Minutes of the Graduate Faculty Council Meeting

Tuesday, November 3, 2009

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

Members (13): Bill Yarroch (ASE), Louise Nelson Dyble (Envir Policy), James Pickens (SFRES), Greg Waite (Geo & Min Eng), Jianping Dong (Math), Craig Friedrich (ME-EM), Blair Orr (Peace Corps), Kim Fook Lee (Physics), Beth Flynn (HU), Brian Davis (Sch of Tech), Amy Marcarelli (Bio Sci), Jean Mayo (Comp Sci), Chris Middlebrook (Elec & Comp Eng)

Guests (5): Heather Suokas (Grad Sch– recording secretary), Debra Charlesworth (Grad Sch), Jackie Huntoon (Grad Sch), Nancy Byers Sprague (Grad Sch), Bill Rose (Geo)

2) Review and approval of 10/06/09 meeting minutes.

3) Old Business
   a. Proposal to Instate a Graduate Dean’s Teaching Award (J. Dong): A draft of the award guidelines was presented (see handouts). A few text changes were made in regards to eligibility and to the number of students that can be recommended. This handout is to be passed out to each member’s department/program and feedback is to be forwarded to Dr. Dong or Dr. Yarroch before the next GFC meeting (12/1/09). The final version will then be presented on 12/1/09 and a vote will follow.
   b. Graduate Certificate Policy Proposed Change (N. Byers-Sprague): A proposal to change the minimum number of credit hours required to obtain a graduate certificate from fifteen to twelve was presented. This proposed change is designed to give maximum flexibility to departments/schools wishing to offer certificates while maintaining a university standard. Several other institutions offer certificates at twelve credits. This proposal was discussed at the Senate Curricula Policy Committee meeting. They are willing to pass this proposal onto the senate, without recommendation, for the following reasons: the committee does not support changing the criteria for the sake of one proposal, fifteen credits is one half of the requirement for a course only master’s degree and the committee doesn’t feel the credit requirement should fall below this, with a twelve credit requirement you could potentially receive a certificate after taking only three courses, and when comparing institutions, Michigan institutions are the real standard and they are mostly using fifteen credits or more as the requirement. The committee doesn’t approve of our university falling below this standard. The few universities in Michigan that do offer less than fifteen credit certificates are for nursing (for those who already have a MS degree) and education. Dean Huntoon pointed out that the assumption that this is to support one proposal is inaccurate. Because of the large number of credits required for certificates (half of the number required for a master’s degree), for the most part the only students who can earn them are doing their degree work in the same discipline. A vote was called to bring the proposal to the senate. Results: the proposal was passed without dissent to instruct the Dean to forward the proposal to the senate.
   i. Proposal for International Profile (W. Rose): The proposal has a twelve credit requirement which doesn’t meet the University guidelines that there must be a minimum of fifteen credits. There was discussion in regards to section six of the proposal (curriculum design). The proposal states, “A knowledge equivalent to two years of college coursework in a foreign language is a prerequisite.” There were questions as to making this part of the credit requirement which would
raise the minimum requirement to fifteen rather than the twelve plus the language prerequisite. The issue with the language requirement is that our University doesn’t teach all languages, for example, Norwegian. This proposal will be tabled until the Graduate Certificate Policy Change proposal goes to the Senate.

c. Parental/Maternal Accommodation for Graduate Students (J. Huntoon): Since GFC passed this proposal it has been sent to the University attorney. The attorney had some questions and comments and Dean Huntoon is working on the changes. The committee can be dissolved at this point.

d. Graduate Program Review (J. Huntoon): The committee continues to meet and Dean Huntoon is working on a program review document.

e. Dismissal/Appeal/Grievance Policy: (J. Huntoon): The committee needs to meet one more time and should have a document to present at the next GFC meeting (12/1).

5) New Business

a. NSF Ethics Education for STEM Graduate Students (C. Walck): Michigan Tech was recently awarded an NSF Ethics and Education in Science and Engineering grant to deliver ethics education to STEM graduate students. The focus will be on intellectual property: patents and copyright issues. Assistance is needed in recruiting up to thirty STEM graduate students to this ethics education program. This is primarily an online course. Students who complete each Ethics Education IP course successfully (two problems per semester) will receive a certificate of completion of training on the IP components of Responsible Conduct of Research. RCR training is a requirement and the goal of this program is engage students with active learning. Encourage your graduate students to participate in this program and encourage graduate faculty to promote this opportunity. Details are provided on the GFC website (handout section) which includes the expected time commitment that students will adhere to. Students will be emailed with information on this program and a reminder email will go out to the GFC to encourage students to participate.

b. ETS Personal Potential Index (J. Huntoon): This is a web-based evaluation system that is intended to provide a more complete picture of an applicant’s potential for success than the GRE scores alone. The applicant selects up to five evaluators who then rate the applicant on six personal dimensions that have been identified as critical for success in graduate school. ETS creates an evaluation report and sends the report to schools the applicant designates. This is a work in progress and if we decide to participant we would essentially be the “guinea pigs” along with several other schools. We would know who students pick as referees. A downside is that if students wish to send the PPI results to more than four schools they will be charged by ETS. We do not know at this point if this system is a true predictor of success. This is a new tool and ETS is carrying out validation testing but results will not be available until significant use of this tool provides accurate testing results. Please present this information to your department or program (complete info provided on GFC website) to determine if there is enough interest in this program.

c. Discussion on Only Allowing MTU Employees to Serve as “External Members” for Student Committees (J. Pickens): The role that the external committee member is to play is to ensure both the student and University is treated fairly. The Humanities department does require a member of the MTU community but the committee can also consist of an outside member. Geology feels that having an outside member serves well for collaborative research and adds additional dimensions to our isolated University. Can an outside member successfully advocate for the student and the University? The department chair and the Dean have to approve the outside committee member. This could be a department by department issue in which each department can formulate their
own rules in regards to external committee members. Each department must adhere to University guidelines but individual department guidelines may be more restrictive than University guidelines. After discussion on this issue Dr. Pickens felt he now has enough information to either proceed with a proposal or refrain.

d. Discussion on Graduate Certificate-Seeking Students Classification (W. Yarroch): The unofficial proposal states that students who wish to earn a graduate certificate but who are not seeking an MS or PhD will need to be admitted to the Graduate School and be assigned to the academic department of the program director. In addition, students already enrolled and wish to also obtain a certificate should complete an application for the certificate program for database purposes. Requirements are detailed on the handout provided on the GFC website.

6) Motion to adjourn at 5:16 pm.