Minutes of the Graduate Faculty Council Meeting

Tuesday, January 11, 2011

1) Meeting called to order at 4:05 pm.

Members (13): Bill Yarroch (ASE), Amy Marcarelli (Bio Sci), Eugene Levin (Sch Tech), Paul Ward (Cog & Sci), Michael Bowler (Rhet & Tech), Craig Friedrich (MEEM), Tom Merz (Bus & Econ), Gerry Caneba (Chem Eng), Ashutosh Tiwari (Chem), Dave Watkins (Civ & Env), Sam Sweitz (Ind Hert), Tom Drummer (Math), Aleksey Smirnov (Geo)

Guests (8): Heather Suokas (Grad Sch), Debra Charlesworth (Grad Sch), Jacqueline Huntoon (Grad Sch), Jacque Smith (Grad Sch), Nancy Byers-Sprague (Grad Sch), Sean Gohman (GSG), Thy Yang (IPS), Derek Yu (IPS)

2) Review and approval of 12/07/10 meeting minutes with the following amendment to Old Business (4b): Insert the word “sometimes” into the following sentence: “Two departments declared that they (insert: “sometimes”) commit to four or five years of funding.”

3) Committee Reports:
   a. Dismissal/Appeal/Grievance Policy (D. Charlesworth): Ann Roth and Ellen Horsch met with the Senate Executive Board to discuss the policy on policies. They are in general agreement that what the executive board needs in the Senate is not contradictory to what the policy on policies states. Deb will continue to align this policy with the policy on policies.
   b. Application Overload in CEE (D. Watkins): The new Work Flow system within the Graduate School is helpful in eliminating the application overload. Jacque and Dave discussed some application screening options that can take place in the Graduate School to further eliminate the burden of overload. D. Watkins will bring any additional issues to the GFC’s attention should they arise. The committee is dissolved.

4) Old Business
   a. Research Only Mode Adjustments (Dean Huntoon): Dean Huntoon and N. Byers-Sprague met with Accounting to discuss the possibility of graduate students (while in research only mode), paying for an additional course as an add-on to their research, if they so chose. As it stands now, the student (in research only mode) is unable to take a course unless they come out of research only mode. (For additional information on this agenda item, see discussion from meeting minutes 12-07-10, New Business- 5.c or http://www.mtu.edu/gradschool/administration/academics/policies-procedures/research-mode/). Accounting said that this would be possible. This rule would not apply to required courses towards the student’s degree (required courses must be complete before entering research only mode). This would be a rule for any additional courses that the student feels is helpful to their research. This would not count towards the total credits required for the degree because credits required for the degree need to be fulfilled before a student can enter research only mode. The Graduate School will write a formal policy which they can then share with the GFC. S. Gohman (GSG) agrees this meets the needs of the graduate students.

5) New Business
   a. IPS Presentation (T. Yang/D. Yu): If your department/program has certain needs or questions that they would like addressing, IPS is available to present to individual areas. Please contact Thy Yang if you would like to set up a meeting. There are seven reasons as to why an international student may take a reduced course load (exceptions to the “full course of study” requirements: 1) academic difficulties – for “new” students only, can only be used once (a. Initial difficulties with the English language, b. initial difficulties with reading requirements, c. unfamiliarity with American teaching methods, d. improper course level placement), 2) illness or medical condition (Dr. report required and no classes can be taken), 3) completing the course of study during the final term (DSO may authorize a reduced course load in the student’s final term, semester, or session if fewer courses are needed to complete the course of study), 4) students engaged in practical training (a. optional practical training, b. curricular practical training), 5) concurrent enrollment in two different SEVIS-approved F-1 schools, 7) annual vacation exemption, and
b. IELTS-Language Testing (J. Smith): There are currently three well known English language tests: TOEFL (offers over 4500 testing centers worldwide), IELTS (offers 500 testing centers worldwide), and the Pearson Test of English (offers 161 testing centers worldwide). Michigan Technological University accepts the TOEFL and the IELTS at the graduate level. At the undergraduate level all three tests are accepted. The handout which can be found on the GFC website breaks down each of these tests and gives the reader information on the differences between the tests and also a conversion table. Use the handout as a comparison tool for your area. The paper and computer based TOEFL tests are being phased out which will leave one form of the exam: internet based. TOEFL tests American English skills, IELTS tests British English skills and Pearson tests a combination of the two. If you have further questions, call the Graduate School and a staff member can assist you with any questions.

c. Accelerated Master’s Programs (Dean Huntoon/W. Yarroch): Last March (2010) GFC approved the proposal to rename and modify the “Senior Rule” Policy. Upon review by the Curricular Policy Committee changes have been suggested. This new proposal “Accelerated Master’s Programs” will have no effect on Senior Rule (Senior Rule will stay the same). This newly revised proposal will establish an accelerated master’s program which will allow students to begin work towards a master’s degree while they are working on their bachelor’s degree. The student will be able to double count up to six credits towards both the bachelor's and masters degree. This will only apply to professional (do not require a thesis or a report) focused degree programs (Plan C and Plan D master’s programs). The original proposal stated that this would be available for research focused students as well, but not this revised proposal. If a degree program agrees to offer this, they need to put a curricula plan into place ahead of time. The courses will be coded and counted as an undergraduate course but the Graduate School will then transfer those credits to count towards their graduate degree as well. This is a fairly common practice nationwide. If the GFC approves this document it will have to return to the CPC for formal approval and then forwarded onto the Senate. Questions/Comments: Does this revised version meet the needs of the programs that wanted this in the first place? The revised document does not meet the needs of two of the original proposers. This will help students who are in Plan C or D programs such as forestry, computer science, and mechanical engineering. Once this proposal is in place we can talk about modifying it to fit research centered programs. Why were Plan A and Plan B excluded? People were concerned about undergraduates doing research and applying that research in a way that was not appropriate or that they were not developed enough to apply the research appropriately. The idea was that once people see that the proposal for Plan C and D work, they can revisit introducing this to Plan A and B. Research and Professional based degrees are so different that it is the general consensus that they should not be included in the same proposal. What would happen if the undergrad works towards a Plan C or D but upon entering grad school or sometime after changes to a Plan A or B? Can they still use the credits from their undergraduate degree? No, a student changing from Plan C or D to A or B will not be able to double count those credits. As things stand now there are rules about what courses can be applied to each plan and each student fills out a degree schedule form. If students do not have the appropriate courses then they have not satisfied the degree requirements for that degree. Why use the word “professional?” W. Yarroch will change the text from “professional” to “course work” degree programs. Motion to approve passed.

d. Graduate School Dean Performance Review – Election of Committee Rep (W. Yarroch): The committee representative will be Nancy Auer.

6) Motion to adjourn at 5:15 pm.
Reduced Course Load

Some exceptions to the "full course of study" requirement are as following:

1. Academic Difficulties

   (a) Initial difficulties with the English language
   (b) Initial difficulties with reading requirements
   (c) Unfamiliarity with American teaching methods
   (d) Improper course level placement

2. Illness or medical condition

   The medical condition must be substantiated by "medical documentation from a licensed medical doctor, doctor of osteopathy, or licensed clinical psychologist."

3. Completing the course of study during the final term

   The DSO may authorize a reduced course load in the student's final term, semester, or session if fewer courses are needed to complete the course of study.

4. Students engaged in practical training

   (a) Optional practical training
   (b) Curricular practical training

5. Concurrent enrollment in two different SEVIS-approved F-1 schools

   An F-1 student can be enrolled in two different SEVIS-approved F-1 schools at the same time (concurrent enrollment), as long as the enrollment in both schools amounts to a full time course of study, and both schools are SEVIS-certified.
6. Annual vacation exemption

F-1 regulations recognize that traditional school years include a session (usually summer), during which students are considered by the school to be on break, and not required to be registered for classes. The regulations see this as an annual vacation, and consider the student to be maintaining status even though he or she is not actually registered for classes.

7. Canadian and Mexican border commuter students

An eligible Canadian or Mexican "border commuter student" may be authorized to enroll in a course load below that otherwise required for a full course of study, provided that the reduced course load is consistent with the border commuter student's approved course of study.

NOTE:

A DSO must authorize a "reduced course load (RCL) and update SEVIS prior to a student reducing his or her course load. A student who drops below a full course of study without the prior approval of the DSO is considered out of status.