Graduate Education Council
Meeting of
Thursday, August 29, 2013
2:00 – 4:00 p.m., 433 Johnston Hall
MINUTES


Guests: Karen Starry, Art Schultz, Alison Skoberg

I. Introduction
   a) Approval of the notes and minutes from the May 22, 2013 meeting (Sally Gregory Kohlstedt; handouts: draft notes and minutes): Minutes and notes approved as written.

   b) Welcome and New Member Orientation (Sally Gregory Kohlstedt): Sally Kohlstedt welcomed the new faculty and student GEC representatives.

   c) Role and Responsibilities of the GEC (Sally Gregory Kohlstedt; handouts: GEC Bylaws):

      The GEC is an advisory body to the vice provost and dean of graduate education. However, in addition to advising on issues brought to them by the vice provost and dean, GEC members are free to recommend agenda items on issues of interest. The Special Committee on Graduate Education initiated by the Faculty Consultative Committee and Provost may also have some recommendations relating to the role and responsibilities of the GEC.

      There will be a continuing conversation with the GEC about role and responsibilities. Issues that require additional discussion include:

         • The strategic use of subcommittees to reserve the time of the full GEC for broader issues
         • The relationship between the GEC, the colleges, and bodies such as SCEP
         • The role of the GEC in program proposal review
         • The role of the GEC related to policy

II. Report from the dean (Sally Gregory Kohlstedt)
   a) Graduate School Vision and Mission Statement (handouts: Graduate School Vision and Mission Statement): Sally explained the vision/mission/values (VMV) process the Graduate School has been undergoing for the past year and where the process is at the current moment. The vision and mission have been developed and will be posted shortly on the Graduate School web site. A set of eight preliminary values (for internal use mostly) have also been identified and are being finalized. Underlying everything is the desire to have high quality graduate education.

   Over
b) Regular Convening of Associate Deans: Sally reported that she will regularly convene a group of associate deans for graduate education beginning this fall. They will meet several times a semester to talk about roles and responsibilities at the central and collegiate levels.

c) TC Dean’s Retreat on Graduate Education: Sally reported that one of the main topics she spoke to was the issue raised in last year’s survey on graduate education related to the erosion of financial support for graduate education over the last several years. Data collected at the aggregate level shows there is less funding for TAships, RAships, etc. There has not necessarily been a dramatic shift, but an erosion nonetheless. Given the reduction in spending, it is important to determine if this has been strategic and to understand where the changes have occurred. This will be an issue for further discussion in the GEC.

III. New Graduate Student Orientation, September 7, 9:00 a.m. -2:30 p.m. (Melissa Anderson, handouts: tentative orientation schedule): Melissa reviewed the planned program with the GEC. Approximately 415 people have registered. Those who are doing their own collegiate orientations see this as complimentary, not competing, event. COGS was very much involved in planning the event, and will be involved in putting it on as well. The content will be provided online as much as possible for those who could not attend, and we hope to offer workshops throughout the year in addition to these and longer sessions.

IV. Academic Program Report
  a) Proposal for a new co-directed Ph.D. degree option in Civil Engineering with the University of Liege (Belgium) (Victor Barocas on behalf of the proposal review committee – Victor Barocas, Dick Brundage and Ryan Thompson; handouts: proposal; guest: Art Schultz, DGS, Civil Engineering)
   • Victor reported on behalf of the review subcommittee: They saw this as a very strong proposal. The subcommittee had some questions related to concerns over health insurance coverage for students while abroad and the use of co-advisor language. However, they were satisfied with the responses they have received to these issues from Civil Engineering. **The subcommittee recommends that the GEC approve the proposal. GEC VOTE: The proposal was approved unanimously.**

  b) Proposal to rename the existing Educational Policy and Administration (EDPA) PhD program to align with the departmental name, Organizational Leadership, Policy, and Development (OLPD); 2) within the renamed PhD program, rename the existing "Educational Administration" subplan as "Education Policy and Leadership"; and 3) restructure the existing Work and Human Resource Education (WHRE) PhD program as a subplan named “Human Resource Development” (HRD) under the OLPD PhD (Karen Starry)

Karen reminded the GEC that this proposal had come before them in May. At that time, the group decided that the review of these proposed changes by staff in the Graduate School and
c) Proposal to discontinue the Human Resources & Industrial Relations (HRIR) PhD and the HRIR minor (Karen Starry)

Karen reported that the program wanted discontinuation, and had a detailed plan for how to take care of any students who had not yet completed. Graduate School staff reviewed it, and it went through for approval.

The GEC discussed at length the need for a clear, consistent process for proposal review. Proposals that represent substantive changes to programs (including proposals for new programs) will be reviewed by a GEC subcommittee, and voted on by the GEC. When Graduate School staff determine there is not a need for full review, they will post the proposal on-line, along with recommendations and commentary from staff representing the Graduate School and the Provost’s Office. GEC members may review the proposal and may recommend that it come before a subcommittee or the full GEC.

V. Thesis Research Grant Program (Alison Skoberg; handouts: program description and eligibility criteria): Alison provided more details on the program. The purpose of the grant is to provide students with research funding that they can leverage in order to make timely progress on their degrees, and position themselves to advance to the next stage of their work. Students must have passed their oral prelim by date of deadline in order to be eligible. Alison will be sending out some communications next week about deadlines and eligibility.

GEC members raised some issues related to eligibility and the wording of the criteria, which Graduate School staff will revisit. There was also discussion about whether funds remaining in the DDF allocation will continue to be distributed in this way, or if there is a possibility of considering alternative, such as bridging funds. Although the funds will be awarded through this program this year, the possibility of alternatives is open for the future.

FY15 Quality Metrics Allocation Plan (Sally Gregory Kohlstedt): Sally reminded GEC members that there is a quality metrics plan that has been in place for last two years. A Quality Metrics committee produced a report for the Provost in January. Sally reported that the report indicated while the group discussed other alternative possibilities, they did not agree on any recommendation to replace the current scheme.

VI. For FY15, a 5-person merit review committee is in place. They will articulate what would be helpful to them in the qualitative narrative that will accompany the quantitative piece. This will help colleges determine how to construct these qualitative narratives. The goal is to have clear guidelines (e.g., the length of the narrative and useful elements) and, where possible, commentary on placement, maybe both quantitative and qualitative. Several GEC members indicated that they did not support the continued use of this process for allocating funds to collegiate units and proposed that this issue be
brought back to the GEC for further discussion. Given the timetable, Sally indicated we need to move forward but can return to the discussion later.

VII. Program Review Guidelines (Sally Gregory Kohlstedt): This process of developing these guidelines is moving forward. Bob McMaster, Sally and several staff members are meeting every two weeks with the goal of producing guidelines by December.

VIII. Expended Bridging Funds Update and Discussion (Ann Masten on behalf of the Faculty Review Committee -- Victor Barocas, Kathleen Conklin, Ann Masten): Ann reported that the committee was asked over the summer to advise the Graduate School on expending bridge funds to cover costs not paid for by some prestigious fellowships. The committee was aware that it was both allocating this year’s funds while also trying to establish guidelines that would be useful in the future. This included making decisions about what would, and would not, be covered.

There were a total of 72 requests. Of these, 35 were not eligible mostly because they were training grant trainees. For the remaining 37 eligible students, a total of $399,604 was requested, of which $221,428 was awarded. The difference in these two amounts (available versus awarded) is due to categorical ineligibility (e.g., requests to cover fees, the requirement of a match from the program for a supplemental stipend).

Some issues the GEC may want to discuss include:

- Should there be a maximum amount on these awards? Some very prestigious awards are very small, so we would be covering a very large gap.
- What process will be used going forward to do things such as change the eligibility criteria, etc. considering that requests are still being accepted on an on-going basis? This is an issue of maintaining fairness in the process.
- How do we determine “prestige” in terms of eligibility? This will require more discussion.
- Should matching funds from the college and/or program be mandated? This would allow us to stretch the funds further?

The committee agreed to bring back guidelines so that the full GEC could discuss them. The next steps would be for the committee to use the questions to come up with some guidelines that could be brought to the full GEC for the next stage of the discussion. This would involve coming back with a set of recommendations.

Submitted by Char Voight