

**Minutes  
Commission on Graduate Studies & Policies  
February 18, 2015  
3:30 pm – 5:00 pm  
Graduate School Conference Room**

Present: Dr. Chad Bolding, Mr. Nathan Carter, Mr. Matthew Chan, Dr. Karen DePauw, Ms. Kira Dietz, Dr. Kay Dunkley (via phone), Dr. Joe Eifert, Ms. Ashley Francis; Dr. Saul Halfon, Dr. James Jones, Mr. Timothy Kinoshita, Dr. Kathryne McConnell, Mr. Greg Purdy, Dr. Cliff T. Ragsdale, Dr. Hans Robinson, Dr. Scott Salom, Dr. Gary Seidel, Ms. Maria Stack.

Absent with Notification: Dr. Cyril Clark, Ms. Nancy Dudek, Dr. Charlene Eska, Dr. Rachel Holloway, Ms. Nicole Johnson, Dr. Elankumaran Subbiah.

Absent without Notification: Dr. Alireza Haghighat, Dr. Tyler Walters, Ms. Sally Wieringa.

Visitors and Invited Guests: Ms. Janice Austin, Dr. Muhammad Hajj.

**Call to Order**

Dr. Hans Robinson, Chair, called the meeting to order.

**Approval of the Agenda**

The Commission approved the agenda without modifications.

**Approval of the Minutes from February 4, 2015**

Deferred.

**Old Business**

Dr. Robinson visited the Faculty Senate last week. There was no opportunity to discuss current proposed resolutions due to other agenda items. Dr. Robinson received an email from a concerned faculty member and opened up discussion about the concerns. The commission members discussed the question regarding data to support the concern for students with repeated enrollment lapses. Janice indicated perhaps 10 or so students may have a lapse without requesting leave of absence requests. Most students just don't enroll. The Commission discussed the question of potential sweetheart deals and how to avoid inconsistent treatment of the policy. A discussion pursued to explore improving transparency of the policy. Dr. DePauw reminded everyone that university audit would review the application of the policy and parties with concerns have the prerogative to notify University Audit for review and consideration. Dr. DePauw will bring a report to the commission after the first and second year of enforcement to review performance and consistency.

**Resolutions Approved**

Following a motion to approve and second, the committee voted to approve the following resolutions:

*Resolution on Graduate Continuous Enrollment – Approved.*

A question was discussed regarding any warning process. Students will be notified after drop/add to identify who is not enrolled and advance awareness of the census date. Minor grammatical corrections were completed. Students will be permitted to register and be charged for only one credit.

*Resolution on Graduate in Absentia Status – Approved.*

A question regarding field work changed to absence with an e.g. reference to field work.

*Resolution on Graduate Leave of Absence – Approved.*

A question was discussed regarding the word “discretion”. “Discretion” was eliminated from the resolution. Students would be required to apply for readmission if leave exceeds one year.

A question was discussed regarding the process for exemptions. Exemptions are granted through an exception basis, generally with the student contacting the Dean or the Associate Dean of the Graduate School.

A question was discussed regarding not following continuous enrollment – a change in wording was accepted to “not adhering to continuous enrollment”.

Following discussion, the group affirmed the resolutions should be considered as a package and would be presented to council as a package. Motion and second approved all resolutions with revisions.

Dr. DePauw extended her thanks to the Commission and DRSCAP for the extensive review and development of the resolutions.

## **Committee Reports**

### Graduate Curriculum Committee

Dr. Saul Halfon, committee chair, has no updates. Blocks of proposals should be discussed with College representatives and committees prior to submission to the GCC.

### Graduate Student Appeals

Currently working on two cases.

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

DRSCAP is currently working on degree titles as referred by University Council.

## **Constituencies Updates**

### Graduate Student Assembly (GSA)

Mr. Greg Purdy, President, reported there is a delegate meeting on Thursday for a second reading on constitution revisions. Passenger train service coming to Roanoke in 2016 and possibly to Christiansburg or Pulaski. GSA writing proposals to supporting funding initiatives. The current resolutions will be reviewed and comments sent to CGS & P.

### Graduate Honor System (GHS)

Mr. Nathan Carter, Chief Justice, reported they have one and half cases (half case is currently in investigation).

### University Library Committee

Ms. Kira Dietz reported Open Library Day will be this Saturday.

### **University Council and Commission Updates**

University Council was snowed out this past Monday.

Dr. Subbiah has a proposed revision of membership of the UCIA that is under consideration.

### **Graduate School Update**

Dr. DePauw reported:

- A draft resolution of self-plagiarism has just been received and will be brought to this commission for consideration.
- An invitation to the social information session for the Academy is extended to everyone. The event is February 24<sup>th</sup> 5-7 p.m. A call to all graduates that are interested has been sent.
- The Provost search process has begun. Dr. DePauw is a member of the search committee. Information will be coming out soon regarding the search and committee, with opportunity for faculty input. A search firm has been hired and the President is co-chairing with Paul Knox. There will be public interviews for all interested.
- A discussion pursued regarding UMass, Amherst's recent restriction of Iranian admission; the restriction has been reversed. No such restrictions are expected at Virginia Tech.

### **New Business:**

The resolution *On Faculty, Family Or Close Relations Serving On Graduate Advisory Committees* was presented and was opened for discussion. Some departments have a number of faculty serving on graduate student committees. Wanting to avoid conflicts of interest or perceived conflicts should be avoided and not include family or close relations on the same student committee. Student can reap the benefit of the expertise of the faculty member without membership on the committee. This resolution would give the department the ability to have control over this possibility. The question was expanded to ask if a resolution is appropriate to manage an ethical obligation. Should a process be developed to consider each member attesting to no conflict of interest? There are no examples of this as a policy at other institutions. Commonly, there is a policy for representation of an external person from an outside department. Committee conflicts generally occur later in the process, and not at the onset of committee creation. There are many instances when there are close, professional relationships such as co-PI's that would necessitate serving together on the committee. Could an ethical statement be added to the plan of study at the point of organizing the committee? Dr. Robinson observed that the language "close personal relationship" is the strong objection. A question was presented to consider if an ethics statement will give opportunity to further training of the student in orientation. Dr. DePauw suggested that Dr. Salom take this back for discussion to the Faculty Senate. Mr. Purdy and Dr. Robinson will take this to the

Commission on Faculty Affairs this week. Mr. Purdy will pursue additional information, and anecdotal, personal accounts from Ms. McCrery. While this is a small population of students with concerns, this is a tremendous opportunity for faculty to engage in the conversation.

**Announcements:** There were no announcements.

**Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned at 4:58 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by:

/s/

Ms. Marilyn R. King on behalf of

Dr. Karen P. DePauw, Vice President and Dean for Graduate Education