Graduate Education Council
Meeting Agenda
Monday, November 21, 2016
2:00-4:00 pm
101 | Walter Library

Present: Rob Blair, Lyn Bruin, Arlene Carney, Abhishek Chandra, Liz Davis, Etty Deveaux (staff), Emi Ito, Keven Joyal-Desmarais, Vlad Griskevicius, Joe Kapusta, Ron Krebs, Mary Jo Kreitzer, Scott Lanyon (chair), Liz Lightfoot, Veronica Postal, Katherine Scheil, Carissa Slotterback, Karen Starry (staff), Alena Talkachova, Katie Thomas, Char Voight (staff)

Information Items:
1) Online academic and professional development resources
   a) **NCFDD** (Scott Lanyon): Lanyon introduced GEC members to the new resource available to U of MN faculty, staff, students, and postdocs (currently available only on the Twin Cities campus). The U has an institutional subscription to the National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity, a nationally-recognized, independent organization that provides online career development and mentoring resources for over 89,000 graduate students, postdocs and faculty members. GEC members were asked to help spread the word about this resource, and to encourage their students and faculty colleagues to activate their memberships.
   b) **Versatile PhD** (Char Voight): Voight provided background on VPhD, an online resource that has been available to the U of MN graduate education community for several years. While some VPhD content is free to all users, graduate students, postdocs, and faculty have free access to premium resources provided through the University’s subscription. VPhD is focused on providing information and resources to those interested in exploring alternative careers outside of academia. GEC members were asked to help raise awareness of this resource, and to encourage students to begin exploring career resources and options from the beginning of their graduate education, rather than waiting until they are in the advanced stages.

2) **Summary of Student Conflict Resolution Center graduate student advising survey results from spring 2016** (Scott Lanyon): Lanyon gave GEC members an overview of the summary of the SCRC spring 2016 student survey on advising. While the U’s results are not atypical for higher education institutions, there were nevertheless some disturbing issues raised in the data. A clear conclusion is that much work to improve graduate advising remains to be done. He urged GEC members to review the survey summary results. GEC members asked whether data was available at the collegiate level. Lanyon indicated that it was, but that Jan Morse from SCRC had not yet shared this data. Caution must be exercised to protect the privacy of the students responding to the survey, so program level data is generally not shared unless it can be aggregated. Lanyon would like to hold annual meetings with the collegiate deans and provide them
with an update on various issues related to graduate education, including the state of advising.

**Discussion:**
We need to be careful not to extrapolate incorrect conclusions from the survey. Was this a representative sample of students? If we conclude that we need to improve in this area, what are the expectations or targets for questions in the survey categories in terms of what we’d like to see in positive responses? The answer would depend on the specific question being considered, and any targets would thus vary. Is poor advising a generalized problem across the institution, or are there a few “bad apples”? Can we determine this based on the survey data? Are the advising needs and experiences different for master’s students versus doctoral students? How does advising differ across units? Master’s students in Humphrey, for example, meet with professional advisors. Do we need different surveys for master’s versus doctoral students?

**Discussion Items:**

3) Policy Review Subcommittee Update
   a) Master’s policies (Katie Thomas). Thomas presented a summary of the policy discussion and proposed changes to the two master’s policies. See the specific policy discussions below.
      i) **Master’s Degree: Performance Standards and Progress:**
         (1) The introduction was rewritten to clarify the goal of the policy.
         (2) The annual progress review requirements and whether written feedback must be given to all students or only to those not meeting expectations was discussed. No policy changes were made, and only those students not making satisfactory progress will be notified in writing.
         (3) Leave of Absence language was added to the section on continuous enrollment (the LOA policy did not exist when this policy was drafted)
         (4) The time limit to degree completion and the process for requesting an extension were discussed. No policy changes made, and master’s students will continue to have a 5-year time limit with the option to request a single 12-month extension.
      ii) **Master’s Degree: Completion:**
          (1) The introduction was rewritten to clarify the goal of this policy.
          (2) A statement was added to clarify that at least two members of the examination committee are intended to represent the student’s major field.
          (3) A statement was added to clarify that the committee membership must be approved at the collegiate level.
Clarification was added that students must be notified in writing of required revisions to the thesis and the timeline for completion of revisions.

An FAQ was added to clarify that a program may require a public presentation of the master’s thesis work, but that this presentation is not required by the University and is not considered part of the final oral examination.

b) Eligibility to Serve on Graduate Examination Committees (Liz Davis). Davis provided a summary of the proposed policy changes and discussion:
   
i) The name of the policy was changed to reflect its purpose more clearly.
   ii) The goal of the policy was clarified relative to other related policies.
   iii) The criteria with regards to the roles on each type of committee and the criteria to be eligible to serve in each role were simplified and reorganized for clarity.
   iv) The development of a policy with regards to reinstating a “Graduate Faculty” at the central level was discussed.

Discussion:
The previous version of the policy combined the eligibility to serve with stipulations on the composition of various committees. The policy requirements on committee composition have now been moved into the policies on performance standards and progress, and completion for both the doctoral and master’s degrees.

The table on eligibility criteria outlines which types of individuals are able to act in which types of roles and on which types of committees. This means only that such persons are eligible to act in these roles. It does not mean that a program is compelled to approve any individual to serve in a specific role based solely on the eligibility criteria. Programs will make their own determinations about service within these minimum standards.

The policy review subcommittee had much discussion about the role of the chair on a committee. When is it appropriate for an outside expert, for example, to chair? Would an outside expert know enough about the University’s policies and procedures to be an effective chair?

How is “adjunct” being defined in this table? In this instance, “adjunct” is being used in a very specific way based on the Human Resources job code. Although the term may be used in other ways more informally, that is not the intent of this table. That is why the job codes are included in the table.

Does it make sense to have people who are not permanent employees of the University act as advisors and chairs? What is the role of the Graduate School and what is the role of the college in making these determinations? The role of the Graduate School as a central unit is to set the minimum standard. Perhaps the minimum standard should be
that the individual must meet the criteria of the tripartite mission of the University, and have involvement in teaching, research, and service?

We do not require outside experts to have an earned doctorate to allow for those instances (mostly in the arts) where there may be someone who is very qualified for a specific student’s committee, but who does not have PhD. Any program can set a stricter standard.

What is “graduate faculty” and who determines this now that the centrally defined category no longer exists? This is now decided by the program/college and entered in the faculty role database. Should a central definition of graduate faculty be reinstated? Perhaps, but the categories associated with this had to do with much more than serving on examination committees. This is a much broader discussion.

4) Additional Policy/Procedures Issues (Scott Lanyon)
   a) Appointment of Non-Tenured Faculty Members as DGS (U-wide Policy on Appointments as Directors of Graduate Studies): Lanyon raised the issue of whether or not faculty who are not tenured or tenure track can serve as DGS. Such requests would come to the vice provost and dean of graduate education for approval. Would there be any basis for deny such requests? Should the Graduate School be in the position of providing a central check on which faculty are being appointed as DGS?

   Discussion:
   We want the person to be tenured or tenure track so that we can be sure they have the appropriate level of involvement in graduate education. Also, if the person is untenured, serving as DGS could negatively affect their research career. There is also concern that programs might move toward having a “professional” DGS who would not have any faculty role in the program. The sense from the GEC was that this would not be good.

   To date, all of these types of requests have come from programs that have a very close industry tie. They would like someone who knows about the career trajectory of their students to act as DGS. But how can the vice provost and dean of graduate education assess this? Do we need to develop some guidelines on how the DGS is selected? What else should we be advising associate deans when telling them what is appropriate?

   If a person was providing graduate students guidance, then they should at least have the degree of the program in which they’re advising (e.g., doctoral degree for doctoral program). The person should also be actively engaged in teaching and research. There may be exceptions (e.g., the Doctor of Audiology) but these should be rare, and the program should be able to articulate the rationale for the exception and the qualifications for the person who would serve as DGS.
In selecting the DGS, programs should avoid naming people early in their careers, and that the DGS would ideally be in a tenure track or tenured faculty position. Someone outside these parameters should be brought in only if all the other requirements of the DGS role are covered. If an outsider is serving who may not be familiar with University requirements, it may be advisable to name a co-DGS.

b) Thesis Format Rules (Thesis Formatting Guidelines from GSSP -- see pages 3-4): Lanyon raised the issue of the requirement for the list of tables and the list of figures. If the thesis is a compilation of different articles, each with their own figures and tables, this becomes very cumbersome. Is there a reason for the requirement? Is there any reason we should keep this requirement? It would be preferable to eliminate the requirement or at least have multiple options.

Discussion:
There could be resistance to eliminating the requirement from programs where the thesis is a single body of work and they want one listing of the body of literature. Could be recommend that colleges set their own standards with a minimum underlying central standard? What would this minimum standard be? Perhaps it would be a requirement for at least one bibliography in which everything is cited, or one bibliography at the end of each chapter, or the option of doing both.

Is this requirement in place because of Proquest? Is it somehow necessary for them to format the dissertation abstracts. It would be surprising if this constraint is the basis for the requirement. What are other institutions doing? Could we not have a list of tables and figures, but just a requirement that they all have a label and title when they’re used?

5) GEC Awards Subcommittee charge: (Scott Lanyon). Lanyon asked GEC members to review the draft charge to the awards subcommittee, and voice any objections. GEC members felt the charge was fine as drafted. If the numbers of applications for any award category covered by the subcommittee were to prove cumbersome, a standing committee would be names for the review of those applications.