Minutes of the Graduate Faculty Council Meeting

Tuesday, December 7, 2010

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

Members (14): Bill Yarroch (ASE), Andrew Storer (SFRES), Amy Marcarelli (Bio Sci), Steve Seidel (Comp Sci), Blair Orr (Peace Corps), Seth Donahue (Bio Med), Eugene Levin (Sch Tech), Greg Waite (Geo), Paul Ward (Cog & Sci), Michael Bowler (Rhet & Tech), Chris Middlebrook (Elec & Comp Eng), Carl Anderson (Eng), Craig Friedrich (MEEM), Barry Solomon (Env Policy)

Guests (7): Heather Suokas (Grad Sch), Debra Charlesworth (Grad Sch), Jacqueline Huntoon, Jacque Smith (Grad Sch), Nancy Byers-Sprague (Grad Sch), Sean Gohman (GSG), James Frendewey (Sch Tech)

2) Review and approval of 11/02/10 meeting minutes.

3) Committee Reports:
   a. Dismissal/Appeal/Grievance Policy (Dean Huntoon): Debra Charlesworth is working to align the policy to fit the University’s Policy on Policies and the University’s Policy on Procedures. Once the policy is in the correct format it will be forwarded to the Senate.
   b. Advisory Guidelines (N. Byers-Sprague): Are there any comments before this goes to a vote? Donohue suggested that on page 2 (Advisory Committee section) of the handouts: The sentence reading “…it is recommended but not required that an additional external member must be chosen.” It is suggested that the word “must” be removed. Nancy will make that change. It is suggested that the bold print in the Advisor section be broken out into two bullet points. Nancy will make that change. Computer Science will agree to this advisory position (last month they requested this proposal be tabled in order for their department to discuss it further). Motion to approve passed.
      b1. Application Overload (W. Yarroch): Dave Watkins proposes that a committee is formed to examine the application process by either instituting an application fee or figure out some other way of dealing with the large number of applications. Jacque volunteered to be on the committee along with Dave Watkins. Does any other department feel overloaded with applications? No, only CEE.

4) Old Business
   a. Tracking Students Who are Both Certificate and Degree Seeking (N. Byers-Sprague): Some of the advantages in tracking these students are being able to conduct longitudinal studies, track time to degree and also to determine the popularity of the certificate programs. In order to track both certificate and degree seeking students, students will have to apply to a certificate program (students who are not enrolled in a degree program already need to apply to a certificate program). There are not many students who are only certificate seeking. Are there any concerns with this? Would there be admission requirements? Certificate requirements typically mirror department’s degree requirements but each department/program can make adjustments as they see fit. The Graduate School is planning to circulate a form to existing students who are both degree seeking and certificate seeking in order to get their information. Would there be a check box added to the existing application? The Graduate School will need to work out the details. It is agreed that it is a good idea to do the tracking. It was suggested that when a procedure is put into place, it then be brought to GFC for review.
   b. Fellowship Update (D. Charlesworth): Finishing Fellowship: A few years ago the GFC requested that there be a competition in the spring to award fall fellowships and the fellowship committee has done that twice now. There have been two issues that have come about. The first being that the panel is having difficulty evaluating in the spring (March) whether or not the student will actually be finishing in the fall (December or January). The other issue is that the spring competition for fall is creating an increase in repeat applications. These students are not always putting their best foot forward. The panel has requested that we limit applications to two attempts per student. The panel is hoping that this will encourage students to really think about when they are going to apply and apply with good intentions to graduate with a superior application. The other request is that we eliminate competition in the spring for fall fellowships. There still would be a competition in the summer for fall fellowships. They would like...
this implemented next semester. Any comments/concerns? Is graduating a condition of accepting the fellowship? The panel tells the students that the expectation is that they graduate the following semester but if they do not graduate the money is not taken away. Should this then be limited to one application if they are supposed to graduate in the next semester? The justification for allowing a student to apply twice is if a student does not get a finishing fellowship the first time they apply and then has to work to support themselves, it extends the time to degree. They then have another opportunity to apply.

Dean’s Fellowship: The dean has found little interest in this fellowship mainly because departments need to commit to a total of four years of funding. When the fellowship was first introduced the GFC had concerns about the difficulty of committing to four years of funding. Would it be better to make this a nine month fellowship at the minimum full time level that a student could use any time in their graduate career? We would still commit to four years of funding but this way it would only require the department or researcher to come up with three years of funding. Will there be fewer fellowships granted? As of now there have not been more than five applications so the hope is that this will lead to an increase in applications. It seems as though you would lose the incentive as far as the add-on to the regular stipend. If you had a research grant you could add on if you wanted because of the minimum stipend. If it turns out you do not have a grant for one year, you can use the Graduate School funds. Then if you have another dry year you can use the TA funds. Basically the Graduate School would like to change the following text (page 6 of the handout section) “The support will include a stipend of $2,000 per academic-year semester… to “The support will be a full-time fellowship which would include minimum stipend plus tuition and fees that the student could use at any time during the next four years.” Is this any more attractive to people? It seems like it would be less attractive for recruiting outstanding students because they are getting the minimum. It should be kept at a higher stipend. It seems as though you would lose the incentive as far as the add-on to the regular stipend. If you take out the $2,000, the student is not getting anything extra and therefore the best students are not applying. The dean will leave this as it is for now and think through this a little further. If anybody has any ideas please email them to her.

c. Addressing Dissents (N. Byers-Sprague): When a faculty member dissents on a presentation there is no formal way to sign off saying that the dissenting concerns were addressed. The Graduate School would like a signature to be required to verify that the concern was addressed. When a student receives a dissent does that require that the student make changes? Yes, but there is not anything in writing saying that the change was made. A check box could be added with the following choices: my concerns were addressed, my concerns were partially addressed or my concerns were not addressed. Check one of those boxes and sign the form. When will this be implemented? This can be in place for summer or at the latest fall 2011.

d. MS in Geospatial Technology (J. Frendewey): At the last meeting there was a request for admission requirements. The requirements have been added to the last page of the handouts. Before the proposal goes to the Senate the requirement updates will be made within the proposal. Questions/Comments: SS5300 has changed its name to Environmental and Energy Policy (page fifteen of the handouts). In regards to the two 5000 level CS courses, there should be an understanding that almost no student would be able to complete those courses without appropriate prerequisites. Yes, that is understood. Suggestion for the table on page twelve under curriculum design; the fifth column should read “Report or Practicum” rather than “Engineering Report of Practicum.” Motion to approve passed.

e. Certificate in Geospatial Technology (J. Frendewey): The degree requirements would be the same as the MS requirements. Is this intended primarily for certificate seeking students as opposed to degree seeking students taking this concurrently? Yes, the primary intention is to attract certificate seeking students. How many credits are required to complete this certificate program? Fifteen. Motion to approve passed.

5) New Business

a. RCR Training (Dean Huntoon): NSF requires responsible conduct of research training for any students funded from the grant. Michigan Tech Sponsored Programs Office certifies that the training is happening on our campus. If your department is not offering this training then your students can enroll in the
Effective Scholarship (UN0500) course, taught by Debra Charlesworth. It is a zero credit course with a $25 fee. The grade is either pass or fail and those who actively participate, pass. In addition, if you have funding from NIH for some specific types of research proposals or student fellowship programs the sort of training that Debra is giving is required. It cannot be online training. There is also a required post doc training for all NSF projects (not sure if NIH post docs are required to take this training). Can the fee be covered by a department account? The Graduate School does not have a problem with that. If the student is supported the fee shows up on the student bill and is covered with the other tuition costs.

b. Outstanding Scholarship Award: Text Change (N. Byers-Sprague): Based on feedback from departments the Graduate School will change the text to say that the number each program can nominate will be based on ten percent of total enrollment in your program rather than ten percent of the expected grads (because expected grads is hard to determine).

c. Discussion of Research Only Mode Adjustments (S. Gohman): The Graduate Student Government has had discussions regarding students who are currently in research only mode that then discover that there is a class that is either going to help their research or is only offered at certain times of the year. Currently the way research only mode works they are not able to take those classes for credit. Can a proposal be put together to modify research only mode to accommodate students who would like to take a class for credit? An option would be to have the student pay for the course as an add-on to their research. There may be some accounting issues. Tuition is based on a code for the semester so you have a specific code while in research only mode. There would need to be some way in which the advisor approves taking a course while in research only mode. The Graduate School will report back when they have some sort of procedure in place.

6) New Meeting Location (H. Suokas): GFC will be meeting in Admin 404 from now on.

7) Motion to adjourn at 5:05 pm.