

University of Massachusetts at Amherst
Graduate Council of the Faculty Senate
Linda Shea, Chair
2008-2009

Minutes of General Membership Meeting
Wednesday, September 10, 2008
Goodell 508

Twenty (22) individuals attended the meeting. Marulyn Billings from the Library and Michael Alderman and Patrick Sullivan of the Graduate School were invited guests. Members also attending were Jane Baran, Leslie Horner Button, James L. Craig, David Dudek, Nigar Khan, M. Christine King, Arthur Kinney, Kevin Klement, David Kotz, Bill McClure, John Mullin, Jose Ornelas, Nahir I. Otano-Gracia, Stephen Rich, Linda Shea, Howard Stidham, Pat Stowell, Nate Therien, and H. Martin Wobst.

I. Welcome and Introductions

Chair Linda Shea called the meeting to order at 12:02 PM and especially welcomed new members and our guests, Bryan Harvey and Marilyn Billings.

II. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the May 7, 2008 meeting were approved unanimously without revisions.

III. Comments by the Graduate Dean

Dean Mullin began his comments by noting that a 3% budget rescission will be implemented in January 2009. The implication of this rescission is that if you spend to your current budget levels now, you would actually experience a 6% cut in 2009.

Dean Mullin then distributed a Graduate School Status Report Prepared for Chancellor Robert Holub dated July 11, 2008. He proceeded to review items throughout the report. In a brief discussion following this review, there was a perspective expressed that graduate education needs more emphasis at UMASS. The Dean confirmed this perspective and noted that in a meeting that reviewed the new Chancellor's strategic plan, the term "graduate" was not in it, while there was a significant emphasis on "first year student experience." It was agreed that excellent graduate education is an important characteristic of a top tier university. It was noted that we should invite the new Chancellor to one of our meetings and discuss the status of graduate education on his agenda.

IV. Old Business

A. Faculty Senate Ad-Hoc Committee on Certificates (ACERT)

Bryan Harvey began the review of the Report of the Faculty Senate Ad-Hoc Committee on Certificates (ACERT) by providing some background on the formation of the committee. He said that new proposed certificate programs were running into issues in the approval process. ACERT wanted to determine what we are trying to accomplish and what do we need to change to get that done. He also said the committee wanted to establish some basic principles and let other Councils develop more specific guidelines appropriate to their different needs.

Bryan said there was one major issue. The old certificate policy prohibited significant overlap between certificates and degree programs. This policy proposal removes that prohibition. Certificates can be a subset of a degree program. A certificate is still a minimum of 15 credits while any program over 30 credits is a regular degree program.

He also said ACERT wanted the policy to be student-centric. The policy allows certificates to be available to both matriculating and non-matriculating students, which is a change from the old policy. The certificate proposal should identify any student eligibility restrictions.

It was mentioned that Penn State University has certificate programs that feed into associate degree programs. Our new draft certificate policy determines consistent rules for credit acceptance. However, the student must still go through the admission process to be admitted to a regular degree program. The draft policy does not establish an application process for certificates. The certificate program proposal must specify admission criteria.

It was noted that there is a 5-year sunset provision for certificate programs. The reason certificate programs must be re-evaluated and approved every 5 years is to ensure the student interest and school resources still warrant program continuation.

Bryan concluded his remarks noting that this type of policy provides a great deal of flexibility for other Councils, such as the Graduate Council and the Academic Matters Council. These other Councils can now establish their own guidelines. However, it was also noted that this flexibility could cause a course enrollment issue. For instance, the lack of admission criteria could cause unplanned spikes in student demand that cannot be fulfilled.

Nigar Khan thanked Bryan and said the flexibility is good. Arthur Kinney confirmed that the ASCC will look at this report and provide comments and recommendations. The Dean noted that five certificate programs are in development. He emphasized that certificate programs are the fastest growing area of graduate study in the United States. Martin Wobst said there will be a need to carefully monitor non-matriculating student participation and perhaps make graduate certificates available to undergraduates.

IV. Old Business (continued)

B. Open Access for Dissertations

Patrick Sullivan and Marilyn Billings from the library led this discussion. They presented a one-page "Proposed Non-exclusive Dissertation Distribution License" for consideration. It was noted that submitting dissertation to the Scholar Works database allows individuals to have access to the dissertations and abstracts but not to the full text. Individuals have to pay extra to allow full text availability. This distribution license would allow the library to provide web access of the full text of the dissertations with no additional fee. It was noted the Open Access will allow our students' work to be cited more.

Arthur Kinney asked about students who want to publish their dissertations separately. Kevin Klement and Martin Wobst were both concerned that students may not have sufficient information when signing this license and then be surprised when they attempt to publish the dissertation later. Marilyn did highlight the fact that the proposed distribution license does allow students to only grant campus access as the current policy now provides. However, there still was concern about the future ramifications of signing such a license when working with book publishers. It was agreed that we should invite Bruce Wilcox, the Director of UMASS Press to provide us his perspective as a publisher.

Lastly, it was noted that there in an informative Open Access Event on Tuesday, October 14 in the evening which the Library and the Graduate School are co-hosting.

V. New Business

A. Full-Time Graduate Student Status

Pat Stowell distributed a one page proposed revision to the Graduate Bulletin General Regulation section regarding full-time status for graduate students. She asked the question how students can continue to be on full-time status after completing their oral dissertation defense or final master's thesis or master's thesis examination. The new policy would not allow students to maintain full-time status and would classify the students as part-time in semesters following their final defense or exam.

There was significant opposition to this new policy. Several faculty members did not see much benefit in the policy and thought that it only hurt students. The Dean did say, though, that once the student completed the dissertation defense or exam, the school has fulfilled its contract with the student.

Martin Wobst noted that there are two forms that are filed with the Graduate School by GPD's which establish a difference between dissertation approval and degree eligibility. He asked why these forms cannot serve as the basis for student status instead of this policy change. He emphasized that the dissertation is only one requirement for a degree and some additional work may need to be completed before a student becomes degree eligible.

IV. New Business (continued)**A. Full-Time Graduate Student Status (continued)**

Pat Stowell said the policy is intended to support GPD's who get pressure to approve full-time status for students who are not really full-time students. Dean Mullin said that rigor has been lost over the years and this policy is an attempt to put in place some rules to establish a bit more rigor.

The question was called and vote of faculty members was taken. The proposal was defeated with 2 votes for and 6 votes against.

VI. Committee Reports

- A. ASCC – No report
- B. ALANA – No report
- C. Fellowship – No report
- D. Ethics – No report
- E. Special Admission – No report
- F. Student Affairs – No report
- G. Mentoring – No report
- H. Travel – No report
- I. Statute of Limitations (ad-hoc) – No report
- J. Graduate School Course Development (ad-hoc) – No report
- K. Bologna Accord Impact Assessment (ad-hoc) - No report

VII. Comments from Administrative Officers and Others

Chair Linda Shea made a special commendation thanking Josh Kroner for all his work in volunteering to administer the Graduate Travel Grant program through the summer.

VIII. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 1:43 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
David E. Dudek