Minutes of the Graduate Faculty Council Meeting

Tuesday, November 6, 2012

Members (19): Thomas Drummer (Math), Dave Watkins (Civil), Andrew Storer (SFRES), Keat Ghee Ong (Biomed), Tom Merz (Bus), Craig Friedrich (MEEM), Zhenlin Wang (CompSci), Carl Anderson (Eng), Noel Urban (Envir), Mike Bowler (Rhet), Eugene Levin (SOT), Ashutosh Tiwari (Chem), Greg Waite (Geo), Kari Henquinet (PCorps), Kim Fook Lee (Physics), Barry Solomon (SocSci), Warren Perger (CompSci), Jim Hwang (MatSci), Paul Ward (CogSci),

Guests (6): Debra Charlesworth (Grad Sch), Nancy Byers-Sprague (Grad Sch), Kevin Cassell (GSG), Erik Nordberg (Lib), Jacque Smith (Grad Sch), Heather Suokas (Grad Sch)

1) Meeting called to order at 4:05 pm.

2) Review and approval of 10/02/12 meeting minutes.

3) Committee Reports:
   a. Thesis/Dissertation Guideline Review Committee (D. Charlesworth): The Administration has approved the new guidelines. D. Charlesworth has updated the website with all the new requirements. All submissions will now follow the new guidelines. There will be a few changes to forms. There will now be an Approval of the Final Thesis/Dissertation/Report form. This form will take the place of the Signature Page form. December 17 is the new deadline to submit a final thesis/dissertation/report. Students who defend in the fall are given the option to request an extension but that needs to be requested by December 17 (students have been emailed this deadline and it is also posted on the website).
      - (Q): Will a student that has gone through the review process with the old guidelines be able to continue to follow the old guidelines?
      - (A): Any document that qualifies under the old guidelines would already be qualified under the new guidelines.
      - (Q): If the student has published their work in a peer reviewed journal do they need to conform to the new guidelines?
      - (A): Yes, they need to conform to the new guidelines.
   b. Graduate Tuition and Stipend Review Committee (H. Suokas): The committee has almost finished with the data analysis. Recommendations will be brought to the January GFC meeting as the committee is still in discussion.

4) Old Business:
   a. Using a BC/C in a Student’s Primary Field of Study (N. Byers-Sprague): Current policy language: “This requirement can be adjusted at the discretion of a student’s graduate program to allow for use of “BC/C” grades in up to six (6) credits from outside the student’s primary field of study.” Should the text “from outside the student’s primary field of study” be removed? At the last meeting representatives were asked to come to this meeting with feedback. Support for the change: as long as the final GPA is at least a 3.0 then this is fine, when a class is not offered regularly this would be a benefit, GSG supports this change. Motion to approve this change passed (14 vote yes, 4 vote no). Senate policy 418.1 will be brought to Senate for revision.
   b. ESL Services (T. Drummer): The issue is that determining which graduate students need ESL services are happening too late in the semester at a point where ESL cannot accept them into the program. ESL would like to find a way to determine if international students need ESL services before the semester starts. There are some remaining questions that the faculty would like answered. Beatrice Smith will be invited to the next GFC meeting to address the questions.
• (C): The GSG president, K. Cassell brought this issue to the GSG members and they had two suggestions. 1) improve the speak test 2) improve the ITAP (international graduate teaching assistance program).

5) New Business:
   a. Best Practices in Admissions (J. Smith/D. Charlesworth): Dean Huntoon attended a GRE Board meeting and received some valuable information. Test takers are down internationally by thirty percent. In the past this has been a good indicator of graduate applications. Some reasons they believe test takers have decreased is because of the tuition increases across the U.S., the worldwide economic downturn, and the federal rates for loans have changed. This information has encouraged Dean Huntoon to ask that departments/programs admit people early if they are a good fit. Keep in mind that funding decisions can happen later but please make your applicant decisions quickly. J. Smith reports that overall graduate applications are down nine but for fall we are down twenty-one applications. Some positive trends he is seeing are that we have accepted more students this year than at this point last year. We have had a dramatic decrease in incomplete applications which means we are pushing more applications through the process at a faster pace. One suggestion to departments/programs is to start a rough screening for fall applicants. At this point no rejections have been reported to the Graduate School for next fall and there are probably students who can easily be screened for rejection. This saves us all emails and phone calls from students wanting to know the status of their application. The Graduate School is also asking that when a department/program accepts a PhD student to keep the communication going. For your top candidates please follow up with them asking if they are interested in a campus visit (there is some funding available to help with this). Select some current graduate students from your program/department to contact the potential PhD students. If you have any underrepresented minority students that you have accepted, please let J. Smith know as there are additional funds for them to come for a campus visit. In addition, we are developing a virtual campus tour (youvisit.com). Key messages: FAST DECISIONS, STAY IN COMMUNICATION.

   b. Update on Accelerated Master’s Programs (D. Charlesworth): One of the things that we are finding is that high school students and parents are very interested in accelerated master’s programs when investigating Michigan Tech for undergraduate education. This could become an important recruiting tool. This also encourages students to attend MTU as an undergraduate. Dean Huntoon is encouraging all programs to offer an accelerated master’s program. There are many models for these programs and the Graduate School can work with you to develop them. State approval is not necessary (these programs do not need to go through the binder process). The departments that have already implemented an accelerated master’s program are Biomedical Engineering, Chemical Engineering, Engineering Mechanics, Mechanical Engineering, and Material Science and Engineering. Departments that are in the process of implementing or have interest in implementing are Computer Science, Chemistry, and Civil & Environmental Engineering. The Provost has stressed that we need to increase enrollment and accelerated master’s programs encourage students to come to Michigan Tech. We currently have eight students enrolled in the accelerated master’s program and an additional ten applications in process.

   c. Assignment of Interim Advisor to Incoming Students (D. Charlesworth): Dean Huntoon would like to encourage you to make sure all incoming students know who their advisor is as it is the department’s responsibility to help with this process. We have incoming students who do not know who their advisor is nor who can assist them. If necessary, please appoint a temporary advisor.

   d. Allowing Multiple Attempts at Oral Exams (N. Byers Sprague): Dean Huntoon is asking that departments/programs start thinking about having a policy that would formally state whether or not you allow multiple attempts at all exams (final oral defense, qualifying/comprehensive and the proposal defense exam) and to clearly state what happens when you fail an exam of this
nature. Sometimes students do need another attempt for whatever reason. Right now it is undetermined whether or not students can have multiple attempts as these exams. A two minimum would be adequate.

- (Q): If on the final thesis defense, the committee fails a student, how would the Graduate School intervene if this is their second attempt?
- (A): This is an example of what should be clearly stated in the policy.
- **TO DO:** Bring your program’s feedback to the next GFC meeting.

6) Motion to adjourn at 4:41 pm.
November 6, 2012

NOTE: (all handouts connected to a single pdf file)

1. Review minutes of 10/02/12

2. Committee Reports:
   b. Graduate Tuition and Stipend Review Committee (H. Suokas)

3. Old Business
   a. Using a BC/C in a Student's Primary Field of Study (N. Byers Sprague)
   b. GACS Update (Dean Huntoon) - Hold until 12/04/12
   c. ESL Services (T. Drummer)

4. New Business
   a. Best Practices in Admissions (J. Smith/D. Charlesworth)
   b. Update on Accelerated Master's Programs (D. Charlesworth)
   c. Assignment of Interim Advisor to Incoming Students (D. Charlesworth)
   d. Allowing Multiple Attempts at Oral Exams - 2 Minimum? (N. Byers Sprague)
   e. Graduate Student Statement of Values and Responsibilities (Dean Huntoon) - Hold until 12/04/12