

THE FACULTY MEETING

CAST:

CHAIR

MASTER'S CHAIR - *Juning* Schenbach

DOCTORAL CHAIR *Irwa*

ADMISSIONS CHAIR *Vine*

FACULTY 1 *quero*

FACULTY 2 *Schuy*

FACULTY SECOND *Savitz*

JOYCE *Joyce*

STUDENT *Carolyn*

PROPS: PAPER HANDOUTS

## THE FACULTY MEETING

CHAIR: It's 2:00 o'clock, I guess we'd better get started. As you know this is the last faculty meeting of the academic year and we have several items we need to wrap up before you all leave for summer vacation and meetings.

(Pointing to empty chairs.)

It looks like some of us have gotten an early start.

Several of our Departmental Committees have been working on recommendations to revise current academic policies. These include the Master's Committee, the Doctoral Committee and the Admissions Committee.

I want to thank Bert Kaplan for arranging for the members of these committees to receive special Sensitivity and Awareness Training which, I am sure, has helped them in their deliberations.

First we will hear from the CHAIR of the MASTER'S COMMITTEE.  
"Name"

MASTER'S CHAIR: (passing out a handout) Thank you, Esteemed Chair.

If you will look on your handout, you will see a listing of the current requirements for a masters degree in epidemiology.

1. Various coursework in Epidemiology and Biostatistics
2. School of Public Health "Girth" Requirements
3. Master's Paper
4. Master's Written Exam
5. Master's Presentation

The Master's Committee has been reviewing these requirements and have come up with several recommendations for revisions.

First, we feel that students are required to take entirely too many courses. As Bert will attest, this leads to stress and unhealthy behaviors.

FACULTY 1: One student told me that his roommate was so stressed out by coursework that he went on a twinkie binge for a solid week.

MASTER'S CHAIR: Our point exactly. Since we are trying to promote the health of the public, perhaps we should start with our own

students.

Therefore, the Master's Committee is recommending that students take 1 course in epidemiology and 1 course in biostatistics, if they want to, and spend at least 10 hours per week in stress management counselling and aerobics.

With respect to the Master's Paper. We feel that too much emphasis has been placed on the preparation of a written document. Since most of our students will eventually write a dissertation anyway, the master's paper seems like an unnecessary obstacle.

We also recommended eliminating the requirement of a written master's exam. Let's face it; the exam covers the same material that is tested in the introductory epidemiology and biostatistics courses. We, therefore, feel it is redundant.

X JOYCE: I hate to sound like a killjoy, but the Master's exam is required by the Graduate School. We can't eliminate it.

FACULTY 2: Suppose we allow a self-graded take-home exam?

ADMIS CHAIR: That's a great idea. We can even have the students make up the exam themselves.

MASTER'S CHAIR: (Quick consultation among the Masters Committee members.)

We accept the proposal as a friendly amendment.

Moving on to the Master's Presentation...

The Committee considered that the most important aspect of the presentation was that our students get a chance to present their material in front of an audience. Therefore, we recommend no change in the current requirement.

FACULTY 2: Still that's an awful lot of presenting and a lot of pressure for our master's students. Afterall, they're not getting a Ph.D.

You know, there's a new language lab over in Dey Hall - what if the students recorded their presentations and then submitted the tapes to 2 faculty members.

That way we could listen to the presentations while we're jogging.

DOCT CHAIR: But there really is no substitute for standing in front of others.

What if we let the students find their own audience? Then they can choose listeners who aren't as intimidating as their fellow students and renowned epidemiologists like ourselves.

FACULTY 2: Good idea. Then we can just have them give us the date and names of the listeners.

FACULTY 1: Does this mean that a student can present to his 2 year old daughter and his dog?

ADM. CHAIR: As long as they can ask probing questions.

CHAIR: Thank you very much "Name of MASTER's CHAIR". I can see that the Master's Committee has put many thoughtful hours into its recommendations.

Now, let me summarize the recommendations we have heard so far this afternoon regarding the Master's requirements:

1. Reduce the course requirements
2. Eliminate the Master's Paper
3. Use a self-made, self-graded take-home exam for the Master's Exam
4. Allow presentation of the Master's Paper to anyone who will listen

Is there a motion to accept these recommendations?

FACULTY 2: So moved.

CHAIR: Do I hear a second?

FACULTY SEC: Second. (looking up from a book)

CHAIR: All in favor, say, "aye".

(All hands go up and faculty say, "aye".)  
Student remains quiet.

All opposed? (No one makes a sound.)

O.K. the recommendations put forth by the Master's Committee will be implemented in the coming academic year.

Next, we will hear from the CHAIR of the DOCTORAL COMMITTEE.  
"Name"

DOCTORAL CHAIR: Thank you, "Name of CHAIR". I, too, have a handout.  
(S/he says while passing out pieces of paper.)

The requirements that the Doctoral Committee considered are:

- 1) The Qualifying Exam
- 2) The Dissertation
- 3) Defense

I will take them one at a time. First, the Qualifying Exam.

The primary objections to the present qualifying exam are that it is too artificial - students get very little return for their effort.

We propose instead that students submit a proposal for actual funding, and students will pass the qualifying exam if their proposals are funded.

That way we don't even need to grade the proposals, and we all have more money!

FACULTY 2: How do you expect students to get funded in an area that's not their specialty when I can't get funded in an area where I have 12 publications?

FACULTY 1: Well, just because you can't.. we have some very capable students, you know.

ADM CHAIR: But, writing real proposals is the epitome of stress. This discussion does not seem to reflect the Sensitivity and Awareness Training we've had.

CHAIR: Absolutely, we want to be part of the solution not part of the problem - and we want our students to love us, too.

MASTER'S CHAIR: Wait a minute. Let's examine our basic assumptions. The Qualifying exam really tests the same thing as EPID 201, doesn't it? So, by requiring the QE, we're really saying that we don't trust our EPID 201 instructors?

That flies in the face of what we've learned in our Sensitivity and Awareness Training.

ADMIS CHAIR: How about making the QE optional for those students who take 201?

FACULTY 1: What about the students who don't take 201. What QE will they take?

FACULTY 2: They can take the final exam from 201.

X **JOYCE:** But there is no final exam for EPID 201. The final is a proposal.

FACULTY 2: That's even better!

DOCTORAL CHAIR: Before we vote on this recommendation, I'd like to present the other recommendations.

Regarding the matter of the dissertation, the Committee felt that nothing could be done since the dissertation is at the core of the Graduate School requirements.

Even Bert agreed that we couldn't tamper with a tradition dating back to the 15th century at Oxford and Cambridge.

FACULTY 1: As wise as they were in the 15th century, they couldn't have anticipated the revolution in scholarship that would take place over the next 500 years. I feel we should be able to make changes and defend them in front of the Graduate School.

~~X~~ *Wait*  
JOYGE: I'd rather take on Saddam Hussain in the fight for oil than take on the Graduate School.

DOCTORAL CHAIR: One thing we might consider is changing the format of the dissertation. In an effort to preserve trees, we could have students submit their dissertations on computer disks, or in Vic's case, submit them through electronic mail.

FACULTY 1: I feel students should have to submit an article to AJE, the Lancet or the New England Journal of Medicine and get it published for their dissertation.

FACULTY 2: Hold on a minute. I'm optimistic that if we think creatively we can preserve the essential ingredients of the dissertation experience (to satisfy Oxford and Cambridge) and the formal aspects (to satisfy the Graduate School) while removing the stress to the student and the work for the faculty.

FACULTY 1: You must have taken the course on the Power of Positive Thinking instead of the Sensitivity and Awareness Training.

MAST CHAIR: No really. For example, what if students turned in their 3 best course papers, reprinted with a laser printer on bond paper with Graduate School-approved margins? If we maintain appropriate standards in our courses, then course papers SHOULD be suitable for the dissertation.

DOCTORAL CHAIR: (Everyone nods in agreement.) I think we have consensus.

Lets move on to the defense.

If you thought the Master's Presentation was stressful for the student, consider the defense. The presentation takes longer, there is a higher faculty to student ratio in the audience, and the presenter is supposed to be an "expert" in the area.

That's OK in a real science like sociology, but it's not fair

in epidemiology where everyone knows you can't prove anything.

The presence of the Doctoral Committee seems to be the biggest concern. Since the Committee gets to read the dissertation anyway, we propose to exclude them from the defense. That way the student gets to present in front of a more sympathetic, understanding and less knowledgeable audience.

FACULTY 1: But how can the student "defend" the dissertation if there's no one there to attack it?

FACULTY 2: But that's just the point - the best defense is to keep the enemy away. After all, our business is PREVENTION.

ADM CHAIR: I like the idea. These 3 hour defenses play havoc with my schedule, and I'm on 22 committees this year. I sure could use those extra 66 hours; it would be like finding another, DAY!

DOCTORAL CHAIR: If there are no further suggestions, this concludes my presentation.

CHAIR: Thank you, "Name". We seem to have agreed on 3 recommendations regarding the doctoral program requirements:

1. Substitution of the EPID 201 proposal for the QE
2. Submission of the 3 best course papers for the dissertation
3. Presentation of the final defense to anyone but the Doctoral Committee

FACULTY 2: I move that we formally approve these recommendations.

CHAIR: Do I hear a second?

FACULTY SEC: Second.

CHAIR: All in favor, say aye.

(All hands go up and faculty say, "aye".)  
Student remains quiet.

All opposed? (No one makes a sound.)

The motion has carried.

The final report of the afternoon will be given by our Admissions Committee Chair, "Name".

ADMISSIONS CHAIR: In the past, the admissions committee has carefully reviewed the applications to the Department looking for --

1. Excellence in academic performance

2. Evidence of preparation in the biological sciences
3. Quantitative ability
4. Research experience
5. and a fundamental knowledge of what epidemiology is.

Since there are so many highly qualified applicants, the Admissions Committee proposes that we admit only those students who have essentially fulfilled all requirements for the degree they are applying for. That will make our teaching easier and more rewarding.

FACULTY 1: Yes, and we can cite all of their previous publications and achievements as accomplishments of our training program.

DOCTORAL CHAIR: I like the idea, too. It seems consistent with the self-help philosophy. After all, what people learn on their own is what really sticks.

MASTER'S CHAIR: Besides, it would reduce our teaching load since the students would be exempted from many of the courses.

X JOYCE: But, what about our Sensitivity and Awareness Training? Last year, we rejected 67 people who applied to our department - those were real people with real families and real feelings.

FACULTY 2: Not only that, I feel we are being too judgmental with our admissions criteria. Is it our right to play God with people's lives?

DOCT CHAIR: I recommend that from now on we admit all applicants to the department for whatever degree they choose to attain, or even if they just want to take courses.

FACULTY 2: An extra 67 or so students per year does not seem as though it will pose that much of an extra burden on our faculty and resources.

X JOYCE: And we can trade the extra FTE's with other departments to get things we need like secretarial time.

CHAIR: We have a motion to admit all applicants to the department. Do I hear a second?

FACULTY SEC: Second.

CHAIR: All in favor, say aye.

(All hands go up and faculty say, "aye".)  
Student remains quiet.

All opposed? (No one makes a sound.)

O.K. the motion has carried.



Well, since we have heard from all....

STUDENT: Excuse me.

CHAIR: Yes?

STUDENT: As the student representative to the faculty meetings, I would like to say something. I can't believe what I have heard this afternoon, and I must protest.

Sure we're stressed, but no required coursework, no Master's paper, no formal defense....

You are jeopardizing the quality of education that the students at UNC have come to expect. More importantly, Bert's UNC Alumni Study showed that low standards in a program of study in Epidemiology was a risk factor for unemployment, and that was a major source of stress!

CHAIR: Are you suggesting that the students would prefer that we keep the requirements the way they were before this meeting?

STUDENT: I believe so, yes.

CHAIR: We have a motion to retain the requirements as they were prior to today's faculty meeting. Do we have a second?

FACULTY SEC: Second.

CHAIR: All in favor, say "aye".

(All hands go up and faculty say, "aye".)  
Student joins in.

All opposed? (No one makes a sound.)

The motion has carried.

I believe that concludes the business we needed to discuss. I hope you all have an enjoyable summer vacation.

The meeting is adjourned.