

Minutes

Commission on Graduate Studies & Policies

March 18, 2015

3:30 pm – 5:00 pm

Graduate School Conference Room

Present: Dr. Chad Bolding, Mr. Nathan Carter, Mr. Matthew Chan, Ms. Kira Dietz, Dr. Kay Dunkley, Dr. Joe Eifert, Dr. Charlene Eska, Dr. Alireza Haghighat, Dr. Saul Halfon, Dr. Rachel Holloway, Dr. James Jones, Mr. Timothy Kinoshita, Mr. Greg Purdy, Dr. Cliff Ragsdale, Dr. Hans Robinson, Dr. Scott Salom, Ms. Maria Stack, Dr. Tyler Walters, Ms. Sally Wieringa.

Absent with Notification: Dr. Karen DePauw, Ms. Nancy Dudek, Dr. Kathyne McConnell, Dr. Elankumaran Subbiah.

Absent without Notification: Dr. Cyril Clarke, Ms. Ashley Folden, Ms. Ashley Francis, and Dr. Gary Seidel.

Visitors and Invited Guests: Mr. Ben Austin, Ms. Heather Evans, Dr. Muhammed Hajj, Dr. Scott Midkiff, and Mr. Dale Pike.

Call to Order

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

Approval of the agenda

The Commission approved the agenda with modifications to accommodate our guests, Dr. Midkiff and Mr. Pike.

Approval of the minutes from March 4, 2015

The minutes were approved with modifications.

Old Business

Committee Reports

Graduate Curriculum Committee

Dr. Saul Halfon, Committee Chair, reported there was no meeting.

Graduate Student Appeals

The members are working on current appeals. Two papers have been drafted and are being circulated.

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

Dr. Robinson reported on the communication shared with the Commission on Research. Dr. Belanger responded to the Commission's questions from the last meeting. Tom Anzana, the research integrity officer for the university, attended DRSCAP. He said the self-plagiarism policy was reviewed by the Office of Research Integrity several years ago. At that time, the policy was also attempting to address

misconduct. ORI advised the Commission that the misconduct policy was not adequate. This current revision process was begun at that time. ORI does not consider self-plagiarism as misconduct. Instead, self-plagiarism should be included in the faculty handbook. Improvement in the definition of self-plagiarism is sought. Dr. Robinson has requested that the discussion be deferred until next meeting when Dean DePauw will attend.

Constituencies Updates

Graduate Student Assembly (GSA)

Matt Chan reported on behalf of the GSA. The Graduate Research Development Program opens applications this coming Monday through April 3rd. This program will fund research for graduate students. Up to \$500 for masters' students and \$700 for doctoral students will be available. Travel grant applications close this Sunday at 5 p.m.

Next week is Graduate Education Week. The Research Symposium will be held on March 25th with students presenting talks and posters. Faculty are participating as judges. This year's theme is communicating science.

Graduate Honor System (GHS)

Nathan said it has been a slow semester and they are wrapping up a final case. They have had only two cases this semester.

University Library Committee

Ms. Kira Dietz reported that an exhibit on Abraham Lincoln is on the 2nd floor of the Library and is interactive. The humanities and technology camp will start in a month. Registration is still open and it is an unconference. An unconference expects attendees to submit presentations and participate in the conference.

University Council and Commission Updates

Dr. Robinson announced University Council was cancelled due to scheduling conflicts. Our current resolutions will be scheduled at the next meeting on April 6th.

The associate vice president for research will attend the next meeting of this commission.

There were no other commission updates.

Graduate School Update

Dr. Hajj attended the Southern Council of Graduate Schools meeting.

Old Business

There was no old business.

New Business

Dr. Scott Midkiff and Mr. Dale Pike provided information about plans for delivering a new learning management system (LMS). The first town hall will be held tomorrow with another scheduled for the

NCR. Sakai support for Scholar has appeared to slow down and many schools and contributors have begun looking for a new platform with the thought that Sakai will not be enhanced to meet our needs. Some programs and faculty are looking for support that Sakai may not be able to deliver. A proof of concept has been underway this semester with Canvas being used. Indiana University has chosen Canvas. We are wanting to evaluate a product that will meet our needs and not choose a product that is the decision of another institution's. Consideration will need to be given to a change in the funding model.

Dr. Robinson asked about Sakai 10 and if that would improve our capabilities. Dr. Midkiff does not believe Sakai 10 will give us the support necessary to meet program and faculty expectations.

Dr. Pike reviewed the experience of the consortium managing Sakai, observing many large schools have left the consortium. Some major schools were not satisfied with the upgrades and implementation processes. Many of the early schools that joined the consortium have left. Dr. Pike believes the platform will survive as a collaboration, but not meet our needs. The question is when will VT need to make a more significant investment or move in another direction. Another significant question is how can VT support a mobile platform. In addition, VT needs to consider how to enrich media options. Consideration is also being made to determine how to support learning analytics and provide data to faculty to assist in understand learning behavior. Another question is how to support mobility in a safe and secure way. These items are surfacing to the top: how to support the transition of content and structure; preparing for opportunities that will determine how to take advantage of a new structure; how to couple support; how to prepare to transition out of the next LMS; and what is the flexibility we need in how we use the system. We have identified a priority that we need to have the flexibility to transition out of the LMS and not be locked into a proprietary system. Some systems require fees to allow exporting of information. We don't want to pay to get out of a system. Canvas is surfacing as the top contender. We are evaluating how we increase resources to provide system support for the transition year; an assurance was given that additional support will be available.

Dr. Salom asked about the duration of a platform. Scholar was brought up in 2010 when Blackboard was turned off. Some studies suggest a 7-year cycle for a platform. This model is changing to allow an LMS to collaborate with other software. Components may change on a regular basis. Mr. Pike commented that we are trying to mitigate the volatility of changes within the LMS.

Dr. Robinson stated his understanding was that we left Blackboard because of the increased cost. Dr. Midkiff indicated Canvas is more open with their interfaces and we have more control.

Dr. Salom commented on the difficulty in becoming comfortable and familiar with a new system. Dr. Midkiff commented that most people will have some pain and suffering, but on the other side experience the benefit of a new environment. Mobile support is significant to most people. Dr. Midkiff believes you find things faster in Canvas and he expects the transition will be easier. Mr. Pike commented that there is the intention to provide support through online courses and partnerships with IT personnel.

Dr. Robinson commented that the Blackboard to Scholar transition required recreating material. Mr. Pike is determined that support will be beefed up to improve the transition experience. A tool to transfer materials will likely be purchased to strengthen the implementation process.

A handout was provided and refers to the new website that has been developed to support the LMS evaluation process. A decision is expected by the end of spring semester. Implementation will occur over the summer. Conversion of courses is expected to be completed by spring 2017, at which time Scholar will end. Dr. Robinson asked about project support. Projects are expected to require less implementation time and will be fit into the calendar plan.

A first reading was presented for the Resolution on Degree Titles on Graduate Diplomas Revising Presidential Policy Memorandum No. 89. This resolution effects only doctoral diplomas and will change the diploma to never include the degree title effective Spring, 2016. Programs may add or remove degree titles by submitting a written request to the Graduate School. This has been returned to us from University Council, has been rewritten and will go forward for the second reading at the next meeting.

Announcements

Dr. Hajj distributed a flyer and announced the events and schedule for Graduate Education Week, March 23-27, 2015. The flyer was requested as a PDF and Dr. Hajj confirmed he would distribute it.

A discussion pursued to consider the nomination of the chair and vice chair of this commission for 2015-16. Nominations should be submitted to Dr. Robinson and Ms. King before the next meeting. Matt Chan commented that the university policy states the commission vice chair automatically becomes the chair in the future year.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 4:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

/s/

Ms. Marilyn R. King on behalf of
Dr. Karen P. DePauw, Vice President and Dean for Graduate Education