Minutes of the Graduate Faculty Council Meeting

Tuesday, February 3, 2009

1) Meeting called to order at 4:08 pm.

Members (14): Bill Yarroch (ASE), Craig Friedrich (MEEM), Claudio Mazzoleni (Physics), Beth Flynn (Humanities), Shekhar Joshi (SFRES), Blair Orr (Peace Corps), Ruth Archer (SBE), Shiyue Fang (Chem), Eugene Levin (School of Technology), Nancy Auer (Bio Sci), Gerald Caneba (Chem Eng), Greg Waite (Geo & Min Eng), Jianping Dong (Math), Richard Honrath (Atmos Sci)

Guests (6): Heather Suokas (Grad School– recording secretary), Jacque Smith (Grad School), Jackie Huntoon (Grad School), Nancy Byers-Sprague (Grad School), Jill Witt (GSC), Tom Vosecky (Humanities), Christa Walck (Library), Ellen Seidel (Library)

2) Review and approval of 1/6/09 meeting minutes pending a change in the description of the Dean’s Fellowship to indicate that the support from the Graduate School is only for the first year.

3) Old Business
   a. Finishing Fellowships (J. Huntoon): Members voted on the text that is to be included in the guidelines for the Finishing Fellowship last month. The new language has been included in the text of the Finishing Fellowship and is now “live” at the following site: http://www.gradschool.mtu.edu/financial/ff.html. Motion to accept this final version passed.
   b. Policy on changing graduate programs (J. Huntoon): Last month a revision in the text was recommended regarding non-departmental degree seeking situations. The following text was added: “Non-departmental PhD programs may or may not accept this form, and students are advised to check with the graduate program director for the appropriate non-departmental PhD program to determine if a new application is required.” Motion to accept this final version passed.
   c. Early Walk form (J. Huntoon): This form has been modified to include an additional signature line to be signed by the department chair or graduate program director. Also, the paragraph regarding which approvals the student needs has been moved to the top of the page. Comments: use positive language in the “Approval signatures” section. Instead of saying “Do Not sign…” say “Only sign…” Modify the wording in the first paragraph to reflect what is included in completing all requirements for the degree. Make a change in the second signature line to reflect which signature is needed in the case of a non-departmental degree situation. The final version of this document will be available in pdf format on-line. Motion passed to accept the form on the condition that the above changes are made.
   d. Committee Reports: Parental/Maternal leave for graduate students (N. Auer): The committee is corresponding and collecting information from other universities on their campus policies.

4) New Business
   a. Master’s Path Policy Change (J. Huntoon): Dean Huntoon revised the wording to reflect the current practice. She also removed wording in the last paragraph to simplify the document. (The document with the tracked changes can be found on the GFC website under 2/3/09 meeting handouts). Motion passed to accept the document.
   b. Procedures to prepare and submit a thesis or dissertation to Michigan Technological University’s Graduate School (Thesis and Dissertation Committee): This is considered a
“living document.” Once the document is approved, it is expected that details will be modified on an ongoing basis. The concept of having a document such as this was unanimously accepted. Discussion focused on:

- Page ten, item six (copyright notice): There were concerns in regards to the amount of work the adviser helps put into the thesis/dissertation and how the student exclusively copyrights the work in their name. Answers provided to these concerns:
  1) The student is not copyrighting the idea. The student is copyrighting the text and presentation of the text. 2) There is an option of obtaining a jointly held copyright. 3) A student needs to be better trained on their responsibility to give back to the University/adviser by getting their works published. 4) There is an understanding that when the appropriate people sign off on the student’s thesis it becomes solely the student’s work. 5) Even if the copyright symbol is not shown, the student owns the copyright to the document. The group concluded that use of the copyright symbol was appropriate.

- Page sixteen, Review of article by committee prior to journal submission: The committee questioned why does the student need permission from the committee for a journal article? Why can’t we keep the journal issue separate from the thesis/dissertation since a student’s committee will reevaluate the section if it is submitted as part of the thesis/dissertation? The group concluded that the Thesis/Dissertation Guidelines Committee members review this part of the document and consider lifting the requirement that committee members be given the opportunity to review journal articles and eliminate the use of the TD-Journal form.

- Page thirty-four, first bullet in regards to the bold text: “At the draft stage, there are no penalties if a submitted document contains plagiarized material.” Why are there no penalties? There are penalties for undergraduates who turn in plagiarized material at the draft stage. Answer: the Graduate School wants the students to feel as though it is a place to go for help. They don’t want the student to be fearful and they want the student to know that the Graduate School will provide assistance. Based on that response the committee felt that the Thesis/Dissertation Guidelines Committee members carefully define the word “draft” so that it is clear that the pre-defense draft is not viewed as anything other than a work in progress that is not intended for final submission. The wording on page thirty-three also needs to be cleaned up so that it is clear that students have the option of submitting a document for review on their own and to encourage students to do what needs to be done to prevent plagiarism before any draft is turned in.

- Page five, first bullet point: This entire bullet either needs to be reworded or completely taken out. Human Subjects is only one of the rules that must be followed. In addition, Michigan Tech currently allows only faculty to be PIs on Human Subjects IRB review requests. Thus it is the faculty member’s not the student’s responsibility to ensure that Human Subjects rules be followed. In addition, this document is about writing the thesis/dissertation and if Human Subjects (or Animal Research) issues were not addressed at the start of the research, it will be too late for the student if that student only learns of the rules once they begin writing.

- A motion was passed to ask the Thesis/Dissertation Guidelines Committee members and Dr. Charlesworth to review these recommendations and report back to the GFC at its next meeting regarding any changes. In addition, members of the GFC who have additional comments on the document should send them to Heather Suokas who will have the comments compiled and reviewed by the committee. Discussion of this document will be resumed at the next Graduate Faculty meeting.
c. Proposal to instate a Graduate Dean’s List (R. Archer, J. Huntoon): Approximately 82 percent of the graduate students maintain a 3.5 grade point average or above and approximately 50 percent maintain a 4.0 grade point average. If this concept is instituted it needs to be prestigious. How can we recognize exceptional students? Possible ideas: through a scholar’s program, recognition during the graduation ceremony or with individual certificates for such things as research. This discussion will be continued at the next Graduate Faculty Council meeting.

5) Motion to adjourn at 5:10 pm.