

25 February 2014

MEMORANDUM FOR MAJOR GENERAL GREGG F. MARTIN, PHD
PRESIDENT, NATIONAL DEFENSE UNIVERSITY

SUBJECT: Faculty Concerns about the "Break Out" Plan to Revamp College Curricula

General Martin:

This memorandum, from the combined faculties of the College of International Security Affairs, the Eisenhower School for National Security and Resource Strategy, and the National War College, responds to your 28 January and 21 February email requests for feedback, reiterated in your 20 February Town Hall Meeting, on the new "Break Out" curriculum. While we have serious concerns about the processes used to arrive at a decision, and the decision itself, we are most concerned about the rapidity of the proposed changes that risk diminishing the quality of the NDU educational experience for the Class of 2015 as well as NDU's current students. Moreover, a rushed transformation could damage NDU's standing and reputation. Accordingly, we propose an approach that we hope will allow us to achieve the changes that you desire.

We join you in our full commitment to the NDU mission. We fully embrace change as a vital part of NDU's curriculum, especially given NDU's "real world" charter to educate top-level national security practitioners. Within the last 24 months, CISA, the Eisenhower School, and NWC all have conducted bottom-up curriculum reviews that have made significant changes in course organization, materials, and structure, and we are in the process of implementing the results of those reviews. To abandon those efforts and conceptualize a new curriculum structure, with all of the necessary reconstruction that entails, and to produce a high-quality product in five months—while continuing to provide a first-rate educational experience for the Class of 2014—would seriously jeopardize the quality of education this year and the next. We would be derelict in our duties both as educators and strategists if we did not give you that fundamental assessment.

Instead of pressing forward with a "Break Out" geared to the Class of 2015, we recommend that you form a task force of teaching faculty members from the three schools to work with the Provost on refining potential courses of action for Academic Year 2015-16. This task force would initiate an inclusive, consultative, and transparent process that would run throughout Academic Year 2014-15. This process would allow increased time for research, reflection, and consideration of future courses of action and their likely consequences, plus allow for testing proposals with small groups of students.

It is in the very spirit of your invitation to provide "ideas, creativity, critical thinking, and concerns" that we submit these thoughts for your consideration. We believe the risks of immediate implementation of the new curricular structure in AY 2014-15 far outweigh the benefits of a more measured and fully collaborative approach that would look to AY 2015-16 for implementation. Once implementation begins, in concert with the notion of "mission command," we would hope that you allow the individual colleges to construct curricula appropriate to the needs of their respective students. However, we fully recognize and accept your authority as NDU President to make decisions for the betterment of the University. Thus, we stand ready to carry out your direction to the best of our ability.

Signed, respectfully, by 96 faculty members of:

The College of International Security Affairs
The Eisenhower School for National Security & Resource Strategy
The National War College

Framework for Proposed Pre-Test of Breakout Curriculum for Class of 2014-15

In lieu of wholesale institution of new curriculum/curricula for all in AY 2014-15 (with attendant pedagogical, administrative, legal, accreditation, budgetary risks):

- Pre-test new curriculum/curricula on equivalent of two student seminars (24-32 students) and two associated faculty teaching teams (8-12 faculty?) from across the three/four colleges over the course of the entire academic year (Phases I, II, III). Content determinations for testing will be made in consonance with preliminary design and planning efforts now underway.
- Composition of student seminars (volunteers and/or selectees) and teaching teams reflect proportional size of student and faculty sizes of constituent colleges.
- Rest of student bodies and faculties proceed with regular curricula over course of entire year. This facilitates comparison of experimental group and control group.
- Experimental seminars will serve as vehicle for real-time, *in situ* content and process alterations, improvements, refinements and variable mixes of multiple alternatives of choice (e.g., thesis, other research, electives, concentrations, other).
- Constitute one (or two) evaluation/assessment teams with heaviest representation from teaching faculties, but also including research and administration representation. Establish evaluation/assessment measures and considerations, compare/contrast experimental and control groups (for performance, satisfaction, etc.) and curricula to make qualitative judgments for systematic, wholesale institution, integration, alteration for Academic Year 2015-16.

Benefits:

- Takes due account of full-time faculty commitment to teaching current Class of 2013-14 between now and graduation, then less than two months to prepare for (instructors, materials, procedures) and implement totally new curriculum/curricula.
- Makes it possible to make necessary changes/improvements, but in a more disciplined, coherent, systematic, rigorous, and fully defensible fashion than the wholesale approach now being directed.
- Provides for real-time experimentation and fine-tuning of content and process on merely a sample of students and faculty, rather than on the entire population, so that final product is more completely developed, effective, and efficient when fully instituted – thereby ensuring quality educational experience for all students and preserving NDU's reputation for excellence.
- More fully and appropriately accommodates necessary legal (Title 10) and accreditation reporting requirements (viz. Middle States requirement for *a priori* notification of major changes).
- Directly and thoroughly involves experienced teaching faculty in the development, evaluation, and necessary modification of the curriculum/curricula they are uniquely qualified to address and charged with implementing.

Meeting: NDU-P and NDU Faculty Advisory Council, 6 March 2014

- ❖ We are here representing our respective faculties.
- ❖ You have asked for “ideas, creativity, critical thinking, and concerns.”
- ❖ You have also affirmed your desire for unrestricted inputs, feedback, and candor.
- ❖ **Faculties of the three colleges most directly affected by proposed “breakout” plan have, accordingly, formulated the attached memorandum of concern, signed by 96 of them. Actual signatures are being withheld in deference to faculty concerns about the need for protection.**
- ❖ **Bottom lines of letter:**
 - (1) Faculties of NDU’s constituent colleges are total professionals who can be counted on, unreservedly, to do their best to execute what they are directed and expected to do in the best interests of NDU.**
 - (2) Faculties, fully committed to providing a quality educational experience for the current class of 2013-14, seek a more measured, systematic, rigorous, and reasonable approach to developing, testing, evaluating, and implementing “breakout,” especially in light of time constraints, the magnitude of change sought, and the many as-yet-unresolved uncertainties and ambiguities.**
 - (3) Faculties, who possess the experience, expertise, and understanding necessary for sound decisions about NDU’s teaching mission, believe they should be fully consulted and engaged in this process – before final decisions are made. To date, they have not been.**
- ❖ **This is not a demonstration of resistance to change, nor a desire for parochial adherence to the status quo. On the contrary, it is a call for properly conceived, properly managed change that enables all concerned to fulfill NDU’s mission for quality education and preserve NDU’s reputation for excellence.**
- ❖ **In the interest of providing constructive input, attached is proposed framework for more measured, systematic, rigorous pre-test of “breakout” curriculum/curricula on sample of students and associated faculty for next academic year, with full implementation in following academic year based on results of pre-test.**