Notes from meeting — 2006.05.17
Transcribed and summarized by Simon Rubinstein-Salzedo

Present at the meeting were Adebisi Agboola, Daryl Cooper, Jacob Jaffe, Jon McCammond, James McKernan, Ken Millett, Timothy Rodriguez, Simon Rubinstein-Salzedo, Shane Ryerson, Edward Sichel, Jeff Stopple, and some else whose name I do not know.

We began by continuing our discussion of writing courses and, more generally, writing in general. It was agreed that people ought to be able to write competently. The ability to write will serve students well when they enter the "real world" and need to write business letters or various other things that may come up. It is also a perennial problem for students working on PhD theses to write a long document. Doing a senior thesis is therefore to be encouraged.

We then returned to the topic of the first-year sequence. The general consensus is that a topology course does not belong in the first-year sequence, as most students will not be in a position to benefit from the study of abstract topological spaces (for example) before seeing examples of actual topological spaces in other courses. In place of topology, linear algebra was proposed. Students are traditionally weak in linear algebra and could certainly use more courses in it. Proposed is an accelerated 108-style course going through Jordan form.

Also proposed was a replacement for Charles Ryavec's course, which is known as "Lots of Math." As I understand it, this course has been a year-long sequence designed to take students through as much of the standard undergraduate curriculum, as well as various other topics as they come up, as possible in the shortest possible amount of time so that students can begin to take graduate courses early. Recently, the structure of this course has changed, and this quarter it is covering mainly topics in combinatorics and probability theory. It seems likely that this course will no longer be offered; however, it was proposed to replace the course by something somewhat similar. Specifically, proposed was a seminar-style course in which people (I do not know whether it would be students or professor(s)) lecture on topics that are important and accessible to undergraduates but are neglected in the undergraduate curriculum.

We briefly discussed the Math 3 and 5 series. To many students, it seems a bit strange to take these series, and in particular the 5 series. For a student who does not know much about physics, these subjects can easily appear unmotivated. Therefore it is recommended for students to take some physics courses that run parallel to these courses. Students needing to take these courses may wish to take the 3CI, 5AI, 5BI courses rather than the standard 3C, 5A, 5B courses. In these courses, students work on their own on problems in order to develop the theory for themselves. The professor then offers advice when needed.

Various other topics were mentioned briefly at the end. The consensus is that the ideal size for the CCS math problem is somewhere from forty to sixty students. Also mentioned was the possibility of a CCS math tea one day a week in South Hall or possibly just encouraging students to attend the tea for math faculty and graduate students.