

University of Massachusetts at Amherst
Graduate Council of the Faculty Senate
D. Anthony Butterfield, Chair
2005-2006

Minutes of General Membership Meeting
Wednesday, March 15, 2006
Goodell 508

Eighteen (18) individuals attended the meeting, including Xiao Zhou, from the Education Department attending as a guest conducting observational research. Also in attendance were Maurianne Adams, Jane Baran, Julia Beyer, Tony Butterfield, James L. Craig, David Dudek, Ramakrishna Janawamy, Nigar Khan, Arthur Kinney, John Mullin, Philip Nasca, Arslan Razmi, Linda Shea, Pat Stowell, Uri Strauss, H. Martin Wobst, and Juan Zamora

I. Welcome and Introductions

Chair Butterfield called the meeting to order at 12:01. He noted that the meeting would need to end by 1:15 in order to accommodate preparation for the next meeting scheduled in the meeting room.

II. Approval of Minutes

The minutes from the last meeting on February 15, 2005 were unanimously approved without changes.

III. Comments by the Graduate Dean

Dean Mullin updated the council concerning seven (7) Graduate School priority topics he has previously brought to the Council's attention.

a. "Thesis-on-a-disk" - Continues to work well. There is continued surprise at great adoption rates by graduate students.

b. Graduate Student Monitoring/Tracking System – Should be in place by this fall.

c. Mentoring

The Graduate School is currently conducting a 100% survey of graduate students of the state of advising.

d. Graduate Fellowships

The Dean has found/reallocated an additional \$50,000 in the Budget for Graduate Fellowships for this year.

e. Diversity Fellowships

Working to get money back for recruiting purposes

f. Certificate Program Development - The Dean noted that meetings are continuing in the development process of three Certificate Programs - Islamic Studies, Medieval Studies and Qualitative Research.

g. Tracking Accepted Graduate Student Rejections – Marilyn Blaustein is working on the new data collection form so we can begin more systematically determining the reason why students who are accepted to the Graduate School decide not to accept and attend UMASS. We are sending this data collection form out with this year's acceptance letters.

IV. Old Business

A. Graduate Fellowship Proposed Changes

Martin Wobst, chair of the Fellowship Sub-committee began this discussion focusing on the GPD Feedback Report distributed prior to the meeting. He said it seemed clear where GPD's agreed and where there is continued confusion. He mentioned that all seemed to agree that increasing the fellowship budget and increasing the amount of fundraising dedicated to fellowship funding were good ideas. He said that the GPD's were equally divided on the other proposal items and that the GPD's needed to be reminded of the current criteria for selecting Fellowship applicants.

He discussed that the most disagreement was with the new incoming student recruitment plan. He seemed critical of GPD's who could not imagine how they could put together recruiting plans even though there might be specific goals their departments have. He said there was disagreement on the acceptability of 1 or 2 year fellowships when taking into account any impact on reducing the number of fellowships. Lastly, he indicated that he thought GPD's expressed the perspective that it would be difficult to support fellowships with additional funds from their departments or schools.

Chair Butterfield commented that he too saw clear agreements and disagreements but saw some a bit differently. He indicated that he saw significant disagreement among the GPD's concerning the earmarking and allocation of fellowship funding between current and incoming students. He did confirm with Martin that the fellowship awards for this year were already raised.

The Dean indicated that all these fellowship ideas and issues will be on the agenda at the annual GPD retreat in the Fall, 2006. The Dean also discussed the idea of incentives in relation to these fellowships. He said he was concerned about giving to the "rich" departments but that active researchers should be rewarded. Good research gets good graduate students. He said one of the key questions is should fellowship awards be based on department plans or the student.

Discussion continued with members making several points.

1. Perhaps fellowships should be allocated based on needs of the department
2. There should be an attempt to raise the graduate student standards using fellowships
3. Is the system really broken and does it need fixing? Is it that unusual that only 1 out of 4 new student fellowship recipients come to UMASS? We need a clearer picture of why students do not attend. The Dean mentioned that we should be getting some of this information this year. (See Item III.g. above)

B. Post-Doctorate/Research Assistant Issue

It was noted that a Joint Task Force of four (4) individuals has been formed with the Research Council to study the issue of the use of Post-Doctorate positions rather than using graduate research assistants. The two Graduate Council members of the Task Force are Philip Nasca and Tobias Baskin.

C. Minority Grants

We cannot do Minority Grants as an institution but we can do other programs. We are currently monitoring the

AGEP program being put together by the NSF. Janet Rifkin has been given the lead in putting together our proposal to the NSF.

V. New Business

A. Re-admission Fee

Pat Stowell reviewed this topic and began by distributing a proposal to revise the current re-admission fee policy as well as a report on fact finding to support the proposal. The proposal was to cap back charges at \$2,000 for re-admitted students.

Pat indicated that they had studied 300 re-admissions and found that students with large re-admission fees rarely come back. It was noted that 14 students have re-applied since January 2006 and that 6 of these individuals had re-admit fees totaling over \$3,000. Those 6 individuals have not followed-up since being notified of these re-admit fees.

A discussion followed in which most members seemed to agree that we wanted students to come back and finish and that we wanted an equitable system. There was an inquiry about how students that get a Leave of Absence are handled. Pat noted that students who are on a Leave of Absence are still active students and they pay a program fee every semester.

The proposal to cap the maximum re-admission fee at \$2,000 was slightly modified to limit its implementation for a 1 year trial basis in order to assess its impact. This modified proposal was moved, seconded, and unanimously approved.

B. Graduate Student Grant Services (GSGS)

The Dean noted that the GSGS has been remarkably successful. GSGS funding that has been eliminated in the past has been reinstated. At this time, the plan is to start expanding their activities and continue building on their successful programs.

C. Program/Course Approvals from ASCC

COMPLIT 551, COMPLIT 552, COMPLIT 753, and AFROAM 605 Course Proposals were recommended for approval. Linda Shea explained that these course proposals initially had some minor problems, such as missing the disability accommodation. However, they were revised and resubmitted. The Graduate Council approved these courses unanimously.

VI. Sub-Committee Reports

A. ASCC – See above **Item V.C.**

B. ALANA – No Report

C. Fellowship – 24 awards made in 21 different programs. The Dean noted that he had been sent two “nastygrams” concerning delayed response times to fellowship applications. Martin Wobst indicated there are always time pressures in responding to the fellowship applications but the sub-committee does a very good job considering the other responsibilities of the members of the sub-committee. This sentiment seemed to be affirmed by the rest of the Graduate Council.

D. Ethics

1. Reminder about the project working with Nanotech to develop new ethics course.
2. Reminder about the April 14 Ethics program on campus.

E. Mentoring

1. Reminder that the Request for Proposal (RFP) is out and is linked to the Graduate School home page web-site (http://www.umass.edu/gradschool/mentor_grant.htm). The RFP is directed to UMASS on-campus Graduate Programs and is for Grants for Graduate Student Mentoring. The applications should be submitted by April 16.
2. The members of the Mentoring sub-committee have completed their series of luncheons with GPD's to discuss mentoring graduate students.
3. The Provost is reorganizing mentoring and teaching. Graduate School funding for mentoring is probably going to be allocated to the Provost.
4. Chair Butterfield mentioned that he referred the Research Council to the Graduate Council Mentoring Sub-committee because the Research Council wishes to pursue activities on this topic which the sub-committee has previously addressed.

F. Travel – None**G. Student Affairs**

1. The sub-committee is currently developing design criteria for the new interior design for the Graduate Lounge.
2. TGIF event is held every Friday.

H. Special Admission – no report**I. Statute of Limitations**

The sub-committee has not met again. Currently pulling data together from 4-year old survey and Julia Beyer's GPD survey. The sub-committee plans to review this data after Spring Break.

VII. Comments by Administrative Officers, et al.

Comments were made by Uri Strauss, President of the Student Senate. He indicated that students seem to be having problems with academic grievances. He said that when students cannot resolve academic grievances they go to GEO. However, GEO can only help with labor issues and cannot help them with academic issues.

Uri said that there is a general graduate student meeting in early May in which he will monitor and advise the Graduate Council of any exploitation issues raised by the students. Chair Butterfield inquired about the nature of these issues. Dean Mullin said that one major issue has reached his office. He indicated that if there is a general sense of frustration among graduate students it is important to get those issues out in the open and discussed at the Graduate Council and the Dean's office so they can be better understood.

VIII. Adjournment

Chair Butterfield noted the next meeting was on April 19, even though that Wednesday is a Monday class schedule. The meeting was then adjourned at 1:10 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
David E. Dudek