Minutes of the Graduate Faculty Council Meeting

Tuesday, September 2, 2008

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

Members (13): Nancy Auer (Biological Sciences), Jackie Huntoon (Dean, Graduate School), Bill Yarroch (ASE), Patrick Martin (SS), Jill Witt (GSC), Judith Perlinger (EPD2), Dave Watkins (CEE), Richard Honrath (ATM), Craig Friedrich (MEEM), Brian Fick (Physics), Chris Middlebrook (EE), Eugene Levin (Technology), Beth Flynn (Humanities)

Guests (4): Debra Charlesworth (Graduate School – recording secretary), Jacque Smith (Graduate School), Brad Baltensperger (Cognitive and Learning Science), Chris Brill (Cognitive and Learning Sciences)

2) Minutes from 4/15/08 were unavailable to review.

3) New Business
   a) Electing new officers. Bill Yarroch nominated himself for chair of GFC. Bill was elected by acclimation. Nancy Auer was thanked for her service to GFC as chair.

   b) Dates for meetings
      GFC regularly meets on the first Tuesday of every month. Rooms are also scheduled for midway between these meetings to facilitate meeting more often as necessary. The dates and locations for the meetings are:

      September 2  Ballroom A-1
      September 16 Peninsula room
      October 7    M&M U115
      October 21   Alumni Lounge
      November 4   Alumni Lounge
      November 18  Alumni Lounge
      December 2   Alumni Lounge
      December 16  Alumni Lounge

   c) PhD Proposal in Applied Cognitive Science and Human Factors
      Brad Baltensperger and Chris Brill presented a proposal to establish a PhD program in Applied Cognitive Science and Human Factors. This is an applied science involved in designing and evaluating technology for humans. Goals can include making the technology safer, easier, or more pleasurable to use. There are faculty across campus with a common interest in this area of research (four dedicated plus six in collaborating departments), and funded research ($1.5 million) supporting the efforts. Establishment of a PhD program could help to increase funding opportunities and collaborations. Needs for the program include research space (currently 100 sq. ft. for each of four faculty) plus additional
faculty lines. Additional faculty would be dedicated to this area of research.

Discussion about the program involved asking what new activities could be initiated with the development of a program, if students from cognate graduate programs could work with faculty in these areas, would approval be necessary to earn an MS “along the way,” and how many new courses are being created.

The proposers were asked to strengthen the proposal and resubmit it to GFC by:

i) Linking faculty within the program to teaching of the courses proposed.
ii) Provide detail on which courses will be dual-listed with existing undergraduate courses.
iii) Provide more detail for course descriptions.
iv) Provide details on how this proposal might be linked to a Strategic Faculty Hiring Initiative, since it is unlikely that new faculty lines will be available to create new programs.

d) Tuition and Stipend Policy Changes (J. Huntoon)
Dean Huntoon provided a paper copy of the memo sent earlier via e-mail to graduate staff. This memo is available at:

http://www.gradschool.mtu.edu/news/Dean_letter_0708.html

Discussion about the new policy and questions regarding it were answered by the dean. Richard Honrath asked if the “Research Only Mode Petition” was being returned after processing. Clarification with Nancy Byers Sprague after the meeting indicated that two copies of the approved form are returned to the program. One is intended for the student and the other is intended for the graduate program. When a petition is denied, Nancy e-mails the advisor and student with the reason so that the issue can be addressed.

e) GTA Allocations (J. Huntoon)
Dean Huntoon passed out a memo detailing how GTA assignments are made. This memo is available on the GFC website as a handout from the meeting.

f) Teaching Plan Update (J. Huntoon)
Further discussion of the memo involving GTA allocations. This memo also included metrics about how many students faculty need to advise in order to attain the Board of Control’s target for graduate enrollment. Administrators are being asked to identify impediments to reaching this goal. The dean’s goal is to not increase or decrease the TAs assigned to a unit by more than two in any academic year to facilitate planning for the next year.

The goal metrics in the memo were 0.67 MS graduates per year per T/TT faculty and 0.24 PhD graduates per year per T/TT faculty. Chris Brill asked how these compare to the current status. Via e-mail, the dean stated that the metrics as of February 2008 were 0.68 MS graduates per year per T/TT faculty and 0.20 PhD
graduates per year per T/TT faculty. The dean stated that the numbers are good right now but sustaining the numbers will be difficult unless we increase the number of students in the pipeline from the current value of 1.61 MS students per T/TT faculty and 1.62 PhD students per T/TT faculty to about 2.68 MS students and 1.97 PhD students per T/TT faculty respectively.

g) **Agenda items for next meeting**
Best practices in recruiting were not discussed at this meeting and will be business at the next meeting, but there is a list of best practices at the end of the memo. Beth Flynn requested that the Graduate School change the deadlines and notifications for Finishing Fellowships to better coordinate TA assignments in programs. A specific proposal to address this matter will be presented by Flynn at the next meeting of the GFC.