Graduate Faculty Council

Recommendations

At its May 11, 1999, meeting Graduate Council discussed Dean Lee’s criteria for awarding Graduate Assistantships.

From the minutes:

The current allocation criteria were reviewed by Marilyn Urion. Possible additional criteria were discussed, including some measure of difficulty in a particular area to obtain limited research funding as a weighting factor for research $ in that area. Other criteria discussed were: past successful use of GAs by departments, number of graduate degrees awarded, number of successful proposals. There was a consensus that some measure of difficulty in a particular area to obtain limited research funding as a weighting factor for research $ in that area may be appropriate for Dr. Lee to consider. It was also agreed by consensus that proposal writing by department heads to obtain GAs was useful to make the case and stay accountable for past use of GAs in a unit.

Other topics were raised but did not gain the consensus of the group:

Should degree production rate be a factor in GA allocation? No, the GA program is not intended to directly increase graduate degree awarded but rather to foster research. Increased degree production is only a secondary benefit.

Should only successful proposals be counted? No particular consensus was reached on this question.

Should teaching loads be taken into account? Again, there was no particular consensus.

To summarize, there was consensus that the "degree of difficulty" of obtaining funding in each field should be one of the criteria, however, no concrete measure of this was suggested. More thought will be given to ways to characterize this factor.

There was also consensus that departments heads should continue to be asked to write proposals for GAs and that, whenever applicable, those proposals should review how GAs awarded in the one or two previous years have been used and what benefits accrued as a result.

Additional comments follow ...

Date: Wed, 12 May 1999 18:52:58 -0400
To: Steve Seidel <steve@mtu.edu>
Steve, I am sorry I could attend this week's Graduate Council meeting. Here are my two comments.

1) The GA Allocation Guideline states that the purpose of GAs is to "partially relieve faculty from their normal teaching duties so that they can devote their time and effort to the development of research and graduate programs in their department." Accordingly, the GA allocation formula does not currently use any weight for how to define teaching loads. I would suggest that the allocation method incorporate some measure(s) of teaching loads into the assessment. I do not think GAs should solely be based on teaching loads or undergraduate numbers, they should be considered though in the allocation process.

I support the use of using "# proposal written" instead of using some undefined "degree of difficulty." This allows one to account for programs which are trying to obtain funding but may not yet have had success in securing funds. As for including the "degree of difficulty" in obtaining funding as a separate criteria, I think this is inappropriate. First as mentioned by the Council what measure would be used? Furthermore, I have never heard of any individual or any field which has "ease" in obtaining research dollars. Research dollars stem from several areas including creativity, interdisciplinary teamwork, and hours devoted to proposal writing and scholarly productivity.

I do not hear other colleagues at other universities debating this, in fact when I was in graduate school every department and area had research dollars. I know this applies to few individuals on campus but we should also not reward programs or individuals for coming up with excuses of why they cannot obtain research funding or why they continue to work in obsolete areas. Instead we should use GAs to assist individuals/groups in trying to obtain funding, hopefully interdisciplinary in nature such that they work in multi-college and multi-institutional teams, and can therefore cross between several funding agencies, perhaps some which are nontraditional.

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