Graduate Education Council  
Agenda  
Tuesday, March 31, 2015  
2-4 pm, 300 Morrill Hall

Present: Melissa Anderson, Jay Austin (via video conference), Victor Barocas, Lyn Bruin, Dick Brundage, Phil Buhlmann, Belinda Cheung, Celeste Falcon, Michael Goldman, Emi Ito, Linda Lindeke, Jan McCulloch, Keaton Miller, Henning Schroeder (chair), Nicole Scott, Phil Sellew, Carissa Slotterback, Kathleen Thomas, Sabrina Trudo, Randall Victora, Char Voight (staff), Betsy Wattenberg

1) Discussion and Vote: Proposal for a New PhD in Molecular and Systems Toxicology (GEC subcommittee: Ameeta Kelekar, Nicole Scott, Betsy Wattenberg; handouts: MST proposal, letters of support). Betsy Watenberg gave a summary of the proposal on behalf of subcommittee Ameeta Kelekar, who could not attend the first part of the meeting. This proposal had been reviewed earlier by the full GEC, which had some questions, primarily concerning how students in the program would be funded. MST has said they will not launch the program and admit students until they have secured funding. The GEC was satisfied with this resolution, and the motion to approve the proposal passed unanimously.

2) Update: COGS Resolution on the Graduate Assistant Health Plan (COGS, handouts: GA Plan Savings Comparison, Benefits & Network Changes, DRAFT of Network – this will not be a handout but available on the Moodle site). Keaton Miller summarized the issues that have been raised in discussion of the resolution. GEC student representatives had a number of questions about the proposed changes in the GA Health Plan, including the impact of reducing the provider networks on the 10% of students who use Allina or Mayo. What costs savings are we seeking to achieve? If the savings comes from the GA budget, how will these funds be redirected? Will savings be reinvested in graduate education? Yes, savings realized by large programs could generate funds to hire or support more students. Similar savings could be achieved by raising the co-pay $5-10.

The COGS position is that they would support an increase in the co-pay if an immediate decision is needed, but they would like more time to look at alternatives to present to the COGS Assembly. There may be some combination of changes that could lead to the desired savings. Although the GEC does not have an official vote on the COGS resolution, but their advice and opinion has been requested. The GEC supports the resolution, especially clauses #5 and #6 concerning protecting students against loss of access to care. A motion was made to specifically support these clauses, with a friendly amendment to also include #7, 8 and 9 as well. Graduate students need to be involved in the process when the proposed changes are next discussed. The motion passed with 9 in favor, 4 opposed, 4 abstentions. It was emphasized that the vote was an expression of opinion, and not bound to any action. The GEC lacks full information, and did not believe a decision could be made based on the information available.
3) Update and discussion: GEC Policy Subcommittee (Liz Davis). Liz Davis, chair of the policy review subcommittee, briefed the GEC on the policies currently under review and what specific issues required GEC input and a vote. The primary issue had to do with the number of credits that could be counted in common between degrees. Davis reminded the GEC that programs can set stricter standards than those laid out in policy if they choose, and that the minimum does not apply to students getting a master’s and a PhD in the same program. There was consensus that it would be inappropriate to set a minimum number of credits in common among master’s degrees. However, there was disagreement as to what the minimum requirement for unique course credits should be for doctoral degrees. There was also a lack of clarity about what counts as a course credit. Transfer credits? Credits earned as a non-degree seeking student? Credits earned for another degree?

Davis provided two versions of the policy for GEC consideration and a vote because of the urgency of moving ahead in the approval process. The first version has no minimum requirement for unique credits for doctoral degrees. Programs are entirely free to decide what coursework they approve. This does raise an issue concerning applying credits earned from a baccalaureate degree. Should students be allowed to count these? Preference would be to allow this is we decide there should be no minimum requirement. Should it be up to the program to decide if they want to allow this? If you have senior majors doing graduate level work, then why should they not get credit? Do we trust the graduate faculty in a program to make good decisions? Can they double count these credits?

The second version sets a minimum of 12 credits in common for the doctoral degree. This version has been widely vetted with other stakeholder groups, and there seems to be support for this position. This would maintain that a minimum requirement of 12 unique credits earned in a program that are not applied to any other degree here or at any other University would be required for the doctoral degree. Beyond these 12, it would be up to the program to decide what other kinds of credits they would allow. Students would also be required to have both 24 course and 24 thesis.

A vote was called on two things: 1) should there be minimum credit requirement for the doctoral degree, and 2) should graduate credits earned as an undergraduate or non-degree seeking student be allowed.

Vote on retaining the minimum credit requirement of 12 for the doctoral degree: 9 in favor, 5 against, 1 abstention. The motions passed to keep the 12 credit minimum.

Vote on continuing to exclude graduate credits earned while an undergraduate/non-degree seeking student in the minimum credit requirements: 2 in favor, 13 against, no abstentions. The motion failed and graduate credits earned by undergraduates/non-degree seeking students may be applied and counted.

4) Update: Program Review Subcommittee (Ameeta Kelekar; handout: draft of Key Criteria for Evaluation of Research-Based Graduate Programs). Ameeta Kelekar, chair of the academic program review subcommittee, summarizes the work of the subcommittee. The initial charge was to help develop criteria to identify weak program, but the subcommittee took the approach
of looking at existing programs and identifying what characteristics make a program excellent. They then developed general criteria, and generated a substantial amount of data. Kelekar emphasized that these applied now to just research-based doctoral programs.

Discussion highlights:

- The Bostrom Efficiency Index remains as a metric, but does not carry as much weight as before due to the fact that it does not work well if you have a small program, many part-time students, or students who take an LOA.
- No one item or metric would result in a program being flagged. There is a comprehensive list of dimensions that could be used to evaluate.
- Will the amount of detail required place a large burden on programs? What is process? How often will programs be asked to do this? Compared to what has been done previously, this is not burdensome. Also, much of the information comes from existing documentation that the program already has, such as their narratives.
- Why is the faculty to advisee ratio included? Many programs have long lists of faculty, but not all of them are advising or interacting with students. We need to know what the faculty are doing to serve students. Faculty lists may give students a skewed view of the numbers of faculty actually available to advise.
- The ability to provide competitive funding packages is included as a criterion. However, this is determined at the college level not the program level. Programs have no ability to impact this if they are being funded in ways that do not allow them to be competitive.
- Who is the audience for this document? Programs? Colleges? We need to think about how this will be interpreted and used at both levels. It is first and foremost a self-assessment tool, which then also provides a basic means to draw comparisons across the U.

5) Update: GEC election spring 2015 (Henning Schroeder). Henning Schroeder gave an update on the upcoming GEC election to be held in April 2015.