

MINUTES

Commission on Graduate Studies & Policies

November 18, 2015

3:30 pm – 5:00 pm

Graduate School Conference Room

Present: Dr. Karen DePauw (ex officio), Dr. Saul Halfon, Mr. Melvin Amos, Mr. Matt Chan, Ms. Kira Dietz, Dr. Kay Dunkley, Dr. Kevin Edgar, Dr. William Huckle, Dr. Sally Paulson, Ms. Tara Reel, Dr. Hans Robinson, Mr. Mohammed Seyam, Ms. Maria Stack, and Dr. Christopher Zobel.

Absent with Notification: Mr. Nathan Carter, Dr. Cyril Clarke, Ms. Chelsea Corkins, Dr. Charlene Eska, Dr. James Jones, Dr. Scott Salom, Ms. Dawn Stoneking, Dr. Tyler Walters (ex officio), and Ms. Sally Wieringa.

Absent without Notification: Dr. Rachel Holloway and Dr. Gary Seidel.

Visitors and Invited Guests: Ms. Ayesheh Alazmi.

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 November 4, 2015

The minutes were approved as presented.

Committee Reports

Graduate Curriculum Committee

The minutes of November 12, 2015 were presented and accepted.

Graduate Student Appeals Committee

Dr. Halfon reported an appeal is in process.

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

Dr. Zobel reported Hans and Saul will attend the GSA meeting tomorrow to discuss the naming of the degree on the diploma. Dr. Blieszner has updated the language for the catalog regarding that the double-counting of credits for certificates and degrees. There will be another meeting with the Dean's of Business and Engineering to work out the MIT program. DRSCAP will meet with Brennan Shepherd to discuss summer status.

Constituencies Updates

Graduate Student Assembly (GSA)

Mr. Chan reported the funding cycles for fall are closed. Seventy-seven applications have been received for the Travel Fund Program. The Graduate Research Development Program has received record-high applications. Dr. Sands will attend the meeting next month.

Graduate Honor System (GHS)

No report.

University Library Committee

No report.

Faculty Senate

Dr. Robinson reported a meeting with the Provost occurred to discuss the shared governance resolution. A change has been suggested regarding the four-week time period. An accompanying resolution will create a task force to analyze and collect data on the University governance system. The parking and transportation master plan continues to be reviewed. Steve Mouras visited the Faculty Senate and noted the significance of sustainability for the transportation plan and is being further discussed with the consultants. Stakeholder meetings are also being held to explore updates to the infrastructure.

University Council and Commission Updates

Dr. Halfon reported the Council adopted the new Honor Code. A first reading was given to establish the Academy of Faculty Leadership. A presentation was given on the two-factor authentication process, explaining the need and purpose of the process. Cost was discussed, as well as consideration for those faculty and staff traveling internationally. Two-factor authentication is recommended, with a goal of all core systems participating by July, 2016. Canvas is included, which would impact all student participation. There is a town hall meeting on December 17th in Torgersen, room 1100.

Mr. Chan reported on the Commission on Student Affairs. There has been a concern that faculty cooperate with student absences from class due to religious observances. Faculty are encouraged to use the interfaith calendar on the web.

Graduate School Update

Dr. DePauw reported that the entrance survey of admitted graduate students is underway. In particular, we are capturing the school of choice when the student does not attend at VT. Fifty-five students have responded. Students not attending VT have identified many other schools of choice because the schools are better matches for them. Dr. DePauw will encourage faculty to discuss research and other factors that would influence student choice. Dr. Halfon requested this information be filtered and sent to the departments. Dr. DePauw assured the commission this will happen. Dr. Robinson asked about the six new questions that will be asked of students applying to the Graduate School. Dr. DePauw indicated that additional comments will also be asked of the people writing recommendation letters. Dr. DePauw also stated the questions are not intended to cause faculty to be misled and the questions can be ignored in the admission process.

Old Business

There was no old business to discuss.

New Business

A brainstorming session ensued with the commission members. Dr. Halfon introduced the following topics:

1. International student language resources – how can writing and speaking be supported for graduate students? Dr. Dunkley suggested the commission invite Don Back to the commission meetings. Dr. DePauw commented on the cost being prohibitive to support additional classes. Dr. Edgar suggested the pursuit of a grant to support this cause.
2. International student tuition – international students must maintain a twelve credit load. What alternatives can be offered to consider a lighter credit load? Dr. DePauw noted that immigration requirements must be considered in how we support the definition of fulltime.
3. The process of applying for new courses and programs – there is a need to develop an electronic process to replace paper.
4. Student evaluations – there are concerns that will be elaborated in the future by Mr. Carter.
5. Hybrid courses – how to improve the technology in the delivery of hybrid courses.
6. Form identification – Mr. Chan is suggesting that best practices and guidance be communicated to the departments and colleges on how information is delivered to the students. Dr. Robinson suggested a departmental graduate handbook would be helpful. Dr. DePauw suggested that more information be included in the catalog. She also will address this concern with the Graduate Program Directors.
7. Open access textbooks and papers – Mr. Seyam is working with the Library to take steps forward for a more open access environment. He is encouraging increased open access publishing and believes this is critical for faculty and students. Ms. Dietz responded that a fund to support publishing does exist and the Library has an open access policy. The fund is a popular resource and is fully utilized each year. The Library also has a platform for hosting open access journals. Dr. Halfon noted the impact is on graduate students as well as undergraduate students.
8. Resources for the Library – Dr. Robinson commented on a previous discussion and concern for more resources for the Library. Mr. Chan commented that the Library Committee meets infrequently and a proposal would be a good first effort.
9. Bachelor-Master's bridge programs – Mr. Amos addressed student concerns regarding the 3.5 grade point average and thesis requirements. Dr. DePauw responded that the GPA had been recommended by another commission and this commission could revisit this topic and make recommendations.

Dr. Halfon indicated that further conversation will continue on these concerns in future commission meetings.

Announcements

There were no announcements.

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