

WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY
FACULTY SENATE

GRADUATE STUDIES COUNCIL
Minutes of 24 September 2009

Members present: Ikhlas Abdel-Qader, Michele Behr, Louann Bierlein Palmer, Amy Curtis, Rob Eversole (for John Spitsbergen), Leigh Ford, Suzanne Hedstrom, Brandi Pritchett, Lewis Pyenson, Bill Rantz, Joel Raveloharimisy, Dave Reinhold (for Provost Greene), David Smith, Mark Wheeler. **Also present:** Virginia Bowlby, Marianne DiPierro, and Julie Nemire, Graduate College; Betty Dennis, Extended University Programs; Sharon Dwan, Student Academic and Institutional Research

Council Chair Mark Wheeler called the meeting to order at 3:02 p.m.

Procedural Items

Acceptance of the Agenda and Approval of the Minutes

Ford moved to accept the agenda; Hedstrom seconded. Motion carried. Curtis moved to approve the minutes of the 25 June 2009 meeting; Hedstrom seconded. The minutes were approved.

Informational Items

Report of the Graduate Dean

- The Graduate College is sponsoring a number of notable speakers who will be coming to campus this fall.
- The Graduate College is also holding an open house, primarily for undergraduate students to come and investigate graduate studies. Details on events are listed on the Graduate College Web page.
- Dr. Pyenson reported that numbers of enrolled graduate students is up about 60 FTE from last year, which was increased from the year before. Applications for graduate admission were up about 10% over the previous year.
- The National Research Council will be publishing an evaluation of doctoral programs. The publication is expected to include a ranking of doctoral programs.
- The Graduate Center for Research and Retention is offering several workshops this semester on data management, coping with stress, financial management, how to get published, and working with statistics. Bierlein Palmer requested that these workshops also be offered off campus, particularly in Grand Rapids where WMU has hundreds of doctoral students who are largely working professionals.
- Ford requested that the GSC look at the draft Academic Affairs Strategic Plan and see how it addresses graduate education. Other council members agreed. The preamble of the draft strategic plan emphasizes WMU's role as an undergraduate institution.

Provost Report

Reinhold announced that he will be replacing Eileen Evans as the Provost representative on the GSC.

A draft of the Academic Affairs Strategic Plan is available on the Provost Web site. The provost would like feedback on the plan from the GSC, as well as the Undergraduate Studies Council.

Report of the Council Chair

No report.

Report of the Graduate Student Advisory Committee

GSAC representatives attended various departmental orientation sessions to get the word out about the GSAC. GSAC is currently funding a number of student groups at the undergraduate level. They are encouraging graduate student groups to organize themselves better so GSAC can fund their activities. GSAC is looking at doing more advocacy work on behalf of graduate students. One example of this is to work with the University Libraries to get loan periods extended for graduate students who are not graduate assistants. Communiiversity was well attended. The Libraries held an open house for graduate students on September 15 which was also well attended. The Hilltop Review publication has had a good response for submissions. There is a need for advisors and peer reviewers.

Report of GSC Committee Chairs

No report.

Discussion items

Review of GSC Charges from 2008-09

The group discussed the six charges given to the GSC last year.

- Item one refers to reviewing the role statement and assessing the effectiveness of council practices and should likely remain as one of the continuing charges of the GSC.
- Item two was covered in the work that was previously done in reviewing the Graduate Advising Handbook.
- Item three refers to the review of the Handbook for Graduate Student Advising. This was completed last year; the Graduate College fixed the items that were identified.
- Item four refers to interdisciplinary graduate programs. A committee was formed and was chaired by Curtis. The subcommittee submitted a report which recommended referring this issue on to another group since interdisciplinary programs are not just at the graduate level. The report will be sent to the Faculty Senate Executive Board along with the results

of the investigations of how other institutions handle the challenges of these programs.

- Item five deals with the issue of tuition remission at the resident level for graduate students. A Memorandum of Action was passed by the GSC, as well as by the Research Policies Council, and International Education Council. Wheeler will check to see what the status of this is.
- Item six appears to be a catchall for GSC issues and likely needs to remain.

Doctoral Residency Requirements

Nemire brought this up to GSC last year. Residency is currently the default requirement and departments can opt out of that. The current policy is difficult to enforce. Usually the Graduate College doesn't find out about problems until after the fact and then the dean is asked to forgive the requirement. The Graduate College would like to eliminate the need for exceptions. The policy that GSC advocated last year would remove the residency requirement as the default and allow departments to opt in if they wanted to keep the requirement. There was concern about paperwork involved in changing the policy, as departments would have to go through the curricular process to do something other than the default. Wheeler asked Nemire to get more data on which departments would be effected by the proposed change and we will readdress the issue at a future meeting.

Graduate Programs: Annual Reviews, Graduate Handbook, and Dismissal Policy

This item was first discussed in June. DiPierro conducted a review and submitted a status report. The status report indicates that the majority of departments have a Graduate Student Handbook in place, and have conducted annual reviews; however only 15 of 26 departments have a dismissal policy in place. Doing reviews annually is likely not sufficient for Masters programs as they have a year to improve and may complete the program before that point. If advising is happening as it should the annual review process is redundant. How do we follow up with departments that reported not conducting annual reviews or not having a dismissal policy? There was discussion about how these issues are enforced. There was a suggestion to have a tracking system for MOAs. Rantz will forward this to the Executive Board. How do MOAs get communicated to faculty and is there any penalty if a policy isn't followed? GSC members felt there is a need for a University dismissal policy, not individual departments. On whose authority is a student dismissed? GSC will review the MOA at a future meeting to determine exactly what we are not meeting. There was discussion about who has ultimate control of the Graduate Catalog. Responsibility has shifted from the Graduate College, to the Registrar's Office. This should be added to the agenda for a future meeting, and invite someone from the Registrar's Office to come talk about how they handle the content of the catalog. Rantz will bring up the issues of dismissal policy and responsibility for the Graduate Catalog at the next Senate Executive Board meeting.

Rubric Award Team Competition

DiPierro, Curtis, and Reinhold worked on planning this award program after a recommendation from the Assessment Committee. The competition is to develop the rubric to evaluate the assessment award. Money was allocated for the award from the Provost's Office. Reinhold sent e-mail out to each Masters program chair asking for a nominee. There will be an orientation program in October. Students will work in teams of 2-3 to come up with a draft. In early December a panel of doctoral students will review the drafts and give feedback to the teams. A final draft will be submitted in February. First place winners will receive an award of \$1000. Winners will be announced on Research Day. Students from across the University are encouraged to work on this. Names should be sent to Curtis by October 21.

Announcements

Nemire announced a regular advising meeting Friday, October 9, from 8 to 10 a.m. Graduate advisors and staff should attend.

Rantz reported that the Executive Board met with Provost Greene about the draft Academic Affairs Strategic Plan. The Executive Board encourages councils to review the plan and make suggestions. GSC might encourage involving graduate directors in this discussion as well.

Adjournment

Raveloharimisy moved to adjourn; Bierlein Palmer seconded. The meeting adjourned at 4:52 p.m.

Michele Behr
Secretary