Graduate Education Council
Minutes
Wednesday, December 9, 2015
2-4 pm, 300 Morrill


Guests: Daniel Jones-White, OIR

1) Highlights: Academic Analytics latest graduate program benchmarking results (Daniel Jones-White, OIR):
   a. Daniel Jones-White presented an overview of the latest Academic Analytics tied to graduate programming benchmarking. The U is currently paying about $250,000 for the AA subscription, which is up for renewal in July 2016. Jones-White walked GEC members through the data that has just been released, and offered to send anyone who has interest the 26 pages on the methodology after the meeting. The data can be used in customized reports by programs for accreditation, program review, and so on. The current data is very much faculty focused. There is a new module that tracks student placement, but only in placement academic positions. The Graduate School has been using Academic Analytics data for quality assessment allocations in addition to other data. The current data will be used in the upcoming 2016 Quality Assessment allocation.

Discussion:
   ● How are faculty assigned to programs in AA? Previously, this was done in Peoplesoft and was based on the primary assignment. Now, emails are sent to programs to verify the faculty from Peoplesoft and allow them to add others that they wanted included. Faculty roles database, which is maintained by ASR, may should perhaps be the list for determining faculty program affiliation, rather than what payroll designates as the primary appointment. Should this be weighted by the number of graduate students someone advises in a program? Would this be accurate?
   ● Are more professionally-oriented programs represented, such as Law? Law is not, but others may be represented (e.g., Humphrey Public Affairs PhD is included).
   ● The primary question is what is this data going to be used for? It will be a component (small) of the quality assessment allocation. The accuracy of the data from AA compared to 10 years ago is much improved. At the same time, the data is best put to use by the programs, who are most able to interpret what is meaningful and why. The Graduate School has produced a document that shows how much programs have changed over the last 5 years. Belinda will share this summary.
   ● There is concern among faculty that attempts to quantify program or faculty quality are dangerous. If faculty can get more funding by publishing more poor
papers and getting credit rather than fewer good quality ones this seems wrong. If you don’t try to quantify quality though, what are you basing assessments on? Anecdotal evidence?

2) Update Policy Review Subcommittee (Michael Gaudio; Handouts: draft policies on Application of Credits for Students Earning Graduate Degrees, Graduate Faculty, and Table on Appointments to Graduate Examination Committees). Michael Gaudio presented the issues to the GEC, and was later joined by Liz Davis, who had been presenting at SCEP.

   a. Application of credits policy draft: The two major discussion items were:
      i. whether or not credits can be counted toward more than one minor. Most GEC members did not object to no double counting for minors. Not many students actually get two graduate minors, and in cases that people are aware of, the minors are in distinct areas where double counting would not occur regardless. The question was raised whether there would be implications related to a certificate versus a minor? However, the certificate policy is a separate one that will be reviewed by the subcommittee. The policy as voted on stood with not allowing double counting between majors
      ii. Graduate credits earned while an undergraduate DO NOT count toward the graduate program. Although there was some discussion, ultimately, it was determined that such credits should NOT be applied to graduate degrees.
      iii. VOTE: The policy passed unanimously, with no abstentions.
      iv. SCEP did just vote to approve with this change about major/minor credits. Will then go to FCC. FAQ on waiving of credits for courses already taken. You have to take a certain number of minimum credits for major and minor, whether or not some course requirements are waived.

   b. Eligibility to serve on graduate examination committees: There were more issues to discuss with this policy, as the recent revisions separate the issues of eligibility to serve apart from committee composition. The components dealing with committee composition will be moved to the policies on progress and completion. Primary discussion items were:
      i. The role of reviewer: Does it make sense to have a separate role of reviewer? If you’re a member of a committee are you not automatically a reviewer? What is the role of a “non-reviewer”? Non-reviewers don’t have to sign off to say that the dissertation is ready for final defense. Do we need to distinguish between the competency requirements for those who can serve on committees versus those who can be a reviewer? No. If you can be on the committee, you can be a reviewer. However, not all members need to be reviewers. In some cases, this would place a burden on the student and on the program. There are programs in which the fourth reviewer is not expected to review the thesis, but to assess the quality of the oral portion of the exam, which is also part of the defense.
ii. Doctorate or equivalent degree required to serve: Should there be exceptions (as there are in current policy) to this requirement? These are minimum requirements, but GEC members had concerns about not allowing any exceptions to the minimum. On the other hand, there was also concern about an “anything goes” approach toward exceptions. Also, if the minimum requirement is a doctoral degree, does this mean that someone who has not done research or actively advised students in years is more qualified to assess the thesis and defense than someone who has been active? It was suggested that “minimum eligibility” be added to the title. There was also discussion about one-time appointments to committees who are not on the Faculty Role List. This policy will undergo further revision and GEC will have an opportunity to review it again.

iii. Faculty Role Database: Liz Davis shared that SCEP had a number of concerns about the Faculty Role List Database. People have found it was out of date for their own programs. Who gives approval of these roles? Currently PLCs enter the info into the database and there is no real oversight. There are no central rules for voting on it by faculty at a program level or any other level. Policy doesn’t state who gets to decide about the individual faculty and what role they can play? It was suggested that the database should be brought under the purview of this policy. Again, on the one hand you may have an individual who is qualified to serve on a single committee, but you would not put them in the faculty role database as qualified to serve on any committee. On the other hand, you have people who may be assigned a role in the database, who really do not have the qualifications to serve in that role (e.g., having tenure should not be an automatic qualifier for serving in any role). The subcommittee will continue to discuss and review. Additional comments and concerns can be sent to Liz Davis.

3) Graduate Student Mental Health Issues and LOA (Henning Schroeder, Phil Buhlmann):
   a. Phil Buhlmann raised the issue of the LOA for students with GA appointments, and the related issues this can cause. For instance, if a student is granted a leave in the middle of the semester, they may get a bill for tuition, etc. In addition, they may also lose their health benefits as a result. You lose your student status on a leave. How does this impact international students? How do we disassociate the economic and other consequences from the issue of determining whether a LOA is warranted? Are there any resources for students to understand what they should do in different circumstances if they think they may need a leave? It was never the intention to increase the hardship for students through the LOA policy, but this is the way that it functions when implemented. There are many HR implications intertwined with the educational aspects of the policy. The policy subcommittee does not believe it is within the scope of their charge to review and revise this policy, at least not with participation of additional individuals who have the HR and other expertise needed. GS going to convene a group that will address both the educational and HR issues.
4) Update: 2016 internship competition: The RFP for this year's internship competition will be issued in the next few weeks.