Minutes of the Graduate Faculty Council Meeting

Tuesday, January 6, 2009

1) Meeting called to order at 4:06 pm.

Members (14): Bill Yarroch (ASE), Judith Perlenger (EPD2), Craig Friedrich (MEEM), Kim Fook Lee (Physics), Beth Flynn (Humanities), Phil Merkey (Comp Sci/Eng), Shekhar Joshi (SFRES), Blair Orr (Peace Corps), Ruth Archer (SBE), Shiyue Fang (Chem), Dave Watkins (Civil & Env Eng), Eugene Levin (School of Technology), Chris Middlebrook (Elec & Comp Eng), Kim Hoagland (Envir Policy)

Guests (3): Heather Suokas (Graduate School– recording secretary), Jacque Smith (Graduate School), Jackie Huntoon (Graduate School)

2) Review and approval of 11/4/08 meeting minutes.

3) Old Business
   a. Sample departmental survey on graduate student rejections (J. Huntoon): The current “rejection” letter that comes from the Graduate School is unappealing. It only states the rejection and gives no feedback as to why. Questions/Comments: Should each department have a letter to give to students stating why they were not accepted? There could be more than one reason for rejection. For example, they could be missing prerequisites and the applicant is not as competitive as the others. On the example sheet of reasons a line will be added to state, “One or more prerequisites missing.” Decision: Each department will receive a sheet of reasons for the rejection to be filled out and returned to the Graduate School. Each department will be asked to check the reason most pertinent to each case/student. Dean Huntoon will send out the sheet as an optional duty to departments and the Graduate School will see what kind of response they get.

b. Dean’s Fellowship guidelines (J. Huntoon): This fellowship is aimed at enhancing diversity on campus. The student does not need to be underrepresented to add to diversity. Dean’s Fellowships will provide partial support for the recipient’s first year in a PhD program. The support will include a stipend of $2,000 per academic-year semester (fall and spring) as well as full summer support (stipend plus minimum full-time tuition and fees). The student will commit to four years of funding which is contingent on proven progress towards a PhD. Offering the four years of funding makes us more competitive. Up to ten fellowships will be awarded per year throughout the entire University. The decisions are made by a panel and the panel brings those recommendations to Dean Huntoon. The student has already been accepted to the University and has been offered support, which makes this fellowship an additional commitment. Nominations will be due on March 1 and the date to respond will be March 22 rather than April 7. This gives the committee three weeks to meet and make decisions. This fellowship will be announced and implemented this year. The students eligible for this fellowship are US citizens or permanent residents. Each spring few students are told they will be given four years support. This fellowship will attract more students. Graduate School recruiters have been spreading the word and there is interest among students.

c. Early Walk (J. Huntoon & E. Flynn): Update from E. Flynn: The early walk form was not modified due to Humanities decision to not allow early walk. This will be written into their handbook. N. Byers-Sprague with the Graduate School helped with the
wording for the handbook and this decision and text were approved by the committee and the Humanities department. Exceptions will not be specified in writing but in few instances exceptions can be made. J. Huntoon stated that one quarter of students stay for two or more semesters after they have participated in the early walk. As of now the assistant to the dean of the Graduate School and the student’s advisor signs off on the current early walk form. This form will be modified to include an additional signature line to be signed by the department chair or graduate program director. This revised form will be brought back to the next GFC meeting for approval. Departments have the option to propose modification to their form.

d. Finishing Fellowships (Dean’s proposal presented by J. Huntoon): Members voted on the text that is to be included in the guidelines for the Finishing Fellowship. The original two choices for the vote were as follows: 1. Have deadlines each semester (summer, fall, spring) for funding only for the next semester. (This choice is consistent with current policy, but not the policy presented at the Nov. 4 GFC meeting) or 2. Have a deadline in the fall for funding in the spring and a deadline in the spring for both summer and fall. (If #2 is the preferred choice, Dean Huntoon will try to get permission to carry funds forward across the end of the fiscal year so that support will exist for the student the next fall. If permission is not obtained we can either get rid of the fall support or reconsider option 1 above). After these two options were presented there was a third choice added - 2a. Have a deadline in the fall for funding in the spring and a deadline in the spring for both summer and fall, plus a limited summer competition exclusively for students who have no support for fall. The voting results were as follows: Option 1 – 1, Option 2 – 1, Option 2a – 10. The record shows that the text will be used from Option 2a. Last fall and last spring semester, seven fellowships were given. The number depends on how much money the Graduate School has. Every year more students apply than the Graduate School has funds.

e. Committee reports: Parental/maternal leave for graduate students (J. Perlinger): The committee is corresponding and collecting information from other Universities on their campus policies.

4) New Business

a. Policy on changing graduate programs (J. Huntoon): Dean Huntoon checked the website to see what was written. The information found on the web was incomplete. Dean Huntoon wrote a suggestion for a new policy (write up can be found on the GFC website under 1/6/09 meeting handouts). After the members read over the wording one comment was that the term D1 is confusing. The Graduate School is in the process of changing that form name. When a student decides to switch paths from pursuing a PhD to pursuing an MS, they need to go through the chain of command in order for all to be informed of the switch. If a student is told to make this change, a different policy would be in effect for that student. The third paragraph stating the rules for changing from a doctoral to a master’s program in the same department will be linked to an appeal process. A revision in this text will be added regarding students in non-departmental degree seeking situations. Dean Huntoon will revise and bring back to the council for approval.

b. The next meeting will be held on February 3 and the agenda will include:
   1. Master’s Path Policy Change
   2. Procedures to prepare and submit a thesis or dissertation to Michigan Technological University’s Graduate School
   3. Proposal to instate a Graduate Dean’s List
5) Motion to adjourn at 5:02 pm.