

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

Minutes of General Membership Meeting
Wednesday, September 14, 2005
Goodell 508

Twenty three (23) individuals attended the meeting. In attendance were Jane Baran, Tobias Baskin, Thomas Heydt-Benjamin, Julia Beyer, Tony Butterfield, James L. Craig, David Dudek, Kevin Klement, Josh Kroner, Ernie May, Bill McClure, Lori Moss, John Mullin, Jose Ornelas, Arslan Razmi, Margara Russotto, Linda Shea, Patricia Stowell, Uri Strauss, Peter Tamas, Nate Therien, H. Martin Wobst, and Juan C. Zamora

I. Welcome and Introductions

Chair Butterfield called the meeting to order at Noon. He welcomed everyone to the meeting and the new year. He especially welcomed new members and John Mullin in his first meeting as the “non interim” Dean of the Graduate School. He asked that each member provide a briefly introduction to the meeting group after which time each attendee introduced himself or herself.

II. Approval of Minutes

Meetings from the last meeting on May 11, 2005 were approved unanimously without discussion and without alteration.

III. Comments by the Graduate Dean

- a. Thesis-on-a-disk is up and running. The library has implemented the technology. This technology helps to reduce printing costs for students. Another advantage of this technology is that it can more easily record dissertations in non-English languages as well as dissertations in multiple media, such as music and art.
- b. The paperless application initiative is moving forward. Currently, 70% of applications come in online. Although we currently have the capability of a paperless process, applications that come-in electronically online are printed out on paper for processing. Training this fall of Graduate Program Directors (GPD's) will take place.
- c. Efforts to more closely monitor Graduate School students' program status at UMASS are in the beginning stages. According to a study by the Sloan School, there is a problem in the United States that over 53% of graduate students drop out. Our efforts to monitor students are required to determine if we have a problem here and, if so, to determine the nature of the problem so that we will be able to report on and address this issue.

III. Comments by the Graduate Dean (continued)

d. We are continuing to experience declines in international student enrollment. However, we have four (4) signed Memoranda of Understanding (MOU's) with schools or foundations in Vietnam, Pakistan, China, and Iraq.

e. Study was done by UMASS Outreach Office indicating our lack of summer programs. It seems few faculty are interested in providing graduate summer opportunities. This area needs to be more closely examined to see what should or could be done.

f. The Graduate School needs to more accurately collect, compile, and analyze data about individuals who are accepted into the Graduate School but decline the offer. There is currently a system in place that collects limited data on a card. There should be an initiative to revise the data collection format and system.

g. There currently are three (3) graduate students coming to UMASS because of the hurricane damage to Louisiana. Polymer Science is currently recruiting six (6) Ph.D. students from Tulane. (Questions were raised from others at the meeting whether these students would stay at UMASS, and comments were made expressing the perceived inappropriateness of UMASS taking advantage of other school's misfortunes by our recruiting efforts.)

h. The Graduate School has enrolled seven (7) additional students from our efforts as part of the Northeast Alliance for Graduate Education and the Professoriate. (NEAGEP). NEAGEP is a minority student recruitment initiative by schools in the Northeast part of the United States. Currently we have 57 students on campus. It is good to see the continued success of our participation in this initiative relative to the results achieved by some other schools that are a part of this alliance.

IV. Sub-Committee Assignments

Chair Butterfield reminded everyone that much of the work of the Graduate Council is done by the sub-committees. He noted that an individual does not need to be a member of the Graduate Council in order to be a member of a sub-committee. Chairpersons of sub-committees, though, should be Graduate Council members.

Chair Butterfield briefly reviewed the membership of each sub-committee.

ASCC - Current membership and chairperson is OK.

ALANA - Pankaj Bansal needs replacing, should have two students on this sub-committee

Fellowship - Current membership and chairperson is OK.

Ethics - Needs a student

IV. Sub-Committee Assignments (Continued)

Five-Campus - is a committee which is staffed only when a need is identified.

Currently there is no need so the sub-committee does not need to be staffed.

Mentoring - Current membership and chairperson is OK.

Student Affairs - Needs student replacements

Travel - After noting that this committee needed a new faculty member, Chair Butterfield volunteered new GC member Arslan Razmi.

V. Old Business

A. Travel Committee Report

The Travel Committee Report was provided by Kevin Klement. He briefly reviewed the GPD Survey results which indicated that there is an issue regarding allocating the same number of travel grants to academic departments regardless of the number of graduate students in each department. Chair Butterfield also briefly reviewed the report and indicated that the fixed number of six (6) grants allocated to each department will probably need to be modified based on these results.

B. Electronic submission and approval procedures for course and program changes.

Discussion indicated that this capability already exists. The issue is how do we enforce this process. It was concluded that the Faculty Senate Office will enforce the electronic submission since it is that office that originally receives course and program requests. However, it is expected that parallel processing (both paper and paperless) will continue until further notice. This is also an issue for the Academic Matters Council.

C. Advising and mentoring of graduate students

An informal survey of graduate students indicated that 10% said they had no advisers. There were no detailed results (i.e., by program) from the survey, just summary aggregate results for the whole Graduate School.

Many members present considered this an important issue to address and fix because it is perceived to directly affect the success of graduate students and the drop-out rate. It did seem that most members agreed that the Ph.D. student drop-out rate reported by the Sloan School was a national disgrace and we wanted to address the issue at our Graduate School.

D. Funding of Graduate Students

This discussion focused on both funding for new Graduate School applicants and as well as funding for students in their second and subsequent years of graduate work. It was noted that these are important issues because they impact our ability to attract and retain high quality graduate students. Funding also directly impacts our ability to help a graduate student succeed and not drop-out from the program before earning the graduate degree. As a result of this discussion, the Fellowship Sub-Committee was charged with developing recommendations to be reviewed at the October meeting of the Graduate Council with the intent to submit a document to the Dean in time for recommendations to be considered for the November budget draft of the Graduate School.

Major points of the discussion:

1. \$250,000 is not sufficient fellowship funding for 68 graduate programs. Many outstanding applications must be rejected. It was also mentioned that the separate deaneries within the Graduate School vary in their ability to attract and gain outside funding to help support their graduate students. Should this differential impact the overall allocation of funding and, if so, how?
2. There is a major issue concerning how the fellowship program should be used. Should it be used to attract new graduate candidates or should it be used to fund existing students? This was an unresolved issue of today's discussion. Only \$77,000 of the \$250,000 this past academic year was used for new student fellowships. We do need a way to attract the higher quality candidates to the school and fellowship grants can play an important role.
3. If fellowships are to be used to attract new candidates, the 1-year term of the fellowships is a significant issue. It was suggested that we need 3 year graduate fellowships to attract new high quality candidates. Josh Kroner also indicated that \$15,000 was the annual grant amount that candidates would like when they evaluate the benefits of that fellowship. However, it was noted that we do not know how many students we are losing by only offering single year \$8,000 fellowship grants. We need to gather some information from this year's application and admission cycle.
4. It was noted that the change in procedure by which fellowship grants are now paid through the financial aid office directly and adversely impacts the ability of fellowship students to get other financial aid because the fellowship grant is included in determining financial need. This does not allow fellowship students to improve their quality of graduate life through earning a fellowship grant.
5. Mentoring and assisting students to apply for outside grants were discussed as, potentially,

an important aspect of improving the funding issue.

D. Funding of Graduate Students (continued)

6. The ability to hire external contractors, or “gypsy faculty”, as teaching assistants at lower costs than the costs of providing teaching assistant funding to graduate students is a major problem.

7. Dean Mullin explicitly said this is the year to address this funding issue. He asked the Graduate Council bring him a recommendation in time to incorporate into the budget draft in November.

VI. New Business

A. Name change for Exercise Science

This name change for the Exercise Science Department to the Department of Kinesiology was moved, seconded, and unanimously approved with little discussion.

B. Off-Campus Internship Policy

Through this discussion Dean Mullin made it clear that this topic represents the beginning of a broader and more comprehensive discussion about “tightening-up” the statute of limitations for students. It was discussed that some students are here too long and that the practice of extending statute of limitations for students adversely limits Graduate School resources available for new students, who perhaps might be successful in their graduate work.

As a result, Chair Butterfield ended the discussion, noting that it needs to be continued at the next meeting. It was also noted that on Thursday, September 22, there is a GPD meeting at which time this topic would also be discussed.

Major points and questions raised in this discussion:

1. Josh Kroner distributed and reviewed a revised policy document which also included data gathered about number of semesters students used externships. He noted that there was some limited abuse of the program that required a formal policy on limitations.
2. The 6 semester limitation for Ph.D. students corresponds to only 2 complete years of work since the summer semester is included, resulting in 3 “semesters” each year.
3. Don’t we need to define an externship, its intent, and how it fits into a program of study?
4. If we are going to raise the accountability for students to complete their program within an established statute of limitation, better tracking and monitoring of progress as well as better follow-up with and mentoring of students needs to be done.

C. Course Approvals

There were no courses to approve. Chair Butterfield told the ASCC sub-committee members that he had two course/program approvals copied and ready to distribute to them at the conclusion of today's meeting.

D. Agenda for 2005-2006

John Mullin discussed the need for a "Quality of Life" Graduate Council Committee to examine issues concerning the needs and wants of graduate students. He indicated that collectively as a graduate school we need to be more concerned and focused on the quality of graduate life outside of the classroom, including such topics as graduate housing.

Chair Butterfield said that this topic seemed to be appropriate for the Student Affairs Sub-committee. However, no time-line for this initiative was identified or assigned to the Student Affairs Sub-Committee.

VI. Sub-Committee Reports

A. ASCC - none

B. ALANA - none

C. Fellowship - none

D. Ethics - Jane Baran provided the report.

The committee is currently increasing its work activities.

E. Mentoring - Jane Baran provided the report.

1. The sub-committee has worked hard to complete the assessment of mentoring.

A White Paper has been submitted to the Dean of the Graduate School.

2. The Sub-committee was hosting a program on mentoring. Jane encouraged members to attend and to publicize the event. She indicated there is a website.

3. The sub-committee was beginning the process of conducting small focus groups of GPD's on the topic of mentoring needs and how the graduate school could help.

4. They have preliminary data from the student survey.

F. Special Admission- Tony Butterfield provided the report.

One student was admitted.

VI. Sub-Committee Reports (Continued)

G. Student Affairs - Julie Beyer provided the Report

1. The Graduate Lounge is re-opening this coming Monday, September 19. She indicated this is a direct result of the work of this committee. She indicated that graduate students had been sent an e-mail about this re-opening and, after a request from the meeting, agreed to send an informative e-mail on this re-opening to members of the Graduate Council. She indicated that it was important to encourage graduate students to use this facility because otherwise they could lose access to this type of social gathering place on campus.
2. A YAHOO internet discussion group has been established to connect and encourage interactions among UMASS graduate students.

H. Travel Committee - provided report earlier in agenda (Item V.A).

VIII. Comments

No comments were offered.

IX. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 1:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
David E. Dudek