Graduate Education Council
Minutes
Tuesday, February 24, 2015
1-3 pm, 300 Morrill Hall

Present: Melissa Anderson, Jay Austin, Dick Brundage, Phil Buhlmann, Belinda Cheung, Liz Davis, Jigna Desai, Emi Ito, Tim Kehoe, Ameeta Kelekar, Linda Lindeke, Keaton Miller, Henning Schroeder (chair), Nicole Scott, Phil Sellew, Kathleen Thomas, Randall Victora, Char Voight (staff), Betsy Wattenberg

Guests: Amber Celotti, Karen Chapin, Sue Jackson, Takehito Kamata

1) Discussion: Request for Proposals, Graduate Assistant Health Plan (Karen Chapin, OHR; Sue Jackson, Graduate Assistant Benefits Office):

Karen Chapin provided GEC members with background on the RFP for the new Graduate Assistant Health Plan, and walked members through a PowerPoint showing several recommendations and option. Chapin emphasized that these were recommendations only, at this point, and that no final decisions had yet been made. The three principle recommendations were:

a. Retain the current benefits structure
b. Implement a new wellness program
c. Eliminate three provider groups from the HealthPartners network, as cost savings measure (Mayo, Allina, HealthEast).

GEC members had several questions and concerns, including:

- What is the timeframe for decision making?
- Will Rochester students be differentially affected? Most of them may use Mayo.
- How many students would be affected?
- Which specific providers and how many would be out of network if the recommendation were approved? Karen says not many but she will double check but none that she knows of.

Chapin stated that they would like to gather feedback and make a decision by the end of March. The next COGS Assembly will be March 14th. GEC representatives from COGS will take the issue up at the Assembly and report back to the GEC at the March meeting.

2) Update and discussion: GEC Policy Subcommittee (Liz Davis; handouts: Tracked changes revised policies on Application of Graduate Credits to Degree Requirements and Credit Requirements for Master’s and Doctoral Students): Davis reminded the GEC that the subcommittee’s goal was to simplify and streamline the policy, and provided the following update on last month’s discussion:
a. The GEC subcommittee had recommended a minimum of 12 unique course credits for doctoral programs. However, when this was presented to other groups (e.g., SCEP, GrAD), there was concern. Some thought there should not be a U-wide requirement or any restrictions on where the credits are earned. In other words, the program could allow a student to transfer all their course credits from another institution or program. This issue is not resolved, and requires further discussion and consultation.

b. The current policy also sets minimum requirements for master's degrees (e.g., you can only double-count 8 credits, there are limits on transfer credits). The subcommittee would like to change the language to take about the minimum requirements and simplify these, which would eliminate the need to have all the exceptions. Students would have to earn a minimum of 12 unique course credits that would not apply to any other degree, either at the U or outside the U. There is general agreement that you CAN'T earn two master's degrees with the same set of credits.

c. Pre-thesis credits (8666): The subcommittee posed the question to the GEC regarding how pre-thesis questions should be dealt with in the policy. The subcommittee asked GEC members if they used pre-thesis credits in their programs and, if so, how. Not all programs use these credits, but some do because they need a continuous enrolment option for students and the program may not allow early thesis credit registration (ETCR). In addition, there is a question about how to categorize pre-thesis credits. The subcommittee would like to simplify the policy language such that credits are either thesis credits or non-thesis credits. Course credits would be non-thesis credits. Are 8666 thesis credits, non-thesis credits, or something else?

After much discussion, the GEC concluded that:

- We should NOT eliminate 8666 because many programs have very specific uses for these credits.
- We should NOT allow conversion from 8666 to 8888.
- We should explore the possibility of re-defining 8666 from course credits to special registration non-thesis credits.

The GEC should keep in mind that the definition of different “types” of credits is part of a different policy held by a different policy owner, so we can recommend this change, but have no direct control over whether or not it is adopted.

3) Discussion: GEC representative on Grad SERU committee (Melissa Anderson):
Anderson briefed the GEC on the decision by OIR to form a governance committee to help manage issues with the Grad SERU survey data (e.g., Who owns the data? How
should it be distributed?). They would like two GEC volunteers. Linda Lindeke and Dick Brundage volunteered. Work will begin this semester.

4) Update and Discussion: GEC election spring 2015: Char Voight briefed GEC members on the status of the GEC election process and asked for decisions on several issues. The following was decided:
   - The ballot will have a write-in line if there is only one candidate listed
   - We will not include CGS fields on the ballot if there is not at least one candidate
   - We will not extend the nomination deadline if there are not sufficient nominees, but rather go back to the list of last years’ nominees to inquire if they would like to run again this year

5) Update: COGS Student Bill of Rights (Nicole Scott; handouts: revised draft of Student Bill of Rights, Introduction): Scott shared the revised Bill of Rights with the GEC. She has drafted a one-page introduction/cover sheet to accompany the document. She asked which other stakeholders should be given the chance to have input before this would be endorsed by the Graduate School. One of the main purposes of the document is to have a roadmap of resources and link to things that already exist. Quick references will be pulled out to make a summary and shorter document with details for those who are interested. This will go to SCEP on March 11th. COGS representatives will also be meeting with staff from the Provost’s office next week. The goal is to have the document completed by May.

There was some concern among GEC members about students’ reactions to this. Will prospective students see this as a red flag – that all these grievable offenses routinely happen at the U? Others were concerned about including this in offer letters and so on because students already receive a lot of information, not all of which they even read through. This will just compound the issue. Scott will take all the feedback from the GEC and from SCEP and other groups, and revise the draft.

6) Update: Program Review Subcommittee (Ameeta Kelekar): Kelekar informed the GEC that this subcommittee is working to develop 16-18 criteria (with exceptions) to be used for program self-assessment and evaluation. This is a time-consuming task, and the group is about 1/3 to 1/2 done. They will finalize the list and bring to the GEC for approval this spring (by the March meeting ideally), after which it will go to the Provost. The goal is to develop a range if criteria and not rely on a few indicators for ALL programs. The criteria are also in alignment with the strategic plan (e.g., diversity, community engagement). Question: Is there a mechanism to say to a program that they don’t meet standards? Answer: Yes. This would occur at the level of the Provost.