

Minutes
Commission on Graduate Studies & Policies
March 21, 2012
3:30 pm – 5:00 pm
Graduate School Conference Room

Present: Ms. Shaimaa Abdallah, Mr. Marc Brodsky, Dr. Carolyn Copenheaver, Ms. Natalie Cruise, Dr. Karen DePauw, Dr. Mark Halsey, Dr. Bernice Hausman, Dr. Jennifer Hodgson, Dr. Karen Hult, Dr. Patrick Miller, Ms. Akiko Nakamura, Dr. Wayne Neu, Dr. Mayuresh Patil, Mr. Greg Purdy, Ms. Katelyn Shugart-Schmidt, Dr. Stephen Smith, Dr. Victoria Soghomonian, Dr. Dan Thorpe, Mr. Leighton Vila, Dr. Tyler Walters

Absent with Notification: Ms. Janice Austin

Absent without Notification: Mr. Mohammed Jalili, Dr. Susan Short, Dr. Jim Yardley

Visitors and Invited Guests: Dr. Janet Rankin

Dr. Victoria Soghomonian, Chair, called the meeting to order.

Approval of the agenda: Approved.

Approval of the minutes from February 15, 2012: Approved.

Committee Reports

Graduate Curriculum Committee (GCC): The minutes from February 23rd and March 15th were approved.

Graduate Student Appeals: The committee is deliberating a case and will be making a recommendation to the dean by Friday.

Graduate Student Relations (GSR): No report.

Degree Requirements, Standards, Criteria, and Academic Progress (DRSCAP): Resolution, Revision of Policy 6500, Substantive Change

The commission voted to waive a first reading with one opposed.

The main changes were in the areas of notification. The recommended change would include notification of the deans for undergraduate and graduate education. Also, because there is no longer a “vice president for distance learning and summer sessions”, that reference was eliminated and replaced with the “director for the Institute for Distance and Distributed Learning”.

Following discussion the substantive change to Policy 6500 was amended to read:

3.2 Distance Learning and Associated Sites

Initiating distance learning activities and/or an off-campus site can constitute a substantive change according to the SACS, and may also require reporting and/or approval from SCHEV. Faculty members planning to deliver an existing academic program through distance learning methodologies (online or interactive video-conferencing (IVC)), will contact the associate vice president for distance learning and summer sessions to determine if SACS notification or approval for a substantive change is required as part of the above process. Courses or programs offered in partnership with an agency, school, or corporation at a new location, or delivered to students at a new site in Virginia, another state, or abroad,

are all included in the SACS requirements for reporting and prior approval. *The office of the director of the Institute for Distance and Distributed Learning maintains a list of SACS approved distance learning programs and associated sites and will communicate this list to the academic deans, the Vice President and Dean for Graduate Education and the Vice President and Dean for Undergraduate Education on an annual basis.*

Individual credit courses delivered through interactive video-conferencing (IVC) should be requested through the Institute for Distance and Distributed Learning (IDDL) to ensure that the proposed site(s) is on the university's approved list of sites to receive credit instruction. If a proposed site is not on the approved list the course should not be delivered to the site until it is certified by IDDL.

The academic deans have the responsibility for ensuring that distance learning and new sites proposed for delivering or receiving distance learning credit programming are reported to the director of the Institute for Distance and Distributed Learning, the Vice President and Dean for Graduate Education, and the Vice President and Dean for Undergraduate Education, and that appropriate notifications and approvals are obtained.

The commission voted to approve the changes, with one abstention.

Graduate Student Assembly Report (GSA): Ms. Abdallah thanked Drs. Soghomonian and Copenheaver for agreeing to be judges for the upcoming research symposium on March 29th. The GSA would like to recruit more judges. The GSA held elections for next year's officers. Ms. Abdallah will be the new president. The official transition to new officers is July 1st.

Graduate Honor System (GHS): No report.

University Library Committee (ULC): Dr. Brodsky announced that at the end of February the library held the Virginia Tech authors' event which honored 100 authors. Julie Speer, the associate dean for research and informatics, has started work at the library. Dr. Walters said that the ULC has one more meeting this year and is currently working on a letter of support. This summer the information gathered during spring semester will be reviewed and used to create designs for remodeling.

University Council: The Conflict of Interest proposal was approved after a second reading at last Monday's meeting.

Graduate School: Dr. DePauw distributed a flyer publicizing Graduate Education Week activities. The Virginia Tech homepage also has coverage of the activities. Dr. DePauw asked commission members to take the message of "appreciating graduate students" back to their respective departments, and if they can't attend any of the scheduled activities, create an in-department activity.

The Board of Visitors will be meeting Sunday and Monday. Among the action items they will be (1) selecting a new graduate student representative to the Board of Visitors and (2) approving the compensation package for graduate students.

Old Business: None

New Business:

IGEP discussion: Dr. Hausman expressed concern that cross-college collaborative opportunities for interdisciplinary education within the humanities field are extremely limited. More opportunities exist within the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences. Sustainability of funding of graduate students is another issue. Dr. Hausman envisioned a possible collaboration which could result in an opportunity for a graduate

concentration in rhetoric of science, medicine, and technology. The issue will be a future agenda item. In the meantime, Dr. Soghomonian asked that comments be sent to Ms. Feuerbach.

Equivalence of online and in-class courses: Dr. Soghomonian reviewed issues raised during DRSCAP meeting discussions. A primary discussion item was a concern that a degree which included on-line coursework might be viewed differently than a degree with only in-class coursework. The registrar's office considers in-class and online classes to be equivalent. In-class courses must go through university governance to be approved. Their online equivalents do not need to go through the governance process. Members of the commission questioned whether there was a current problem, or if a problem was anticipated. It was noted that departments are responsible for course content, whether taught online or in a classroom. A suggestion was made that perhaps the commission could brainstorm some ideas that would enable students taking online classes to participate more fully in experiences taking place on campus, e.g., seminars. Also, until data on learning outcomes is collected on the issue, it is difficult to pinpoint problems if they exist. The discussion will continue at a future meeting.

Announcements:

Thursday, March 22, 2012, Alumni Assembly Hall, The Inn at Virginia Tech, 7:30 pm. Sir Anthony Leggett (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Nobel Laureate 2003), "Why Can't Time Run Backwards?"

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 5:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted:

Ms. Nancy Feuerbach, on behalf of
Dr. Karen P. DePauw, Vice President and Dean for Graduate Education