Graduate Faculty Council Minutes
February 6, 2018

Members Present: Judith Perlinger (Atmo Sci), Ebenezer Tumban, (Bio Sci), Feng Zhao (Biomed Eng), Mari Buche (Bus), Veronica Webster (Civ Env Eng), Susan Amato-Henderson (Cog Learn Sci), Andrew Storer (Forest), Chad Deering (Geo Min Eng), Steve Elmer (Kinesiology), Leonard Bohmann (MS Eng), Qiuying Sha (Math), Craig Friedrich (MEEM), Yoke Khin Yap (Physics), Yu Cai (Sch of Tech), Melissa Baird (Soc Sci)

Guests Present: Pushpa Murthy (Grad Sch), Faith Morrison (Grad Sch), Mary Stevens (Grad Sch), Jacque Smith (Grad Sch), Hossein Tavakoli (GSG), Erin Matas (Library), Brian Barkdoll (Univ Senate), Heather Deering (English Language Institute), Cassy Tefft de Munoz, International Programs & Services

Approval of previous minutes. The January minutes will be voted at the next meeting.

Business before the Senate. The proposal to Shelve the Interdisciplinary Graduate International Profile Certificate will be addressed at the February 7 Senate meeting. GFC previously approved shelving this proposal at the November 7 meeting so no GFC representative will be needed to attend the Senate meeting.

Informational Items
1. English language requirement for graduate students. (P. Murthy, J. Smith, H. Deering, C. Tefft de Munoz)

The federal government recently changed the English language requirements. Cassy Tefft de Munoz from the International Programs and Services (IPS) Office explained that IPS is responsible for all enrolled international students’ compliance with the government visa regulations. Either IPS or the Graduate School will issue an initial academic I-20 to students that have met the English language criteria for the visa process. If the student has not met the University’s minimum TOEFL score of 79, or the departmental minimum score, IPS or the Graduate School must issue an ESL I-20, which only allows the student to pursue English language studies at the University. Once the student passes the English language requirement (either before enrolling or after he/she arrives on campus), he/she will receive a new I-20 from IPS for their academic studies.

A difference with the new criteria is that students cannot be admitted into the degree program, or take academic courses, if they have not met the language requirements. If a student is issued the ESL I-20, goes through English Language Institute’s assessment, and passes, the student will immediately receive the new academic I-20 and he/she can enroll in the academic classes.

Before each term, Heather Deering, Director of from the English Language Institute, will announce testing information to departments and to students. The mandatory tests are held before the start of every semester. The ELI instructors administer a TOEFL placement test, a test of written English, and the final test is an IELTS interview. Heather will also follow up with departments about the test score results and the student’s
placement. For the upcoming Summer and Fall 2018 placement dates, advisors may also consult the IESL calendar at http://www.mtu.edu/esl/about/calendar/index.html.

With the recent tuition reduction for IESL students in place (i.e., cutting the original tuition costs in half), this extra language support has become more affordable.

The English Language Institute also offers the Graduate Orientation and Applied Language (GOAL) Program, an intensive six-week summer intensive program that focuses on preparing graduate students for rigorous academic language. Students receive help with lecture comprehension and note-taking skills; academic reading strategies and vocabulary; peer collaboration and classroom interactions; and professional presentations. They also learn to lead discussions and write lab reports, grant proposals, and literature reviews—depending on their field. In addition, students are connected with peer mentors from their disciplines.

When students complete the six-week program, they are ready to do research with their advisor. This year’s program starts on June 18th. See http://www.mtu.edu/esl/otherprograms/goal/ for more information. Contact Heather at hideerin@mtu.edu or (906) 487-2009 as soon as possible if you know of any students who would benefit from this program.

The ELI also offers customized tutoring services for international graduate students (see http://www.mtu.edu/esl/otherprograms/tutoring/) and free graduate workshops. The next workshop on improving lab reports will be held on February 15th from 2:00-3:45 p.m., and graduate students may sign up at https://goo.gl/forms/YXrNoSrRf66aQ5422 or contact Jessica Lauer at jlauer@mtu.edu.

GFC members requested that we continue this discussion at the next meeting. Jacque will look at the number of students that fell into this category and will provide additional information to the group.


2. GRE scores. (P. Murthy)
The GRE standardized test issue was brought up by Keypath Education, the company developing our online programs. Keypath said that the requirement for GRE scores will discourage students from enrolling in online programs.

Pushpa pointed out that the University of Michigan announced last summer that Programs in Biomedical Sciences PIBS) will no longer require GRE scores.

The University of Michigan collected and shared an extensive amount of papers, articles, and conducted a town hall meeting before eliminating the GRE requirement. The American Physical Society, American Astronomical Society, Harvard University’s Department of Astronomy, among others, are recommending the elimination of the GRE requirement.
Pushpa recommends members review the articles, watch video recording of their town-hall meeting and read the summary found in the “white papers”.

The announcement can be found here: https://medicine.umich.edu/medschool/education/phd-programs/phd-admissions.

GFC members requested that we continue this discussion at the next meeting.

3. Individual Development Plans for graduate students and postdoctoral fellows. (D. Charlesworth)
Time did not permit discussion and the issue will be brought up at the next meeting.

New Business
1. Revision of senate policy 415.1 - Graduate appeals of suspension or dismissal. (D. Charlesworth)

The Graduate School issues suspension notices on the day grades are processed. Dismissal notices are sent after grades are processed and we have received feedback from the faculty advisor regarding the dismissal. Currently, ten business days are allowed to file an appeal of a suspension or dismissal. When there is a short time between semesters (such as between spring and summer semesters) or multiple holidays (such as between fall and spring semesters), an appeal deadline falls due well after the semester has started. To make the process more fair for students and faculty that need to make a decision, the Graduate School is asking to include “the ten business days to file an appeal or by 4pm of the Friday preceding the semester the student would like to enroll, whichever is sooner.”

The proposal passed on a voice vote with no discussion and will be forwarded to the University Senate.

2. Revision of senate policy 416.1 - Graduate Good Academic Standing and Dismissal. (D. Charlesworth)

Currently, if a student is suspended, the only thing he/she needs to do is request to return. Some students are suspended because they are not achieving progress on their research and we want to add more oversight of their progress. Students who have been suspended due to lack of progress in their research (Q grade) need to have a plan for success and must have an advisor that will work with them prior to returning to pursue their degree.

The Graduate School is asking to include “If a student has been suspended because they received a “Q” grade in research, the student must develop a timeline for the returning semester with benchmarks for satisfactory progress. This timeline must be approved by the research advisor(s) prior to reinstatement. If the student is unable to obtain approval of the timeline, the student will be dismissed from the graduate program. Students have the right to appeal the dismissal.”
It was requested to mimic wording in the background to the recommended text changes and include the words “plans” and “deadlines” in the requested changes.

The proposal passed on a voice vote with the requested changes and will be forwarded to the University Senate.

Announcement
1. GSG’s 50th Anniversary Celebration. (H. Tavakoli)

Everyone is invited to join GSG in celebrating the 50th anniversary. You will be joined by current GSG representatives, GSG Alumni, staff and Dean of graduate school, and administration.

The celebration will be on Feb. 19th at 6:30pm at the Magnuson Bonfire Steakhouse restaurant. Hossein will send an e-mail as a reminder.

Old Business
None

Motion to adjourn at 5:00 pm.