Minutes of the Graduate Faculty Council Meeting

Tuesday, September 20, 2011

**Members** (12): Thomas Drummer (Math), Ashutosh Tiwari (Chem), Craig Friedrich (MEEM), Blair Orr (PCMI), Greg Waite (Geo), Eugene Levin (Sch Tech), Keat Ghee Ong (Biomed), Steve Seidel (CompSci), Barry Solomon (SocSci), Mi Hye Song (Bio), Dave Watkins (Civil), Carl Anderson (Eng)

**Guests** (7): Heather Suokas (Grad Sch), Debra Charlesworth (Grad Sch), Jacque Smith (Grad School), Nancy Byers-Sprague (Grad Sch), Felicia Chong (GSG), Pushpa Murthy (Chem), Erik Nordberg (Libr)

1) Meeting called to order at 4:08 pm.

2) Review and approval of 09/06/11 meeting minutes.

3) Committee Reports:
   a. Call for Volunteers to Form a Thesis/Dissertation Guideline Review Committee (Dean Huntoon): The new procedures that were approved last year have been put into place as of January 2011. After using them for two semesters Dean Huntoon has received feedback from students and faculty. In response to feedback, Dean Huntoon has drafted a new version of the guidelines. She would like a committee formed to help her revise and finalize the guidelines. What problems are the current guidelines creating? The guidelines are rigorous (specific fonts, formats, etc) and the Graduate School staff does not have the time to check all of those guideline details. Students find it very difficult to achieve all of the requirements named in the current guidelines. Blair Orr and Steve Seidel volunteered. Felicia (GSG) will also inform the GSG President requesting a volunteer from the Graduate Student Government.

4) Old Business:
   a. Biochemistry & Molecular Biology PhD Proposal- Non-departmental (P. Murthy): At the 09/06/11 GFC meeting, members were asked to bring the proposal back to their departments to discuss any questions or concerns that they may have. Questions/Comments: Being that this is a PhD degree should the core courses actually be at the 6000 level rather than the 5000 level? P. Murthy agrees and will make the change. The second paragraph of 6.1 (Required Core Courses) states “The courses may be at the 3000-, 4000-, or 5000-level.” This referring to the additional courses needed for the degree. Should they actually be allowed to take 3000-level courses? Yes, because depending on the competence of the student some of them may need to take 3000-level courses to get up to speed. Do all the departments involved (Chemistry, Biology and Forestry) allow 3000-level courses for a PhD degree? The representatives for Chemistry, Biology and Forestry all agree that this is allowed. With the text change above from 5000-level to 6000-level, the sentence should now include 6000-level courses. Is this proposal emulating any other PhD program on campus? No. What is meant by core faculty? Anybody who would like to be considered core faculty is expected to actively participate by teaching and committing to the graduate program committee. Motion to approve this proposal with the two above text changes passed. This should be emailed to Helene Hiner in the Provost’s Office in order for her to forward to the Senate.

   b. Biomedical Engineering MS Proposal (K. Ghee Ong): At the 09/06/11 GFC meeting, members were asked to bring the proposal back to their departments to discuss any questions or concerns that they may have. Questions/Comments: There are some concerns that this proposal does not include core courses. There are similar degree programs on campus that do not have core courses. Some degree programs have core courses and some do not. They are going to set some guidelines. Are your students primarily supported by external resources? Yes, most are externally supported. Section 6 (Program Requirements) states that “graduate students will be required to attend the Graduate Seminar.” How do you ensure that this happens? There are no consequences if this is not followed. Attendance is taken. The assumption is that the students follow the guidelines. The Library representative present at the meeting wanted to point out that some proposals state that there are no additional costs. New graduate program proposals should be attentive to potential costs associated with access to licensed journals and per-article downloads,
particularly in new discipline areas. More graduate students equal more resources being used at the Library. This may be something departments can look at in the future when developing a proposal. Motion to approve this proposal passed. This should be emailed to Helene Hiner in the Provost’s Office in order for her to forward to the Senate.

5) New Business:
   a. Category Revisions for Graduate Faculty (Dean Huntoon): Right now we have two classes of graduate faculty: full members and adhoc members (there to serve on one student’s committee). In reality there are many kinds of people that are part of the graduate faculty. Some are members of the Michigan Tech faculty, some are off campus faculty, and some are research scientists. The new categories and definitions are as follows: 1) Full Members: Members of the academic faculty holding the rank of assistant professor, associate professor or professor, 2) Affiliated Members: Members holding the rank of lecturer, adjunct, and emeritus faculty and faculty holding a rank with a prefix of visiting, 3) Contributing Members: Members with special technical expertise that are employees of Michigan Tech and have been nominated for membership in the Graduate Faculty by an academic department or school and have been appointed to the Graduate Faculty by the dean of the Graduate School (Research Scientists, research engineers which are now called full membership, if they have a terminal degree in their field), 4) Temporary Members: Members with special technical expertise that are not employees of Michigan Tech. Temporary members must be nominated for membership in the Graduate Faculty by an academic department or school and must be appointed to the Graduate Faculty by the dean of the Graduate School. Questions/Comments: Nancy Byers Sprague sends out an email each year asking that chairs review the list and remove those who no longer should be listed as Graduate Faculty. Will all these categories have the same rights and privileges? Yes. The way it is proposed here eliminates a lot of the confusion that was caused in the past where the people within the categories all had different roles. Is the way it stands now with only two classes creating a big problem? No, it is not a big problem but based on faculty feedback there is a need to distinguish between regular grad faculty who do hold a regular tenure track appointment and the others. Is the distinction between affiliated members and contributing members so much that the two need to be separated? Affiliated include lecturers which are faculty and contributing members are people like research scientists/engineers which are staff. If nobody has a problem with the two being combined then Dean Huntoon will combine them. The members are asked to bring the proposal back to their department to discuss and get feedback including on whether to combine the two categories mentioned above.

   b. Changes to GACS (Dean Huntoon): In the past the Graduate Assistant Cost Share (GACS) has been available to assist the professors at the proposal stage. When an assistant professor writes a proposal, they can receive tuition if the sponsor provides full stipend. This has worked really well for some faculty but not all faculty. The faculty in which this works for have taken advantage of it, written proposals, and received funding. The faculty in which it did not work for have a hard time getting graduate students (due to lack of funding) to help them get the initial data needed to write a winning proposal to receive external funding. The National Science Foundation has now said that they no longer require disclose of cost share. If we continue to commit GACS at the proposal stage the University would be responsible for tracking all the GACS. Currently when there is left over money from GACS when the project ends, the money needs to be given back to the Graduate School. Rather than committing GACS at the proposal stage there would be a return to the departments once per year based on how much external support for graduate students were expended in the previous year. The money can then be used for a variety of reasons including to support students or to help incoming faculty. The goal is to stimulate further growth in the number of students supported by sponsored projects. Questions/Comments: What about the new departments just starting? The new departments tend to get a boost in the GTA allocations to help with that. The hope with this new proposal is that everybody will get something. Who will control the money? The money will go to the department chair. Can this be used for stipend or just tuition? That has yet to be determined but it is leaning towards tuition only. What happens if the funding source does require cost share? The proposal writer would go to the department chair rather than the graduate school to ask for the money. This proposal has been approved by the dean’s council and is supported by the Provost, chairs in engineering, and the VPR’s. Will this proposal be put into place whether the GFC approves or not? Yes. When will this start? The earliest that it could possibly start is this coming January. Being that the money
goes to the chair to use as they see fit, there is risk that the money will not be used for incoming faculty. The GFC sees this as a problem. A strong recommendation could be made to consider the early career faculty. Why does it need to go to the chair; why not to the PI? That option was not popular with the dean’s and chairs. The members are asked to bring the proposal back to their department to discuss and get feedback.

6) Motion to adjourn at 5:10 pm.