Minutes of the Graduate Faculty Council Meeting

Tuesday, December 4, 2012

Members (18): Thomas Drummer (Math), Amlan Mukherjee (Civil), Andrew Storer (SFRES), Keat Ghee Ong (Biomed), Craig Friedrich (MEEM), Zhenlin Wang (CompSci), Carl Anderson (Eng), Noel Urban (Envir), Mike Bowler (Rhet), Eugene Levin (SOT), Ashutosh Tiwari (Chem), Thomas Oommen (Geo), Kari Henquinet (PCorps), Jonathan Robins (SocSci), Warren Perger (CompSci), Bill Yarroch (CogSci), Erika Hersch-Green (BioSci), Judith Perlinger (Atmos)

Guests (6): Debra Charlesworth (Grad Sch), Nancy Byers-Sprague (Grad Sch), Kevin Cassell (GSG), Ellen Seidel (Lib), Jacque Smith (Grad Sch), Heather Suokas (Grad Sch)

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

2) Review and approval of 11/06/12 meeting minutes.

3) Committee Reports:
   a. Graduate Tuition and Stipend Review Committee (D.Charlesworth): The committee has met to review the benchmarking data that was generated by the graduate students, D. Charlesworth and N. Byers Sprague. They are still working on recommendations. They will present some data to the Board of Control on 12/14/12 and Dean Huntoon will bring the report to the GFC meeting as soon as it is complete.

4) Old Business:
   a. ESL Services (B. Smith): Right now when departments admit students who need language services the departments are not informing ESL. ESL would like to be notified of these acceptances so that service can be improved. Recently, it has been decided at the undergraduate level that ESL will offer, beginning in January, a track A or track B class called Transitions to American Academic Culture. It will allow ESL to evaluate their language proficiency. B. Smith is proposing that incoming, international graduate students go through an ESL administered evaluation. This would take place the week before classes begin (orientation week). B. Smith and J. Smith have discussed this and have determined that he will run a report for ESL that includes all international students and their TOEFL or IELTS score (after the student confirms attendance by paying the SEVIS fee). There are two options after she receives the report. 1) B. Smith will look at the program’s cutoff scores and email the graduate program director if they admitted a student that falls below their cutoff score. 2) The graduate program director will contact her when they have admitted a student that may need additional training in English. B. Smith reminds the group that she is teaching a graduate research writing class in the spring. She only has two students registered which means if she does not get more students she will need to cancel the course (ESL0590, 3 credit course). The students need to email B. Smith in order to register for the course.

   • (Q): What is an approximate test score that would indicate that a student needs evaluation?
   • (A): This is undetermined because graduate students are able to take academic classes based on lower scores than an undergraduate would be allowed. She would not allow an undergraduate with a score of 75 (TOEFL) into an academic class.
   • (Q): Do offer letters need to be changed to say that the student will be evaluated and if a certain requirement is not met they may need to take certain classes until they satisfy the requirement?
• (A): You can admit a student coming from a place for which English is not an official language provisionally. The admission would be contingent on language proficiency.
• (Q): What is the date for the spring evaluation?
• (A): January 13. Also, departments need to contact ESL with the number of students who will be attending by December 12.
• (C): Somebody should put in writing the series of steps, practices, and deadlines that are needed to put something in place for graduate international students officially.

b. GACS Update (Dean Huntoon via handout): As a result of the feedback provided to me by the GFC, the GACS remained as is and was not modified in 2011-2012. There will be a slight modification in the future, beginning in January 2013. This modification is that in the future GACS support must be budgeted in the tuition category. The reason for this change is that it will allow the Graduate School and Sponsored Program to ensure that the GACS support committed to a project is 1) spent for that project (not for another project), and 2) is not spent for another purpose (e.g., for travel or equipment). Budgeting GACS in the tuition category allows the University to ensure that expenditures are aligned with the GACS policy (which is to provide partial support to graduate students when the remainder of their support is obtained from an external source). Budgeting GACS in the tuition category will allow us to make sure that GACS is only used when students are also being paid a stipend from the same grant and this will then satisfy the intent of GACS which is to provide matching support.

c. Allowing Multiple Attempts at Oral Exams – 2 minimum? (N. Byers Sprague): Departments are being encouraged to have a program or departmental policy on exams. Last month the council was asked to bring feedback to this meeting. After the last GFC meeting Biomedical Engineering wrote a policy to allow two attempts at exams. Electrical Engineering already had a policy to allow two attempts.

• (Q): Why not have the Graduate School create a policy?
• (A): The Graduate School can create a policy but in order to offer programs flexibility and set their own rules the Graduate School is encouraging programs to set their own.
• (C): In the absence of a policy the danger is that a student may get treated differently.
• (C): Legally a policy protects you. If a department/program does not have a policy or a standard, legally you may be encouraged to give a student another chance.

This is a post-meeting recommendation for language from Dr. Yarroch:

*Proposed Graduate School Policy*

Each graduate program should have a written policy that addresses multiple attempts at all exams (final oral defense, qualifying/comprehensive, proposal defense, etc.). This policy should contain the following:
1. Statement of a finite number of multiple attempts permitted.
2. Statement of viable options available to those students who pass or fail each attempt.
3. And, if not addressed in the above, reference to Senate proposal 2-12 and Graduate School grievance procedures.

5) New Business:

a. Orientation (D. Charlesworth): Spring orientation is taking place on January 11, 2013. If you have post docs in your department, if they attend orientation as a facilitator they will satisfy the basic responsible conduct of research training that is required. If you have senior graduate students who would like more experience in teaching and learning more about any of the aspects presented during orientation they would also be encouraged to attend as well as faculty and staff as facilitators.

6) Motion to adjourn at 4:58 pm.