Graduate Education Council
Meeting Agenda
Monday, September 19, 2016
2:00-4:00 pm
101 Walter Library

Present: Victor Baracos, Rob Blair, Lyn Bruin, Arlene Carney, Abhishek Chandra, Liz Davis, Etty Deveaux (staff), Vlad Griskevicius, Emi Ito, Keven Joyal-Desmarais, Ron Krebs, Mary Jo Kreitzer, Scott Lanyon (chair), Deb Levison, Liz Lightfoot, Veronica Postal, Katherine Scheil, Carissa Slotterback, Alena Talkachova, Diane Tedick, Char Voight (staff), Andrea Wolf

Guests: Brad Bostrom (Graduate School)

Discussion Items:

1) Preparing Future Professionals: Scott Lanyon informed the GEC that he is exploring the development of a “preparing future professionals” program to provide opportunities for graduate students and postdocs to explore non-academic career options, and to receive training that goes beyond what they currently receive in their programs. Lanyon asked for input from the GEC. Specifically:
   a) What is already happening at the program or collegiate level?
   b) What would be the main components of such a program?
   c) How would such a program be best delivered (courses, workshops, online, etc.), and at what level (central, collegiate, program)?

Discussion:

● Do not develop as parallel track to Preparing Future Faculty (PFF). PFP would be focused on professional skills that all students and postdocs would need (e.g., leadership, communication, teamwork, writing), regardless of career path.
● Research and membership in a research community is a theme that cuts across the experience of all graduate students. Students can be encouraged to think about the potential impact of their research both inside and outside academia.
● It’s important this program be flexible about how the opportunities are offered (course-based, non course-based), and the career stage at which they’re offered. Some skills are best introduced early, while others are most impactful at later stages.
● Students may not feel comfortable telling their advisor that they don’t want to pursue an academic career. They may also be actively discouraged from taking advantage of opportunities perceived as not directly related to their academic career development. We would need to address this problem in order to be successful.
● Bringing students together across programs is a benefit that they can only get from a central offering. Students are otherwise too siloed.
2) **Graduate School Conversations:** Lanyon explained to GEC members that he would like to have a high-level conversation every year on a key topic related to graduate education. For this year’s topic, he is proposing the issue of situations where the interests of advisors and advisees may be in conflict (e.g. student’s desire to apply for a fellowship vs. advisor’s need to have student continue to work on a grant). Lanyon asked for input on how to host these conversations so they’re productive and not threatening. A productive conversation could lead to developing different ways to mentor new faculty, a training program for advisors and/or new DGSs, etc.

Discussion:
- The purpose of the conversation would be to bring this issue to the fore, and to get input from people about what we should be saying to faculty in an advisor training. Another goal is to facilitate introspection.
- We also want student participation. How do we protect their anonymity? Can we have aspects of the conversation that would have multiple levels of protection? Perhaps even an asynchronous aspect?
- How do we address the issue that the faculty who may most need to be at such a training may be least likely to attend?
- Issues to be addressed in a training could be conflicts related to authorship, publishing, career aspirations and preparation.
- It would be important to make sure the training would provide tools faculty can use in their mentoring relationships. It’s not productive to simply talk about all the issues with no discussion about how they can be avoided or solved.
- “Training” may be a problematic way to talk about this. A better approach would be to talk about it as an opportunity to identify resources to improve the advisor/advisee relationships.
- Issues arise from both sides of the relationship. Students can also engage in problematic behavior, and may not have realistic expectations. It is sometimes best for all involved that the student be counseled out of his/her program.
- While there may be a role for some online training components, this is probably not the best way to deliver the content. You can’t ask questions in an online training or engage in the same way, and there is the risk it would become trivialized.

3) **Quality Metrics:** Lanyon told the GEC that the Quality Metrics Allocation program would be “on hold” this year while the goals and process are re-examined. Programs will not have to submit data or a narrative, and allocations will remain at their previous levels. He will be meeting with all the deans and associate deans, and is considering raising this topic with them. Lanyon asked GEC members for their insights into the program, its purpose, and effectiveness.

Discussion:
- The intent of the program was never clear. The metrics seemed to have been chosen to reward programs that were doing well, not to bolster programs that might be weaker.
• The exercise is useful for **self-assessment**, but it's difficult to get an honest self-assessment when the results are tied to funding. Programs that have a certain student composition (e.g., older, more diverse students) are penalized because they take longer to complete. In programs that have made improvements, there is reluctance to discuss this because it may be seen as a weakness and may negatively impact the allocation.

• Different colleges have different ways of dividing up the funds from QMA also. In some, a program gets what it has “earned” in the evaluation. In others, it is distributed in other ways, and it’s not always clear what the criteria are for determining the distribution, nor is the process transparent.

• There was consensus that the process is time-consuming and the end result not very useful for programs. If it’s intended to lead to program improvement, it is not achieving that goal as currently designed.

4) **Procedures updates:**
   
a) **Bridging Fellowships:** The Graduate School now has **explicit guidelines** posted that explain eligibility for bridging funds. It’s not clear what the long-term financial impact of providing these funds will be on the Graduate School. However, there is carryover funding to continue doing so for the short-term. Longer term, Lanyon will have to request additional recurring funds from the Provost to support these fellowships.

b) **Doctoral Dissertation Fellowship:** Lanyon explained that, under the current process, 40% of DDF allocations to colleges are distributed based on the number of eligible students in the college. The other 60% of allocations are awarded based on past success (using the last 3 years of data). Very small units will always be guaranteed at least one allocation. Colleges can also “return” their allocation, or a portion of it, to the pool for redistribution if they don’t think they have strong candidates. He asked for opinions on the 40/60 allocation split. He also informed the GEC that the DDF committee felt satisfied with the number of DDFs they were awarding, and did not see the need to increase the number of fellowships. If the quality of the pool were to increase, then this opinion might change.

Discussion:

• The 60% allocation is not necessarily based on quality. Small programs with just one slot will have a success outcome of either 0% or 100%.

• It’s important to continue to allow colleges to return allocations to the pool.

• Colleges have their own internal methods for awarding the slots they’re allocated, and this is not always a transparent process.

• In the past, the committee has sometimes decided not to award all available DDF funding in a given year. However, committee members feel they are awarding the right number, and don’t believe deserving proposals are going unfunded or
that the overall number of DDFs should be increased. We do need to pay attention to changes in the size and quality of the pool that might shift this view.

5) Possible topic for April 5, 2017 GPEA: Creating a Supportive Campus Climate: Lanyon reminded the GEC that the Graduate School would be hosting Julie Posselt, Assistant Professor of Education at the University of Southern California, for an event on implicit bias in admissions on October 3. This event is a follow-up to Posselt’s presentation at the Spring 2016 GPEA. The proposed topic for the 2017 GPEA carries the theme forward with a focus on “Creating a Supportive Campus Climate.” Lanyon asked for feedback on the topic from the GEC, and for suggestions for subtopics, possible speakers, and volunteers to serve on the planning committee.

6) GEC Spring 2017 Election: Annual GEC elections are held in March or April, and a call for nominations is typically issued in November. While improvements have been made to the election process over the past several years, the topic should be revisited again this year. Lanyon told the GEC there is a proposal under consideration in the Faculty Senate to form a committee on graduate education/graduate student affairs. If such a committee is formed, it would likely impact the purpose and role of the GEC, and in turn the election process. The timeframe for consideration and a decision on the Senate proposal is unclear. However, there will be no call for GEC nominations in November, as there is sufficient time to do this in the early spring and launch an election if this is needed.

7) Policy Review Subcommittee Update (Liz Davis): GEC Policy Review Subcommittee chair, Liz Davis, gave a brief synopsis of the past work of the subcommittee and the work plan for the upcoming semester. The subcommittee is currently revising the policies on doctoral performance standards and progress, and completion. It will next turn to the same policies governing master’s degrees. As revisions are made to each policy, the full policies will be brought before the GEC for discussion, and then to a series of stakeholder groups that includes SCEP, FCC, the Policy Advisory Committee (PAC) and the President’s Policy Committee (PPC).

Information Items:
1) Interdisciplinary Doctoral Fellowship
2) Preparing a Successful National Science Foundation GRFP Application, September 14, 3-4:30 in 101 Walter (registration)
   Preparing a Successful National Science Foundation GRFP Application, September 14, 3-4:30 in 101 Walter (flyer)
3) Graduate School Seminar Series on Collaborative Leadership and Grand Challenges Research (flyer)
4) Inside Grad Admissions: Improving Student Diversity Through Holistic Review, Monday, October 3rd, 10:00 am-3:30 pm, Mississippi Room (registration)
   Inside Grad Admissions: Improving Student Diversity Through Holistic Review, Monday,
October 3rd, 10:00 am-3:30 pm, Mississippi Room (flyer)

6) Discovery Across the Disciplines Showcase; 12-2 pm, Thursday, October 13 (flyer)