Minutes of the Graduate Faculty Council Meeting

Tuesday, April 5, 2011

Members (10): Bill Yarroch (ASE), Amy Marcarelli (Bio Sci), Ashutosh Tiwari (Chem), Dave Watkins (Civ & Env), Sam Sweitz (Ind Hert), Craig Friedrich (MEEM), Blair Orr (PCMI), Paul Ward (Cog & Learn Sci), Greg Waite (Geo), Eugene Levin (Sch Tech), Andrew Storer (SFRES)

Guests (7): Heather Suokas (Grad Sch), Debra Charlesworth (Grad Sch), Jacque Smith (Grad School), Nancy Byers-Sprague (Grad Sch), Erik Nordberg (Library), Sean Gohman (GSG), Pat Gotschalk (Dean of Stu)

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

2) Review and approval of 03/01/11 meeting minutes.

3) Committee Reports:

   a. Dismissal/Appeal Grievance Policy (D. Charlesworth): This is now in written format and can be found on the GFC website – handout section. Questions: The third paragraph on page 3 states that “if their cumulative GPA is at least 3.0 …they will return to good standing.” What if it is mathematically impossible to receive a 3.0 the first semester back? In this case the student can appeal. Unless there was a strong movement from the department stating why the student should not be readmitted, the student’s appeal would most likely be granted. Is it possible for a student who is on suspension to become a non-degree seeking student? Are they subject to this policy? If so can the non-degree seeking credits be transferred in later for degree seeking? Yes, they are able to transfer to non-degree seeking and the cumulative GPA would include the non-degree seeking credits. Any credits that apply to degree progress will be transferred in. Second paragraph on page 6, concerning the Graduate Grievance Committee consisting of one member of the Graduate Faculty from outside the student’s academic home department, the student’s advisor, the student’s graduate program director and the assistant to the dean of the Graduate School- if the graduate program director is also the advisor, does that mean one person fills two roles (primarily happens in course work only)? Yes, that is correct. The fifth paragraph identifies an advocate who will be allowed to attend but not speak at the hearing other than for clarification. Can this advocate be the graduate program director? A committee member cannot serve as the advocate.

   b. Non-departmental External Committee Members (J. Hwang): J. Hwang was not in attendance.

4) Old Business:

   a. Revisit Grad Student Award Nomination Process (J. Smith): Dean Huntoon recommends the following text change to the Outstanding Graduate Student Teaching Award, “Each academic school or department may recommend at least one and no more than 2.5% of its graduate students to receive this award each academic-year semester.” This wording as opposed to current text that states “no more than 20%.” The dean also recommends the following text change to the Award for Outstanding scholarship, “Each academic school or department may recommend at least one and no more than 1% of its graduate students to receive this award each academic-year semester.” This wording as opposed to current text that states “may recommend up to 10% of its total graduate student enrollment.” Questions/Comments: From the perspective of a small department, this makes a lot more sense than the current text. The current text allows for all the students to potentially get this award. What would the larger departments do if there is more than one student who is deserving- meaning in terms of GPA and teaching ability they are near equal? Should it not be up to the departments to determine how many students truly deserve the award? Is there an appeal process if a department really wants to nominate more than one student? Yes, an appeal would go through Nancy. Can one student be nominated for both awards? Yes, but one student cannot receive the same award more than once. The call for nominations is sent out in the third week of the semester so these changes could be implemented in the fall semester. The GFC would like to take these changes back to their departments to get feedback.
5) New Business:
   a. Academic Integrity (D. Charlesworth/P. Gotschalk): A presentation was given describing graduate academic integrity updates (presentation slides can be found in the handout section on the GFC website). Academic integrity can be a career ending issue which is why the GFC should be aware of what is happening on campus. Note that reported academic integrity incidents are steadily rising. Deb is willing to come to individual departments to discuss for faculty/staff.
   b. Shelving/Eliminating Programs (A. Storer): The provost’s office would like to start the process of cleaning up old degree programs as well as newer programs that upon recent reviews are no longer needed. The curricular policy committee was charged with preparing a proposal as to how to officially shelve or eliminate a degree program. Departments are unable to eliminate a program unless it has been shelved for five years. Refer to the GFC handouts section to review the “clean-up” list of graduate programs that will be eliminated. A. Storer would like for the Senate to review this proposal on the last meeting of the academic year on April 20. Mechanical Engineering requests that the Proposal to Eliminate Degree Program: Ph.D. in Propulsion Systems Engineering is taken off the clean-up list. They do not want this program eliminated at this time. The program will be taken off of the list before it is brought to the Senate. Being that our degree programs are approved in Lansing and they keep the records, if a prospective student inquires as to what programs Michigan Tech offers they will be given outdated information. Once a program has been shelved for five years, it will be re-evaluated to determine whether it should be shelved again, eliminated or put back into action. What does shelving mean? If will be kept on the books, be listed as a degree program that can be offered but Michigan Tech will not be actively offering it. The Senate webpage also includes the proposals for eliminating individual undergraduate degree programs.
   c. Supplemental Application Materials (J. Smith): Up until very recently the Graduate School was handling all application material via paper files and any sheet of paper that arrived in our office was sent through campus mail to the department. Now with the workflow system all material is sent electronically. Prospective students are sending a large number of supplemental materials and it is unclear as to what is of value to the departments. Examples of some of the paper flow coming through the Graduate School that may not need to be sent electronically are publications, writing samples and certificates. The idea is to narrow down what is actually sent electronically to the following materials: application, statement of purpose, test score report, transcripts, resumes/vitas, letters of recommendation, financial documents, visa and passports. These documents will go through workflow and will be stored in the student’s permanent record. The additional items can be sent through campus mail. This will ensure that each department can determine what is important to the student’s file. Does anybody have any thoughts/suggestions? Do the students know what materials are required? Yes, the website indicates which items are required. The items that are being sent electronically should include a sentence stating that the department should expect a physical file with additional materials, if there are additional materials. Is the Graduate School going to determine whether or not two or three letters of recommendation are required? No, that is up to each department to decide.
   d. Announcement (J. Smith): There is a proposal for a PhD in non departmental Biochemistry. The dean may send the proposal out through email for the GFC to look over. Chemistry, biology and forestry teamed up for this proposal. They are consistently seeing students who are qualified but do not fit a classical forestry, biology or chemistry degree program. It becomes difficult for the student to complete the core courses to qualify for any of the programs. This proposes a new set of core courses that they will be required to take if they qualify for this program. The enrollment process as it is being proposed would be that whichever the apparent department is, will be responsible for that student. Now that the proposal has been introduced, would it be possible to vote electronically once the proposal is sent out the GFC electronically? Being that it is so late in the semester; the Senate would not be reviewing the proposal until fall. If and when the proposal is distributed Dr. Yarroch will then determine how to proceed. This may just be put as an agenda item for the first meeting in the fall.

6) Motion to adjourn at 5:08 pm.