Graduate Education Council
Meeting of
Thursday, September 27, 2012
2:00 – 4:00 p.m., 433 Johnston Hall
Minutes

Attendees: Richard Brundage, Juliette Cherbuliez, Kathleen Conklin, Shawn Curley, Ameeta Kelekar, Joe Konstan, Karen LaBat, Keshab Parhi, Timothy Salo, Henning Schroeder, Ryan Thompson, Frances Vavrus, Mary Vavrus; staff: Belinda Cheung, Vicki Field, Toby Greenwald, Char Voight

For information

1. Announcements
   - Henning Schroeder has convened a committee of four faculty and two staff members to conduct a search for a new Graduate School Associate Dean. The half-time position will be posted soon.
   - The Extended Quality Metrics Allocation Committee will meet 3-4 times this semester and make recommendations to the Provost for the FY15 Quality Metrics Allocation plan.
   - Update on questions raised at the August GEC meeting regarding advisors on preliminary oral examination committees: Kathleen Conklin and Nita Krevans met with the Senate Committee on Education Policy. They reached a decision that satisfies both the requirements of the new policy and the interests of the three programs whose preliminary oral exam practices do not align with it. Some FAQs will be changed so that successful practices may continue. Although the student’s advisor will be required to participate on the examining committee, each program will have flexibility in defining “participation”.

2. Update on the graduate education transition
   John Vollum provided a list of Graduate School forms his group has been and will be working on. Using WorkflowGen software, ASR consultants are converting paper processes into digital formats, building rules and policies into the digital forms, and populating the selected responses with only current and correct information. Streamlined processes can be completed more quickly--e.g., the time for completion of registration exceptions was reduced by 4-5 days. The consultants are considering which forms should be digitized, and whether all current forms are still necessary. Several new technologies are being planned for a variety of forms, which will be piloted in a few graduate programs.

3. Update on the invitation to Provost Hanson to meet with the GEC
   Karen Hansen has accepted GEC’s invitation to come to the October 15th meeting.

For discussion and action:

1. Notes and minutes from the August 22, 2012, GEC meeting were unanimously approved.

2. Request to discontinue the M.S. and Ph.D. degree program in Toxicology.
   Following a year-long process of consultation, no college is willing to serve as the academic home for the all-University Toxicology program, which has produced few graduates over the past 10 years. Faculty will be invited to join a new program that is under development in the School of Public Health, should this program materialize.
   All students in the current program will be able to finish. Admissions have already been suspended, and the program won’t be included in the updated Graduate School catalog. The effective term and year of program discontinuation will be fall 2012.
Motion (by Joe Konstan, seconded by Ameeta Kalakar) to follow the program owners’ recommendation to discontinue the M.S. and Ph.D. degree program in Toxicology.
Motion was approved unanimously by a voice vote of the GEC.

For discussion
1. Proposed changes in the GEC bylaws to address membership of the Graduate School Academic Grievance Committee
The Graduate School Academic Grievance Committee must have at least two faculty members and one student. The faculty members can’t have any personal interest in the student. Because of difficulties in finding a pool of faculty for the Grievance Committee, proposed changes to the GEC bylaws would require GEC members to also serve as members of this committee. GEC members suggested that those who serve should be in the second or later year of their term. Someone serving a subsequent term could also be on the Grievance Committee. Adoption of this change will begin in September 2013, since all current GEC members are officially still in their first year of service. If needed, Dean Schroeder would be authorized to appoint additional faculty for Grievance Committee service

Motion was made by Joe Konstan and seconded: that the GEC adopt the proposed amendment to the bylaws, changed as follows:
Faculty members in their second or subsequent years will serve as members of the Graduate School Academic Grievance Committee.
The motion was unanimously accepted, to be effective September 2013.
The new bylaw, “item e” is also adopted.

2. Planning for the spring 2013 election of one-third of the GEC’s faculty members:
After discussing voters’ comments on last year’s election process, GEC members decided to use the same process for the spring 2013 election to fill 5 slots that will open on the committee for next fall. The process should be revisited in 2014, after it has been used several times. Nominations will be solicited from tenured and tenure-track faculty, and a nominating subcommittee of the GEC will be formed to select a slate of candidates from various disciplines. Any nominee who is not included on the selected slate will be able to choose to remain on the ballot. Nominations should be solicited this (fall) semester. The nominating committee should be in place by mid-October, and ballots should go out in March or April 2013.

3. Central mechanism for bridge funds for NIH pre-doctoral fellowships
Yoji Shimizu, Assistant Dean for Graduate Education, Medical School, wrote to Dean Schroeder on behalf of a large group of faculty, detailing reasons and support for creating a pool of bridge funds for NIH pre-doctoral fellows (F-awards). The Graduate School currently has a central mechanism for bridge funds for NSF fellows. Other graduate schools within and outside the CIC do have mechanisms to include extra funds for fellowships other than NSF fellowships. The bridge fund for NSF fellows has been increased to a recurring line of $500,000 because the number of NSF fellows has increased in the last few years. The University has around 80-85 NSF fellows, and all students who need bridge funds receive them. The cost of providing supplemental stipend and fringe benefits for the current number of NIH pre-doctoral fellows is estimated to be $150,000 to $200,000.

GEC members brought up the issue of other prestigious fellowships (e.g., Fulbrights) that either require additional non-sponsored collegiate support or must be turned down. One member recommended that rather than making NIH the second exception, the University should instead create a policy as to how it will supplement fellowships. We need to figure out what the rules are. Which fellowships are eligible for central bridge funds? Do we supplement stipends, or do we only contribute toward tuition and fringe benefits?
One GEC member said this issue is part of the larger issue of how best to finance graduate education and the answer should come from the provost rather than from the colleges.

There are some advantages to moving the bridge funds program to the colleges, said another member. There are local advantages that can’t be addressed across the University--e.g., there might be indirect cost recovery from research. This problem must be discussed broadly by deans, and we must make sure there is no disincentive for students to get prestigious fellowships. Another member pointed out that we need a University pool to support the “common good” and prestigious fellowships that improve the reputation of our University are a good example of the "common good" that President Kaler also supports.

4. Training Grant Matching Funds Program, 2012-13
In FY12 the Graduate School received its first recurring line of $200,000 to provide matching funds for training grant applications. We spent $188,00 the first year and requested an additional $200,000 per year starting FY13. Matching fund commitments are mostly for 3-5 years. For FY13, we’ve already committed $239,000 but not all proposals will be funded. We will over-commit to a certain extent. However, once the call for matching fund requests is issued, the demand may far exceed available funds. For NIH training grants, the University normally tries to come up with a combined institutional match of 10% of total requested training grant fund. We tend to give more money for proposals that will support more graduate students. The Office of the Vice President for Research also provides matching funds for research grant applications. However, they only provide matching fund for those that the granting agency requires an institutional match. We ask that departments, colleges, and other units chip in matching support in addition to tuition waivers. If we get more applications than we can fund, we have to choose those we think will likely receive grant funding or have more merit. We used to commit these funds in a first-come-first-served manner, but that might need to change depending on the results of the upcoming call. What should the selection criteria be and what priorities should be used, if any?

We would like to have a faculty review process. If we do this, we might ask GEC faculty members to participate in this process on an ad hoc basis. If the goal is to try to leverage this money to attract more training funds, do we provide matching funds to new grants that have no track record, or those that have a long track record of being renewed? Usually it takes a few rounds of applying to get the initial grant. GEC members advised including some criteria in the call for requests for matching funds. Describe what makes a proposal strong, and pay attention to disciplinary balance. Regarding renewal of old proposals vs. new proposals: focus common money on new proposals that don’t have any other source of support.

5. Open discussion
GEC members suggested topics they would like Provost Hanson to address in her visit:
- concrete questions that faculty have, such as the question of centralization/decentralization.
- will the Graduate School be asked to take back some of its historic functions or will it become something else?
- what is Provost Hanson’s vision of the purpose of block grants?
- there should be time for questions in response to Provost Hanson’s comments

Adjourn