Minutes of the Graduate Faculty Council Meeting

Tuesday, September 4, 2012

Members (15): Thomas Drummer (Math), Amlan Mukherjee (Civil), Andrew Storer (SFRES), Keat Ghee Ong (Biomed), Tom Merz (Bus), Craig Friedrich (MEEM), Mi Hye Song (BioSci), Steve Seidel (CompSci), Judith Perliger (Atmos), Tim Eisele (ChemEng), Carl Anderson (Eng), Noel Urban (Envir), Mike Bowler (Rhet), Eugene Levin (SocSci), Paul Ward (CogSci)

Guests (7): Jackie Huntoon (Grad Sch), Heather Suokas (Grad Sch), Debra Charlesworth (Grad Sch), Nancy Byers-Sprague (Grad Sch), Jacque Smith, Erik Nordberg (Libr)

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

2) Review and approval of 04/03/12 meeting minutes.

3) Committee Reports:
   a. Thesis/Dissertation Guideline Review Committee (Dean Huntoon): All of the changes that were recommended by the GFC have been made and the document was submitted to the Senate last spring. The Senate will vote on the proposal this fall (once the new Senate Committees are in place).
   b. Graduate Tuition and Stipend Review Committee (Dean Huntoon): The Executive Team tasked Dean Huntoon with setting up this committee to determine what the tuition and levels on campus should be. The committee has been meeting since last spring. The committee created a survey that was administered during graduate student orientation in order to collect information from incoming graduate students. Dean Huntoon also asked that the GSG representatives help to collect some information from returning graduate students. A group of five graduate students are collecting information from peer institutions.
      • (Q): Why did this committee need to be formed/what are the issues with tuition? (A): Long ago graduate student tuition was set at the midpoint between resident and nonresident tuition. Through time tuition has risen and there is now a large difference between nonresident undergraduate and resident graduate tuition.
      • (Q): What is the deadline for this committee’s recommendations? (A): December.

4) Old Business:
   a. Requirements for Coursework Only Applicants (Dean Huntoon): Please refer to the handout on the handout section of the GFC website. Dean Huntoon met with chairs and graduate program directors that offer a coursework only degree. This fall she also met with the Engineering Council to talk about this. After reading national level reports it appears that there is a lot of potential for growth in coursework only masters programs in STEM (perhaps even in communication). There is a lot of potential here for MTU to grow and enrollment is very important to us. One issue that has come up is that programs that do not offer a coursework only masters degree feel that it might be a bad idea for students to be able to earn a MS degree when they are not conducting research (master or science implies you are doing research). Some universities have a different type of degree (like we do in forestry-Master of Forestry degree and Business – MBA). The idea is that the programs on campus can offer coursework only degrees but name them differently, for example Chemistry could offer a degree with a different name, for example, a Master of Chemistry degree. This would also allow us to be more strategic about whom we admit to what type of program. Please consider whether your department would like to offer such degrees (if not already), whether a different name would be a good thing for your area, and whether you would consider having different application requirements for coursework only students. Bring thoughts back to GFC at the next meeting.
(Q): In some engineering departments there already is a Master of Engineering and a Master of Science degree. In this case would a third title need to be made? (A): Dean Huntoon’s vision is that the Master of Engineering program would be a general engineering degree and that each department could then have a Master of Engineering in (insert program name).

(Q): In the current Master of Engineering degree do students have to enter that program up front or do they enter this program if their research does not work out. (A): Students apply to the Master or Engineering program. If a student did enter into a MS program and later decided to pursue a coursework only degree, then the student could apply for admission into the coursework only program (as it is not now). This would not necessarily require an entire new application; an internal form could be used.

(Q): Is the suggestion being made that each program has two different degree programs? (A): Yes.

(Q): There have been instances where Mechanical Engineering has accepted course work only students and then an advisor picks them up. How will this be handled? (A): They would not need to reapply. They would most likely need to fill out a form and have it approved.

(Q): In Mechanical Engineering they do not have applicants for the coursework MS. If they all apply to the thesis based MS and we reject them (based on availability of advisors), then should we automatically put them into the coursework program or would they need to reapply? (A): Either is possible.

(C): Students may choose an option that is too difficult for them. The two different admission criteria may not be right for all programs.

(Q): Would we eliminate the plans (A, B, C, D) or would it be separate? It would be beneficial if programs could offer a coursework only MS as some do now. (A): Plans C and D are both coursework-only degrees. If a new degree program is offered in some field, then it might be necessary to also offer the Plan C or D master’s.

(Q): Can a department choose whether or not they would want the new degree? (A): Of course.

(Q): What is the goal in talking about this? (A): We have a product that people are interested in and having more coursework only degree programs that are clearly marketed as such might help us to attract more students who are interested in a graduate degree. If the application process could be streamlined for non-research program students it would save faculty and staff a lot of time in the review process.

b. Using a BC/C in a Student’s Primary Field of Study (Dean Huntoon): There are two requirements for degree completion. 1) Students need to maintain an overall B or above average. 2) Students can only apply grades of B or better to their degree schedule. Should we allow the use of B/C or C grades for up to six credits within the primary field of study with approval as long as they still maintain the overall B average? Right now the policy says that six credits of B/C or C outside the primary field of study will apply with approval (Policy language: “This requirement can be adjusted at the discretion of a student's graduate program to allow for use of “BC/C” grades in up to six (6) credits from outside the student's primary field of study.”) Should the text “from outside the student’s primary field of study” be removed? This comes up because we do have several coursework only degree programs and sometimes students get a C and they continue to get a C in the same class even though they have done very well in all their other classes. More and more frequently departments are asking the Graduate School to make exceptions and the graduate school will grant those requests with approval. As always, programs can have stricter requirements than the Graduate School, but as always, they have to make it clear that they have stricter requirements so that students are aware (their web page could be used). Please take this back to your departments and bring thoughts back to GFC at the next meeting.
5) New Business:
   a. Elect a New Chair: An email call for nominations was sent out. The people who were nominated have declined. Are there any volunteers? Nobody volunteered. Dean Huntoon suggests having a vice chair so they can step into the chair position when needed.
   b. GFC Liaison to the Senate: Keat Ghee Ong volunteered.
   c. GFC Meeting Dates: 1st Tuesday of every month excluding Jan. 2013, meeting date is 01/15/13
      • Please block the 3rd Tuesday of every month in the event that an extra meeting needs to be held.

6) Motion to adjourn at 5:00 pm.