Graduate Education Council  
Meeting of Tuesday, March 20, 2012  
1-2:30 pm, 433 Johnston Hall  

Minutes

Present: Victor Barocas, Richard Brundage, Belinda Cheung (staff), Kathleen Conklin, Shawn Curley, Jigna Desai, Vicki Field (staff), John Goodge (via Skype), Ameeta Kelekar, Mike Kilgore, Joe Konstan, Ann Masten, Christopher Phelan, Tim Salo, Henning Schroeder, Fran Vavrus, Char Voight (staff), Elizabeth Wattenberg, Pamela Weisenhorn

Guest: Nita Krevans, chair, Policy Review Committee

1) Approval of the notes and minutes from the February 28, 2012, GEC meeting: The notes and minutes from the February 28, 2012 meeting were unanimously approved.

2) Updates: Henning Schroeder reminded GEC members of the April 17 Doctoral Showcase from 12-2 pm in Coffman Memorial Union. The showcase will feature the work of this year’s Doctoral Dissertation Fellows and Interdisciplinary Doctoral Fellows.

3) Update from the Graduate Education Policy Review Committee: Nita Krevans, chair of the Policy Review Committee, updated the GEC on the current status of several policies.
   a) Public comments: The following policies are currently in a 30-day review period:
      i) Admission for Master’s and Doctoral Degrees: Twin Cities, Rochester
      ii) Readmission or Changes to Doctoral or Master’s Degree Objectives
      iii) Post-baccalaureate Certificate Plans Approved by the Board of Regents
   Comments can be submitted using the comment box attached to each policy in the Policy Library. Comments are due by April 6. The admission and readmission policies require the use of the University’s central admissions application system. Programs using an alternative system must obtain an exception to the requirement from the Provost by the effective date (Fall 2013 for students applying for Fall 2014 admission). Another major change is the elimination of a central University standard for minimum English language proficiency. Guidelines will continue to be maintained centrally, but programs will have the discretion to admit students who may not meet the minimum recommended standard in the guidelines.
   b) Degree progress: Krevans reviewed the degree progress draft policies for master’s and doctoral students. She highlighted a change suggested initially by the collegiate representatives group that will permit remote participation in doctoral preliminary oral and doctoral and master’s final oral examinations. The Policy Review Committee has developed a document that will accompany the policy outlining the conditions that must be met in order to allow remote participation, as well as best practices for conducting the examination with remote participants.
   c) Queries for GEC: Krevans solicited the opinion of the GEC on several issues, including:
      (1) Whether and where the requirements for Responsible Conduct of Research training for students should be referenced in policy documents. GEC members would recommend that the Policy Review Committee put a reference to appropriate training in RCR in the preamble of the degree progress policies.
(2) Advising: SCEP has requested an advising policy. The Policy Review Committee has considered the request and at this point believes that what is really called for is a best practices document. The “policy” aspects of advising are covered in the exam committee policy. Does the GEC think it would be appropriate to have the Committee develop a best practices document? GEC members agreed that they would like both best practices guidelines and a policy. The latter would target the most egregious instances of poor advising. Some thought this work was outside the scope of the Policy Review Committee and would be better taken up by a body such as SCEP. Krevans will take this issue to the college reps this week for their input.

(3) Collaborative theses and dissertations: A resolution to allow collaborative theses and dissertations passed in 4 of the 6 P&R Councils, so the practice is currently allowed in some programs and not in others. It is also not allowed in those programs that were not formerly in the Graduate School. Absent the P&R Council structure, how should this issue be treated? GEC members asked the Policy Review Committee to look at the existing policy language on research, scholarship, etc. related to theses and dissertations to see if there is anything that precludes collaborative work absent a specific policy. There was as yet no consensus among GEC members as to whether such a policy would be warranted.

d) University-Administered Graduate Student Fellowships and Traineeships: Twin Cities draft policy: Krevans summarized the main points of the draft fellowships policy and asked for feedback from the GEC.

4) Graduate program review (Henning Schroeder): The Graduate School no longer coordinates the external review process. Some colleges have put in place an alternate system for handling reviews, but others have not. The Graduate School is working with OLDP in CEHD on an approach loosely based on the Carnegie Initiative on the Doctorate. This is not about bringing in external reviewers but about internal program evaluation. What have GEC members experienced in their collegiate units and programs with respect to external review? Most members agreed that external reviews were infrequent and labor intensive for programs, though also potentially very useful. There is no longer funding available from the Graduate School to support external reviews. This is now a collegiate responsibility. GEC members generally agreed that the Graduate School did not necessarily need to be involved in the external review process, as this was something we want the department or unit to “own.” However, there could be processes and procedures to assist with reviews at the central level tied to the Provost’s office, which would signal that this is a priority and an expectation the Provost has of the deans [that they will undertake external review]. One exception could be interdisciplinary graduate programs that draw faculty from different units. In these cases, it may be helpful to have Graduate School involvement.

5) FY14 Quality Metrics Allocation Plan (Henning Schroeder): Discussion will be tabled for a future meeting.

6) Fellowships for the recruitment of high-quality graduate students (Henning Schroeder): Discussion of this item was deferred to the next GEC meeting.