

MINUTES

Commission on Graduate Studies & Policies

February 3, 2016

3:30 pm – 5:00 pm

Graduate School Conference Room

Present: Dr. Karen DePauw (ex officio), Dr. Saul Halfon, Mr. David W. Allen (GSA proxy), Mr. Melvin Amos, Dr. Lujean Baab, Mr. Anthony Carno, Mr. Nathan Carter, Ms. Kira Dietz, Dr. Kay Dunkley, Dr. Kevin Edgar, Dr. Charlene Eska, Dr. William Huckle, Dr. James Jones, Dr. Sally Paulson, Kaveh Rahimi (GSA proxy), Dr. Hans Robinson, Mr. Richard Rodrigues (GSA proxy), Dr. Scott Salom, Dr. Gary Seidel, Ms. Maria Stack, and Dr. Christopher Zobel.

Absent with Notification: Mr. Matt Chan, Dr. Cyril Clarke, Dr. Rachel Holloway, Ms. Tara Reel, and Mr. Mohammed Seyam, Ms. Sally Wieringa.

Absent without Notification: Dr. Tyler Walters (ex officio).

Visitors and Invited Guests: Ms. Janice Austin and Dr. Muhammed Hajj.

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Dr. Halfon at 3:30 p.m.

Approval of the Agenda

The Commission approved the agenda as presented.

Approval of the Minutes from January 20, 2016

The minutes were approved as amended.

Committee Reports

Graduate Curriculum Committee

The minutes of January 28, 2016 were presented and accepted. The footnote will be removed as it is from a previous report and does not apply to the January 28th minutes.

Graduate Student Appeals Committee

Dr. Jones reported there are no cases pending.

Degree Requirements, Standards, Criteria, and Academic Progress (DRSCAP) Committee

Dr. Zobel reported the committee met last week. Several issues are under consideration.

Constituencies Updates

Graduate Student Assembly (GSA)

It was reported the GSA has requested 30,000 from the Budget Board. A decision will be made in April. Funds will be used for speakers for the GSA. The symposium abstract request has closed; 220 applications have been received. Formats will include panels and roundtables. An additional request will be sent via email for faculty judges. The GSA is in the final stages of negotiating a guest speaker for the symposium.

Graduate Honor System (GHS)

Mr. Carter reported there is one new case.

University Library Committee

Ms. Dietz had no report.

Faculty Senate

Dr. Salom reported a committee has been formed to possibly establish an Ombuds Office. Dr. Robinson provided a copy of the proposal for an Ombuds Office for Faculty at Virginia Tech. The proposal will be uploaded in Scholar.

SGA

The SGA has met twice and recently elected a new speaker. Mr. Amos will not be attending future CGS&P meetings due to a schedule conflict and a substitute will attend in his place.

University Council and Commission Updates

Dr. Halfon reported that Dr. Perillo presented information on student-centered learning during the most recent University Council meeting. The joint resolution on the Formation of a University Governance Task Force passed. The Faculty Resolution on Shared Governance was also passed. The commission chairs reported on their agendas for the year. A meeting of the chairs with the President and Provost occurred earlier in the morning. Dr. Halfon presented a copy of the presentation material to the CGS&P membership and it is also available on Scholar. Course proposal requests are expected to be a digital process by next year. There is a concern regarding resources for international student language skills and the costs of supporting ESL courses. This topic is also on the Commission on Outreach and International Affairs agenda. Additional research is needed to gather data on how other universities are managing fulltime status for international students to maintain continuous enrollment following completion of preliminary exams. There may not be alternatives for international students due to visa requirements. Dr. Halfon noted that as the international population expands, perhaps a centralized option to provide English language services will be needed. Dr. DePauw reminded everyone that the Graduate School has an English proficiency requirement. Challenges are present in the testing and other issues include the student using multiple languages at home and at school. Dr. Edgar noted the significance of the cost and faculty time in supporting students with English deficiencies. Dr. Seidel stated that many technically skilled students are language deficient. Dr. DePauw noted that students have identified there are labs that never use English as the primary language. Dr. Seidel asked what the metric would be to demonstrate success. This topic will be scheduled for a future meeting. We will also continue our discussion about advisory committee membership. DRSCAP is continuing the conversation about anti-plagiarism tools.

Commission agenda items presented by other commission chairs will be available in University Council minutes.

Mr. Amos reported the Energy and Sustainability Commission met last week and RFP proposals are being reviewed. Thirty-six proposals were received. Following review, they will be submitted to the Budget Office. New decals will be placed on campus recycling bins. There were 434 participants in the sustainability survey. Recommendations will be forthcoming in April.

Graduate School Update

Dr. DePauw reported the Provost is demonstrating his interest in graduate student issues and is listening to graduate students. She will be meeting with the Provost to discuss medical insurance and other issues. Dr. DePauw met with Vet-Med yesterday regarding holistic admissions and fostering an affirming environment. A survey will be available on the graduate website to collect information on people's experience with graduate education and a positive, affirming environment. The Graduate School will host workshops on micro-aggressions and implicit bias. In addition, a professional development series of workshops will be held. Advising and mentoring workshops will also be held to strengthen the student-faculty relationship. The Graduate School has been collecting data on assistantships and additional information will be published soon.

Dr. DePauw is interested in learning more about the commission's understanding of the qualities of good advisors and faculty involvement with students. She would like to develop an award for 2016-17 that would recognize faculty success. Dr. Edgar suggested the awards be given by the College. Dr. Halfon noted there is an award in his college. Dr. Salom stated an academy is appealing concept and would add an incentive for faculty demonstrating excellence. Questions were asked about how faculty would be nominated and how the selection process would be established. This suggestion has come forward as a result of advising being a number one concern for graduate students as noted in previous years' climate surveys. Dr. Hajj suggested an advisor of the week would also be another approach to consider.

Dr. DePauw is identifying topics that she would like to explore regarding the future of the dissertation. The dissertation is a product of the 19th century. Should we think of the dissertation as a product along the way of advancement? Today's dissertations are often collaborative and interdisciplinary. Dr. Salom noted the dissertation is symbolic of a substantial scholarly achievement by the student at a level commensurate with the requirements for a doctoral degree as reviewed and approved by the student's Graduate Committee. A question was raised asking what are the skills needed for success and how do teaching and engagement fit into the process. Another question explored was how do we better prepare our PhD students. Are we thoughtful of what is needed today and tomorrow? Dr. Salom noted the committee should be a part of the entire student program. Dr. DePauw asked the commission to consider what principles we want accomplished in the PhD experience. This conversation will continue as we explore the role of the committee, the skills needed for success, and improved preparation of our PhD students.

Old Business

There were no old business topics to report.

New Business

The new business item listed on the agenda, SPOI process, is deferred to the next commission meeting.

Announcements

None.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/

Marilynn R. King
on behalf of Karen P. DePauw, Ph.D.
Vice President and Dean for Graduate Education