group. On the other hand, if the University community is interested in protecting the data from misuse, it *is* possible to define its permissible use. Thus, we could forbid data collected for the course information material forms from being entered into a Provost’s Advisory Committee (PAC) file for a tenure candidate

Prof. Constable said that she believed that to be a more reasonable approach than attempting to limit access by way of student identification.

Prof. Warlick asked when in the academic year instructors would provide information about a future class and how often instructors could revise what they have submitted.

Prof. Jacobs said that both questions relate to the fine points of implementation. He does not now have the answers to them now, but two scenarios are possible: information could be generated only at certain intervals, or it may be possible to update it nearly instantaneously.

Prof. Warlick pointed out that if an instructor substantially reworked a course the summer after course information was submitted, there could be a real difference between description and reality.

Prof. Jacobs responded that the information could be dated and a note added to the Web site that information on courses is subject to change. And, in response to another member's comment, he said that the faculty would be sent an e-mail reminder every semester that the system is available and they should submit or update course information.

Fr. Jenkins then suggested that Prof. Jacobs seek endorsement of the proposal to adopt a course information form. Prof. Jacobs did so, noting that in the next round of fine tuning, several suggestions made by Council members would be adopted. After his motion was seconded but before a vote, more discussion occurred on the issue of access to the "blue" ratings section of the proposed course information sheet and on the mechanics of the process.

Prof. Roche said he wanted to make sure that he understood the outcome of the discussion on Prof. O'Hara's questions regarding access to instructor ratings information. He asked whether a vote to approve indicates approval of a three-part policy: (1) faculty members would have access to all three sections of the course information sheet for their own courses; (2) other faculty members and administrators would have access to the (yellow) "course description" and (pink) "related courses" sections but not to the (blue) "student ratings" section; and (3) none of the information available on the course information sheet could be considered in tenure and promotion cases.

Prof. Jacobs confirmed that unless a motion is made otherwise, as proposed, information in the blue ratings section would be available only to students by Net ID access. A faculty member could see his or her own full form; all others in the Notre Dame community would see only the “course description” and “related courses” sections.

Referring to the difficulties with this system pointed out earlier by Profs. O’Hara and Constable, Dr. Burish said it would seem odd that when seeking help from an advisor or assistant dean in selecting courses or creating a program, a student would have access to the ratings sections of course information forms but the advisor could feel that it is inappropriate for him or her to consult them as well. Given that thousands of students would have access to the course information forms, he would suggest that the only tenable position is that information they collect cannot be considered in an evaluative way—that is, for promotion or tenure.

Prof. Jacobs responded that the committee was merely trying to respond to the concern expressed by some faculty members that they do not want colleagues to have access to their “blue” ratings sections. If sensitivity to that issue is not real, he would agree with Dr. Burish.

Prof. Woo said that there is little doubt that sensitivity to the confidentiality of the ratings information is real; however, Dr. Burish’s point is that it is so difficult to prevent administrators and other faculty from seeing the ratings information that it is pointless to try to prevent it. The only possible answer to the sensitivity is that ratings information cannot be entered into PAC files.

Prof. Woo then asked whether all faculty are required to complete a course information sheet or whether the committee intends it to be optional.

Prof. Jacobs said while there is no plan now to enforce a requirement, the Provost's Office will strongly encourage faculty to participate in the course information initiative. He expects that department chairs and college deans will do the same. He would predict, however, that the real impetus for near-universal participation will come from students. If students try to pull up this form for a particular course and its yellow sections are completely blank, that would reflect poorly on the course and instructor.

Prof. Woo pointed out that some instructors might set up a personal Web site with even more information on their courses than the course information sheet provides.

Prof. Jacobs responded that there will be a space on the course information sheet for a link to the instructor's Web site. He added that the committee did show students a dozen or so syllabi and asked them for comments. The overwhelming reaction was that, typically, syllabi do *not* provide the necessary information. They either do not answer the kinds of questions asked on the yellow form, or, at times, they are too long for students to sift through and make a decision.

Mr. Ramanan said that while the yellow portion of the course information sheet compiles information that might exist elsewhere, its advantage is placing that information in a format that is clear and easy to process. Moreover, the form is relatively painless for faculty to complete. In the pilot studies, it took faculty members only 10 to 15 minutes to supply the necessary information.

Discussion then returned to the question of access to the "blue" ratings section. Prof. Roche said that he agrees it seems silly for an advisor to refuse to look at a print-out of a course information sheet shown to him or her by a student; however, that is not the same as saying that because the ratings information *could* become available to people

other than students the University *should* make it easily accessible. While no one is arguing that the information should become part of a PAC file, another position is that if a student shares the information with an administrator, that person should not feel that confidentiality has been compromised. Yet a third position—which, he understands, was the spirit of the discussion in the Faculty Senate—is that the ratings information exists exclusively for students. Thus, he thinks the University should not make it easy for people other than students to see the “blue” ratings information.

Prof. Jacobs agreed.

Prof. O’Hara asked for clarification of the answer to Prof. Woo’s question of whether faculty members could opt out of participation.

Prof. Jacobs responded that even if the “yellow” course description information is left blank, the “pink” historical information would exist; and, if the course had been taught previously, the “blue” ratings section would exist as well. As he said earlier, while instructors will not be required to complete the course description information, department chairs will be sending a strong message that cooperation with this program is highly encouraged.

Prof. Antsaklis said it seems odd that his chairperson has access to his TCEs but not to the blue ratings section of this form.

Prof. Jacobs emphasized that the TCE and the course information sheet are entirely different forms that have been created for entirely different purposes. The questions in the “blue” section of the course information sheets are written by students for students. The TCEs are created by the administration and the faculty to evaluate

teachers and courses for the purpose of tenure decisions, promotion decisions, teaching assignments, and the like.

Prof. Incropera said that he thinks that definition is too rigid. A department chair or dean could find the ratings information very useful in mentoring faculty members or making future teaching assignments. He advocates making the ratings information available to department chairs and deans.

Prof. Warlick posed other “when” questions: When during the semester can students enter the Web site and answer the blue questions? Can they answer them only once? She pointed out that student responses to the questions may be different after grades are distributed.

Prof. Jacobs said he believes that students would answer the course information questions at the same time they complete the TCEs—which is prior to grading.

Prof. Preacher said she agreed with Prof. Incropera. The impetus for creation of the course information sheets was students asking for some kind of descriptive ratings information. And, because the TCEs contain confidential information, this separate form was created. It seems odd to preclude other legitimate uses of the form.

Prof. Jacobs said the answer to Prof. Preacher’s question lies in the intent behind the forms: to create a system that supported students at the time of course selection. Because he is not in the market for engineering courses, he should not have access to Prof. Antsaklis’ course information sheet. All along, a perception of faculty sensitivity to broad distribution of the ratings information has driven the access question. If that sensitivity is not real or it is relatively minor, it is easy enough to make the ratings information available to the entire Notre Dame community.

Dr. Barry, associate director of the University's Kaneb Center for Teaching and Learning, commented that making the course information sheets public may provide an opportunity to change some faculty members' views on the appropriateness of keeping such information confidential. All faculty members' research record is a matter of public knowledge; many would argue that teaching records should be no different.

Prof. Jacobs responded that others are not able to see peer evaluations of faculty members such as those performed by journal referees or reviewers of grant proposals.

Dr. Barry answered that he and others at the Kaneb Center try constantly to convince faculty members to be public about their teaching and to share what they are doing with each other. It might have a positive effect on the climate to have ratings information public. Too many faculty members go about teaching in isolation.

Prof. DeBoer asked for clarification of the Academic Council's role today. Is it merely to approve continuation of the pilot? If so, perhaps the Council need not resolve the issue of access today.

Fr. Jenkins said it might be helpful to have a show of hands indicating what level of access Council members prefer.

Prof. D'Angelo suggested that the Council revisit the question of access after completion of IR's study exploring the relationship between the TCEs and the course information sheets' ratings. If she were a junior faculty member coming up for tenure, she might ask to have the ratings information included in her file.

Prof. Jacobs explained that the timetable for the project is such that he needs a vote by the Council today. Institutional Research will complete the pilot in the coming two weeks. Data from that will allow the committee to validate the "blue" ratings section

by making sure it is consistent with the TCE data. If the sets of data are inconsistent, IR will modify the course information sheet and do further testing. If they are consistent, IR will use the summer to begin working with the Office of Information Technology to build the infrastructure for the program. Thus, some kind of green light is necessary so that the opportunity for a summer's worth of work will not be lost, or work done over the summer will not be wasted.

Prof. D'Angelo explained that she was suggesting only tabling the access question—not the project in general.

Prof. Woo pointed out that there has been absolutely no objection to the design of this whole instrument. To move the matter forward, the Council could take a formal vote to determine if there is agreement on accepting this particular instrument.

After more comments on the desirability of deciding the question of access at a later date, Dr. Burish pointed out that time will not provide Council members with any additional information. Prof. Jacobs has said that if the results of the study are not consistent with comparable questions on the TCE, he will not proceed. Thus, members have all the information necessary to make a decision.

Prof. O'Hara said she continues to see the access issue as problematical. The entire course information form project began with the premise that TCEs should not be disclosed to students or the University community. Given that information in the “blue” ratings section is expected to be consistent with the TCEs, why should there *not* be concerns with open access to them?

Prof. Jacobs said that while the ratings information should be *consistent* with certain TCE questions, it is not identical to them. The point of the study comparing

ratings information and the TCEs is to validate the student questions on the course information form. In other words, it is a statistical check. A student who views the distribution of responses to the five questions proposed here would not be able to accurately predict the confidential responses to all 19 TCE questions and, hence, would not have privileged access to information used for personnel decisions. For example, there is no equivalent to TCE Questions 15 or 17 on the course information form. On the other hand, an administrator who has access to a faculty member's complete TCE report would not learn anything substantively different from viewing the responses to the five questions on the blue portion of the course information form than he/she could cull from the TCE report.

To further illustrate the distinction between these two sets of questions, Prof. Jacobs pointed out that students, faculty, and administrators would all agree that the most desirable answer to each of the five questions posed here is "strongly agree." This is not the case for TCE Question 15, which is the question on student time spent on a course. If the responses to TCE Question 15 were made public, students might gravitate to courses that require less time, whereas administrators would be alarmed about rigor in courses that had low marks on TCE Question 15.

Prof. Constable asked how long the committee was planning to archive the information collected.

Prof. Jacobs answered that a three-year window is intended. If courses were taught repeatedly in multiple semesters in that three-year period, it would be possible to accumulate average responses to the questions. And, there is no plan to archive this information longer than three years.

Prof. Delaney pointed out that the answer to the question on access depends on context. If a person perceives the ratings information as a subset of the TCE, the answer may be one thing. Yet, if it is looked at as an aid to students wanting to know what they are “getting into,” the answer may be different. Now, students’ sources of information are NDToday and word of mouth. Committee members have been constructing a way for students to collect information on courses that is more statistically reliable than either method. And, that way has nothing to do with TCEs. Both NDToday and anecdotes are far more specific than the course information sheets—just less statistically interesting. All seem to agree that the other two components of this particular form are completely innocuous. If the course information form is described as an “upgrade” of information now available, it is difficult to have an objection to it.

Prof. Jacobs then framed the three possibilities for a vote:

Proposal A: only students and the individual instructor have access to the “blue” ratings information;

Proposal B: only students; the individual instructor; and deans, chairs, and other appropriate administrators have access to it;

Proposal C: the entire Notre Dame community has access.

In response to a suggestion by Prof. Incropera, Prof. Jacobs asked for a vote on each proposal separately—to allow for multiple preferences.

The vote was 17 in favor of A; 15 in favor of B, and 12 in favor of C.

Then, the vote was changed to only one preference, which resulted in Proposal A prevailing.

Prof. Jacobs pointed out that Proposal A is the proposal as written: only students and the instructor have access to the ratings information.

When voted on as a whole, the proposal passed with one negative vote

5. Committee Reports:

(a) **Undergraduate Studies:** Prof. Preacher said that two items on the committee's agenda, the Advanced Placement proposal and the proposal for better informing students of course offerings, were presented to the full Council today. For the third item on this year's agenda, faculty feedback to admissions, subcommittee members met with members of the admissions office and came up with a list of recommendations. While it is not appropriate to bring those recommendations forward as motions, subcommittee members have asked her to enter them in the record so that next year's committee may continue work on them.

The first recommendation is to initiate and coordinate regular group meetings between teaching faculty and admissions office counselors for specific feedback about students in the different colleges. Mr. Saracino, assistant provost for enrollment, was very receptive to this idea and will pursue initiating those kinds of group meetings. It is envisioned that they would occur once or twice a year, separately for each college, with departments and colleges designating representatives.

Committee members also recommended that Institutional Research undertake a few surveys related to admissions. One would focus on faculty and deal with the intellectual life and academic performance of undergraduate students. Information collected could be extremely helpful to admissions as well as to such university units as First Year of Studies, Student Affairs, and various deans' offices.

A second survey, Prof. Preacher said, could deal with the impact, if any, on admissions from decisions made today regarding AP credit. What the Council decided today was not an enormous reduction or change in the way that AP credit will be used, but members are curious what would happen if, in fact, the University further reduced the use of AP credit. Such a decision might affect not only admissions but other matters, such as seat demand in upper-level courses.

A third area of interest for committee members is the University's honors programs and how they affect recruiting. Members have questions on their effectiveness—for example, *do* they bring in the best students? If so, how many?

Finally, there is interest related to admissions in the University's pre-college programs. Of the current programs, some show extreme promise in bringing some very good students to the University. Should they be expanded? In what way? Do we need more of them?

(b) Faculty Affairs: Prof. Robinson said that the committee focused its energy this academic year on issues related to the conversation Fr. Jenkins initiated on academic freedom and Catholic character.

(c) Graduate Council: Prof. Constable explained that members of the Graduate Affairs Committee were regular members of the Graduate Council. Academic Council members presented several items to the Graduate Council for consideration—all of them were discussed and a number of them culminated in specific actions.

Some items of importance acted on by the Graduate Council in the 2005-2006 academic year were: (1) establishment of a new policy on graduate student grievances and appeals; (2) establishment of a temporary leave policy for graduate students for

medical reasons; (3) to protect the identity of students, a recommendation that the written form of graduate TCEs be typed before the professor sees them; and (4) approval of guidelines for new graduate programs. In addition, Prof. Constable noted, the Graduate Council discussed the regular review procedures for academic departments and heard two important presentations—one from the Graduate Student Union on academic freedom and another by Hilary Crnkovich, vice president for public affairs and communication, on ways her office is working to better promote the Graduate School.

Before adjournment, Fr. Jenkins thanked all members, but particularly the committee chairs, for their work this year.