Minutes of the Graduate Faculty Council Meeting

Tuesday, March 13, 2012

Members (14): Thomas Drummer (Math), Ashutosh Tiwari (Chem), Eugene Levin (Sch Tech), Sam Sweitz (SocSci), Blair Orr (PCMI), Dave Watkins (Civil), Andrew Storer (SFRES), Simon Carn (Geo), Keat Ghee Ong (Biomed), Tom Merz (Bus), Julia King (ChemEng), Paul Ward (Cog Sci), Craig Friedrich (MEEM), Kim Fook Lee (Phys), Judith Perlinger (Atmos)

Guests (6): Jackie Huntoon (Grad Sch), Heather Suokas (Grad Sch), Debra Charlesworth (Grad Sch), Nancy Byers-Sprague (Grad Sch), Jacque Smith, Felicia Chong (GSG)

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

2) Review and approval of 02/07/12 meeting minutes.

3) Committee Reports: Thesis/Dissertation Guideline Review Committee (Dean Huntoon): A draft is almost ready to be forwarded to the GFC members. They will receive the draft via email either this week or next week. In the handouts section of the GFC website you will find an overview and summary that discusses what has changed since the previous version. Throughout this document, the names of publications, forms, or other resources are italicized. Requirements are underlined or otherwise emphasized. The Guide now applies to final reports (as well as theses and dissertations). The Guide now allows for more flexibility in the formatting of documents. Double-sided printing and single-spacing are encouraged and are modeled in the Guide. Digital copies of theses and reports will be retained in the library. Paper and digital copies of dissertations will be retained in the library. Approval of a student’s final oral examination and approval of the final dissertation, thesis, or report, will now be reported separately. It would be possible for a student to pass their oral defense but not have their final dissertation accepted. Approval pages included in dissertations, theses, and reports will no longer include original signatures. Students will have the ability to submit documents to plagiarism-detection software without Graduate School assistance. Originality reports generated by plagiarism-detection software will only be reviewed by the Graduate School when a student requests assistance. Deadlines for submission of a dissertation, thesis, or report have been modified and clarified. Students who have met all academic requirements for completion of their degree and have met all Graduate School deadlines for degree completion, but have not submitted an acceptable version of their dissertation, thesis, or report prior to the end of the final exam period will be allowed to enroll in a special section of UN5951. There is no tuition associated with UN5951, but students will be charged a resubmission fee equivalent to 25% of the regular tuition for a single credit to pay for the additional processing required. Enrollment in the special section of UN5951 is limited to one semester. Enrollment in the special section of UN5951 is restricted; only students who have met all academic requirements for completion of their degree and have met all Graduate School deadlines for degree completion are allowed to enroll in these courses. All bound copies ordered through the Graduate School will be bound with a black cover with white lettering. Color, oversized pages, and pockets will be allowed. For a detailed look at what steps students should take the semester prior to completing their degree please refer to the flowchart on the handout section of the GFC website. Some deadlines have changed. One reason is because the Graduate School staff is very busy at the beginning of the semester with orientation. The deadlines will no longer overlap. IPS also had problems with the old deadlines because students have until January to complete their degree but their Visa runs out earlier. It also creates a problem for housing because students feel if they have until the end of January to complete their degree that they also have housing for that length of time but that is not the case. Upon receiving the email with the full version draft of the Guide, please review and come prepared to vote at next month’s meeting.
New Business:

a. Graduate Application Fee (Dean Huntoon): What are your opinions on instituting a small application fee ($20-25)? Are application fees common? Yes. Could the fee be waived for Tech students or not have this rule apply to Tech students? If a department is recruiting a student, can the fee be waived? All requests would be considered. Why are we considering this? We get many international applicants who do not meet our requirements. A fee would most likely cut down the number of those applying who do not qualify. Are the numbers a problem for the Graduate School or in the departments? At least one department is receiving a lot of spurious applications. Michigan Tech had a fee in the past and when the undergraduate admissions stopped their fee they saw a dramatic increase in applications. The Graduate School followed suit. Maybe a test score restriction should be put on the website in order to combat spurious applications. It seems like waiving fees for some and not others would create more work for the departments. Graduate Program directors can tell the Graduate School at what point they want to see applications (some want only the complete apps, some want them as soon as the app is processed). How many graduate applications are received? The Graduate School receives around three thousand applications. The University accepts about half of that and then of those accepted around one third enroll/attend. The Civil Engineering department has done some benchmarking and found that all of our peer institutions charge an application fee ($100-150). Some did have a waiver or a discount for their own students. Business agrees with Civil that a fee would eliminate the applicants who do not come close to meeting requirements. Can we apply the fee to international students only? It seems that with a fee you are weeding out students who are unable to afford the fee, rather than weeding out unqualified students. If a fee is instituted it should be across the board, not just for international students, not waived for Tech students, etc. Nothing is free and Tech should have an application fee. A $20 fee should not prevent too many people from applying. Can some programs have a fee while others do not? Where would the fee go? That has not been determined. An experimental process to see if there is a dramatic decline in applications (to the extent that it hurts the University) could be put into place. Another option to help with an over abundance of applications is the Graduate School doing a preliminary review (see 4b). This will be revisited next month as some departments are pro-fee and some are not. This would also have to be approved by the budget team. Huntoon will run it by them before the next meeting to see if it is even a possibility.

b. Preliminary Application Review in the Grad School (Dean Huntoon): TOEFL minimum score for the University is 79ibt; we cannot serve any student with a score of less than 55ibt. Departments can tell the Graduate School that they do not want to see any applications with a score of less than X. Huntoon would like for the departments to give a minimum score for each subset of the test, rather than just the total. Each department can set their own guidelines. This seems to be a more efficient way of handling applications than instituting a fee.

c. Application Due Dates (Dean Huntoon): Michigan Tech is a signatory to the Council of Graduate Schools resolution that says we can offer students financial aid but we cannot require them to tell us whether or not they will accept until April 15. This is so that other universities also have time to make offers and time for students to consider all the offers. This creates a problem when students are applying in April. Some departments do not like due dates because if there are late applications that meet the requirements and there is room in the program why let a due date stop the student from being accepted. If a student applies after the due date the Graduate School would reject or hold the application. How about a late application fee? Some departments already have due dates. One department was thinking about posting a due date for full financial consideration in order for the department to make GTA offers earlier in the year. If you want a due date, please let the Graduate School know.

d. Communications Assistance Program (Dean Huntoon): If you have a student who is having difficulty communicating, understanding, reading, or producing written documents, the Graduate School now has Leah Jenkins who will work on a fee for service ($25/hour) basis with the student. Students and departments are already using this service (some departments have covered the fee for the student). Leah has a lot of experience working with international students and has a master’s
degree. She is also willing to work with people on their journal publications. There is a website for more information on this service:
http://www.mtu.edu/gradschool/administration/academics/resources/GS-CAP/
e. Enrollment Deposits (Dean Huntoon): Fifteen hundred students get accepted to Tech every year and four hundred of them enroll. Would this be helpful in planning course sections? Mechanical Engineering runs into the problem of more students enrolling in a class (last minute) than expected. Upon coming to campus and having conversations about classes with friends there will be an influx of students in a particular class. The department is not prepared for the volume of students and therefore cannot accommodate all the students. If they knew they were coming and confirmed it would help with planning. Could this be refundable? That is a good idea. The refundable fee could also apply to the application fee discussed earlier. Bring your thoughts to next month’s meeting.
f. Late Registration and Course Cancellations (Dean Huntoon): Some departments cancel classes with fewer than five students. How can we ensure class numbers before the semester begins? Bring your thoughts to next month’s meeting.
g. Announcement (Dean Huntoon): Accelerated Master’s programs were approved in Mechanical Engineering, Biomedical Engineering, and Chemical Engineering. Huntoon asks if Storer can bring this news to the Curricular Policy Committee and he agrees.
h. Announcement (D. Charlesworth): Dean’s Fellowship applications are due on Thursday, March 15. If students are awarded this fellowship are they eligible for other types of support? Yes.

5) Motion to adjourn at 4:55 pm.