

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

Minutes of General Membership Meeting
Wednesday, February 18, 2009
Goodell 528

Seventeen (17) individuals attended the meeting. Michael Alderman and Patrick Sullivan from the Graduate School attended. Also, in attendance were Graduate Council members Jane Baran, James L. Craig, David Dudek, Arthur Kinney, David Kotz, Kathryn Lachman, Bing Liang, Augusta Mfuko, John Mullin, Nahir I. Otano, Lorna Peterson, Linda Shea, Howard Stidham, Patricia Stowell, and Judy Van de Geer.

I. Welcome and Introductions

Chair Linda Shea called the meeting to order at 12:05 PM.

II. Approval of Minutes

The minutes were approved with one change.

III. Comments by the Graduate Dean

Dean John Mullin reviewed and discussed several items.

a. National Research Council (NRC) delayed again

The National Research Council (NRC) has delayed releasing its program evaluations until May. As an alternative to the NRC program rankings, we need to establish a “competitiveness committee” to rank the different Graduate Departments on campus. We can model this evaluation after the NRC using the latest completed NRC survey as a benchmark while giving each department the opportunity to update it. Other non-NRC should complete a similar internal survey. This evaluation could also be based on accreditation documents. The Dean stated that he believed top programs should be rewarded. The Dean also stated that he thinks the Graduate Council should lead this effort. Ohio State has already done type of evaluation already, and the Dean asked David Dudek to send a recent article from “The Chronicle of Higher Education” which discussed this Ohio State program to Graduate Council members.

David Kotz said that that it seems difficult to compare programs in this manner. It also seems that a reward system such as this could increase disparity among programs. Perhaps it is possible to rank programs against like programs. Arthur Kinney stated that we should not punish some underperforming departments but seek to find the problems and remedy them. The Dean requested Chair Linda Shea to put together a balanced committee to address this issue.

b. Strategic Plan Update #1 – Graduate Student Salaries

Efforts continue to lobby the Chancellor to increase the salaries of graduate students. UMASS Amherst is now 4th from the bottom when compared to our peer institutions. The Dean said he wanted to get to the midrange. The Dean said he is working with the Chancellor to determine ways to increase stipends.

III. Comments by the Graduate Dean (continued)

c. Strategic Plan Update #2 – Graduate Fellowships

Efforts are continuing to find more money for Graduate Fellowships.

d. Strategic Plan Update #3 – Mentoring, Advising, and Counseling

Forty-five percent (45%) of our doctoral students drop out before completing their degree. Although this is the national average, this statistic has had a big impact on the Chancellor. It was noted that 50% of students do get their Master's though. We do not know why students leave. It was noted that perhaps we should focus on students who drop out later in their programs rather than students who drop out in the first year or two.

e. Opportunities for Graduate School

There are opportunities for the Graduate School to innovate in packaging knowledge for needs within society. A couple areas of opportunity are collaboration within and outside the university and certificate programs.

f. Sylvan is ready

Good News - the Housing Department has released building in Sylvan Residential Hall for graduate student housing. This facility seems to meet most needs although the kitchen may need a bit of improvement. Also, students will be able to stay at Prince if they wish.

g. Curriculum Fee Increase Proposal

The UMASS Board of Trustees is considering increasing the curriculum fee \$1,500 for undergraduates and about \$1,000 for graduate students. The Dean noted that he has met with David Ostendorf who is doing a study on the impact of the curriculum fee on graduate research assistants and hiring.

h. Certificate Program Guidelines

In December the Graduate Council approved the supplemental guidelines for the development and evaluation of graduate certificate program proposals. Job Well Done.

i. Cotutelle

Virginia Tech has over 50 Cotutelle programs. We did one on a test case basis with the University of Macquarie in Sydney Australia. We now have 25 requests from China and 1 request from Italy. We must now establish procedures. Patrick Sullivan is working on this.

j. Infinity Dinner

Arthur Kinney also attended. The Independent Master's Degree was discussed. This is similar to the Bachelor Degree in Individual Concentration (BDIC). Discussions will continue.

k. Native American Festival

The Graduate School is sponsoring the largest Native American Festival which will take place on this campus in the fall. We are also sponsoring a 3-4 day event celebrating the Irish Peace Accord through murals.

III. Comments by the Graduate Dean (continued)

l. Electronic submission of application material

The Graduate School will soon begin accepting graduate student application recommendations electronically.

m. Professional Master's of Science Degree

Five deans from the UMASS campus meet with representatives from the Sloan Foundation and were given a presentation on the importance of developing a Professional Master's of Science Degree. Efforts on this will continue.

n. Graduate Student age demographics

The Dean stated that it was his impression that the graduate student population is aging. Current age profiles of student show that 1/3 of students are 20-29, 1/3 are 30-39, and 1/3 are over 40. We need to gather data and understand the demographics and their implications for the Graduate School.

IV. Old Business

A. Statute of Limitations Committee Proposal

Patrick Sullivan distributed three documents. The first was a one page proposal to change the current Statute of Limitations Policy for Doctoral Students. The second was a report was titled "Time to Doctoral Degree Compared to a Carnegie Institution List." The third provided institutional candidacy comparisons within the Carnegie Institution list. After a brief discussion summarizing these documents the proposal was moved, seconded, and approved with one abstention.

V. New Business

A. Report of the Academic Standards and Curriculum Committee (ASCC)

Arthur Kinney brought several items before the Graduate Council that had been approved by the ASCC:

1. Graduate Certificate in African Diaspora Studies
2. Refining the Master of Science Degree Requirements for Kinesiology
3. Revision of the MAT in Latin and Classical Humanities
4. Education 822
5. Education 884
6. Education 666: The River that Connects Us-Environmental Based Education
7. Public Health 620

After a brief review, all proposals were approved unanimously.

V. New Business (continued)**B. Report for the Faculty Senate on the Impact of the Chancellor's Reorganization Proposal on Graduate Education**

Chair Linda Shea introduced this topic. She described the charge from the Faculty Senate to provide a report to the Faculty Senate by Friday March 6 which discussed the impact of the Chancellor's Reorganization Proposal on Graduate Education. After a discussion, it was determined that the faculty needed clarification about the specifics of the Chancellor's Reorganization Proposal. Linda agreed to obtain clarification from Ernie May of the Faculty Senate and get that information to Graduate Council members.

C. Preparation for Chancellor Holub's Visit to the Graduate Council

Chair Linda Shea explained that she is working on trying to get Chancellor Holub to attend one of the Graduate Council's meeting this spring. It was discussed that we need to provide the Chancellor an overview of the direction of Graduate Education. It was also noted that we need to have questions prepared in advance. Dean Mullin noted that in the Chancellor's meetings with the Deans, no one asks any questions and great opportunities are lost to learn more details about how the Chancellor is thinking about certain issues.

VI. Committee Reports

A. ASCC – see New Business, Item A above.

B. ALANA – Inactive

C. Fellowship

There was a question whether the deadline for Graduate Fellowships was extended. It was noted that some people complained that they did not have all the information about graduate applicants in time. Patrick Sullivan did say that there were delays due to the need to scan documents and forward paper documents to the departments. But he also said that the only issues that may exist would concern the recommendations. It was noted that this may become a big problem this year.

D. Ethics – Inactive.

E. Special Admission – Inactive

F. Student Affairs – Inactive

G. Mentoring – No report was made

H. Travel – No report made

I. Statute of Limitations (ad-hoc) – Final Report made – See “Old Business - Item A” above

J. Graduate School Course Development (ad-hoc) – No report was made.

K. Bologna Accord Impact Assessment (ad-hoc) – No report was made.

VII. Comments from Administrative Officers and Others

1. It was noted that a special committee has been formed to conduct the 3-year review of Dean John Mullin in his role as Dean of the Graduate School. Martin Wobst is chair of the committee. Jane Baran, Jim Craig, and Linda Shea are also on the committee.

VIII. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 1:28 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
David E. Dudek