

Minutes

Commission on Graduate Studies & Policies

November 16, 2011

3:30 pm – 5:00 pm

Graduate School Conference Room

Present: Ms. Shaimaa Abdallah, Ms. Janice Austin, Mr. Marc Brodsky, Dr. Carolyn Copenheaver, Ms. Natalie Cruise, Dr. Karen Hult, Dr. Kumar Mallikarjunan, Ms. Akiko Nakamura, Dr. Mayuresh Patil, Dr. Susan Short, Ms. Katelyn Shugart-Schmidt, Dr. Victoria Soghomonian, Mr. Leighton Vila, Dr. Jim Yardley

Absent with Notification: Dr. Karen DePauw, Dr. Mark Halsey, Dr. Bernice Hausman, Mr. Jalili Mohammed, Dr. Mayuresh Patil, Dr. Robin Panneton

Absent without Notification: Dr. Jennifer Hodgson, Dr. Patrick Miller, Dr. Tyler Walters

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 November 2: Approved with minor corrections.

Committee Reports

Graduate Curriculum Committee (GCC): The minutes from October 27th were approved.

Graduate Student Appeals: No report.

Graduate Student Relations (GSR): No report.

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

The committee continued their meetings with graduate students and faculty members to discuss potential conflict of interest issues that may occur when students work for faculty owned businesses. Current policy prohibits supervisors from serving as faculty advisors. The committee had three suggestions to safeguard students working in faculty owned businesses:

- Students funded by faculty owned businesses should have a co-advisor of faculty of equal or higher rank than faculty who own the business
- Students, advisors, and department heads should sign a disclosure document
- It is recommended that students keep a log of hours worked

The committee recommended that managing the disclosure document process be coordinated by the Graduate School. Dr. Rankin described the process she currently oversees at the Graduate School. The Graduate School primarily hears about students who are hired by Virginia Tech via the research office. The form used essentially dictates that the supervisor and mentor cannot be the same person, and the project cannot create a conflict. The form is signed by the advisor, student, committee, and department head. She questioned how we could monitor student employment outside of Virginia Tech. Dr. Copenheaver said that Dr. Hyer would share the revised policy with the Graduate School once she has received all the suggestions. DRSCAP has one more meeting before suggestions are due to Dr. Hyer.

Future topics the committee may discuss include: electronic yearbook, academic and professional integrity, online course development, couples serving on committees, and other potential conflicts that may arise in committee selection.

Graduate Student Assembly Report (GSA):

- The flyer for the 28th Annual Research Symposium has gone out and commission members are asked to share information about the upcoming event with their colleges / departments. The GSA still need faculty to volunteer to be judges. Graduate students are reviewers. Symposium submissions must be online.
- Fifty people attended the OXFAM hunger banquet.
- The Hygiene Drive was a success.
- The logo design contest is ongoing and preferences are being narrowed down.
- The last delegate meeting for the semester is November 29th. At the Monday cabinet meeting members heard about the undergraduate initiative supporting the optional collection of a “green fee” to support environmental initiatives on campus. The GSA cabinet members expressed concern that the fee could become mandatory, and no controls would be in place that would regulate the fee.

Dr. Short reminded commissions that commonwealth campus students pay fees for services they do not receive. The issue will be brought up at a GSA delegate meeting.

Graduate Honor System (GHS): Ms. Shugart-Schmidt reported no new cases.

University Library Committee (ULC):

Mr. Brodsky reviewed recent university library activities.

- Minutes to the ULC meetings will be forwarded to Ms. Feuerbach.
- Forty people had a successful visit to N.C. State’s library. Changes in VT’s library should be visible by spring.
- The circulation department handles locker assignments. Information is on the library webpage.
- The library will have more equipment available for checkout.
- Library hours will be modified.

University Council: Dr. Soghomonian reported on the November 14th meeting:

- Future faculty hires may be required to have background checks.
- The Wood Science and Forest Products name change was discussed. Various concerns were raised. There will be a second reading.
- The Academic Warning resolution was passed. This resolution applies to students in good standing who have one semester GPA below 2.0 and is intended to assist them academically.

Old Business:

Multi-Modal Transit Facility (MMTF): Following Dr. Knox’s presentation on long range planning at the December 7th meeting, Dr. Sherwood Wilson will discuss the transit facility.

New Business:

Michael Denbow has asked for input for the academic calendar review which occurs every five years. In particular, he asked for input on an option which would shorten the Thanksgiving break and lengthen the fall break in October. Dr. DePauw replied in an e-mail that she saw no reason for change, and asked why Virginia Tech was not closed for federal holidays. The GSA has discussed this option in the past and does not wish the calendar to be changed. Many students travel a great distance and shortening the Thanksgiving holiday would restrict options for travel home. Students need at least a week at some point to justify travel home. Dr. Hult felt that pedagogically, there were not enough breaks in a very long fall semester. Mr. Vila felt that science and

engineering benefited from the semester as currently planned. Another suggestion was to begin the semester a few days earlier so that more days could be added to fall break.

Announcements:

Dr. Soghomonian will use our Scholar site to post a link to the long range planning document prior to Dr. Knox's visit at the December 7th meeting.

On behalf of the GSA, Ms. Abdallah requested that the commission discuss the possibility of scheduling the preliminary examinations in the summer. Dr. Soghomonian asked that this item be on the December 7th agenda under New Business. Ms. Austin asked the commission to consider SACS accreditation when considering the possibility of any fee waivers.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 4:40 pm.

Respectfully submitted:

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