Minutes of the Graduate Faculty Council Meeting

Tuesday, November 1, 2011

Members (15): Thomas Drummer (Math), Ashutosh Tiwari (Chem), Craig Friedrich (MEEM), Simon Carn (Geo), Yu Cai (Sch Tech), Barry Solomon (SocSci), Paul Ward (Cog Sci), Andrew Storer (SFRES), Mike Bowler (Rhet), Steve Seidel (Comp Sci), Kim Fook Lee (Physics), Mi Hye Song (Bio Sci), Julia King (Chem Eng), Dave Watkins (Civil), Judith Perlinger (Atmos)

Guests (8): Heather Suokas (Grad Sch), Debra Charlesworth (Grad Sch), Nancy Byers-Sprague (Grad Sch), Felicia Chong (GSG), Jacque Smith (Grad School), Jackie Huntoon (Grad Sch), Erik Nordberg (Libr), Tara Evans (IPS)

1) Meeting called to order at 4:06 pm.

2) Review and approval of 10/18/11 meeting minutes.

3) Committee Reports:
   a. Thesis/Dissertation Guideline Review Committee (Dean Huntoon): Dean Huntoon has met with Nancy and Deb to review the dean’s recommendations. Nancy and Deb made their recommendations and Deb is in the process of incorporating those changes into the document. She will send the draft to the committee this week.

4) Old Business:
   a. Changes to GACS (Andrew Storer): Andrew had a draft proposal sent to the members of GFC for review and comment. He did receive some feedback and the revised proposal can be found in the handouts section on the GFC website. The GFC proposed the following modifications to the new policy: 1. Voluntary uncommitted costshare for assistant professors be continued. NSF is no longer allowing voluntary uncommitted costshare on proposals, but this is not a reason to eliminate this from all proposals. GACS incentive return to assistant professors should be shown as voluntary costshare when permissible by the funding agency. Dean Huntoon reminds the group that currently we do voluntary uncommitted meaning we do not reveal costshare to the sponsor. If you do want to reveal to the sponsor then it is considered voluntary committed. Dean Huntoon feels the new proposal is suggesting that we begin using voluntary committed costshare. Andrew says when an assistant professor is working on a proposal where costshare is permissible it should be able to be shown as voluntary committed costshare. This would help make our proposals more competitive. 2. GACS incentive return should go to a new GACS incentive account of the investigator and not to the Department Chair or School Dean. This may ensure that the funding is used exclusively for graduate student support. Consideration should be given to a higher rate of return to assistant professors than to tenured faculty (perhaps ½ to assistant professors and ¼ to tenured faculty as opposed to the 1/3 flat return rate proposed). Jackie will discuss these ideas with Julie Seppala in the Research Office and then Jackie will respond to the GFC.
   b. Graduate Student Maximum Credits (C. Friedrich): Craig contacted the registrar’s office and the thirteen credit enrollment maximum is in place. Students may seek permission from the graduate director to enroll in more than thirteen credits. Deb Chrarlesworth will add this text to the website.
   c. Report Submission (N. Byers-Sprague): At the last GFC meeting Nancy asked that the members bring this proposal to eliminate the option for professional binding of reports back to their departments for feedback. Currently only Applied Science Education requires a bound report. Paul Ward say feedback from his department (that includes the applied science education program) was not favorable as they see it as treating a report differently from a thesis or dissertation. Cognitive and Learning Sciences does not view a report as different from a thesis. Is electronic data safe? In order to protect the longevity and reliability of electronic data, thesis and dissertations are sent to ProQuest. ProQuest archives electronically and with microfilm. Paul Ward asks if this can be tabled until the recommendations are brought forward from the thesis and dissertation guidelines committee. It is agreed that this will be tabled until the new thesis and dissertation guidelines are agreed upon.
d. Combining Plan C & D as “coursework only” (N. Byers-Sprague): At the last GFC meeting Nancy asked that the members bring this proposal to combine Plan C & D as “coursework only” back to their departments for feedback. The Plan C students would not have to submit a pre-defense form. Are we graduating more or less Plan C students as compared to the past? More departments are going to a Plan D so we are graduating less Plan C students. The options would go from Plan A, B, C, or D to Thesis, Report, or Coursework only. The website will clearly state that under the coursework only option that programs can select to include a culminating exam or not. Nancy will need to know if your department includes an exam or not. This can be indicated during the binder process. Motion to approve passed.

5) New Business:
   a. Meet Tara Evans, Assistant Director, International Programs and Services (T. Evans): Tara Evans is the new Assistant Director for International Programs and Services. She will be handling immigration advising for graduate students. Jackie also recommends that Tara attend a Graduate Student Government meeting as well.
   b. PhD Guidelines (Dean Huntoon): Jackie has been reviewing the PhD guidelines that are posted on the web and then brought them to Deb and Nancy to see if their work falls in line with what is posted. In the process the three of them also came up with a series of questions that are brought up each year. Specifically do we want to allow faculty with adjunct appointments in a unit to be the primary advisor for a student in that unit, and does the current requirement that if you are a student in a non-departmental program, the external committee member cannot be in your administrative home department and they cannot be affiliated with your non-departmental program need to stay in place? The latter in particular is very hard for students. The dean also asked for input on some recommended timelines for completion of milestones as students would like guidance on these. A representative asked that the dean prepare a flowchart to facilitate review and discussion. Another representative asked that flexibility be allowed for the differences between post-bachelor’s and post-master’s students. The dean also asked for input on the potential for standardizing the names and purposes of the different PhD exams. Discussion will continue at a future meeting after the flowcharts have been prepared.
   c. TOEFL Minimum Score (J. Smith): Michigan Tech does not have a recommended minimum TOEFL score for admissions into our graduate programs. The Graduate School is proposing a minimum score of 55 iBT. Applicants with a score of less than 55 iBT would be rejected by the Graduate School and their files would not be forwarded to departments/programs for review. Currently there are not any language support systems on campus for students with TOEFL scores of less than 55. Students who score above 55 can use our campus ESL program to help to bring a student up to your department’s desired language level. What is the maximum score? 120. This proposal is estimated to effect less than 50 out of 3,000 applicants in a year. The Graduate School is not looking to change department requirements. This proposal will help lower the flow of applications streaming to your department by weeding out the applicants with TOEFL scores of less than 55. How would departments identify the popularity of a program in the event that many applying have a low TOEFL score? Will departments still know that people are applying even though the Graduate School is rejecting the applications? Jacque will look into the data and find out how that would be reported. Jacque asks that the members take this back to their departments and bring feedback to the next GFC meeting.

6) Motion to adjourn at 5:10 pm.