Minutes of the Graduate Faculty Council Meeting

Tuesday, April 6, 2010

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

**Members** (16): Bill Yarroch (ASE), James Pickens (SFRES), Beth Flynn (HU), Amy Marcarelli (Bio Sci), Steve Seidel (Comp Sci), Greg Waite (Geo), Dave Fritz (GSG), Ruth Archer (Bus), Shiyue Fang (Chem), Sam Sweitz (Env Pol), Carl Anderson (Eng), Jianping Dong (Math), Craig Friedrich (ME-EM), Blair Orr (Peace Corp), Kim Fook Lee (Phy)

**Guests** (2): Heather Suokas (Grad Sch– recording secretary), Jackie Huntoon (Grad Sch)

2) Review and approval of 03/02/10 meeting minutes.

3) Note about the handouts: Some have Senate designated numbers because we are at the end of the academic year. This is the last GFC meeting of the academic year. The Senate’s last meeting is on 4/14 and these proposals needed to be added to the Senate agenda in advance. These will not advance to the Senate meeting unless GFC approves.

4) Old Business
   a. Graduate Certificate in International Profile Proposal (B. Orr): No updates. This will remain on the agenda.
   b. Graduate Certificate in HEDV Engineering (W. Yarroch/C. Anderson): All of the changes that the GFC recommended were incorporated into the proposal. The Curricular Committee asked for one additional change (to add the following text to the end of paragraph one): “The Certificate Advisor will be appointed by the Dean of the College of Engineering.” This is incorporated into the updated handout. This is an appropriate addition when pertaining to non-degree seeking students who may not have an advisor. Motion to approve the revised document passed.
   c. International Dual Graduate Degrees Proposal (J. Huntoon): The GFC already approved this proposal and it moved on to the Curricular Committee. The Curricular Committee feels that the Senate needs to see each proposal because they typically see exceptions to both the normal residency and transfer credit policies. As a result, section 4a was amended to say the Senate will review a concept proposal before it is worked into a contractual agreement. Motion to approve the revised document passed.
   d. Committee Reports (J. Huntoon):
      Graduate Program Review: No new updates.
      Dismissal/Appeal/Grievance Policy: No new updates.

5) New Business
   a. Residency Requirements for Graduate Students (W. Yarroch): Neither the Senate nor the Board has residency requirements in place for graduate students. It has been written in the graduate catalog for many years. The Curricular Committee took the paragraphs that appear in the graduate catalog and copied them into what became an amendment to proposal 11-01- REQUIREMENTS FOR GRADUATION (see the underlined statements on the handouts section of the GFC website). Questions: the underlined text in section (a) says “A minimum of two-thirds of the required non-research course-work credits required for the degree must be taken through Michigan Tech.” Mechanical engineering does not have required courses for their PhD program. Text will be added to say “in general, no more than ten credits may be transferred to Michigan Tech without the approval of the Graduate School.” Dean Huntoon will notify Bob Keen of this additional text in advance of the Senate meeting. As amended, motion to approve passed.
   b. Academic Good Standing (R. Archer): The current policy states that students must earn a B or
better in all graded courses used on a degree schedule. This requirement can be adjusted at the discretion of the student’s graduate program to allow for use of up to six credits from outside the student’s primary field of study for which grades of BC/C grades were received. This proposal changes the text to state “students may earn up to nine credits of C grades, as long as a 3.0 average GPA is maintained.” The rationale being that even the best students may earn an average grade at one time or another due to heavy course load, personal or family responsibilities, or inadequate preparation in a particular area. A few average grades in an overall B average are acceptable at many institutions. Michigan Tech’s current policy may result in grade inflation. Faculty may feel pressured to give an undeserving student a B. This revision also will help advisors identify students who are struggling. Questions/Comments: If this passes this academic year can it pertain to students who receive a BC/C this semester (SP 10)? Yes, because this would be applied upon graduation. Should this be degree type specific (course work only vs. research) or departmental specific? Yes, that is a possibility. If this is implemented what distinguishes an undergraduate degree from a graduate degree? Meaning, as the policy stands graduate student expectations are high and should be. Why should we change expectations? Should the nine credits be lowered to four credits? Students who receive a BC/C according to current policy have to repeat the course. Courses are not offered each semester. The student may have to wait another year to graduate. Students may lower their own expectations and effort if they are allowed to get a BC/C. Ruth Archer will share the benchmarking data she collected with the committee. This will impact Plan C and D degree plans the most. If a student receives a C it is said that they only gained a certain amount of knowledge, yet they are able to proceed with their education and continue taking courses that build off of the course where they only gained minimal knowledge. Will this create more of a problem for the student? Students should have to gain maximum knowledge from courses. Is there a way to get a waiver for individual students rather than passing this policy? Yes, the department can recommend to the Graduate School that an exception be made. Has this proposal been presented to the faculty of the Business School? Yes, there is approval among the Business School faculty. Other possibilities for this proposal: Allow the student nine credits with a BC or above rather than C/BC. Leave the proposal as it was before this modification and change the following text: “graduate program to allow for use of up to six credits from outside the student’s primary field of study for which grades of BC/C grades were received” and leave out the word “outside.” This may discourage students from venturing outside of their major for fear of getting less than a B. Michigan Tech tries to keep policies standardized but should the Business School have their own policy? We want to attract students who will excel and succeed here. Do we really want to drop the high standard? This doesn’t necessarily bring the standard down; it brings the honesty up (referring to faculty and the pressure to give undeserving grades). The GFC would like the benchmarking data and would like to know the opinions of the faculty and staff in the Business School. Motion to table this proposal until next academic year passed.

6) Motion to adjourn at 5:02 pm.