Graduate Faculty Council Minutes
December 5, 2017

Members Present: John Durocher (Bio Sci), Jingfeng Jiang (Biomed Eng), Tom Merz (Bus), Becky Ong (Chem Engg), Ashutosh Tiwari (Chem), Veronica Webster (Civ Env Eng), Scott Marratto (Humanities), Steve Elmer (Kinesiology), Leonard Bohmann (Engg), Qiuying Sha (Mathematics), Craig Friedrich (MEEM), Judith Perlinger (Non-Dept Atmo Sci), Mari Buche (Non-Dept Data Sci), Yoke Khin Yap (Phys), Melissa Baird (Soc Sci)

Guests Present: Nancy Byers-Sprague (Grad Sch), Debra Charlesworth (Grad Sch), Faith Morrison (Grad Sch), Mary Stevens (Grad Sch), Jacque Smith (Grad Sch), Hossein Tavakoli (GSG), Erin Matas (Library)

Approve previous minutes.
The minutes of the November 7 meeting will be forwarded to GFC members along with the December minutes and will be reviewed at the January meeting.

New Business
1. Proposals for a new Master of Science degree in Applied Statistics, Master of Science degree in Statistics and PhD in Statistics, Department of Mathematical Sciences (Q. Sha)

The new degree programs will give more visibility, increase enrollment, and there are several job opportunities available that require these skills. The M.S. in Applied Statistics will be offered under the Coursework option (no comprehensive examination). The degree requires 30 credits, which can be completed during three semesters on campus. The program also offers an online/on-campus hybrid (two semesters on campus). The required MA4760 and MA4770 courses can be taken online starting fall 2018 and students will be able to complete the M.S. in two semesters.

The M.S. in Statistics will be offered under the Thesis Option, Report Option, and Coursework (with exam).

The core courses requirements will be existing courses. No new courses will be created. Students in Applied Statistics will be able to concentrate on the application skills.

Due to very limited options for online students, Craig Friedrich supports the option of Master’s students in Mechanical Engineering being able to take online math courses to fulfill the three credit math requirement.

Jacque Smith pointed out the Graduate School is only authorized to offer online classes to students in certain parts of Canada. Jacque suggested to discuss broadening
opportunities to other countries with the Provost, Alex Guth, and Jacque is happy to support this.

Marie Buche brought up a concern regarding enrollment caps for MA5790 Predictive Modeling required course because it is already exceeding capacity. This course is part of the Data Science program. Sha said the department’s goal is to increase Master’s student enrollment and they are aware they will need to open more sections of MA5790.

The council will review the new programs and discussion will continue at the next meeting.

2. Proposed tax plan increase for graduate students (M. Baird)

The U.S. House and Senate are moving forward to conference the tax proposal. The House proposed different repeals of tax 117 D and 127 to increase the taxable income to campus employees enrolled in a graduate degree program, and to all graduate students. If the bill passes, the direct impact would affect enrollment.

Hossein Tavakoli pointed out if the bill passes, students would see a 260% increase in their taxes and that will impact students’ decision to continue their education.

Hossein talked about the nation-wide walk GSG organized out on November 29. Hossein said the U.S. Senate proposed a different tax plan that does not include the tax proposal.

Dean Murthy reported President Mroz and other university presidents have met with U.S. Senators, but students should speak out and contact Representative Bergman. Hossein mentioned December 9 is a day for all students to call representatives. He will provide students the Representative Bergman’s number and script.

Old Business
1. Report on coursework Master's degree name (C. Friedrich)

The four departments represented by the committee members enrolled 62% of all MS students in AY 16-17. The findings did not support a name change or that a differentiator should not be put in place and the committee thinks it would hurt enrollment. The recommendation to not change the degree name of MS Coursework option is based on data from departments, degree names at peer institutions, Michigan Tech MS alumni, and employment recruiters.
Dean Murthy shared the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine Committee on Revitalizing Graduate STEM Education for the 21st Century Discussion Document, which can also be found online: http://sites.nationalacademies.org/pga/bhew/graded/pga_180817.

This committee referred to the Council of Graduate School’s alignment framework for commonality in all or most master’s degree programs. The four competencies are disciplinary and interdisciplinary knowledge; professional competencies; foundational and transferrable skills; and research. The report identifies the four competencies should be the focus and not to put emphasis on coursework, thesis or project.