Minutes of the Graduate Faculty Council Meeting

Tuesday, March 1, 2011

Members (11): Bill Yarroch (ASE), Amy Marcarelli (Bio Sci), Seth Donahue (Bio Eng), Ashutosh Tiwari (Chem), Dave Watkins (Civ & Env), Chris Middlebrook (Elec & Comp), Sam Sweitz (Ind Hert), Craig Friedrich (MEEM), Blair Orr (PCMI), Kim Fook Lee (Phys), Steve Seidel (Comp Sci)

Guests (7): Heather Suokas (Grad Sch), Debra Charlesworth (Grad Sch), Jacqueline Huntoon (Grad Sch), Jacque Smith (Grad School), Nancy Byers-Sprague (Grad Sch), Erik Nordberg (Library), Sean Gohman (GSG)

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

2) Review and approval of 02/01/11 meeting minutes with the following amendment: item 3a) should read-the policies and procedures will be available for the GFC members to read at the April meeting.

3) Committee Reports:
   a. Dismissal/Appeal Grievance Policy (D. Charlesworth): The draft policies and procedures will be available as handouts for the GFC members to read at the April 5th meeting.

4) New Business:
   a. External Committee Members (Dean Huntoon): Dr. Hwang has expressed to Dean Huntoon that his department/program is finding it difficult to locate external committee members. The current rule states that “For interdisciplinary and non-departmental programs, the outside examiner may not be affiliated with the interdisciplinary or non-departmental program. A person external to Michigan Tech may be appointed as an ad hoc member of the Graduate Faculty to serve as the outside examiner. Persons who are not members of the Graduate Faculty may not serve as voting members of doctoral examination Committees.” Dr. Hwang’s concern is that it is difficult to find people who are not somehow associated with a non-departmental program. Is it possible to remove the text above from the policy? An external member of the committee serves a couple of purposes. One is that they provide oversight on the process, they can also see if anything abnormal is going on and it allows faculty to meet people from across campus and find potential for new collaborations. Also the external committee member adds breadth and a different perspective/view point. The Dean suggests that a committee is formed by the graduate program directors of the non-departmental programs to put together a proposal. If this is limiting students from joining non-departmental degree programs then this does need to be looked at further. Dave Watkins will speak with the chair of the EPD2 committee and get his thoughts. Is it possible to petition for an exemption on a case by case basis? It is a possibility. Dean Huntoon will contact Dr. Hwang to discuss a potential committee formation for this issue.

   b. Computational Science & Engineering Program (P. Merkey): Dean Huntoon asked P. Merkey to present to the GFC because it is time to update the documents and structure of the Computational Science & Engineering program. A committee is being formed to encourage students to join the program and possibly revise documents. If any of you would like to participate you can by contacting Computational Science. This program is beneficial in cases where a student in another discipline is conducting computationally intensive research. This program gives them access to faculty and training that they need to solve the computational problems they will encounter. In the past a student, for example in the Geology department who is studying within the Computational Science program, could only be coded by program/major and the department would not get the credit for graduating a PhD student. Banner is now set up to accept two codes and both the department and the program receive the credit for producing a PhD student. Please see P. Merkey’s presentation on pages 3-7 of these minutes.
c. Revisit Grad Student Award Nomination Process (Dean Huntoon): There are two dean’s awards that the GFC approved last year that were put into place this year. One is the dean’s award for outstanding graduate student teaching and the second is the outstanding scholarship award. These were proposed so that graduate students could be recognized much like undergraduates on the dean’s list are recognized. The original proposals stated that students would only be eligible if they were graduating in a particular semester but when this was put into place it was determined that it is difficult to know when a student will graduate far enough in advance to include the award recipient into the commencement booklet. The text of the teaching award was then changed to read that a certain percentage of the total enrollment would be eligible and removed the requirement that they needed to be graduating in a given semester. Another unintended consequence has arisen. The graduate student teaching award reads, “Each academic school or department may recommend at least one and no more than 20% of its graduate students to receive this award each academic-year semester.” If it is a PhD student cohort and one out of the five receives the award, by the five years it takes to graduate everybody could potentially receive this award. The intention of the award is to recognize outstanding students but with the text as it is, this may turn into an award that everybody receives. The outstanding scholarship reads, “Each academic school or department may recommend up to 10% of its total graduate student enrollment to receive this award each academic-year semester.” This award does have the graduation requirement remaining as opposed to the teaching award which does not have a graduation requirement. The dean would like to change the text of both awards to either a smaller percentage or to say a specific number of students from each department. How do we make these awards meaningful for the large and the small departments? Can there be different numbers/percentages based on whether it is a large or small department? Maybe it could be worded in a way in which a department can nominate one student for every five students. Nancy also would like to suggest a change to the nomination process. Rather than nominating summer graduates in the fall (after they graduate), she would like to have departments nominate them in the spring semester (before they graduate). Jackie will think more about how to change the text so that it benefits all departments and re-present to the GFC.

5) Motion to adjourn at 5:05 pm.
Current CSE Program

- Computational Science and Engineering Research Institute
  - Support the CSE PhD program
  - Promote the use of Advanced Computation on Campus
  - Reports directly to VP of Research

- CSE PhD Program
  - Non-departmental
  - Virtual Program
  - Directly under Dean of Graduate School
  - Any PhD granting department can house a CSE PhD student
CSE PhD Program

- Students:
  - 5 active (2xMath, 2xEE, Forestry)
  - we have lost 3-5 students
  - 7 alumni, first in 2002 (2xCS, 2xGeoEng, 2xMath, Phy)

- PhD Requirements:
  - Must have a M.S.
  - 30 credit, 18 course credits, 12 at 5000 or 6000
  - 3 comprehensive exams
  - specialty exam
  - thesis proposal, thesis defense
  - combination of disciplines is determined by the student’s advisory committee (no core requirements)
CSE PhD Program

- Current Organizational Structure
  - Dean
  - Director
  - Faculty advisory committee
  - Admin help from CS dept
  - Course fee collected on some cross-listed courses
  - The role of the “Home” department
    - admissions and support
    - standards and conventions
Why Tech Needs a CSE Program

- Interdisciplinary Studies
- Increase our pool of graduate students
  - story of a student we got
  - story of one that got away
- Help current students finish:
  If a student can’t/won’t go deeper in a discipline, but can (via computation) go broader, maybe we can construct a CSE PhD that keeps the student here.
- We need ways that Tech can appear to be and act as if it is bigger than it is.
How should we change the Program?

- Make it less dependent on individuals
- Possible Structure:
  - Dean
  - Coordinator:
    - Non-Tenured Staff Member
    - Rotating Tenured Faculty Member
  - Departmental buy in from core or currently involved departments:
    - Grad Directors
    - Recognized committee appointment
  - Representation for faculty with student in the program.
- Issues:
  - Can the new way of handling applications help?
  - Do we need core (or a set of core) courses?
  - Should we have an MS degree?
  - Should we have Graduate Certificates?