Graduate Education Council
Meeting of
Wednesday, October 9, 2013
2:00 – 4:00 p.m., 433 Johnston Hall

Attending: Melissa Anderson, Lynn Bruin, Dick Brundage, Phil Buhlmann, Belinda Cheung, Liz Davis, Vicki Field, John Goodge (via Skype), Tim Kehoe, Ameeta Kelekar, Sally Gregory Kohlstedt (chair), Linda Lindeke, Lynn Lukkas, Keaton Miller, Nicole Scott, Ryan Thompson, Char Voight (staff recorder), Betsy Wattenberg

Guest: Scott Lanyon (chair, Special Committee on Graduate Education)

1. Approval of the minutes from the September 11th meeting: The minutes were circulated with little time for review. Voight will email GEC members a reminder to review the minutes and send any comments or corrections. The approved version will be posted on the Graduate School web site.

2. Special Committee on Graduate Education (Lanyon):
The committee will focus on Ph.D. graduate programs. Because of the diversity of graduate and professional education at the University, the decision was made to limit the scope in order to avoid “one-size fits all” recommendations. These are essentially the fields that are analyzed in detail by the National Research Council as well as the Association of American Universities. Professor Lanyon expects that many of the findings and recommendations will apply more broadly despite the limited scope, and he anticipates this is just the beginning of a broader conversation.

The focus is forward-thinking. The work of the committee is not to rethink or revisit previous decisions related to decentralization.

Structure: The Special Committee is divided into the following four subcommittees:

- Graduate education financing
- The graduate student experience and program quality
- Enrollment management
- The visibility of graduate education (“Education” at the University is most often seen as undergraduate education. When “graduate” is emphasized, this is often understood as professional education).

Membership: Committee membership reflects representation from:

- Top-ranked NRC programs
- Every college with PhD research graduate programs
- Specific individuals recommended by Graduate School staff and the FCC
- Individuals with a demonstrated commitment to graduate education (e.g., have served as DGS, award winners, demonstrated graduate education service)
- Individuals with recognized stature within the institution (e.g., Regent’s professors).
Timeline: The subcommittees have been meeting for several weeks, and will conclude their work by the end of October. The full committee will meet twice in November with the aim of having a finished report by December. The tight timeline is driven by several factors:

- The desire to focus on large issues affecting graduate education
- The president’s strategic planning process
- The provost’s interest in having changes in place in time for the next recruitment cohort

Primary concern: The timeline does not allow for opportunities to engage in broad consultation. However, there had been several efforts to gather substantial input even prior to the formation of the committee (e.g., discussions in FCC, the graduate education survey in spring 2013). There are plans to conduct listening sessions in early November to get feedback on the preliminary recommendations from the committee. An in-person session on the Duluth campus is also being considered.

3. GEC input on Academic Program Review (Kohlstedt, Field). The chair asked for further GEC input on the revised suggested questions for academic program review. The current draft is not substantially different but has a new “academic overview” section that focuses on the purpose and goals of the program.

Discussion:

- Where does the document ask programs about their future goals are and whether they’ve achieved them? If the reviewers identify issues within a program, there should be follow up to see if improvements have been made. Discussion about timing of the reviews led to a tentative suggestion that reviews take place in the fall, and that the provost or the provost’s designee meet with the program in spring to discuss the findings of the review and to see what actions are planned as a result.
- Comment on #7 (International considerations): It is important to emphasize that the point is to achieve an appropriate balanced proportion of domestic and international students, not necessarily just to increase enrollment of international students.
- General comment: In relationship to the comment above, committee members reiterated that this is to be a forward-looking, rather than backward-looking process. However, many of the items (e.g., #3, #4) appear very backward-looking. Programs should be asked not only what they’ve done, but also what they should be aiming to do in the future. Including aspirations for the future of the program is important.

4. D grade and proposed revisions in degree progress and standards policy, and post-baccalaureate policy (Kohlstedt, Field).

Background: Previously, Graduate School policy disallowed the inclusion of D grades on the degree plan. The conversion to U-wide policies resulting from decentralization led to the unintentional loss of the language prohibiting this. Changes are being requested to the degree standards and progress policies for master’s and doctoral students, and to the post-baccalaureate certificate policy to make it explicitly clear that D grades cannot be included on the degree plan. Input has been sought from RAC and from GSSP. Decision: The
proposed changes were reviewed and the GEC unanimously approved the revised language in all three policies.

5. FY15 Graduate Education budget framework (Kohlstedt). The chair reviewed the proposed graduate education budget framework for FY15. Given that there will be a 1.5-2.5% cut, it is unrealistic to propose grand projects. However, we still want to identify some strategic areas for expansion.

Possible areas for requesting additional funds in existing areas:

- **Training grants:** Requesting an increase of $100,000 to existing budget of $300,000 to increase our flexibility in committing funding for new and renewing applications.
- **Quality Metrics:** Requesting an additional $500,000, for a total of $5 million, to help cover allocations for those programs that have not been part of the quality metrics allocation plan. Currently, only M.A., M.S., M.F.A., and Ph.D. degree programs are included in the plan.
- **DDF:** Asking for an increase to make up for the loss of the state special funding (extra $2 million per year for three years) that ends in FY14. Without the state special funding, the DDF budget will return to $3.5 million per year. The request will be for at least $100,000 per year for the next five years to bring the funding level to at least $4 million per year by FY19.
- **IDF:** Funding has come from the Provost's Interdisciplinary Team. This request for $178,500/year will bring the IDF budget to $600,000/year.
- **DOVE fellowship:** Funding comes from graduate education cost pool, and is then transferred to the Office for Diversity in Graduate Education (ODGE), a unit under the Office for Equity and Diversity, which administers the fellowship. This request for $300,000 in recurring funding would raise the current $900,000 to $1.2 million/year.

Possible new requests:

- **Research Experiences for Undergraduates (REUs):** Requesting $25,000/year recurring for matching funds for REUs. These funds will be administered in conjunction with ODGE for recruitment efforts.
- **Academic and professional development:** Requesting $45,000/year recurring for a new P&A position, and for associated programming costs for academic and professional development, postdoctoral activities, and new student orientation.
- **International student support:** Requesting $35,000 for a graduate administrative fellow who will support activities targeting international graduate students specifically.

6. Report from the Chair:
   a. **Spring 2013 Graduate Education survey:** A brief summary of results were distributed and reviewed. There were few comments except agreement that funding of graduate students continues to be an issue. The University is currently working on a graduate education version of SERU (the undergraduate survey), and any input on what should be included would be valuable.
b. DGS orientation: After discussion with the Associate Deans and other collegiate administrators responsible for graduate education, the Graduate School is likely to coordinate a DGS orientation in the future. It would be open to all DGSs, but the focus would be on new DGSs in particular, because they are new to the position and an overview as well as technical matters might best be explained in a group setting.

c. Suggestions for Spring 2014 Graduate and Professional Assembly (GPEA) topics (Field). Vicki asked GEC members to hold the date of Wednesday, April 2 for the GPEA, and that GEC members to send her any ideas they had on possible topics.

Possible topics:
- Report/discussion with the Special Committee on Graduate Education (Some felt that April 2 would be too late within the president’s strategic planning timeframe).
- Graduate education in a digital age.
- International graduate education (Meredith McQuaid has a big event planned that we would not want to conflict with so this would mean coordinating efforts).
- Self-advocacy for grad students - very broad and general.
- Academic careers and the changing landscape of employment opportunities in interdisciplinary life sciences education – very specific and narrow topic.

7. CIC Professional Advancement Initiative (Kohlstedt). The University of Minnesota is participating in an NSF grant under its Alliance for Graduate Education and the Professoriate initiative to enhance the academic opportunities for underrepresented STEM post-doctoral appointees. The goal is to assist post-docs through guided mentoring by their advisors and other mentors. The first step will be to identify under-represented post docs in STEM fields and determine their interest in participation. Further stages will involve training the advisors and mentors by a team of visitors who will travel to CIC schools and also invite participants to meetings on specific campuses. In response to a question, Kohlstedt noted that this is a postdoc to faculty transition focused initiative, not a graduate student to postdoc transition project.