

## **GRADUATE ADMINISTRATORS' COUNCIL MEETING**

**Thursday, August 13, 2020**

**via Zoom Meeting ID: 933 9022 3435**

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**Attendees:** Robert Wojtowicz, Bryan Porter, Missy Barber, Genny Conwell, Courtney Nishnick, Bill Heffelfinger, Craig Bayse, Dale Miller, David Chapman, David Cook, Dorothy Lockaby, Humberto Portellez, Jane Dane, Karen Eck, Khan Iftekharuddin, Lamar Reams, Mathew Schmidt, Muge Akpinar-Elci, Paul Curren, Regina Karp, Tisha Paredes, Wie Yusuf, Steven Risch, and Laura Ray.

### **Welcome**

Robert Wojtowicz greeted council members and guests.

### **Approval of Minutes**

Minutes from the Thursday, July 9, 2020 meeting were approved.

### **IELTS as a Waiver for the SPEAK Test – Laura Ray & Steve Risch**

IELTS was described as the British version of the TOEFL exam. It has been used for a while to satisfy the language requirement for admission to the University. There is interest in using the IELTS to replace the SPEAK test, like the TOEFL iBT, for screening applicants for graduate assistantships. Scores are received electronically and stored in Banner. However, the speaking sample is not usually collected. It can be investigated whether we can pay to receive this portion, as well.

Laura Ray, Assistant Director at the English Language Center (ELC), is now taking the lead at ELC. She indicated that a potential concern with using the IELTS is that it is not as academically focused as the TOEFL. It was noted that academic language understanding is typically harder to acquire than general language comprehension. However, allowing the IELTS would allow international students additional opportunities to be eligible for funding as Graduate Assistants (GAs). Some universities require a 7.0 on the IELTS speaking section, while others require a 7.5. ODU would look at taking between a 7.0 and 7.5 because this is typically the standard. The Consortium for Graduate Communication has more information available on this.

It was noted that admission language requirements and the SPEAK test have different purposes, and graduate assistants are often put into the classroom within their first semester without understanding of academic language regardless. There was also discussion about focused mentoring for graduate assistants. Ray indicated ELC is interested in helping with this need. It was noted this would be addressed in a Graduate Associate Deans' meeting to discuss costs and application.

### **Announcements**

- **Start of the Fall Semester Updates:** The semester is beginning on the original start date of Saturday, August 29th. The semester will go continuously with two holidays, Labor Day and Election Day. Classes will resume remotely after the Thanksgiving Break. The winter term schedule has not been officially announced but is also likely to return to the original schedule.

- **Graduate Student Forum Updates:** The forum was held on Monday, August 10, 2020 and was successful.

### **Graduate Enrollments – Jane Dane & Bill Heffelfinger**

Graduate student head count is up by about 14%, and FTE is also up by about 16%. Graduate numbers are strong and are likely to still be ahead at the start of the fall semester. Enrollment reports are created every Saturday, vetted, and made available in the dashboard about mid-week. Graduate enrollment tends to increase when the economy is not strong. Summer was very successful with registrations. Online courses have been very popular and working for ODU. ODU picked up students from other institutions that did not have course offerings online.

It was indicated there needs to be an official term for what is a “hybrid” class. Differentiation between essential and non-essential classes was explained, along with definitions of asynchronous and synchronous classes. A flexible hybrid class was described as an instructor physically teaching in the classroom with some students face-to-face and others assigned to another CRN taking the class online. The Office of the University Registrar has been careful with how they are advertising classes. Only on-campus classes have rooms assigned. ITS has added lecture capture technology to most of the rooms converted to classrooms that did not have the technology available prior. It was requested that a matrix be created for faculty and students to clearly understand the differences between methods of course delivery offerings. It was noted information is on the COVID website, along with pricing differences for courses. Students were also emailed this information. SCHEV has definitions that need to be followed. It was noted they will be brought into the next GAC meeting to review.

It was noted that the MBA program is seeing a lot of deferrals due to parents having children schooling from home. This led to further discussion, and flexibility was highly encouraged during this time. Students are likely to drop courses if they are required to attend class online at a certain day and time when they signed up for an online course. It was noted that international students are flexible, but they would like to access a recording at a later date. Faculty should be notified that if a class is advertised as asynchronous, they cannot require students to attend at a certain day and time. Courses must be consistent with how they are shown at registration. However, faculty can teach courses as they see appropriate. It was encouraged to include faculty in the decision making to decrease noncooperation.

### **Graduate Recruiting – Bill Heffelfinger & Elaine Ross**

It was stated that recruitment efforts for fall have transitioned to virtual platforms. To avoid duplication of effort, Colleges are encouraged to assign a point person to coordinate with the Office of Graduate Admissions.

### **Forms & Policies Committee**

**Members for 2020-2021 Academic Year.** Volunteers are needed to serve on the Forms & Policies Committee. Typically, it has been Associate Deans serving on this committee, but GPDs are also welcome to serve. Dale Miller indicated he would serve one more year. David Cook, David Chapman, and Craig Bayse offered to fill the open positions.

**Revisions to D9 form.** The current D9 form was shared. It was noted that there were aspects of the form that are not needed and do not match the Catalog policy. Proposed revisions include

correcting points 1 – 3 to match the Catalog policy about advancing to candidacy. Forms & Policies had not seen the revisions because the issues with the form arose in the last 24 hours. It was noted that the Graduate School controls the forms, unlike policies that have a full approval process. The D9 is only needed if students need to be reported as full-time and are only enrolled in one-credit per semester. D9 form revisions were approved by committee.

**Continuance Policy Revision – Extracurricular Activity Eligibility.** Revisions to the Continuance Policy were shared. It was noted that student athletes can continue participating in extracurricular activities while on academic probation at the undergraduate level, and language was needed for the graduate policy to match. It was highlighted that students separated, deactivated, suspended, or dismissed from a graduate program are ineligible to participate in any extracurricular activities. Concern was brought up about students dropping out of master's program after athletic eligibility has ended. It was noted that most students do in fact finish their programs at the conclusion of their athletic eligibility. It was also noted that many of these students are finishing their undergraduate degrees in less than four years, and then can easily finish their master's degrees before the eligibility expires. The policy was moved to approve.

#### **Other Topics for Discussion**

**Graduate Certification.** There was discussion about extension to graduate certification. It was noted that language was changed to extend certifications but was never finalized.

**University Libraries.** ODU library has been opened to those with ODU card since July. On August 26th, the library will be open to the public. Students do not need to come to campus for materials. Materials can be shipped to students. Also, many journals are electronic.

**Ph.D. Students Close to 8-year Time Limit.** Students are asking if the clock can be stopped due to COVID. There was question about justification about milestones not being met due to COVID. It was noted that extending the clock has always been possible, but recertifying courses must be done.

#### **Next Meeting**

The next Graduate Administrators' Council Meeting was scheduled for Thursday, September 10, 2020 from 8:30 – 10:30 am.

Meeting adjourned.