

## **Final Report of the Graduate Education Working Group.**

**April 24 2001**

**Gareth Wynn-Williams**

The working group consisted of Wynn-Williams (chair), Barnes, Boesgaard, L. Cowie, A. Cowie, Henry, Hu, Joseph, Kaiser, Rothberg & Tholen.

The meetings on which this report is based were

1. Pre-retreat open Graduate Faculty meeting on October 19 2000
2. Retreat itself on November 17-18 2000
3. Post-retreat meeting on December 8 2000

At the October meeting there was a broad airing of a number of graduate and undergraduate issues. At the November retreat the discussion was focused on the topics of graduate recruitment and graduate astronomy courses. Most of the December 8<sup>th</sup> meeting was given over to discussions of the balance between directed research and coursework and the desirability of offering a wider range of courses.

Overall there was no sentiment for major changes in either the graduate program or the undergraduate program. (Discussions about the relationship of the teaching program with the rest of the IfA are dealt with by another working group). There was, however, a general consensus about the following points:

1. We would like to increase the range of courses offered to the grad students, notwithstanding that this may mean that some courses will likely be offered to only 1-2 students.
2. We do not want to make major changes to the qual process, except to ensure that the range of questions offered in the written qual reflects whatever changes are proposed to the course structure.
3. We cannot reasonably expect students to increase the total number of 600/700 level credits above the current baseline (36 credits in 4 semesters).
4. We should not require that students take courses in the physics department, but they should not be discouraged from doing so.
5. Faculty teaching graduate courses should take more care to produce accurate course synopses, and to coordinate course content among each other.

### **Graduate student recruitment**

1. We should seek out endowed scholarships to attract top graduate school applicants
2. We should do more to use the website to project a positive image of the IfA for graduate students
3. We should attempt to meet with potential graduate students when giving talks at other institutions.

4. We should remember that visiting faculty take impressions of the IfA home with them; small audiences at our colloquia can hurt our future recruitment efforts.

At the conclusion of the meeting December 8<sup>th</sup> the participants were asked to submit concrete written proposals for additions, consolidations and deletions of current courses, bearing in mind constraints such as the total course load on students. A few suggestions were received, but not enough to warrant holding a second post-retreat meeting. Instead, a standing curriculum was set up to push forward with improvements to our graduate and undergraduate programs, and to take over the work of the Graduate Education Working Group. Its mandate and membership are given below.

### **Other**

We should explore ways of providing temporary financial aid for incoming graduate students in the first few months after their arrival in Hawaii

### **Curriculum Committee**

- The committee will concern itself with both the graduate and undergraduate teaching programs.
- Its primary responsibility will be to recommend changes to the graduate and undergraduate astronomy curricula, via the introduction, modification and deletion of courses, and, if necessary, by the modification of degree requirements.
- The committee will also be tasked with recommending Astro 73x courses each semester.
- The committee will consist of about five faculty members appointed by the graduate chair, plus two graduate students nominated by the gradrep. The graduate chair will be an ex-officio member.
- Although the committee will have a defined membership, its meetings will normally be open to all faculty and graduate students.
- The committee will not make specific teaching assignments, nor will it have access to student evaluations of faculty.

The curriculum committee will initially consist of Josh Barnes (chair), Brian Barris, Michael Cushing, George Herbig, Bob Joseph, Nick Kaiser, Rolf Peter Kudritzki, Jeff Kuhn and Gareth Wynn-Williams. Its first meeting is planned for May 2, 2001.