Graduate Education Council  
Meeting Minutes  
Thursday, December 15, 2016  
10:00 am-12:00 pm  
237 Morrill Hall

Present: Victor Barocas, Lyn Bruin, Abhishek Chandra, Liz Davis, Etty DeVeaux (staff), Vlad Griskevicius, Keven Joyal-Desmarais, Joe Kapusta, Ron Krebs, Scott Lanyon, Deborah Levison, Carissa Slotterback, Randall Victora, Char Voight (staff)

Guests: Noro Andriamanalina (Office for Diversity in Graduate Education, Graduate School), Brad Bostrom (Graduate School), Karen Starry (Graduate School)

Discussion Items:
1) Policy Review Subcommittee (Liz Davis)
   a) Admission to Graduate Programs (current published policy): Davis summarized the main discussion points with the policy, emphasizing the issue of minimum standards for English Language proficiency. GEC members wondered if there were federal standards, and how the U’s aligned with these if applicable. They also wondered if there were standards for those who would be in TA positions. GS staff will explore these issues. Finally, Davis stated that a new requirement related to issuing I-20 visas requires admissions staff to sign off verifying that the visa applicant meets minimum English language proficiency. The GEC had a discussion about the implications of programs admitting students who do not meet the guidelines for minimum English language proficiency, and the pros and cons of establishing guidelines. For those concerned about the minimum standards being too low, Davis reminded people that as with all policies programs are free to set higher, more stringent standards.

   Davis also raised the question of whether or not students should be allowed to serve on admissions committees. The current policy contains an FAQ that says they cannot; however, some of our peers do allow this. Following a discussion about the pros and cons of allowing students to serve on admissions committees, the consensus was that a change in policy was not required, but rather there could be guidance provided to programs about the benefits and challenges of inviting student input into the process at different points.

   b) Readmission to Graduate Programs (current published policy): Davis summarized the primary discussion points related to the readmission policy. The major issue is ensuring that there is good communication with students when they are readmitted regarding any additional required conditions attached to readmission. In particular, the subcommittee want to make sure that expectations about the deadline for degree completion are communicated to the
students. There was also a discussion about the various types of readmission -- requiring full application, “express” readmit, etc.

c) SCEP update: Davis updated the GEC on the SCEP discussion of the doctoral and master’s policies: performance standards and progress, and completion. There were no concerns or real issues, and both performance standards and progress policies were approved. Although there were no substantive objections to the completion policies, the vote was deferred on both pending more information on the ways in which requests for thesis holds/embargos will be processed. Currently, a student’s work becomes public immediately upon graduation. Students must proactively request an embargo to prevent this. One suggestion was to alter the form such that all students would complete it, but add an option to request no hold. This would ensure that all students are aware of the available options, and that they have discussed this with their advisor.

d) Eligibility to Serve on Graduate Examination Committees (table): Davis presented the appendix to the Eligibility to Serve on Graduate Examination Committees to SCEP, and updated the GEC on the discussion. There were no specific comments by SCEP on the table, and the policy itself will be brought to the group at a later date.

2) DOVE Emergency Funding Program (Scott Lanyon): Lanyon introduced the new funding program to the GEC, explaining that the intent is to address extenuating, unanticipated circumstances that arise that financially threaten students’ ability to persist and complete. The Graduate School would like to pilot the emergency funding program to evaluate the impact. Any student who is or has been a DOVE recipient would be eligible. There is no deadline to apply for the funding, and the process will not be cumbersome. This funding would be a last resort for the student once all other options had been exhausted. It is not intended to replace support that can and should be provided by the program and/or college.

Discussion: Why restrict eligibility to DOVE recipients? By doing so, who are we eliminating from the pool of eligible applicants? At least on a pilot basis, the Graduate School would like to restrict the program to DOVE students until we can assess the demand and impact. This does not mean it could not be expanded in the future. Lanyon asked GEC members to send him any suggestions they might have about how to scale up such a program. For instance, the DOVE Summer Institute has been expanded to other fellowship recipients if the college or program is willing to pay the cost of attendance ($4,000). This could be a model to include students who have departmental or collegiate fellowships.

Lanyon asked the GEC to consider how this program could be expanded if it proves successful and effective. He also noted that it would be important to communicate
about the program directly to students. Not all students will feel comfortable approaching the DGS, or even their advisor if they are struggling. It will also be important that students are clear about the criteria regarding what constitutes an “emergency.”

GEC members wondered if there should be a required program and/or collegiate match so that this funding would be value-added and not a replacement for what would otherwise be provided to the student. The consensus was that this should be strongly encouraged, but not required. It was also suggested that the Also, we don’t want this to be a situation in which the Graduate School is simply giving funding for what a department head used to or would do. This should be value added.

It was noted that ISSS has a similar program for international students who are not US citizens or permanent residents. The Graduate School can also work to promote awareness of this resource for students. Perhaps developing a handbook or resource guide for DGSs, advisors, and Graduate Program Coordinators would be useful. We should make it clear what other options students will be expected to explore prior to applying for emergency funds. This information should be made easily available. Perhaps the Graduate School can work toward a coordinated program to ease the burden on individual students, DGSs and advisors needing to seek out additional funding support for students under such circumstances.

Lanyon reminded GEC members that demand for this funding would likely rise and fall based on the larger economic context in which students might find themselves. It would be important to be able to carry forward unused funding for years in which demand might be greater. He also reminded the GEC that it would be important to safeguard student privacy with respect to what information would be required and what information would be shared.

Other issues to consider: Students registered for GRAD 0999 would not be eligible due to the way in which the funds are currently paid (as a scholarship paid through the student’s account). This does pose a potential problem, and Lanyon is exploring if there are other ways to disburse funds so that students on GRAD 0999 would be eligible. If students have loans, they also need to be aware that it may also have an impact.

3) Quality Metrics Allocation Plan (Scott Lanyon)

Lanyon reviewed the history of the Quality Metrics Allocation Plan for GEC members who may not have been familiar with the program. Approximately $4.5 million is distributed to programs, based on a combination of factors including program size, type (e.g., master’s only, combined master’s/PhD), and the program “rating” according to a set of metrics and a narrative submitted by the program every two years. Funds were allocated to collegiate units, who then determined the internal allocation to individual programs. Although narratives were due this year, Lanyon will keep the allocations
stable while reviewing the program in order to determine if changes should be made for allocations moving forward.

Lanyon shared his preliminary observations on QMAP for input from the GEC:

- **Narrative:** Narratives submitted by programs were free-form and highly variable, with no central template. The scope was also variable. In some cases, one narrative per program is submitted, but in others one narrative per college is submitted with information on each program. These variations can make it difficult to evaluate the narrative portions. Programs also described the narrative as cumbersome.

- **Time to degree:** Students should graduate in as little time as possible as long as they meet our standards of excellent and have the skills we think they need. TTD will vary according to the specific program, as it should.

- **Completion rates:** How do we interpret attrition? Attrition of students who are in their programs longer than 4 years is generally seen as a bad thing. But do we know what this necessarily means? Attrition of students who leave after the first year or two can, again, be interpreted both positively and negatively.

- **Placement rates:** The data on placement from programs was highly variable, with some providing no data, and others only on placement in certain careers (academic).

**Important questions to ask:**

- What is the intent of this program? To reward successful programs? To incentivize programs to do better? Something else?

- The narratives took a lot of time to develop, but the resulting funding was not seen as substantial enough to warrant the effort. Yet, the narrative is also where programs get to tell their own story and set their own goals. What should the narrative look like? What is the purpose of the narrative and how can it be streamlined to make it less onerous?

- How can we separate what we want programs to do for their own self-assessment purposes from any quality evaluation?

- Should the Graduate School incentive “quality” along a particular axis (e.g., diversity, TTD)? Should funds be awarded to the college? The program? Some combination of both depending on the size?

- What do programs use the money for? Are colleges depending on this money? They were told that they should not depend on this money to fund graduate education; that it is supposed to be “value added.” However, some have become dependent and any change will result in some pain.

- What can reasonably be accomplished with $4.5 million? What are priorities? How do we accomplish them?