

Graduate Administrators Council (GAC)
Minutes for Thursday, September 12, 2013
Koch Hall Board Room
9:00 am to 10:30 am

Attending: Brenda Neuman Lewis, Chair, Missy Barber, Brian Payne, Robert Wojtowicz, Shirshak Dhali, Isao Ishibashi, Kevin DePew, Bill Heffelfinger, Lynn Ridinger, Gail Dickinson, Craig Bayse, Richardean Benjamin, Ravi Mukkamala, Ali Ardalan, Carolyn Rutledge

Welcome and Introductions

- Dr. Lewis welcomed the 2013 - 2014 Council members to the meeting. Everyone introduced themselves to the group.
- Dr. Lewis indicated that the Council includes all associate deans that work with graduate programs, a representative graduate program director from each college, Bill Heffelfinger, Director of Graduate Admissions, Mary Swartz, University Registrar, and Brian Payne, Vice Provost for Graduate and Undergraduate Programs.

Approval of May 9, 2013 Minutes

- Minutes were approved as submitted.

Announcements/Updates

- Continuance Data – Dr. Lewis provided Council with summary information relating to graduate students' academic performance for the 2012 – 2013 academic year. Associate Deans were sent information specific to their respective colleges. Dr. Lewis indicated the summary shows that academic performance has remained steady.
- Graduate Travel Awards Summary - Dr. Lewis explained to Council that the funds for the graduate travel awards were provided by SEES. She and Dr. Wojtowicz served on the committee to review and approve requests. All graduate students that met the guidelines and applied received funding. Dr. Lewis encouraged Council to market this benefit to their students. While it can only be used one time, it is still a helpful resource for travel support. The application deadline is one month prior to the applicant's travel date, so the application period is on-going. Information on the process is available on the SEES website.
- GTAI Institute Evaluations – Dr. Lewis shared the evaluation summary of the fall 2013 GTAI Institute. She pointed out that the results were very good. On a scale of 1 – 5, most sessions were solidly above a 4. Dr. Lewis advised Council that the Provost expects follow-up within the colleges. There should be on-going training for GTAs, e.g., mentoring, guidance, and support. Dr. Lewis mentioned that there were a number of late registrations as well as a much larger group than we normally have. She also reminded the associate deans about their responsibility to issue certificates of completion to the new GTAs.

Dr. DePew made a point that there was an increase in the number of GTAs because there are fewer adjuncts and there are more courses.

Dr. Dickinson mentioned the issue of GTA access to Blackboard prior to completion of the GTAI Institute. Dr. Lewis said that it would be a topic of discussion for the planning of the spring GTAI Institute.

- New Graduate Student Orientation – Dr. Lewis said that the evaluations for the New Graduate Student Orientation were good. She did mention that some students said the information was redundant; however, only two speakers were the same for both the GTAI Institute and New Graduate Student Orientation. Also, she pointed out their presentations were different for each event.
- PFF Event on September 20, 2013 from noon to 2:00 pm in the Cape Charles Room in Webb Center – The topic is Classroom Management.
- Graduate Administration Workshop - This event is scheduled for Wednesday, October 16th in the Hampton/Newport News Room in Webb Center. If you have questions or concerns that you would like to see addressed at the workshop, please let Dr. Lewis know. Points of discussion will include changes to policies and current issues relating to graduate students. Dr. Lewis said that she may call on some Council members to participate.
- GSO Mentoring Workshop – October 24, 2013
- CV Writing Workshop – November 15, 2013. Dr. Lewis said that faculty facilitators are needed for this event from each college.
- Fall 2013 GAC Schedule – Dr. Lewis has a conflict with the meeting scheduled for September 26. Council agreed to cancel the meeting for that date and meet on the next scheduled meeting day of Thursday, October 10, 2013.

RCR Policy

- Dr. Lewis reviewed the RCR policy and the requirement for the completion of the RCR modules has been in effect since 2010. Changes have been made to the language to clarify the policy. The changes include adding “admitted or readmitted,” “degree-seeking or licensure,” and changing the time frame for completion from one year to 12 credit hours. Dr. Lewis indicated the change to credit hours rather than one semester, which was Council’s recommendation, was in response to a concern from Faculty Senate about non-traditional students and providing enough time for completion.
- Dr. Lewis discussed the process for enforcement of the requirement. She advised that students not completing the RCR training will receive a hold. If they are attending full-time, it will be after they have registered for their second semester.
- Dr. Lewis provided Council with a copy of the RCR policy incorporated with the latest changes. She pointed out that the RCR completion has been separated from Human and Animal Subjects training. RCR completion is a graduation requirement and the Human and Animal Subjects training is tied to research.
- Dr. Lewis advised that some degree programs have incorporated RCR completion as part of a course requirement. She encouraged the associate deans to consider this option for their programs.
- Dr. Lewis requested a motion to approve the changes to the RCR policy. The motion was approved.
- Dr. Lewis will present the revised policy to Committee C.
- The online graduate catalog will be updated to reflect the change.

Graduate Policies

- Dr. Lewis said that there were some graduate policies that needed to be reviewed for possible revision and language clean up. She asked Dr. Wojtowicz to chair a subcommittee to review the policies and degree requirements. Other committee members are Mary Swartz, Gail Dickinson, and Ali Ardalan. Dr. Lewis asked Council to advise the committee if they see any issues that need to be addressed.

Graduate Certificates Project – Update

- Dr. Lewis reviewed the goals and the status of those goals.
 1. Meet SCHEV's requirement to notify them of all graduate certificate programs. Certificates were submitted to SCHEV in batches by college. With the help of a small committee and Jeanie Kline, the last batch of certificates will be submitted to SCHEV tomorrow. It has been a very complex process. Any new certificates or changes to existing certificates will be sent individually.
 2. Develop a procedure to be able to identify certificate programs, students enrolled, and their completion dates. At present, there is no way to identify students, the certificate programs they may be working on, or when they complete the programs. Some certificates are being awarded and the Registrar's Office is not being notified. The committee consists of Bill Heffelfinger, Mary Swartz, Jeanie Kline, Laura Vann, and Michael Moore.

The committee is making progress. Each certificate now has a code in Banner. Each college has five to six certificates with the plan that more will be developed. Bill Heffelfinger is working on an admission page so that non-degree students can be admitted directly into a certificate program. His office will work with faculty during the admission process to ensure students have the right background. However, degree seeking students will not be captured with this method. They are working on how to capture them.

- If we want to make certificates a more attractive option, there will be a significant increase to the workload of graduate program directors.
- SACS requirements also need to be considered. If the certificate is not based on current coursework, then it will need to be approved by SACS.
- There is some concern about CAGs from SCHEV's perspective. Because of this, they want program approval. Jeanie Kline will be at the next GAC meeting to discuss this issue further. Specifically, there are concerns about certificates that require a high number of credit hours to complete. What is the benefit to the student when they could take a few more credit hours and get a degree.
- Dr. Ishibashi asked about the process to create a new certificate. Dr. Lewis advised there was a template that needs to be completed to go with the curriculum change form. She said that she would provide copies at the next meeting. Certificates must go through an approval process within the college and then to Academic Affairs. Dr. Lewis also said the process would be discussed at the Graduate Administration Workshop.

Master's Student Notification of Full-Time Status Form

- Effective with the 2013 – 2014 catalog, a Master’s student in the final semester of study may register for fewer than 9 credit hours and be considered full-time.
- Dr. Lewis requested that Council let their faculty and GPDs know about the change.
- Dr. Lewis will send Council the new form electronically. It will also be posted on the Graduate Studies website.

Continuous Enrollment Policy

- Dr. Ardalan updated Council on the Continuous Enrollment Policy and the recommendations for change. The current policy states that once a student has advanced to candidacy, he must register for one credit hour in every semester until graduation. There is some concern about students being required to register for summer because some students do not work on their dissertations in the summer and also they may not have access to faculty during that time. GAC formed a subcommittee to review. Dr. Wojtowicz, Dr. Ardalan, Dr. Akan, and Dr. Ishibashi were on the committee.
- Dr. Ardalan said they looked at the pros and cons of student registration. If a student is not using University resources, why are we requiring them to register? It is possible that a student may be using other resources. It is very difficult to follow students at that stage. Jim Duffy was consulted to determine the amount of revenue that could possibly be lost if the registration requirement was changed. He advised that the revenue loss would not be a significant impact to the University. It would also be the faculty members’ responsibility to ensure that the students that needed to register would do so.
- There are other issues that need to be addressed like the definition of candidacy, also students are being charged for the use of University resources, but faculty are not being compensated.
- There are also ethical questions because summer school as a semester does not impact PhD students. If faculty are not on campus guiding students, it seems disingenuous to require that students be registered.
- Graduate PhD students can request a leave of absence, but that should be used only as a one-time request.
- If students do not register for every semester, they are assessed for those semesters at graduation. For some students, that is a significant amount. It is also not a good way for students to end their academic careers at ODU.
- Dr. Ardalan said that they will share their recommendations at the next meeting.
- Concern was expressed regarding impact to time for degree completion. However, many schools do not require summer registration.

Health Insurance Update – Brian Payne

- Dr. Payne is on a University-wide committee that is working on the issue of health insurance for GTAs. A tentative plan has been developed to offer health insurance as a part of the funding package for GTAs.
- The University has contributed \$300K for GTA health insurance. The proposal includes the University providing 60% of the cost, the college providing 20%, and the student providing 20%. The initial rate estimate provided by Jenny Foss was \$1400, now the estimate is closer to \$2000. They are working on an RFP now for a policy that will cover GTAs and international students. Participation will be mandatory. Dr. Payne says they hope to have something together by the end of the year or Spring 2014.

- There are issues with how to fund the program and also they need to look at the impact of the Affordable Health Care Act.

Full-time Designation for Graduate Assistants – Brian Payne

- There have been some issues with defining “full-time” for graduate assistants. Students funded through ODURF can work 6 hours and be considered full-time, but students on S5 funding are required to take 9 credit hours to be considered full-time.
- One proposal would be to dictate the rules by the activity. GTAs and GAAs would adhere to the current policy of 9 hours. GRAs would only be required to take 6. This would be ok for international students because they can get a waiver.
- Dr. Payne asked for Council to share proposal with the Graduate Program Directors before the next meeting and get their feedback so that it can be discussed further.

Graduate Enrollment – Brian Payne

- Dr. Payne said two tasks have been identified.
 1. Program Review (GAC will be collectively involved in the process.)
 2. Graduate enrollment projections are needed from each department.