GEC Meeting 12/18/17
GEC Advocacy and Leadership: Discussion Summary

Question 1: What is advocacy and leadership in graduate education for the GEC?

How is GEC advocacy and leadership unique or different from that of Associate Deans for Graduate Education? Program DGSs?

- System-wide council that is neutral; does not advocate for specific collegiate or program issues or positions (members should be selected from a diversity of disciplines such that as a body they represent the breadth of faculty interest in graduate education, but members should not see themselves as representatives of a specific unit).
- Oversight of graduate education ("eyes and ears centrally").
- Bigger-picture, broader perspective and level of engagement (looking at national landscape of graduate education, not "in the weeds" like other groups)
- More visionary (versus operational).
- Asking critical questions and providing information/data to advance the institution (e.g., how do we compared to peers in terms of fellowship support, diversity recruitment, retention?).
- Identifying gaps and opportunities; proposing ways to move forward (e.g., where do we lack policies or standards? what are focus areas and what data do we need to assess and move forward?).
- Ensuring fairness and equity across campuses, colleges, and programs for all graduate students (e.g., funding, opportunities, access to resources).

What is the advocacy role of GEC members in relation to other faculty (e.g., SCEP, FCC) and graduate student governance bodies (e.g., COGS, GEC)?

- More student focused than SCEP and FCC, and focused solely on graduate education.
- Able to advocate and communicate graduate education activities and issues to other faculty.
- Ambassadors between faculty and student governance bodies.

What does GEC advocacy and leadership look like within the broad context of the graduate education community system-wide?

- Helping the Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Education identify, shape, and advance strategic initiatives/focus areas in graduate education.
Advocating for graduate education environment where students thrive and succeed.
Advocating for excellence in graduate education at the University (the best we can be).
Raising issues of concern in graduate education with University administration (e.g., impact of proposed tax reform bill, how to handle ineffective advisors).
Advocating for more funds for recruitment and support of graduate students and graduate education initiatives.
Advocating for efforts to increase recruitment, retention, and successful completion of students from diverse and underrepresented communities.
Raising awareness of, and support for, graduate education with the broader community both within and external to the University.

Question #2: What is needed for the GEC to realize its leadership and advocacy role?

How should the GEC be structured and operate to best realize the role identified?

Focus and Agenda

- GEC should focus on larger issues related to graduate education (e.g., campus climate, treatment of students), and should take a national view - benchmarking against our peers/aspirational peers)

- Agenda should:
  - be driven by issues of national and institutional importance
  - include items generated both by GEC members and by the Graduate School
  - emphasize items where the perspective of a diversity of faculty is needed in order for the Graduate School to make informed decisions about what is best for graduate education.

Primary Theme/Topic - The GEC should be strategic about investing their time and energy.

- The GEC should participate annually in updating the Graduate School’s strategic initiatives.
- Energy and effort should be concentrated on these strategic initiatives (e.g., improving advising, increasing student diversity, GAGE).
- Strategic initiatives should follow a cycle involving problem identification, design of solution or intervention, implementation, and assessment.
- Strategic initiatives should be incentivized and rewarded for making progress on goals related to the identified theme.
Attention needs to be paid to how to sustain and leverage the impact of initiatives beyond the focus year(s).

Strategic Task Forces and Meaningful, Issue-focused Subcommittees
- Subcommittees and Task Forces should be issues-based, focused on strategic areas (should dovetail with Graduate School’s priorities), and use members’ time effectively and with clear purpose.
- Task Forces and subcommittees should have faculty chairs who are responsible for making sure there is output to the larger GEC and to other relevant bodies (e.g., COGS, SCEP, GrAD), both in terms of reporting on progress and outcomes, as well as making recommendations for action.
- Draw membership from current and former GEC members. Former members’ input and experience could be of enormous value, but charge must be clearly defined and time used well.
- Members should have advocacy role, and should accompany the Vice Provost and Dean to relevant meetings and events; be called upon to speak on behalf of the GEC.

Budget
- GEC should have a budget to support recommendations related to the focus themes and to promote initiatives (e.g., incentivizing programs, buying out faculty time for training and leadership roles, bringing in speakers).
- Funding could complement other Graduate School and graduate education initiatives.
- Could be formal or informal budget as long as there is some commitment of funds to act on GEC recommendations.

Data
- GEC should be presented with available data (e.g., gradSERU) and should request and have access to additional data that inform important issues and help guide focus and agenda.
- Data should inform what GEC should be advocating for at the program, college, and institutional levels, and where attention should focus nationally and internationally.

Leadership and Membership
- The Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Education should co-chair the GEC with a GEC faculty member (perhaps an experienced third-year GEC member?).
- The faculty co-chair should lead GEC meetings to reinforce a culture in which the GEC functions as an advisory committee.
- Consider increasing the number of members and the breadth of representation. If GEC is responsible for reporting back to other faculty/graduate programs, effectiveness is limited by the number of people on the Council.
What support does the GEC need to be effective in its role?

Clarity on Role, Responsibilities, and Charge

- The GEC is an advisory group. However, the expectation is that the Vice Provost and Dean will generally treat GEC recommendations as a “vote” when making decisions that are best made by faculty representing the breadth of the University community.
- The GEC’s role is to support and advocate for graduate education. Ideally, this is also the agenda of the Vice Provost and Dean. If it is not, then the GEC’s role is especially critical.

Clarity on Representation and Constituencies

- GEC members represent University faculty interests in graduate education. They are explicitly asked to avoid thinking about what is best for their own unit, but to use their own knowledge to make recommendations about what is best for graduate education as a whole.
- GEC members should be active in suggesting agenda items that they feel are critical for graduate education as a whole.

Communication and Transparency in Decision Making

- GEC members should be active in suggesting agenda items including requests for updates regarding decision making.
- Improve communication and exchange between different bodies (e.g., GEC, GrAD, DGSs, SCEP) and make communications channels and process clear to members.
- GEC as “information transfer” body, not just receiver of information. GEC discussions and concerns shared with other groups by Vice Provost and Dean and GEC members. Information might include recommendations, resolutions, reports, data, etc.
- The Graduate School should establish transparent and consistent practices (e.g., mechanisms for making funding decisions) and communicate those practices.

Staff Support and Information

- Provide task forces and subcommittees with data, resources, and best practices relevant to agenda and focus.
- Provide information on how peers are addressing issues of common interest (e.g., advisor training) and what resources are available.
- Ensure easy access to documents (presentations, agendas, minutes, data, charges) to GEC members.