
(Shawn Curley chaired the meeting on behalf of Henning Schroeder.)

For Information
1. Announcements
Shawn Curley reported that ballots for GEC membership have been sent out and are due on Friday, May 3. Election results will be discussed by the GEC at its meeting on May 22.

2. Models for interdisciplinary inquiry and public engagement:
Carissa Schively Slotterback (Associate Professor and Director, Urban and Regional Planning Program, HHH) presented information about the Resilient Communities Project, for which she serves as faculty director. RCP matches 1-year community projects with relevant U of MN graduate courses across colleges. RCP was initiated by the Sustainability Faculty Network, a grassroots collaborative (and interdisciplinary graduate group) of over 60 faculty from diverse disciplines engaged in sustainability.

The Institute on the Environment and the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs provided some support for RCP at its start, but because it relies on existing graduate and professional school courses and small contributions from the communities it serves, RCP receives no tuition funding. RCP creates opportunities for experiential learning while students engage in solving real world problems. In addition to regular coursework, students may participate through individual capstone projects, honors theses, professional papers, or research assistantships through CURA.

In RCP’s pilot year, the Project partnered with the city of Minnetonka. Faculty and students from eight colleges and 23 courses were involved in 14 projects. Next year the city of North St. Paul will contribute $25,000-$30,000 and RCP will take on 15-30 locally relevant projects ranging from fiber optic network development to a master redevelopment plan. A systematic de-brief will be conducted when projects are over. RCP believes impacts will be seen within 2-5 years.

A brief discussion followed her presentation.

For discussion and action:
ACTION: Notes and minutes from the March 26, 2013 GEC meeting were unanimously approved.

For information/discussion
1. Update on addressing President Kaler’s charge to strengthen graduate education and graduate education administration
Belinda Cheung reviewed the history of this charge and actions taken to date. President Kaler introduced “Graduate School 2.0” in his February 28, 2013 State of the University address. Two weeks later, he
formally charged Provost Hanson and Vice Provost and Dean Schroeder to review the current administrative structure for graduate education. President Kaler expects a set of recommendations for improvement in the fall of 2013. To help inform this work, a short survey with open-ended questions was sent to faculty, graduate students, and staff on April 4. A team of Graduate School staff is coding, reviewing, and summarizing survey responses, with help from Associate Dean Anderson. Results will be shared with Provost Hanson and the chair of the University Senate Faculty Consultative Committee.

3. Discussion of dissertation embargoes at March 15, 2013 meeting of Senate Committee on Academic Freedom and Tenure

As the Senate Committee on Academic Freedom and Tenure had considered guidelines on dissertation embargos at its March 15, 2013 meeting, Shawn Curley asked GEC members whether they were still satisfied with procedures and policies related to dissertation embargos, and with information that is available to students.

GEC members did not see a need to change the current embargo policies at this time. However, all graduate students should be informed earlier about the possibility of an embargo and should be advised to acquaint themselves with the policies of journals in their field regarding publication of the thesis or dissertation. Available guidelines should be reviewed and made more visible and accessible, as needed.

GEC members supported adding to the University of Minnesota Digital Conservancy web site information about embargoed dissertations. This information might include the dissertation title and an abstract that would be accessible to the public.

GEC members also suggested that Vice Provost and Dean Schroeder address the embargo issue on a national level, perhaps initiating discussion with organizations like the Council of Graduate Schools.

4. Term of service for chair of Graduate School Academic Grievance Committee

GEC members considered whether clarification was needed in the GEC bylaws regarding the beginning and ending dates of the position of Grievance Committee chair. Following discussion, GEC members favored appointing the new chair in the spring semester, allowing for the possibility that the new chair might take on new cases over the summer while the outgoing chair might close out (over the summer) the cases s/he had been working on, and leaving the length of the chair’s service flexible to allow for adjustment if a chair turns out not to be well-suited for this work.

5. Proposal for use of the expanded Graduate School Bridging Funds in FY14

Belinda Cheung provided background information. In March, GEC members had favored a “first-come-first-served” approach for awarding Bridging Funds to cover the education allowance shortfall for other than NSF Pre-Doctoral Fellowships, which are already covered by these funds. However, doing so will disadvantage fellowships that announce winners late in the academic year. Setting a later deadline—such as June 1— for Bridging Funds would ensure a fairer process. By the end of May, NSF needs are known and the funds balance available to cover other gaps can be determined. For NIH fellowships, the stipend award is an issue. Priority is given to covering health insurance and tuition for fellowships of $30,000 or less.

GEC members discussed whether priority in allocating Bridging Funds should be based on the prestige of a fellowship or on other factors, such as a department’s need. Several members felt strongly that prestige should not be the dominant criterion, but rather that support should supplement awards not covered by federal funds. The Bridging Fund should include departments in disciplines that are not eligible to apply to NSF or NIH. It was also suggested that departments with significant non-sponsored funding should not
receive Bridging Funds. Letters of support for those requesting Bridging Funds should come either from DGSs or department chairs, who, unlike advisors, are aware of available departmental funds and can make a case for need.

Cheung responded that the June 1 deadline would be set only for this first year to make sure the work is done. The GEC can revisit the approach for FY15 and make appropriate adjustments.

Adjourn