

**ACADEMIC COUNCIL
UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME
MEETING OF NOVEMBER 27, 2000**

Members Present: Rev. Edward Malloy, C.S.C., Nathan Hatch, Rev. Timothy Scully, C.S.C., Rev. John Jenkins, C.S.C., Jeffrey Kantor, Carol Mooney, James Merz, Rev. Mark Poorman, C.S.C., Francis Castellino, Frank Incropera, Eileen Kolman, Patricia O'Hara, Mark Roche, Carolyn Woo, Jennifer Younger, Jean Porter, Susan Roberts, Thomas Blantz, Rev. Patrick Gaffney, C.S.C., Naomi Meara, Sonia Gernes, Carolyn Nordstrom, Patricia Blanchette, Teresa Ghilarducci, W. Robert Scheidt, Ikaros Bigi, Umesh Garg, Joseph Powers, Panos Antsaklis, Edward Conlon, Kenneth DeBoer, Ava Preacher, Andre Olejnik, Patrick Shea, Sarah Bassler

Members Absent: Joan Aldous, Alan Krieger

Members Excused: Thomas Blantz, Rick Mendenhall, Jay Tidmarsh, Dino Marcantonio

Observers Present: Mary Hendrickson, Dennis Moore, Capt. Patrick Casey, Harold Pace, Dan Saracino, Barbara Walvoord

Observers Absent: Omar Munoz

Invited Guests: Robert Nelson

Prof. Hatch opened the meeting at 3:05 p.m. with a prayer.

1. Minutes Approved. Academic Council members unanimously approved the minutes of six meetings: January 24, 2000; March 2, 2000; April 18, 2000; May 10, 2000; August 24, 2000; and September 6, 2000.

2. Proposal for a Master of Engineering in Mechanical Engineering Degree. Prof. Hatch introduced Prof. Robert Nelson, Chair of the Department of Aerospace and Mechanical Engineering.

Prof. Nelson explained that the proposed Master of Engineering in Mechanical Engineering (MEME) degree would be awarded at the end of a one-year, interdisciplinary professional program. This is not a master of science degree. The focus of the program is product realization. Its intent is to prepare students for leadership roles in guiding and directing technological innovation in industry. The department expects the program will draw its students primarily from industry, although

it will also serve current students of the department who wish to prepare themselves for a career in product/process development. (See Attachment A)

MEME students will take core courses in the areas of design and manufacturing. They will also take a series of courses as electives and some professional practice courses (largely in the MBA program of the Mendoza College of Business). The degree will require 30 credit hours – 24 hours of formal course work and 6 hours of an individual or team-based research/design project, for which students will develop an idea and produce a product prototype.

Prof. Nelson said the program for a MEME degree was approved by the Graduate Council. All the interactions with the College of Business are supported by Dean Woo.

Fr. Gaffney asked if Prof. Nelson anticipated that most of the program's students will be supported by the Graduate School.

Prof. Nelson replied that the program will be a revenue-generating program for which no graduate student stipends will be used. The department has targeted the MEME degree for engineers who work in local industries. For example, as part of the Indiana 21st Century Fund Program, Notre Dame professors have worked with engineers in the orthopedic implant industry. Prof. Nelson expects a number of engineers from that industry to participate in the program. Also, although a fairly large number of engineering undergraduates have been interested in a combined engineering and MBA program, the MBA program can accommodate only a very small number of engineering students. The MEME degree program should appeal to the engineering undergraduate with an interest in business school.

Prof. Merz said the MEME degree program has his enthusiastic support. First, it would be a revenue-generating program. Second, there is significant interest, both locally and nationally, in such a program. Patrick Finneran, a vice-president of Boeing-McDonnell Douglass in St. Louis and a member of the Graduate School's Advisory Council, has indicated his interest in implementing a distance-learning component of the proposed MEME program. Mr. Finneran believes many of his company's engineers would be interested in working towards the degree and that Boeing-McDonnell Douglass would support their enrollment. Such interest on the part of industry executives is good news in terms of the overall development of the MEME program. It also serves to fulfill a Graduate School goal of developing stronger interactions with industry through the Colleges of Engineering and Science.

Prof. Porter asked why someone would want a degree in engineering with a significant business component. How would graduates use their degrees?

Prof. Nelson replied that he would not characterize six hours of MBA coursework as a "significant" business component. The point of including some business courses in the program is that, to participate most effectively in the product realization process,

engineers should have an understanding of how to integrate business practices into product development.

Prof. Merz commented that, conversely, a very important element on the résumé of a person seeking a position in business would be significant training in engineering. Given the technological basis of so many businesses today, a bachelor's degree in engineering followed by some master's level courses would be a very strong entrée into the business world.

Dean Woo said, from the Business School standpoint, there are many reasons to support the proposal. First, while people with technical backgrounds frequently enter MBA programs, unfortunately, they often abandon the technical track. Second, the University's MBA core courses have no excess capacity; however, there is capacity in the elective MBA courses designated for MEME students. The proposed degree program allows the College of Business to add students to these courses with no additional cost or resources. Third, many universities have joint degree programs – for example, MBA/Engineering or MBA/Law. The MEME program could be a model at the University for other joint degree programs.

Prof. Mooney reiterated that the proposal under consideration comes to the Academic Council with the unanimous approval of the Graduate Council.

Fr. Malloy called for a vote on the proposal to establish a Master of Engineering in Mechanical Engineering degree. Members approved it unanimously.

3. Revision of the Academic Code Concerning Graduation Honors for Undergraduate Students. Currently, the University's *Academic Code* provides: "In the undergraduate colleges, degrees will be granted with honors (*cum laude*) if the student has a 3.400 cumulative average; a 3.600 cumulative average is required for graduation with high honors (*magna cum laude*); and a 3.800 cumulative average is required for graduation with highest honors (*summa cum laude*)." [*Academic Code*, Sec. 24.1] Dean Roche, chair of the Undergraduate Studies Committee, presented a proposal to amend Section 24.1 so that graduation, or Latin, honors would be awarded to students whose grade point average ranks in the top 25% of the student's school or college. (See Attachment B) A version of the proposal originated in the Faculty Senate and was redirected to the Undergraduate Studies Committee.

Dean Roche said the committee was in unanimous agreement that if 42% of Notre Dame's undergraduates are graduating with Latin honors, the distinction of Latin honors is essentially evaporating. Much of the committee's discussion focused on two possible ways to remedy the problem – either elevating the grade point average (GPA) required for graduation honors or setting a percentage figure for honors.

The arguments in favor of maintaining a standard based on GPAs focused on

the fact that it is an absolute scale. Unlike the percentage method, with which the GPA qualification for Latin honors fluctuates, a GPA standard does not vary from year to year – leading to clear expectations for students and, some thought, a less competitive environment. Another argument in this option’s favor is that a grade point average system is the traditional strategy at Notre Dame. Some believe that exceptional arguments are necessary to overturn what is current practice.

One argument in favor of a percentage system is that the standard it sets need not be reviewed every few years to make sure the correct number of students are at the various levels. Thus, it is a clearer strategy in terms of outcome. More importantly, a percentage system would allow for symmetry across the colleges. One of the committee’s concerns has been that, under the GPA method, a larger percentage of students might graduate with Latin honors in one college than in others. And, if a system based on GPAs continues to be used, the University will probably move toward establishing different requirements for grade point averages in each college. Some committee members believed this would not be a very “elegant” solution to the problem of grade inflation.

Dean Roche said, after considering the arguments on each side, the committee ultimately voted in favor of a percentage system. Members also debated the merits of a 30% standard versus a 25% standard, with the majority voting in favor of the stricter 25% level. The committee then chose a middle path between highly selective *summa cum laude* honors and a more liberal designation, deciding that the highest 5% of the class should graduate *summa cum laude*, the next 5% *magna cum laude*, and the next 15% *cum laude*.

Dean Roche continued by stating that one concern raised in committee was that under a percentage-based system, it is possible that in a given year some students could achieve Latin honors with very low grade point averages. That concern was deflected somewhat by the Registrar’s review of University records, which showed that in the 1999-2000 academic year, only one student would have received Latin honors without attaining the minimum GPA. Nonetheless, while not part of its formal proposal, the committee recommends that if its amendment to the *Academic Code* is adopted, the Registrar should review records after some years to ensure that Latin honors are not being awarded to a significant number of students with low grade point averages.

Asking particularly for the views of the student members of the Academic Council, Fr. Malloy opened up the floor for questions.

Ms. Roberts said the issue of changing the requirements for Latin honors has been a huge concern for students. She was one member of the Undergraduate Studies Committee who endorsed retaining the current GPA-based system. There are two important arguments in favor of this system. First, students know precisely what they must achieve to graduate with honors. Second, they can compete with themselves on

the clear standard rather than constantly comparing their performance to that of other students in the class. Ms. Roberts believes adopting a percentage system would change the atmosphere on campus for the worse. As to the argument that maintaining the current GPA-based system requires periodic review of the number of students receiving honors, Ms. Roberts said it should not be an ordeal to monitor graduation honors numbers. The various deans' offices, the Registrar, or the Academic Council could review outcomes every five years or so.

Dean Castellino asked if the committee considered allowing each college to establish the appropriate standard for Latin honors in that college because he could see some merit in doing so.

Dean Roche replied that the committee did discuss the fact that Latin honors are University honors. There are departmental honors based on a student's senior thesis but he believes there was a modest preference for continuing to treat graduation honors as University honors.

Prof. Powers said there was not much discussion in committee of different colleges adopting different standards. With the help of the Registrar's Office, members did examine practices at Notre Dame's peer institutions and found a wide variety of standards. For example, Boston College has 29% of its students receiving Latin honors; Duke, 25%; the University of Michigan, 25% (except for the College of Engineering, which has its own standards); Northwestern, 16%; Stanford, 20%; Yale, 30%. (See Attachment B, pp. 6-8)

Dean Castellino said that as long as the issue of the University's different colleges adopting their own standards for graduation honors was considered, he can support the proposal. If not, he would like to see it considered. If University-wide standards are maintained for the reasons provided by Dean Roche, Dean Castellino indicated he would prefer a percentage-based system over the current GPA-based system. If the proposal is adopted, he would suggest that the Registrar add one more line to University undergraduate transcripts to show students where they stand in their class in terms of percentages.

Dr. Pace said his office could adopt Dean Castellino's suggestion.

Dean Roche said that action on the Registrar's part would address Ms. Robert's concern of students' anxiety over the uncertainty of what is necessary to attain graduation honors. Also, over the years, students would get an idea of what grade point average it would take to reach a certain level of Latin honors. The GPAs for Latin honors would be very consistent over time.

Prof. Bigi disagreed that a percentage system should be characterized as more "elegant" than a grade point average system. He would define "elegant" somewhat differently. He asked if it would be grossly unfair to say that a principle argument in

favor of the percentage system is its ease of application.

Dean Castellino replied he did not think a percentage system is any easier to administer than a GPA-based system. Its advantage is that it would equalize the percentage of students receiving honors in each of the colleges, which is good.

Prof. Scheidt commented that over the years there might be one class with a high percentage of excellent students, and the next year a class whose members are significantly less qualified. Thus, at the class level, there might be an element of unfairness with a percentage-based system. He asked Prof. Walvoord to address this issue as it is often recommended that to motivate students in large classes, professors should set their standards in advance.

Mr. Olejnik commented that the suggestion for the Registrar's Office to add a line to students' transcripts showing their class rank is unnecessary. If students want to find out their class rank, they can already do so through *IrishLink*. Perhaps putting actual percentage figures on transcripts would only add to students' anxieties.

Mr. Olejnik continued that he fears adopting a percentage-based system will change the academic atmosphere at the University. In making its decision, the committee compared Notre Dame to several other institutions with percentage-based honors systems -- for example, Boston College, the University of Michigan, Duke, Yale, and Northwestern. Personally, Mr. Olejnik does not want to be in the competitive atmosphere that he believes exists at those schools, and he did not apply to them because of their reputations as more competitive -- even cut-throat. In addition to students rarely forming study groups at those schools, he has heard of experiments being sabotaged. While he hopes the atmosphere at Notre Dame will never reach that point, the proposed action seems a minor step in that direction. Notre Dame's student body is already competitive enough, as evidenced by the fact that 86% of Notre Dame's students have competed in varsity sports in high school. Also, Mr. Olejnik believes there is a significant problem on campus with eating disorders -- showing a certain striving for perfection. By opting for a percentage-based system, he says the University takes the ability to determine their graduation status out of students' hands and instead puts them in competition with one another.

Mr. Olejnik noted that the committee stated that its proposal was motivated by the perception that too many students are receiving honors. Why? Because grades are higher. Why are they higher? Is it because students are better or because professors are giving higher grades? If there should be a correlation between grades and GRE scores at Notre Dame, and the GRE scores of Notre Dame students have been decreasing over the past ten years, then students are not getting smarter and professors must be giving higher grades. A percentage-based system gives free rein to professors. They no longer need to think about what sort of grades they give. If they give all As and A-s, that is fine because "the percentages" will determine which students receive which level of honors. Mr. Olejnik thinks the proposal would establish a new,

undesirable level of competition among students while not addressing the actual source of the problem -- professors giving higher grades.

Mr. Shea commented that the Joint Engineering Council, an organization representing all students in the College of Engineering, voted unanimously, 20-0, in favor of a percentage-based Latin honors system. Members of the Engineering Council do not believe that adopting such a system would have a serious effect on the attitude of students or on their level of competitiveness.

Prof. Porter said she favors adopting the percentage-based system. The University wants to bestow its highest honors on those who are truly its best students. The most logical and straightforward way to determine that is to see which students have the best GPAs compared to other members of their class. In that sense, a percentage-based system is the more elegant system, as well as having the virtue of being easier to administer. Prof. Porter also noted that the proposal reflects a long and complex set of Faculty Senate resolutions, representing much hard work and very serious concerns across the University about grade inflation. While members may debate the merits of this particular proposal, the goals it represents are very much worthy of support.

Dean O'Hara said she appreciates the problem the University faces. Forty-two percent of students receiving Latin honors is too high. She is concerned, however, that the proposal of the Undergraduate Studies Committee is not the best solution to the problem, even though it may be only a part of a larger package. One reason for her concern is that although the proposal describes the honors received as "University honors," a slippery slope may develop so that the system will be applied to Notre Dame's professional schools as well. Graduation honors for the professional schools is a separate subject now under study by the Graduate Studies Committee.

Even looking at the proposal only from the standpoint of undergraduates, there are problems. The attachment provided to members (Attachment B) lists six peer institutions on GPA-based systems and, of those six, only two have tighter GPA requirements than Notre Dame. Only three of the schools listed employ percentage systems, with two of those three at 30% rather than 25%. Dean O'Hara said that she might feel differently about the proposal if the cut-off had been established at 30% rather than 25%, and if it had been part of a complete examination of the problem of grade inflation. While Prof. Powers said other schools are at lower caps than the committee's proposal, the figure of 25% struck Dean O'Hara as low, given the increasing quality of Notre Dame students.

Prof. Powers said, unfortunately, because of an error in copying, several schools were omitted from the attachment members received. When these schools are included, the Registrar's survey would show that awarding Latin honors to 30% of graduating seniors is on the high side.

Prof. Nordstrom said that while there are good arguments on both sides, it does seem to her that a percentage-based system establishes a culture of competition rather than a culture of achievement. She is concerned with the argument that if the proposal is adopted, students cannot control whether they receive Latin honors. If in the senior year a student truly wanted to pull up his or her GPA to meet the honors threshold in preparation for the job market, it is possible to do so with a GPA-based system. A system based on percentages does not offer that option. She fears adopting the proposal will affect the level of competition at Notre Dame and that will, in turn, affect students' satisfaction with the University.

Dean Castellino asked if students' rank in their colleges appears on their transcripts.

Mr. Olejnik reiterated that students can determine their class rank through *IrishLink*.

Dean Castellino said he did not realize students had access to this information. Still, he suggested that the Registrar actually add the information to students' transcripts. Also, in regard to Prof. Scheidt's comment that the percentages may be skewed because in some years a department may have a far superior group of students than in others, he does not believe that, as a small number in a large statistic, the situation he describes will make any difference in awarding graduation honors. In a given year, the small number of majors in one department will not govern the percentages in the college as a whole. Most likely, the year that a particular department has a high number of superior students, all those students will receive the honors they deserve. It appears likely that Science will always be dominated by preprofessional and biology students. The grades in a given year of physics majors – whether there are twelve superior students or twelve below-average students – should not have much impact on the college's overall statistics. The problem that Professor Scheidt foresees could only occur in a large department, but, in that case, it is unlikely that there would be all superior or all below-average students.

Mr. Olejnik asked Mr. Shea if during the Joint Engineering Council's discussion of the issue, members considered any alternatives to the percentage-based proposal. In the College of Engineering, where GPAs are traditionally lower than in many of the University's other colleges, students may very well prefer a percentage-based system.

Mr. Shea replied that the Engineering Council had considered the other proposals but concluded that the percentage proposed was the best for students in the College of Engineering.

Prof. Meara asked if there was any conversation in committee about eliminating graduation honors altogether. Students would refer only to their GPAs – whether 2.3 or 3.9 – in identifying their standing in their graduating class.

Dean Roche said eliminating honors altogether was not discussed; however, committee members did discuss the advantages of awarding Latin honors – honest Latin honors. When too many students receive Latin honors, it is disadvantageous to the institution. It gives the false impression that a certain, rather average, student is at the very top of his or her class.

Prof. Meara said when she reviews graduate school applications, she pays attention to students' undergraduate grade point averages, not to whether they received Latin honors.

Dean Roche replied that certainly at a later stage in life one would not list his or her GPA on a *vita* or in an employment situation; however, a person might very well continue to provide the name of any Latin honors received.

Prof. Powers noted that even when applying for a job in the fall semester of senior year, students do not yet know whether they will receive Latin honors. As to a different point raised, he does not believe that a percentage-based system will create a hyper-competitive atmosphere on campus. Notre Dame students are already competitive. Under the proposed change, standards for Latin honors in the various colleges would become well established over time and not vary significantly. Students *will* know what GPA they need to strive to attain. Those who are nervous under the current GPA-based system will be nervous under a percentage-based system as well.

Prof. Bigi asked if any empirical evidence existed concerning the competitiveness of students under either system.

Prof. Walvoord said the research with which she is familiar would not give a specific answer to the question of whether students are more anxious under a competitive-based or a standards-based honors system. She doubts whether an answer exists. There is an indication that the learning atmosphere can be changed significantly by basing it on competition of student against student or on competition against a standard. It is the difference between tennis and golf. If an institution takes the tennis rather than the golf approach, it creates a different kind of culture. Notre Dame is a place of mixed cultures. Her own feeling is that the research would suggest that whenever a school can adopt a golf model instead of a tennis model, it should do so.

Prof. Ghilarducci said no professor in the Economics Department grades on an absolute standard. All grading is on the curve. She asked what percentage of classes at Notre Dame are taught using an absolute standard and what percentage are graded on the curve.

Prof. Walvoord said she did not know.

Prof. Scheidt said in the Chemistry Department there has been discussion that

the current practice of grading on the curve is not beneficial to the way first-year students learn.

Dean Castellino said most departments in the College of Science grade on the curve.

Prof. Ghilarducci said, in that case, adoption of this proposal only puts graduation honors on the curve. The discussion about the proposal changing the competitive environment on campus does not make sense.

Dean Castellino said that in the College of Science if professors graded other than on the curve, students would be extremely upset. Professors can set the average wherever they choose. The question is whether one is trying to identify the best students by setting the curve low and seeing who peaks, or whether one is trying to identify the poorest students by setting the curve high and seeing who bottoms out. He believes science always tries to identify the best students by setting the curve on the low side. The average grade in science is a B-.

Mr. Olejnik said he has taken eight economics courses and has never known that he was being graded on the curve. He says it would be interesting to know what students say about classes they take in which they know they are being graded on the curve. Do they feel more anxious? It seems to him fairly easy to discover the answer to this question. Mr. Olejnik disagreed that under a percentage-based system students will know over time what GPA they need to achieve to receive Latin honors. The reason today's discussion is being held is that GPAs have changed drastically over the past ten years. They could just as easily continue to change.

Prof. Porter moved to call the previous question. Fr. Scully seconded her motion. A majority voted in favor of calling the question.

Dean Kolman asked first for discussion of the 25% cut-off. For the same reasons given by Dean O'Hara, she is troubled by the proposed 25% standard. She is a member of the Undergraduate Studies Committee and believes that Prof. Powers said in a meeting that nationally 30% of graduating seniors receive Latin honors.

Prof. Powers said the 30% national average figure to which Dean Kolman refers is based on the Registrar's "semi-scientific" survey of other institutions. That approximation is a matter of interpretation. Of the schools surveyed with a percentage-based system, 25% strikes the middle. Of schools overall, the percentage is closer to 30% because schools that are GPA-based tend to give more honors.

Dean Kolman replied that given where Notre Dame is now, as well as the fact that there is certainly good company in such schools as Yale, at which 30% of the students receive Latin honors, she would propose that the University award Latin

honors to the top 30% of its undergraduates, with 5% for *summa*, 10% for *magna*, and 15% for *cum laude* honors.

Fr. Malloy said because Council members have already decided to approve voting on the proposal now on the table, those in favor of Dean Kolman's proposal should vote "no." He asked for a vote on the proposal from the Undergraduate Studies Committee to award Latin honors to the top 25% of undergraduates. The vote was 16 in favor and 17 against, with two abstentions.

Dean Kolman then restated her proposal to award Latin honors to the top 30% of undergraduates. Prof. Gernes seconded her motion.

Fr. Malloy asked the committee why they chose a cut-off figure of 25% rather than 30%.

Mr. Olejnik said the committee did discuss both possibilities. Committee members were split between them – with the vote 4 to 3 in favor of the 25% proposal. Those who favored the 25% figure wanted a more rigorous selection system. Members who supported the 30% proposal felt it would be a less radical change for students as well as more generous in recognizing them.

Dean O'Hara said she is more comfortable with the 30% proposal than the failed 25% proposal. Still, she does not believe that the first effort to address a perceived problem of grade inflation should be directed at the percentage of students receiving Latin honors. Doing so does not address the fundamental source of the problem, which is faculty grading. Rather than the proposal at hand, she would like to see the conversation begin by having representatives of the University's colleges discuss such topics as whether they are grading on the curve. A multiple-step proposal might grow out of that conversation, with one possible step aimed at reducing the number of students receiving Latin honors. Again, she is not comfortable starting at this point. For one thing, if professors truly are grading on the curve, that practice does not mesh with the grade inflation statistics presented.

Prof. Nordstrom said she has been at the University long enough to have recognized a pattern but new enough to be astounded by it. All her students come to class, all turn in their papers, all take their tests. Nobody misses anything. She has never seen students work so hard and so consistently and she has taught at several good universities. With a culture so unique, perhaps a large number of Notre Dame students actually deserve Latin honors.

Prof. Preacher said that part of the reason the issue of the number of Latin honors received by Notre Dame students was raised in the Faculty Senate was that in the College of Arts and Letters, more students – a total of 66% – were on the Dean's List (which is different than graduation honors) than off. Honors become meaningless when more students receive them than not.

Fr. Gaffney commented on Dean O'Hara's remarks. He believes the proposal to raise the honors bar at the University does address indirectly, and perhaps in a fragmentary way, the problem of grade inflation. Grade inflation will probably continue to creep along, and that should be discussed at some other point; however, this proposal is designed to check one of grade inflation's pernicious consequences – honors becoming so commonplace that they are beginning to lose their meaning.

Fr. Gaffney continued that rather than using tennis or golf analogies to describe systems of awarding Latin honors, it is a jogging analogy that should be used. Latin honors show students where they end up in the pack – not either one on one *or* against an absolute system. For his own discipline, it would be difficult to find a way of grading that is *not* based on the curve. When one formulates test questions, it is difficult to say how much students should know to receive an absolute A. One might develop this knowledge over time, but the grading process generally involves a professor doing his or her best possible teaching and the students doing the best they can in response. The students are then evaluated in a way that relativizes that spread, and that is what is reflected in the grading system. This outcome is what society generally wants to know as well; that is, what is the *relative* performance capacity of this group of students and of this particular student? Fr. Gaffney said he believes the proposal of the Undergraduate Studies Committee does address this question. Finally, he supports Dean Kolman's 30% proposal for Latin honors because it recognizes the competitive pressures students experience by expanding the honors category just that little bit.

Dean O'Hara responded that Fr. Gaffney's comments underscore her point that the core issue in the area of grade inflation is the actions of professors – the "local decision-makers." The proposal for tightening up Latin honors does not seem to address their actions. If, in fact, most professors *were* grading on the curve, 42% of undergraduates would not be receiving Latin honors. By putting a cap on Latin honors, the University is removing the problem of grade inflation for faculty members. They need not worry because someone else, in a sense, will make the cut for honors by raising the bar at the macro level. This proposal does not really address the core issue of what is occurring in individual courses with respect to grade distribution that leads to GPAs giving 42% of undergraduates Latin honors. Not only has it failed to address the actions of the fundamental decision-makers, it has not even engaged them in the conversation.

Ms. Roberts said the debate between a 25% versus a 30% cap points out how very arbitrary a percentage system is – whether the number chosen is based on practice at other universities or on statistics at Notre Dame itself. Whatever number is chosen, the University is deciding for future classes, before they have even entered high school, how many will graduate with honors. It seems much more sensible to set standards for students and say: "Here is what you need to do to achieve honors. Prove to us that you deserve this." With a GPA-based system, students know clearly what goal they need to reach. Also, Notre Dame is structured in such a way that it creates difficulties for students who in the First Year of Studies may be in the top 25% of their

class and feel they are reaching their goals. Then, suddenly, as sophomores, they are transferred into the College of Arts and Letters and drop down to the 35% range. The University's current structure does not allow students to gauge accurately where they need to be and what they need to do to achieve their academic goals.

Prof. Walvoord said two philosophical issues are on the table that are becoming a bit tangled. It is important to emphasize that the bar for honors can be raised whether professors grade on the curve (not only on a strict mathematical curve, but according to some competitive system) or grade within an absolute system. Raising the bar within an absolute system would require instructors to make clear to students that they need to write more elegantly, think more creatively, etc. Thus, the University need not switch from an absolute system to a competitive system to raise the bar for honors. The bar can be raised or lowered within either system.

Prof. Gernes commented that as an officer of Phi Beta Kappa for a number of years, she has witnessed a problem similar to the one the University faces with Latin honors. More and more students were being admitted to Phi Beta Kappa every year. Last year, the Notre Dame chapter voted to raise by a few percentage points the score at which students were admitted to the honorary society. The national organization also sets a cap, which she believes to be 10% of the graduating class, but individual chapters can set the bar where they choose. Although it might be a clumsy system and not ideal, this model does offer another possibility for awarding Latin honors at Notre Dame: each college could set its own bar at no more that a certain percentage of the graduating class.

Dean Castellino said he wished to address comments on the subjectivity of the percentage chosen to cap Latin honors. The entire area of grading is very subjective. He has seen tremendous flow in and out of courses depending on the grading habits of instructors. Instructors who grade high are generally very popular instructors. They think they are good teachers – and ask for raises – because the students evaluate them very highly. Choosing now whether the percentage cap should be 25% or 30% is confusing because the number has shifted from what the committee that studied the issue recommended. Choosing the number is as subjective a task as the whole enterprise. Personally, he likes 25%, but has no objection to 30%. Someone could say they prefer 32% and the discussion could go on forever.

Dean Woo said it is important to separate grading practices and outcomes from the awarding of honors. She is troubled that people immediately reach the conclusion that grade inflation exists and has pernicious effects. Current grading philosophy has changed the way professors grade. Many times grades are used more as positive feedback than as negative. Many times grades are set on a contract basis – the instructor sets the expectations and the students fulfill them – although, unfortunately, such contracts often are written preponderantly in terms of activities and attendance and the grades are generally quite high. Contract grading in itself is not bad. Also, many popular faculty members are considered to be very hard task-masters. For

instance, students in Prof. Affleck-Graves' courses worked very hard, but Dean Woo does not believe that GPAs for his classes were necessarily lower than for others in the College of Business. He was always very clear about the expectations he held for students and students worked very hard to deliver on them. Also, as students are assigned an increasing number of team-based assignments, grading becomes less varied and the number of high grades rises. While grading philosophy has changed, Dean Woo said she believes honors should still be reserved for recognizing those who are truly distinguished among their peers. Given that grading and honors should be separated, she supports the 30% cap rather than the 25% because enough evidence exists that it is a logical number.

Mr. Olejnik said the arguments in favor of a percentage-based system seem to come down to the perception that it is easier to implement than a GPA-based system. This is not necessarily true. The University could determine which percentage would be the cut-off under a percentage-based system and then choose that as the GPA that must be achieved to attain Latin honors. It would not be at all difficult to review that number approximately every fourth year to monitor whether too few or too many students are receiving graduation honors. He fears that in the discussion today people are opting for the proposal that seems to offer ease of administration rather than considering the philosophical implications of a change that might result in a competitive atmosphere at Notre Dame.

Fr. Malloy called for a vote on Dean Kolman's proposal to amend the *Academic Code* to award Latin honors to the top 30% of each graduating class – with the top 5% designated as *summa cum laude* graduates, the next 10% as *magna cum laude* graduates, and the next 15% as *cum laude* graduates. The motion passed by a vote of 22 to 8, with two abstentions.

4. Amendment of the Academic Articles Concerning Non-regular Faculty. Prof. Mooney explained that at its meeting of May 10, 2000, the Academic Council accepted a report from the Faculty Affairs Committee dealing with non-regular faculty. The document recommended that the *Academic Articles* [Art. III, Sec. I, Subsec. (f)] be amended to include definitions of the various titles used for non-regular faculty (Visitor, Adjunct, Concurrent, Guest, *Emeritus/Emerita*, and Lecturer). The definitions are intended to improve consistency in the use of the titles and to help administrators more easily identify the title appropriate for a proposed appointment. After discussion at the May meeting, the Provost's Office was asked to further refine the definitions and to bring them back to the Academic Council for its consideration. The proposal at hand (Attachment C) is the product of refinements added this summer by Prof. Mooney and Prof. Kantor, who oversees appointment of the University's non-regular faculty, as well as further refinements resulting from a Fall meeting of the University's deans -- the administrators who most often deal with the various titles. In addition, more changes to the definitions were made at the most recent meeting of the Executive Committee of the Academic Council.

Fr. Malloy said that any definitions approved by the Academic Council for non-regular faculty as amendments to the Academic Articles must first be approved by him and then by the Board of Trustees before becoming final.

Prof. Walvoord asked for clarification of the term “concurrent” faculty member. The proposed definition reads that a “concurrent faculty appointment is appropriate for staff or faculty who hold full-time positions elsewhere in the University.” She asked what the word “staff” means in this context.

Prof. Mooney said it was someone without a faculty appointment.

Prof. Walvoord asked whether a staff person could nonetheless have a concurrent faculty appointment.

Prof. Mooney answered that it was possible. Members offered several examples: a staff member at *Notre Dame Magazine* who teaches a writing course, or WNDU or University Counseling Center staff members who teach courses in various departments, or Scott Malpass, the University’s Vice President for Finance and Chief Investment Officer, who also teaches a course in finance.

Dean Castellino asked if concurrent appointments are renewable on a year-to-year basis.

Prof Mooney answered, “Yes.”

After Fr. Malloy commented that the definitions presented today are the product of much word crafting, Prof. Mooney said the section that has undergone the most writing and rewriting concerns *emerita* and *emeritus* faculty (lines 32-38). The Executive Committee discussed this proposed definition at length, particularly lines 33 and 34. The Executive Committee added the “normally” language of the current proposal – “Upon retirement from a full-time position, a faculty member normally would be promoted to the title of *emerita* or *emeritus*” – to clarify that the title is a promotion. *Emerita* and *emeritus* designations are not automatic upon retirement, although they most often occur.

Prof. Mooney continued that the current proposal would give the impression that *all* faculty “normally” are promoted to *emeritus* status – not only teaching-and-research faculty. While she would not want to preclude members from other categories of the regular faculty [research faculty, special professional faculty, and library faculty] from attaining the *emerita/emeritus* designation, it is not currently standard practice for them to do so. While there are certainly examples of non-teaching-and-research faculty being promoted to *emeritus*, it is rare. Therefore, she would like to add a friendly amendment to the proposal so that it reads: “Upon retirement from a full-time position, a teaching-and-research faculty member normally would be promoted to the title of

emerita or *emeritus*.”

Prof. Antsaklis asked Prof. Mooney the definition of “regular” faculty.

The regular faculty are defined in the *Academic Articles* as including teaching-and-research, research, library, and special professional faculty. [Art. III, Sec. 1(e)].

Fr. Gaffney asked whether the amendment is actually necessary. What is the procedure in the abnormal case in which a person retires and is *not* promoted to *emeritus*? Is there a letter omitted from the file?

Prof. Mooney replied that, generally, when a teaching-and-research faculty member retires, there is an agreement dealing with the retirement that specifies whether or not he or she will receive a promotion to *emeritus* or *emeritas*. Promotion is at the recommendation of the dean, by way of a letter in the file.

Fr. Gaffney commented that then there is a subtle step missing in the case of the exception.

Dean Kolman said she believes the import of Prof. Mooney’s proposed amendment is not clear. If it is adopted, six years from now others who interpret the *Academic Articles* may believe it precludes non-teaching-and-research faculty from attaining *emeritus* status.

Prof. Mooney said it may not be clear that the amendment allows promotion of non-teaching-and-research faculty members to *emeritus* status, but it does *not* preclude it.

Dean Kolman replied that while the number of non-teaching-and-research faculty members attaining *emeritus* status may have been slight in the past, as this type of University appointment continues to increase, there will be more retirements of research faculty, special professional faculty, and library faculty in the future. If this wording is adopted, these faculty members may lose their opportunity to attain *emeritus* status.

Dr. Younger said she believes that Prof. Mooney’s proposed amendment clearly conveys a difference between teaching-and-research faculty and other regular faculty in promotion to *emeritus*. If that is the intent, then it should be spelled out more concretely in some other place.

Prof. Hatch said the proposed amendment attempts to capture the University’s current practice.

Dr. Younger said she is suggesting that the Academic Council might not want to

capture current University practice.

Dean Woo, who has served on the Faculty Affairs Committee, asked what tangible difference the title of *emeritus* makes to retired faculty. Is there any tangible benefit at all?

Prof. Mooney replied, “None that I know of.”

Dean Woo asked why, then, does the conferring of the title mean so much?

Dean O’Hara said the *emeritus* title does carry some significance. As faculty members take early retirement or negotiate deals upon leaving the University, some want to hold the title of *emeritus* professor at Notre Dame, but actively affiliate with another institution. While she has no problem with the language “normally would be promoted,” the situations she describes are problematic. The title “*emeritus*” carries certain reputational and institutional affiliations that are inappropriate when a person is teaching elsewhere.

Dean Woo disagreed. The word “*emeritus*” connotes a past association. People are entitled to attach it to their names by virtue of their years on the faculty. If a faculty member is promoted to *emeritus* and then, three years later, decides to take a position at another university, does Notre Dame remove the *emeritus* title?

Dean O’Hara said use of the title “*emeritus*” or “*emerita*” does not necessarily mean one’s affiliation with the University is only in the past. At times, an *emeritus* or *emerita* professor returns to active involvement at the University, as lines 34 through 38 of the proposed amendment suggest. For instance, he or she might receive an appointment at Notre Dame to continue to teach, submit grant proposals, or manage research funds.

Dean Woo replied that lines 34 through 38 do not concern only *emeritus* faculty. The words are: “If a *retired* faculty person will be teaching, submitting grant proposals . . .”

Fr. Gaffney said, to him, the word “retirement” implies an end career move. This is the point at which one receives the gold watch and begins receiving a pension. In contrast, “resignation” implies going on to another post and continuing a career. It is truly an exceptional case when an *emeritus* faculty member returns to teach – so curious and relatively rare that it does not strike him as problematic. The problem is when, after fifteen years of teaching and at age 45, a person asks for the *emeritus* title. That is more accurately a situation of resignation, not retirement.

Prof. Gernes pointed out that the *Academic Articles* state how many years of service and at what age a person may retire from the University. [At age 65, at age 55

with 15 years of service, or at age 62 with 10 years of service. Art. III, Sec. 12]

Dean Roche said he understands Prof. Mooney proposes to add the words “teaching-and-research faculty” to the *emeritus* definition to make clear Notre Dame’s current practice, but he is sensitive to the concern that the University has introduced a fairly new type of faculty – professional specialist – and, in the future, it might want to honor these faculty members with the title of *emeritus*. He is in favor of the current version of the definition – without Prof. Mooney’s proposed amendment. Other than the rationale that it is not current practice to confer the title of *emeritus* on non-teaching-and-research faculty, there is no reason not to leave open the possibility of awarding it to other regular faculty members. There will be many professional specialists retiring in the next dozen years.

Fr. Malloy asked Prof. Mooney if she wished to withdraw her proposed amendment.

Prof. Mooney said if Academic Council members choose to expand the *emeritus* title as Dean Roche and others have suggested, she is comfortable with that. She does want it recognized, however, that conferring the title of *emeritus* or *emerita* is a promotion.

Prof. Hatch commented that “*emeritus*” defines a very broad category of faculty members. He has been thinking through many of the situations in which the title may be conferred and whether that may always be appropriate.

Dr. Younger said it does not seem to her that this is the section of the *Academic Articles* that opens up the category of *emeritus*. She was under the impression that language elsewhere in the *Academic Articles* speaks to the requirements for *emeritus* status.

No, Profs. Mooney and Kantor, answered. This is the section that defines who is eligible for the designation.

In that case, Prof. Younger said, she supports Dean Roche’s comments. The University could always decide not to award the *emeritus* title if it is deemed not appropriate. Generally, though, where appropriate, it makes sense to open up the category to all regular faculty members.

Prof. Scheidt replied that the title of *emeritus* is bestowed not because of future objectives or future actions but simply as a recognition of past service.

Prof. Kantor said he is not aware of any cases in which *emeritus* status has been awarded prior to retirement.

Fr. Malloy concurred. *Emeritus* is a retirement phenomenon – a new status with honorary connotations.

Fr. Malloy asked if Prof. Mooney wished to bring her proposal forward as an amendment.

Mr. Moore asked for Prof. Mooney's reaction to changing the words "normally would be" to "may be." (Line 34)

Prof. Mooney said the Executive Committee added the words "normally would be." She did not believe it was her prerogative to remove them.

Members discussed how the proposal should be voted on, with Dean Castellino saying that although he would prefer to include the words "teaching-and-research faculty," he is not willing to see the proposal fail because of their inclusion.

Prof. Porter said the amendment should be voted on first.

Prof. Mooney explained that, with the proposed amendment, the sentence that carries over from line 33 to line 34 would read, "Upon retirement from a full-time position, a teaching-and-research faculty member normally would be promoted to the title of *emerita* or *emeritus*."

Dean Castellino offered a second to the proposed amendment.

Fr. Malloy called for a vote, which was 14 to 13 in favor of Prof. Mooney's amendment to add the words "teaching-and-research faculty" to lines 33 and 34, with five abstentions.

Fr. Malloy then called for a vote on the proposal to amend the *Academic Articles* by adding the definitions of non-regular faculty titles, as amended, as a whole. It was approved unanimously.

5. Committee Reports.

(a) Undergraduate Studies Committee. Dean Roche said the committee has three subcommittees. The first is working on two items: first, a proposal to address the grade inflation issue by way of the Dean's List and, second, the scheduling of relatively few Friday classed. Dean Kolman chairs a second subcommittee with a focus on teaching. It is preparing to undertake a large-scale review of the curriculum. Fr. Jenkins chairs the third subcommittee, which is examining the University's honor code.

(b) Graduate Studies Committee. Prof. Garg explained that the Senate resolution dealing with Latin honors originally included graduate students. A subcommittee

examined the issue in some detail and did not find any strong evidence of grade inflation in graduate studies. The issue seems to be of most concern to the College of Business and the Law School. They are in the process of collecting information from peer institutions.

(c) Faculty Affairs Committee. Prof. Mooney reported for Prof. Mendenhall. She said there are subcommittees working on a faculty alcohol policy, which was a topic of a Faculty Senate resolution and is now before the full Faculty Affairs Committee; representation of library faculty on various University committees; and the Faculty Senate's resolution to increase the faculty by 150 positions in addition to those called

for by the Colloquy 2000. As soon as the matter of the faculty alcohol policy is resolved, a new subcommittee will form to look at the status of women faculty.

There being no further business, Fr. Malloy adjourned the meeting at 4:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol Ann Mooney
Secretary