Graduate Faculty Council
Minutes - March 1, 2005

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The Graduate Faculty Council (GFC) met on March 1, 2005 in the ROTC Blue Room.

Depts/Programs represented: Casey Huckins (Biology), Brent Lekvin (SBE), Pushpa Murthy (Chem), Joe Holles (CME), Neil Hutzler (CEE), Jean Mayo (CS), Warren Perger (ECE), Kurt Pregitzer (SFRES), John Gierke (GMES), Dennis Lynch (HU), Jianping Dong (Math), H. Wang (MSE), Ghatu Subhash (MEEM), Barry Solomon (SS), Martin Smith & Marilyn Vogler (GS).

Depts/Programs/Offices not represented: Biomedical Engineering, Physics, Education

Guests: Rick Vendlinski (GSC)

1. President Kurt Pregitzer opened the meeting at 4:05.
2. John Gierke volunteered to record and distribute the minutes for the March meeting.
3. Agenda Items:
   a. February meeting minutes were approved.
   b. Updates:
      i. Change in Process for Graduate Faculty Appointments: the policy change is underway.
      ii. GFC Web Page: GFC Pres. Pregitzer expressed appreciation on behalf of the GFC for the excellent web pages that were developed and are maintained by Asst. Dean Marilyn Vogler. GFC appreciation was unanimous. Members are encouraged to use the GFC web pages for referring to meeting minutes and other information pertaining to GFC business (http://www.gradschool.mtu.edu/gfc/).
      iii. Commencement Policy Change: The new policy regarding the eligibility of graduate students to participate in commencement is outlined below:
         
         - From http://www.gradschool.mtu.edu/Graduation.html (Note: the web page contains the link to the form requesting commencement participation):
         
         - Commencement Ceremony
         
         - Michigan Tech has commencement at the end of fall and spring semesters.

         Commencement information is mailed to all eligible students about two months before the ceremony, generally in mid-March and early October. Any graduate student is eligible to participate in the nearest UPCOMING commencement if

         1. The student's advisor has signed the "Request to Participate in Commencement Prior to Final Submission of Documents" affirming his/her confidence that the student will defend, correct and submit to the Graduate School, their thesis/report/dissertation and all final paperwork prior to the official end date of the FOLLOWING semester.
         
         2. The Graduate School receives this form with the advisor's signature prior to the process that initiates printing of commencement materials (about one month before commencement).

         iv. Search committee for a permanent Graduate Dean has been established (see February 1, 2005 minutes for list of GFC appointments to the search committee. A position announcement has been posted. The search is internal.
c. Proposal to Change the Plan C M.S. Final Oral Exam Policy: SBE Rep. Brent Lekvin presented the highlights and rationale for changes in the final oral exam policy for Plan C M.S. programs at MTU.

i. The proposal (see GFC Recommendations) suggests making the Final Oral Exam Optional. The oral examination for coursework only (Plan C) master's degree programs shall be optional at the discretion of the department in which the programs are administered. Each department shall establish a policy regarding oral examinations for coursework only master's degree programs. The policy established for a given program within a department must be applied to every student in that program.

ii. The rationale for the changes: MTU offers a variety of master's degree programs that are coursework only. The current policy does not differentiate between degree programs and applies a one-size-fits-all approach. Consequently, it is reasonable to ask if the oral examination requirement serves as an effective qualitative measure of academic performance for some degree programs. Making the oral examination optional, at the discretion of the department, would transfer the decision regarding the appropriate means of academic assessment to the level at which the participants involved are the most familiar with the program in question.

iii. Analysis of final oral exam policies at a wide variety of institutions suggests that about half require a final oral exam and there is either no exam or the exam is optional, depending on the program, at the other half. (see Excel spreadsheet of data archived at: http://www.gradschool.mtu.edu/gfc/library.html)

iv. The vote in the GFC was unanimous in favor of the proposed policy change. GFC Reps were encouraged to discuss this issue with their constituencies in advance of submitting the proposal to the University Senate.

d. Interim Dean Martyn Smith introduced himself to the GFC by discussing an online delivery of graduate courses that he plans to develop and a possible model for present and future Masters programs. Further information about these efforts is forthcoming.

The GFC adjourned at 5:00 PM.

Reported by J.S. Gierke, 4/10/05