Minutes of University Graduate Council  
January 16, 2008

Present: Jay Radke (AG), Rachael Ortego (A & A), Priscilla Wisner (BUS), Mark Nelson (EHHD), Robert Maher (ENGR), Carl Fox (DGE), Robert Rydell (L&S-Letters), Yves Idzerda (L&S-Science), Rita Cheek (NURS), Ed Dea (STUDENT), David Weaver (FC).

Also attending were MaryKay West (DGE), Jen Jencso (DGE), and Donna Negaard (DGE).

Meeting commenced at 10:03 a.m. in 114 Sherrick.

Open Campus Forum

a) No one came forward.

Introductions

As there were two substitutes attending for regular members, everyone introduced themselves.

DGE Staff Reports

• Graduate Info Night – Carl Fox

  a) To be held in March
  b) For MSU juniors and seniors with GPAs of 3.5 and 3.0 or higher, respectively.
  c) DGE will present information on what graduate school is all about and recruit our own MSU students
  d) Planning to involve each college—each will have their own rep to talk about what their departments offer
  e) Possibly include MSU graduate alumni who are still in the area.

• T Shirt Design Competition

  a) Carl’s idea to elevate visibility of graduate education on campus
  b) Plan is for it to be an annual event; the Dean of Architecture will assist in choosing the winning design
  c) There will be a financial reward to the winning student so that DGE will own the copyright
  d) DGE will sell the printed t shirts, with all extra funds going into a graduate student support fund (to help grads attend professional meetings to present their papers).

• Graduate Seminars
a) DGE is changing seminars topics (to be more professional development), times and venues
b) Possible topics include: (1) working in industry (2) academia (3) for non profits; (4) what grads should know about business practice (5) understanding intellectual property (patents, copyrights, trademarks) (6) research ethics (7) engineering for non-engineers (8) teaching for GTAs
c) DGE is surveying MSU students re: best time and delivery type
d) BTC will video tape each seminar (time permitting); Carl’s “Grant Writing” seminar is on the DGE website.

- Administrative Staff Update
  
a) DGE will present updated policies and procedures to MSU administrative associates and answer their questions.

- Open House
  
a) DGE will hold an Open House for faculty, staff, and students
b) To meet DGE staff and to unveil the selected grad T shirt design.

- MUS Graduate Education Initiative
  
a) Handout attached
b) Board of Regents has discussed the proposal and it is on their website
c) The proposal is to (1) fund new grad student fellowships through increased stipend levels for RAs and TAs and (2) to consider changing NON-resident RAs and TAs to resident status for tuition purposes
d) Proposal is to connect to economic development to move the state of Montana forward
e) New programs in the future will require more assistantships.

- Research Expo – Jen Jencso
  
a) April 15 – a day to celebrate all research on MSU campus
b) For the first time, graduate research will be added to undergraduate research
c) Will increase graduate exposure on campus
d) Grads will submit ½ page abstracts of their research by March 7; abstracts will be published as further incentive to participate (CV citations)
e) The Governor, Commissioner of Higher Education, legislators, and community will be invited.

- GTA Training
  
a) Jen is setting up focus groups in the spring for campus faculty members to discuss what GTAs need in their training.
Professional Paper Credits for PhD – Jen Jencso

a) If a student does not have a MS degree, can take 18 – 28 dissertation credits
b) A department has asked if they can put professional paper (575) on their PhD Program of Study (to count in the research section); at present, this is not allowed
c) On transcripts, 575 shows as “professional paper” and 590/690 shows as “research”
d) In sciences, published professional papers are equal to or more important than dissertations
e) Questions were raised as to whether this would dilute research credits or if 575s would add value to the student’s work
f) There are research activities that are not connected to a student’s thesis or dissertation (such as a professor’s research for a grant)
g) There is a clear need to clarify what the specific requirements are that a student is signing up for
h) DGE does not approve 575s
i) There are “common” course numbers (570, 575, 576, 590, etc) which need to have their descriptions reviewed for appropriateness
j) The possibility of separating out “research” credits from “writing” credits was brought up
k) Jen will ask the department that originally inquired what their requirements are for their PhD and how a 575 would fit into the requirements; and, she will ask if a 570 would work instead of a 575.

Graduate Assistant Tuition Waiver Plan – Carl Fox

a) MSU has a problem with the relationship of tuition waivers and Grad Assistants
b) Departments are given an allocation and they determine the number of GTAs they can afford (based on past history)
c) For unknown reasons, some departments have lost GTA money while other departments continue to have funds
d) The tuition waiver allocation process is historic; the MSU Budget Office follows what appears to be a Legislative requirement not to award any more GTA tuition waivers than would exceed 2% of fall enrollment
e) The Budget Office gives DGE a dollar number which is divided into FTEs to create tuition waivers
f) tuition waivers are to be only for TAs, but this is not always the case
g) To become a resident of Montana, grad students (who are TAs) cannot take more than 6 credits per semester—students will go where they can take 9 credits
h) RAs receive funding from grants and contracts—non-resident tuition is high
i) Carl has talked to all Deans—idea is to bring tuition waivers back to be awarded in conjunction with grad assistantships (TAs or RAs)
j) Move toward changing non-resident TAs to resident TAs for tuition purposes
k) Tuition waiver plan has to be finalized by the end of the month so departments will know how many tuition waivers can be allocated
l) DGE is gathering minimum stipend per hour for GTAs information from peer universities
m) An evaluation of the whole RA/TA allocation system by all departments is needed, to help departments understand the process and to help with department recruitment
n) MSU is not competitive with most peer universities—they have full grad tuition waivers and offer health insurance or discounted health insurance
o) At MSU, the undergrad emphasis is to recruit NON-resident students
p) The State of Montana gives money for each resident student (nothing for non-resident); the proposal before the Board of Regents to change non-resident TAs to resident TAs (to make MSU TAs more nationally competitive) will increase the state money to the MSU budget
q) There is a proposal to reduce the MSU “full time” graduate equivalent from 12 credits to 9 credits.

**Challenge Courses – Donna Negaard**

To be discussed at a future meeting.

**Comprehensive Exams – Jen Jencso**

a) How much should DGE oversee comp exams?
b) Departments administer them differently and at different times which can cause confusion among students and for DGE
c) Jen feels that a comprehensive exam should not be administered until 2/3 of coursework is complete, in accordance with current policy
d) Confusion arises as to whether the exam is really a pre-qualifier or a comprehensive if it is administered too early
e) Departments also have different formats for performing comp exams; the student’s committee might alter the process to meet specific circumstances
f) There is a need to clarify exactly what a comprehensive exam entails—provide a basic structure that defines pass or fail
g) Jen will contact each department to ask them to write out their comp exam process for both MS and PhD (to be included in the MSU catalog).

**Council Committee Reports – moved to February meeting**

**Elections for Spring – Carl Fox**

a) In the fall, members agreed to delay elections until Spring 2008
b) Schedule shows that almost all members have “expired”
c) Carl wants terms to be one, two and three years—so that 1/3 of members will be on Council
d) Ives, Rob Maher, and Rita—terms are up in May 2009; Bob Rydell is up in May 2008

e) Mary Kay will send a current listing of all members to members so they can fill in their perceived end of term dates.

Approval of Minutes of December 13, 2007

a) Corrections: Challenge Courses c) please delete "Business department...; Tuition Waivers e) change to FTE

Motion: Priscilla motioned and Bob Rydell seconded to approve minutes as amended. Approved by unanimous vote.

Meeting adjourned at noon.

NEXT UGC MEETING Wednesday, February 20, 10:00 – noon

114 Sherrick Hall

MaryKay West, Secretary
Division of Graduate Education