

WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY
FACULTY SENATE

GRADUATE STUDIES COUNCIL
Minutes of 19 November 2009

Members present: Ikhlal Abdel-Qader, Michele Behr, Louann Bierlein Palmer, Amy Curtis, Leigh Ford, Suzanne Hedstrom, Brandi Pritchett, Lewis Pyenson, Bill Rantz, Joel Raveloharimisy, Dave Reinhold, David Smith, John Spitsbergen, Mark Wheeler. **Also present:** Timothy Greene, provost and vice president for academic affairs; Virginia Bowlby, Graduate College.

Council Chair Mark Wheeler called the meeting to order at 3:02 p.m. Wheeler welcomed Provost Greene who joined the council for discussion of the draft strategic plan for Academic Affairs. Wheeler also announced that Bruce Ferrin has been elected to the council as a representative from the Business College.

Procedural Items

Acceptance of the Agenda

Hedstrom moved to accept the agenda; Spitsbergen seconded. The agenda was accepted.

Approval of the Minutes of October 22

Pritchett pointed out that the minutes omitted WMU administration as a sponsor for the Graduate Student Advisory Committee Mix and Mingle event. Nemire also e-mailed that there was an error in the section of the curriculum proposal from the Department of Paper Engineering, Chemical Engineering, and Imaging. The current program is 30 credit hours, not 24 as noted in the minutes. Spitsbergen moved to accept the minutes with the two corrections. Pritchett seconded. The minutes were approved.

Discussion/Action Items

Curriculum Proposal: Department of Educational Leadership, Research, and Technology – Graduate Certificate Program in Student Affairs in Higher Education [COEHD-137]

This proposal is being modified; University policy states that certificate programs need to be 15-21 credit hours. The department will modify the proposal to add the appropriate number of credit hours. There was some discussion about the requirement for students in the certificate program to be currently employed as student affairs professionals. The proposed program is not intended to bypass the Masters program, but would be an additional credential on top of that.

Update on the Doctoral Residency Requirement – Mark Wheeler

Nemire had been asked to check with departments to see how many would want to reinstate the requirement if the University requirement for residency were dropped. At this point, about half the departments have responded and Nemire is following up with phone calls to departments. This will be on the agenda for the December meeting.

Discussion of the Academic Affairs Strategic Plan

After the discussion of the draft strategic plan at the October meeting, GSC members were sent the following questions in preparation for the second part of the discussion:

- 1) *How can promoting a culture of diversity be more explicitly incorporated into graduate education?*
- 2) *How much, and in what ways, should our local community be incorporated into graduate education?*
- 3) *On a continuum from a focus on teaching to a focus on scholarship/creative activities/leadership, where should the focus of graduate faculty lie and should this be the same for all faculty? (Consider issues related to quality of education here.)*
- 4) *How do we envision ourselves as an "excellent" place for graduate education? This should include a discussion regarding whether excellence is based on: scholarly/creative/leadership activities of faculty and/or students, quality of teaching, placement of our students post-WMU, incoming standardized scores of our students, or some other factor(s). It would be nice for all of these to be perfect, but we will need to prioritize.*
- 5) *What is the relationship between graduate education and undergraduate education?*

Provost Greene reported that he is meeting with various groups and gathering comments and suggestions on the draft. He is hoping to finalize the plan before the semester break.

How can we incorporate diversity beyond just putting another statement on a syllabus? Martha Warfield, associate vice president for diversity and inclusion, is looking for faculty to join in study groups on diversity issues. Provost Greene will be sending out an e-mail with more information on this initiative. The McNair scholars program was previously used to fund underrepresented groups. This was a successful initiative. Perhaps we could look at Kalamazoo Promise students and Ceita scholars and build something like the McNair program? WMU also has a relationship with Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) in which students come and investigate WMU graduate programs. Increasing diversity among the faculty should also be a priority.

How do we measure excellence in graduate education? Some council members argue the crucial factor is faculty. If you have excellent faculty, students will be attracted to come work with them.

Some council members felt that on many issues there should not be a division between undergraduate and graduate students. WMU values student success whether it is at the undergraduate or graduate level.

How do we define graduate programs that are successful? Are graduate programs supposed to pay for themselves? What are criteria for evaluating a graduate program? WMU needs to establish criteria for evaluating programs. This council has an important role to play in this process.

The draft document appears to show “silos” whereas council members pointed out that undergraduate, graduate, and research activities all have a synergistic effect. There should be more in the plan about the mutually beneficial relationships between these areas. One of the strengths of WMU is the time students get to work with faculty that they often would not get at a larger school.

Council members agreed that valuable conversations are occurring as a result of the strategic planning process. The Faculty Senate wants to adopt a process so this is an ongoing discussion and the strategic plan will be a living document.

Curtis, Bierlein Palmer, Ford, Wheeler, and Pritchett will meet as a small group to refine the recommendations from the GSC and send those on to the provost.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 5 p.m.

Michele Behr
Secretary