Minutes of the Graduate Faculty Council Meeting

Tuesday, November 4, 2008

1) Meeting called to order at 4:04 pm.

**Members** (17): Nancy Auer (Biological Sciences), Bill Yarroch (ASE), Judith Perlinger (EPD2), Craig Friedrich (MEEM), Kim Fook Lee (Physics), Eugene Levin (Technology), Beth Flynn (Humanities), Sam Sweitz (SS), Phil Merkey (Comp Sci/Eng), Shekhar Joshi (SFRES), Blair Orr (Peace Corps), Greg Waite (GMES), Ruth Archer (SBE), Jianping Dong (Math), Seth Donahue (Biomed Eng), Shiyue Fang (Chem), Dave Watkins (Civil & Env Eng)

**Guests** (5): Debra Charlesworth (Graduate School), Heather Suokas (Graduate School– recording secretary), Jacque Smith (Graduate School), Nancy Byers-Sprague (Graduate School), Martha Sloan (Elec and Comp Eng)

2) Review and approval of 10/7/08 meeting minutes.

3) Old Business
   b. Best practices in recruiting (J. Smith): Make a connection with the student during the application process. Do not rely totally on test scores. Call students when possible. Use Skype or other web-based communication tool to determine candidate’s qualifications or English skills. Accept students early-even if you are unsure about the funding (Separate Acceptance and Funding). There was discussion on the details of the letter. Faculty concerned that students will see the letter as acceptance without support. Make multi-year funding offers upfront. Start with TA money first and switch over to RA money when students reach “Research Only Mode.” Contact J. Smith if you are in need of names of prospective students – we have been at over twenty recruiting events.
   c. Graduate School new student orientation (D. Charlesworth): Responsible Conduct of Research – shorter and more to the point. Schedule to make a better use of faculty’s time. Get HU faculty involved. The Graduate School is looking for approval of Wednesday, August 26, 2009 for all-day graduate student orientation. Motion passed to approve. Dr. Charlesworth to send email with details to all the Graduate Program Directors.
   d. Finishing Fellowships (Dean’s proposal presented by J. Smith): The Graduate School will continue to offer Finishing Fellowships with the goal of starting to fund raise to create an endowment. Availability of Finishing Fellowships will be advertised in the middle of the semester for the upcoming semester. The goal is to notify students three-quarters of the way through the semester about the upcoming funding. Finishing Fellowships will be offered twice a year, with the goal of 10 Fellowships at each offering.
   e. Committee reports: Parental/maternal leave for graduate students (Nancy Auer-Chair). The committee is working on this and will have an update at the December meeting.

4) New Business
   a. MS and PhD in Computer Engineering proposals (M. Sloan): Questions/comments that were brought after the members reviewed the proposal were as follows in regards to the
MS portion: Will this be offered as an on-line program? Answer: That could be a possibility as the program expands. There was discussion on specifying the elective course levels in the proposal. M. Sloan to add to the proposal that the elective courses will be 4000 level or above. M. Sloan to also amend the proposal to specify whether the courses listed are existing or to be developed. Questions in regards to the PhD portion: Is the expectation that students will go from the MS program to the PhD program? Answer: The MS students will be pursued (recruited) into the PhD program. Motion to accept the proposal on the condition that the above changes are made passed. This will go to Helene Hiner.

b. Sample departmental survey on graduate student rejections (J. Smith): Dean Huntoon is looking to see if faculty thinks this is a good idea and would be willing to support it. Right now the rejection Graduate School letter is very short with no reason why the student was not accepted. The Graduate School gets many calls and emails asking why. This would create an opportunity to provide feedback and help in student’s long-term success. What can they change to be a successful candidate in the future. This is also being promoted by the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS). Humanities would like to add to the reason form: Weak Writing Sample. Another suggestion was to add as a rejection reason: Supporting documentation not as competitive. Some think the word “rejection” is not well received. Can we change the word? What are the legal ramifications of such a letter? Answer: This will be run through risk management. Suggestion to not list the prerequisite that the student is lacking. Simply just state that they are lacking prerequisites.

c. Graduate student exit interview summary (J. Smith): Overall the students that responded were quite satisfied. Both the Provost and the Dean review the responses. There are pockets where there is room for improvement – student mentoring (overall good). If you would like to see detailed responses and comments, please contact Dean Huntoon. Questions: 131 responded, how many graduates in 2007? Answer: 249. Students are reminded to take the survey but not pressured.

d. Dean’s Fellowship guidelines (J. Smith): This is a recruiting fellowship to enhance student’s first year of support. Dean Huntoon developed this with Chris Anderson’s input and is intended to put into place for this recruiting season. She has received support from the Provost and Executive Team. Do not have to be underrepresented to add to diversity. Suggestions: More descriptive title somehow stating that this is in addition to other support (Supplemental Recruiting Fellowship). Is four years too much to ask for? Can we send this letter out the same time as the offer letter? Questions as to whether April 7 is too late of a date to respond. Please bring your final comments to the December meeting.

e. Early Walk (E. Flynn – Humanities, N. Byers-Sprague): The concept is to permit students to walk in the graduation ceremony and then complete their thesis and defense the following semester. In some cases this is not happening and students walk early and are still here two or more semesters later. How can we prevent this from happening? Discussion on needing more rigorous verification of progress towards thesis completion and defense. Examples: Requiring that X amount of thesis pages are written and submitted. Nancy can check that they have done their proposal defense. Please bring this topic to your department for discussion. This will be revisited during the December meeting.

5) Motion to adjourn at 5:10 pm.