

PROVOST'S COUNCIL RETREAT ON GRADUATE SCHOOLS AT ODU
August 11, 2009

Attendees: Carol Simpson (Chair), M'Hammed Abdous, Osman Akan, Nancy Bagranoff, Andrew Balas, Oktay Baysal, Richardean Benjamin, Andy Casiello, Mona Danner, Chandra de Silva, Bill Graves, Bill Heffelfinger, Sylvia Hudgins, Sharon Judge, Bill McMahan, Ginny O'Herron, Chris Osgood, Mike Overstreet, Chris Platsoucas, Steve Risch, Marty Sharpe, Mary Swartz, Martha Walker, and Charles Wilson.

Carol Simpson began the discussion with an overview of the current situation regarding graduate programs. Concerns have been expressed about the resources for graduate studies and where those resources are going as well as the recommendation from the CGS consulting team to implement a central graduate school with a Dean. Discussions have taken place at Provost's Council meetings with some of the colleges expressing the desire for more autonomy and less centralization. Options for the structure of graduate studies include the following.

- A graduate school in each college
- One centralized graduate school
- A graduate school for each of the professional colleges with a combined school for the Colleges of Arts and Letters and Sciences

The focus should be on what is best for the students, delivery of quality programs, timely completion for students, and assessment and feedback.

The pros and cons of a centralized graduate school versus decentralized schools in the colleges were discussed. Comments in favor of the decentralized structure are as follows.

- Graduate programs are different by nature and different approaches are needed to improve them.
- What is important in one program or college, such as peer review and support from grants, may not be important in other colleges.
- The college leadership is the most knowledgeable about the college's programs.
- Graduate students are tied to and identify with their college.
- The responsibility for graduate program improvement should be located in the area that can affect improvement.
- In some colleges graduate students require high maintenance; there is a need for competitive grants, competitive faculty and equipment. If the college is responsible for garnering the resources and working with the students, the college should govern the programs.
- There is less overlap in a decentralized model.

Comments in favor of a more centralized structure include the following.

- Some oversight is needed at the Provost's level.
- There is more efficiency with more centralization.
- There is more consistent record keeping in a centralized model.
- Given concerns some colleges have about resource allocation, a more centralized model may bring needed oversight.
- An increase in the workload of GPDs is a concern in a decentralized model.

- Some colleges and departments do not have the support staff resources needed for decentralization.

The comment was made that whether we have a completely centralized or decentralized model, we should focus on what functions are best performed in which place. Some things need to be centralized, such as interdisciplinary program development, allocation and reallocation of resources, common standards, reporting, responsibility for theses and dissertations, and investigating student problems. On the other hand, some responsibilities are already decentralized, such as teaching, awarding degrees, advising, and research. There may be some functions in the middle that should be shared: the admissions process, training of TAs, and funding.

Comments and suggestions resulting from the discussion are as follows.

- Support staff could be pooled to support a decentralized model.
- Change the structure of the current support staff to create Faculty Professional (FP) positions. Individuals in these positions could assume many of the duties currently performed by GPDs. This model is used currently in the MBA program.
- Most important is the relationship between the student and the faculty. Many of the faculty regard the GPD as the person who should work with students and advise them. Instead, all faculty need to advise and be involved with graduate students.
- Restructuring graduate studies is an opportunity to streamline processes such as compensation, admissions, and visas for international students.
- Data and statistical support are important. One specific area in which improvement is needed is the placement of our graduate students. It was suggested that the colleges should be responsible for determining the statistics and data needed to assess quality, viability and productivity. Going into SACS, we must have evidence of the process to monitor quality and make improvements.
- All policies related to graduate programs need to recognize disciplinary differences. There could be a central policy with the opportunity for modification by individual colleges.
- Program review is needed. It was suggested that there be annual reports but that the program reviews should be bi-annual instead of annual. Carol Simpson stated that the goal is to review every program – graduate and undergraduate – every five years. The review process will start in fall 2009 with six to eight programs.
- Colleges need flexibility and should have the authority to make some decisions within the colleges, such as the way unfunded assistantships are allocated and how the tuition requirement is met. Carol Simpson agreed that we need to look at what can and cannot be done concerning splitting TAs.
- Several Deans expressed concern about communication issues between ODURF and the Office of Finance related to stipends.
- Five focus areas related to graduate programs have emerged.
 - Decide on strategic programs in areas of need for employment skills.
 - Find the resources for programs, such as stipends, equipment, space, etc.
 - Find the faculty to direct and advise students.
 - Recruitment and retention of students.
 - Quality control, processes and procedures.

Carol Simpson summarized the discussion. She stated we should continue to do many of the things that are being done at the college level. Some responsibilities should be moved to the department level, but we must be careful not to overload GPDs. We should focus on the five areas noted above as a whole. In addition, in each College, an ad hoc group should be formed to review the documents prepared by Phil Langlais and develop recommendations on functions that should be performed centrally. Ad hoc groups in the colleges should be asked to develop recommendations on functions that would reside in the colleges and those that would be better centralized.

Dr. Simpson also stated that the University anticipates another budget cut soon. Stimulus funds will help in the short term, but there will be no significant new state resources. There will be a capital campaign before too long, and colleges should begin thinking of their needs as they relate to graduate programs. There is an increase in the University's overall enrollment this year, and this will bring additional tuition dollars; however, the tuition generated does not cover all the costs of instruction. Graduate students (in their role as GTAs) will be an important part of supporting the enrollment increase.

Identifying strategic programs in areas of need will be important. Some strategic areas have been identified at the University level: modeling and simulation, bioelectrics, nursing, and port and maritime programs. Any new programs must demonstrate student demand and must be self supporting. Each college will need to look at its programs in terms of viability. As noted previously, program reviews will be conducted. There needs to be a process so that programs that are not doing well have an opportunity to make progress; if they do not, funding could be withdrawn.

Several comments were made related to the selection and development of strategic programs.

- We should identify and support outstanding programs.
- Resource allocation is not always consistent with the priority of the program.
- We need to be strategic internally but pay attention to the external.
- We should make statements to highlight excellence.
- Our faculty compete for grants with faculty from other institutions that are larger and may be better funded, but we do not always have the depth of faculty expertise.
- We should look for ways other than salary to reward faculty. The College of Education has used PRT and IDC to reward faculty who worked with doctoral students. These faculty received \$1,000 per student in the departmental account for their use. Carol Simpson indicated she would like to have something like a personal development account for each faculty member. These accounts are available for PIs through the Research Foundation, but they are not available on the state side.

The discussion moved to the roles and responsibilities of GPDS, the structure of the Graduate Administrators Council, and the GAC task force report. Carol Simpson noted that the total responsibility for marketing and recruitment should not reside solely with the GPD and the department. Underlying support is needed and is available from marketing and media relations. Many GPDs want to do more marketing and recruitment but they need resources. The colleges and departments need print resources and a web presence. Web sites need to be up to date. At a

minimum, a listing of faculty and the doctoral students they are working with should be on the departmental web pages.

The following comments were made regarding the suggestion for a University Graduate Council to replace GAC.

- GAC is composed of an associate dean and a GPD from each college. Some faculty feel there is not enough faculty input or involvement.
- There should be a line of communication between GAC and Faculty Senate Committee C. Should the chair of Committee C be at least an ad hoc member of GAC?
- GAC's charge needs to be redefined.

During the lunch break, retreat attendees split into topic groups to discuss three issues: delivery of graduate courses through Distance Learning, electronic theses and dissertations, and training of TAs and use of TAs in the classroom. Reports from each group are as follows.

Delivery of graduate courses through Distance Learning: There is tension between growth and access to resources. Discussion revolved around how tools can be used to improve instruction, incentives for graduate programs to move to online modes, the impact of teaching at a distance, and CLT's role in supporting faculty. In summary, Distance Learning needs to provide tools to faculty, which they are doing, but other needs should also be supported.

Electronic theses and dissertations: A recommendation was made to move to electronic submission of theses and dissertations and to have them reside in the Library rather than the University Registrar's Office. GAC has looked at this issue and found that, although it sounds easy, there are issues and challenges as well as resource needs. Ginny O'Herron noted that the Library has concerns about making this change. The working group recommended that GAC continue to look at this issue with involvement from the Library and the University Registrar's Office.

Training of TAs and use of TAs in the classroom: An effort is underway through CLT to move some of the training of TAs on line and to provide more training for international students. An issue with the GTA Institute is that so much information is covered so quickly. CLT is looking at ways to give students what they need before they go into the classroom and to spread the training out during the semester.

Bill Heffelfinger and Steve Risch joined the group to discuss graduate and international admissions. They noted that the new document management system implemented this year has resulted in a quicker turnaround time. The GPD is notified within 24 hours when an online application is received, and there is an additional notification for each subsequent document received. Supporting documents may take longer. Admissions will notify students if their application is incomplete. Comments from the group noted that the new system looks good so far but that the test will come when more applications are submitted. There was a concern that packets received by the GPD are supposed to be complete, but some incomplete packets have

been received. Mr. Heffelfinger responded that this could happen when the Admissions staff finds something that causes the packet to become incomplete.

Carol Simpson stated that there is interest in building relationships to attract more international students. She asked if there are places where we might develop joint or dual degree programs. The College of Engineering and Technology is beginning to look at institutions in China for joint or dual programs. The Computer Science Department has talked to several European institutions, but tuition is a problem. We must determine whether the affiliation would serve ODU. Distance learning is a part of some joint and dual degree programs.

Interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary programs do not always fit into the college structure. When this happens, we need to determine who is responsible for the program. Ideas and suggestions about interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary programs are as follows.

- They could report to the Provost.
- Flexibility will be needed.
- Courtesy appointments will be needed.
- Ownership could rotate.
- The program could be managed by more than one college with a common GPD chosen by the departments involved.
- We could create an institute that offers the degree, similar to institutes that exist at UNC.

Carol Simpson provided an overall summary. The consensus of the retreat is that the University should explore the development of individual graduate schools. The documents prepared by Phil Langlais should be reviewed, revised and used to move in this direction. We need to determine what is essential, what has to be done centrally, and what is best done in the colleges. GPD responsibilities need to be reviewed. The colleges, GPDs, faculty, and the Faculty Senate should be engaged in the discussion. Some staff from the Office of Graduate Studies would be assigned to colleges.

Dr. Simpson stated that we must look at performance measures. External review will be a part of the review of academic programs. There will be an agreed-upon set of criteria for the external reviewers to look at. Dr. Simpson will work with the Deans to select programs to be reviewed in fall 2009. Some of the programs will have issues, some will be doing well, and some will be solid but with room for improvement. We will need to reallocate resources and focus on the highly productive programs and those that have the potential to become highly productive. Resource allocation and program productivity will be part of the next round of budget requests. Marty Sharpe and her staff will help reconcile differences in data, where these arise. Colleges will be asked for annual reports, which should include a special section on graduate programs, productivity, and viability.

Dr. Simpson also expressed her desire to focus on TAs and their role in the classroom. We need to make sure that the GTA Institute is effective and helpful and that the information presented is modern and relevant. The training may benefit from being split into smaller units. There were enough resources to support GAs this year, but there may need to be reallocations next year.

The Strategic Plan document is on the web and will be distributed the week of August 17. There will be an open forum on the Strategic Plan on September 11. Carol Simpson asked those present at the retreat to look at the draft Strategic Plan in relation to the existing and new plans for their areas.

There will be follow up on several issues raised during the day's discussion.

- University Professor guidelines (concern was expressed that the guidelines do not take into account disciplinary differences)
- Working with ODURF and the Office of Finance regarding splitting GAs
- Differential tuition
- Strategic programs – each college must determine criteria for their programs and identify those that are strong, solid, and not as strong.