

Arts and Sciences Council  
8 November 2007  
139 Social Sciences  
Chair: Prof. Suzanne Shanahan

At approximately 3:34 p.m. Prof. Shanahan called the Council to order, then announced the major agenda items of the day: (1) The Arts at Duke: A Discussion with Prof. Scott Lindroth, Vice Provost for the Arts; (2) The Proposal for a Visual Studies Major, with Prof. Ruth Day (Curriculum Committee; Psychological and Brain Sciences) and Prof. Hans Van Miegroet (chair of Art, Art History, and Visual Studies); and (3) A Discussion with Mr. Paul Slattery (DSG President) and Ms. Gina Ireland (DSG Vice President for Academic Affairs).

She next requested approval of the minutes of the October meeting of the Council and, there being no negative outcry, ordered them read into the record as written. Then she invited Prof. Lindroth, Chair of Music, now beginning to serve also as Duke's first Vice Provost for the Arts, to say a few words about his thoughts and plans.

With thanks to Prof. Shanahan and the Council for the opportunity, he defined himself first as having joined Duke's Music faculty in 1990. He had taught music at both graduate and undergraduate levels, and come to feel very fortunate, indeed, to be in a department where there was so much good will and collaboration, in fact where there was a healthy integration of performance, composition, theory analysis, and historical research. All in all, he thought it a situation worthy of serving as a model for all of the arts at Duke.

He was pleased to say, furthermore, in his capacity as Vice Provost, that the arts at Duke had already begun to participate fully in the various aspects of Duke's Campus Cultural Initiative as it was defined in 2006-07. That is, Duke was already working toward internationalization, experiential learning, vertical integration, faculty-student interaction, and community engagement.

Other encouraging news, he said, was that a good many academically gifted students at Duke had a really serious interest in the arts. In fact, he wanted particularly to make the point that there already was beginning to be a very real correlation between involvement in the arts and academic achievement. (As

evidence, he played a brief but impressive clip of Mr. Yi Xiang at the piano.) Indeed, Duke was already working with the Admissions Office in order to target such gifted students. One of Prof. Lindroth's own projects involved tracking exceptionally talented students, and having their progress recorded on film. Among other things, in fact, he looked forward to the installation of an "enormous screen" in the Bryan Center to make their skills known. More broadly speaking, he hoped to make the arts at Duke more visible.

Along the way to attaining that goal, he hoped to redress what he perceived to be a separation of serious work in the arts from regular "academic" course work at Duke. He would like to look forward to the day when some students would come to Duke with the aim of concentrating on the arts and at the same time view and value their other courses as a source of intellectual and emotional stimulation that fed into their work as artists. No conservatory could offer that sort of broad-based education, but Duke could, and that could "profoundly change a student's work." Duke, of course, would need to do some serious recruiting of students who would come with the goal of concentrating on the arts—students "spread out" over the arts. If fifteen such students were to be admitted each year, a very significant change would be apparent in four years or so.

Already, it was worth noting, a number of other universities seemed to be focusing major attention on the arts. Stanford, for instance, recently announced an Assistant Vice President for the Arts, and Harvard had announced the creation of a Task Force on the Arts. Other competitors now rediscovering the arts would include Yale and Princeton, so it was clear that drawing students to Duke would involve the need to establish some significant art-based scholarships.

Meanwhile there were other ways that Duke could foster the arts. For instance, it might cultivate closer ties with the American Dance Festival (already long associated with Duke) and the Full Frame Festival (which every spring drew film-makers and film buffs here to Durham). Then, too, the Performing Arts Center planned for downtown Durham would certainly afford some possibilities for collaboration. Though it was hardly likely that Duke would be building a concert hall such as UNC-CH's recently transfigured Memorial Hall, current plans for Central Campus did include significant new spaces for the arts—i.e., a blackbox theater and a three-hundred seat theater for either theatrical or musical performances.

Dean of the Faculty George McLendon observed at this point that the city of Durham was going to be building a very significant theater, and until that theater was fully established, it was prudent to say that Duke's theater building would "have to be

on the back burner.” He referred also to Page Auditorium: it obviously needed work, but at the moment no decision had been made as to how that structure might be most appropriately modified. Major renovations, meanwhile, were planned for Baldwin Auditorium.

Prof. Daniel Foster (Theater Studies), returning to Prof. Lindroth’s observations and speaking more on behalf of his departmental colleagues than for himself, wondered whether the plans he was now hearing about would result in discouraging amateurism in the arts. He expressed concern about a student “in the middle,” the sort of student who wanted to major in chemistry and asked whether he really had to major in Theater Studies in order to be in a production. Theater Studies had concluded some years ago that the right answer was “no.” Though Prof. Foster himself was a scholar in the field, he was concerned on behalf of his colleagues about overlooking or downgrading the value of encouraging artistic amateurism.

Prof. Lindroth said he shared such a concern. He had encountered it time and again. It certainly merited more thought.

Prof. Shanahan remarked that she herself was interested in the relations between Duke on the one hand and Durham and the North Carolina arts community on the other. Prof. Lindroth: Though Duke was certainly deeply involved in the Performing Arts Center soon to break ground in downtown Durham, perhaps the most important of art-related connections for Duke at the moment were with the ADF and Full Frame. He also had taken a tour with Assistant Vice President Michael Palmer (Community Affairs) of local arts organizations, some of which were certainly stressed for money, but his own priority was to work on various kinds of opportunities with local schools. For example, one particularly interesting possibility would be to “partner” in some way with the Walltown Children’s Theater.

After exchanging mutual thanks, Prof. Shanahan introduced Prof. Day, who in turn brought greetings and thanks on behalf of the Curriculum Committee (a “great group” of faculty members), including both Dean Ingeborg Walther and Dean Ellen Wittig. In fact she believed that Dean Wittig deserved special recognition and thanks, for she had served with unfailing commitment, calm grace, and great effectiveness for twenty-two years. Members of the Council applauded vigorously.

Prof. Day then proceeded to introduce the proposal for establishing a major in Visual Studies in the Department of Art, Art History, and Visual Studies. Though with expressions of regret for the absence of Prof. Kristine Stiles (DUS of the Department), who was unable to attend, Prof. Day was pleased to say that while the

proposal had won initial approval in the Spring of '07, it was then too late to be approved. This Fall, however, after some appropriate revising, the proposal had been forwarded to the Executive Committee of the Arts and Sciences Council. ECACS found the proposal to be strong and very persuasive, and after further discussion and some minor tweaking the proposal was this afternoon being presented for voting by the Council. To facilitate matters, Prof. Day had prepared and now projected on the screen a helpful chart of the details pertaining to each of the department's majors, including the one now being presented to the Council for approval.

Following these framing comments, Prof. Hans Van Miegroet addressed the Council with vigor and conviction—and with apologies to anyone who might be mystified by his Dutch accent. He observed that the major now being proposed had been in preparation for “at least seven years,” that Visual Studies was a lively emerging field not only at Duke but elsewhere, that members of Duke's department had invited and conversed with experts in the field, and that it was intended to function as part of a “university-wide strategy” that would be unwrapped in the Spring semester of 2008. A very substantial grant had already been received, and the overall proposal now being presented would result not only in student involvement but also in significant faculty development.

Although there was much else to be said on the subject, Prof. Van Miegroet then read his conclusion, an imperfect approximation of which reads something like this:

Visual Studies is poised to become one of the most interesting and conceptually, intellectually challenging subjects that has emerged in academic life in the last several decades, especially in the humanities. It is already becoming a place where questions of visibility are discussed, where people in different disciplines may discover new ways of understanding images. Visual studies also has a potential to contribute a voice significantly different from that of the humanities and to reach parts of the university where it has not been previously. It is a means of connecting fields and perceptions. It attempts to merge the humanities not only with the social sciences but also with the sciences. In fact, Duke appears to be the first Art History Department in the country that has scientists on its faculty. Visual Studies, in short, is not simply a field of linked studies. It is itself an emergent field.

The subject matter and its fervent delivery moved Prof. Shanahan to observe that that was a hard act to follow. Dean McLendon (one of whose titles was Professor of Chemistry) remarked, “This is a very well developed proposal. I am strongly supportive of this proposal.” He was convinced it had “intellectual rigor.”

Prof. Ann Marie Rasmussen (Department of Germanic Languages and Literature) considered it “a great proposal”—reaching out, as it did, in genuinely interdisciplinary ways. To this, Prof. Van Miegroet responded that his department was already reaching out to German, Romance Studies, English, and Religion, as well as Engineering and Computer Science.

Prof. Owen Astrachan (Computer Science) cautioned that appointing new faculty members could be difficult when joint appointments were involved.

Prof. Ron Grunwald (Biology) observed that it would be very helpful to know when a cross-listing of a course was appropriate and when it was not. He also asked if there had been some consideration of rules to prevent cross-counting of courses towards more than the major. Others agreed that these were important matters to be clarified.

Prof. Shanahan then put the matter to a vote, and there being no nays, the Department of Art, Art History, and Visual Studies had a new major in Visual Studies.

Next, after being invited to the front of the room, Mr. Slattery came forward and expressed thanks for the opportunity to speak to the Council. After a bit of wit about professorial lectures, he explained that both he and Ms. Ireland would first of all report “what we have been working on.” First on his own list was the current judicial process at Duke. It was out of step, he thought, with some better procedures at other institutions. Second, he wished to touch on the subject of Duke’s present lunch-with-faculty program, which seemed “superficial at best.” Students would like to see the scope of the program significantly expanded. He also hoped to visit the issue of course loads.

Ms. Ireland then noted her issues of the day: first, she believed that Duke should revisit and reinvigorate its gender initiative. Among other things, she thought it should concern gender issues, not just women’s issues. And, second, she was concerned about enhancing research opportunities for students.

To open the discussion, Prof. Grunwald asked to have a little more information about the student view of the judicial process at Duke. Mr. Slattery replied that Duke currently had a system that he would compare with that of the

Spanish Inquisition. There was an “Inquisition-style handling of cases.” In the past Duke had had a judicial code that involved a number of student rights, but now student rights had for the most part been removed from Duke’s code. He had in mind, for instance, the right to be silent and the right to see the evidence against one. A list of “procedural rights” should be created and given to any student who was to be examined. At present there was no such list.

Prof. Day inquired whether the students had looked at the Community Standards now on the books. Mr. Slattery: They had, and he was comfortable with that statement. It was an “over-arching” document, however, not a statement with details of things for which one might be punished. He was concerned with the actual operation of the judicial process.

In response to a remark from the back of the room, Dean Robert Thompson (Trinity College) observed that the comparable system now operating at the Duke Medical Center was very good, indeed—in fact, it was being looked at with envy. A major question at the moment concerned whether our current system should be modified or totally scrapped so we might begin anew. In any case, “We join the students in thinking about the issue.”

Ms. Ireland, returning to the gender initiative, remarked that the present official statement on the subject was written before she came to Duke. It was time to “reinvigorate” it, to add new ideas so that it was more “student-owned.” Both men and women should be involved and provide feedback. Presently the students were creating a new committee and selecting two chairs, part of their obligation being to re-charge the students and re-start conversation. Eventually some sort of document would be created and presented to the academic community. Most important for the Council to know was that the students wanted to create an advisory committee that embraced members of the faculty and staff. The students very much hoped to hear from anyone present who was interested.

Dean Stephen Nowicki (Undergraduate Education) rose to the occasion: he assured the students that he would be happy to be one of those helping to form the advisory group.

The afternoon’s student visitors also brought thoughts concerning the recently floated proposal to drop the course-load from four to three for students who were heavily committed to particular activities (e.g., serving as editor of *The Chronicle*) or those who simply wanted for some reason to reconfigure the pattern of their coursework. Mr. Slattery was not impressed by the former (“a little cult of privileged leaders”), but saw some merit in considering the question *vis-à-vis* students

in general. The idea of having flexibility in the pattern of one's courses was not necessarily bad. Provided all the "global" goals of major requirements and distribution remained intact, it might make sense to modify the rigorous four-course rule—perhaps for students intending to do some significant research.

Prof. Foster observed that when he went to college, one had to stay fully registered or lose one's student aid.

Mr. Slattery: A student might enroll in four courses, then go convince a dean that it was necessary to drop one of them. One could be a full-time student with just three courses.

Dean Thompson: You are raising the issue of status, of what "full-time" means. One should not get the idea that this sort of change would be a simple matter or without major repercussions. Given an extraordinary situation, a dean conceivably might be able to "work something out," but no one should bank on it.

Prof. David Malone (Education) observed that there were not only logistical matters to consider. There also were academic issues. The research of Prof. Kenneth Spenner (Sociology) had indicated recently that students at Duke might not be spending an optimal amount of time on their studies.<sup>1</sup> How should one respond to that? If we looked beyond the twenty per cent of Duke students we know to be deeply engaged in their studies, what would we see and conclude? And also, do you think that such course-shifting as we are discussing would really enhance the intellectual climate at Duke?

Mr. Slattery was willing to concede that a lazy student under any system could always "pick a package of courses."

Prof. Shanahan suggested that in some cases a loosening of the rules might be a means of increasing the intellectual quotient for a student who really was pursuing an intellectual path that was particularly important or interesting.

Prof. Grunwald wondered if the 800-pound gorilla was with us here. Did allowing for a reduced load in a semester not open the door to graduation in more than four years? And had the four-course system not already been abandoned in many places?

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<sup>1</sup>Quoted in Caroline McGeough, "Study Time Low at Duke," in the second report of the five-year Campus Life and Learning Project, released in July, 2007.

Dean Walther remarked that she herself was really sympathetic to the idea of allowing a little flexibility in the matter. Nevertheless, she would also worry that students might take advantage of under-subscribing and end up “getting into a pickle” toward the close of their junior or senior year.

Mr. Slattery agreed that the institution itself could make better decisions than any individual student.

Since conversation was waning at this point and it was obviously too late in the day to unknot the Gordian problem of course loads, Prof. Shanahan declared the meeting closed at 5:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Dale B. J. Randall  
Executive Secretary