

## April 12, 2016 Meeting Minutes of the Graduate Council

Members Present: J. Albert, P. Auter, D. Bellar, A. Brown, K. Evans-Jackson, W. Ferguson, S. Gawronski, R. Gonzales, H. Hurst, A. Khattab, M. Kightley, J. Lemoine, A. Maida, A. Magidin, S. McInerny, C. Roche-Wallace, W. Xu, M. Farmer-Kaiser (ex-officio member)

Members Absent: D. Baker, C. Briggs, D. Harrington, R. Hernandez, P. Morton, D. Olivier, K. Smith, D. Stevens, C. Taylor

The meeting was called to order by W. Ferguson at 2:04 p.m.

### **Announcements:**

The Council voted to approve the March 8, 2016 meeting minutes.

The list of degree candidates was presented to and accepted by the Council.

W. Ferguson notified the Council of upcoming Graduate Council elections in both the College of Engineering and the College of Liberal Arts, with M. Farmer-Kaiser encouraging external as well as self nominations from graduate faculty in those colleges. In addition, M. Farmer-Kaiser noted that with this election cycle, the Council will now have continually staggered appointments with each academic year seeing new Council appointments.

M. Farmer-Kaiser provided updates on both the first annual Doctoral Candidacy Recognition Ceremony as well as Graduate Student Appreciation week. Both events were considered successes with good faculty and student participation, although the research competitions during the week would have benefited from more student submissions. The Graduate School is actively seeking feedback from GSAW participants and the University Committee on Graduate Student Success and Retention is considering ways to improve the Recognition Ceremony for next year.

### **Committee Reports:**

Student Appeals Committee – No report.

Curriculum Committee – Committee report submitted by Natalia Sidorovskaia, not present. Motion made to accept the report of the Curriculum Committee. Motion seconded and carried.

Fellowship Committee – Committee report submitted by the Graduate School on behalf of Andrea Loewy, not present. M. Farmer-Kaiser reported that the Committee recommended four recipients and provided four alternatives for the four University Master's Fellowships. Five offers were made, with only one offer being declined. The four one-year fellowships have been awarded to entering Master's students in the following programs: Biology, Chemical Engineering, Speech Pathology & Audiology, and English. M. Farmer-Kaiser commented that the high acceptance rate was a significant improvement over previous years. Motion made to accept the report of the Fellowship Committee. Motion seconded and passed.

Graduate Faculty Membership Committee – Committee report submitted by Michelle Feist, not present. The report was submitted as two parts, with the first (submitted by the Graduate School on behalf of Dr. Feist) including recommendations for appointment of 19 applicants that received unanimous support from their three college review entities at the level to which they applied (and thus not requiring review by the Graduate Faculty Membership Committee) and the second, a report from the Committee that offered recommendations for the 10 applications it reviewed and additional policy-related points for discussion by the Council.

The Council acted on the Committee report in multiple motions. Motion made to accept the 19 appointment recommendations that contained no discrepancies among the three college review entities. Motion seconded and passed. Motion then made to accept the Committee’s unanimous recommendation for Level II membership for three applicants. Motion seconded and passed. Motion then made to accept the Committee’s recommendation for Level I membership for five applicants. Discussion turned to the Committee’s recommendation to deny membership on the Graduate Faculty for one applicant because the applicant lacked the terminal degree. The Council reviewed the applicant’s CV, college recommendations, and college criteria. Motion made to accept the Committee’s recommendation to deny appointment. Motion seconded and passed. Finally, with regard to recommendations for appointment, the Council turned its attention to an application that the Committee reported a “split” assessment of, with four members voting for, one voting against, and four abstaining from the vote. The Council reviewed the applicant’s CV, the college review entities’ recommendations, the college’s criteria, and discussed at length. Many issues complicated the application’s consideration by the Committee and now, the Council; these included: (1) the applicant is not a full-time, tenured or tenure-track faculty member, but rather serves as a researcher affiliated with the University; (2) the individual academic college, through which the applicant has applied, has not updated its college criteria to address questions concerning the eligibility of such individuals to hold Graduate Faculty membership and/or to direct graduate student committees within its college; and (3) that this particular application would not have required review by the Graduate Faculty Membership Committee had the college peer review committee’s recommendation been returned by the deadline. After continued discussion, a motion was made to support the recommendations of the college review entities by approving a Level II appointment for this applicant. Motion seconded and carried.

The Council then reviewed the Committee’s additional comments focused on the University guidelines and review process. First, the Committee raised concern that “some of the Colleges include separate criteria for appointment to the Graduate Faculty for administrators.” The Council reviewed the various college criteria and noted that presently only the College of Business Administration has such a provision. While the issue was discussed at length, the Council did not take official action on this point. Second, the Committee expressed concern “about the level of some of the Colleges’ criteria for Graduate Faculty Membership.” While noting “that there have been changes in the criteria over the years, resulting in additional rigor in the criteria for some of the Colleges,” the Committee encouraged “further revision along this path.” In particular, it formally requested that the College of Education take steps to update its college criteria as the other colleges have done in the last year, and the Council heartily endorsed this call for action. Third, the Committee called again on the various college review entities to ground the justification for their recommendations on the individual college criteria and not

qualities not addressed (e.g., teaching abilities and teaching needs) there. Finally, the Committee called the Council's attention again to concerns about "the appointment of non-faculty university employees to the Graduate Faculty, as applications from non-faculty employees have increased in recent semesters." The Council discussed these concerns, but no additional formal action was taken at this time.

### **Old Business:**

W. Ferguson asked for updates from the Ad Hoc Committee on International Student Admissions Policies. M. Farmer-Kaiser stated that the committee is set to meet prior to the May meeting.

W. Ferguson asked for updates from the Ad Hoc Committee on Outside Observers for Thesis and Dissertation Defenses. M. Kightley and J. Lemoine, co-chairs of that committee, provided a summary of the committee's findings and recommendations. J. Lemoine reported that the committee researched 22 Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) peer/aspirational peer institutions; of the 22 IPEDS peers, the committee was able to report on outside observer practices from 11 institutions. Of the 11 institutions surveyed, only 6 required the appointment of outside observers by the Graduate School for both master's and doctoral defenses. Optional appointment of outside observers for both master's and doctoral defenses was found at only one school, while another listed outside observers as optional for master's defenses but required for doctoral defenses. The remaining 3 institutions utilized a dissertation/defense calendar making these events open to the public; at these institutions, an outside observer could be appointed by the Graduate School at the request of a committee member and/or the student. J. Lemoine also reported that the title of the outside observer varied among institutions, and included: Representative of the Dean of the Graduate School, Outside Committee Member, the Graduate Dean's Representative, Advisory Committee, University Representative, Graduate School Representative, and Dean's Representative. Likewise, she continued, the method of appointment and specifications of the outside observer also varied per institution. The majority of the IPEDS surveyed required the outside observer to be from a different graduate program or to have one member of the dissertation/thesis/synthesis committee from another department. All institutions required the outside observer to have membership on the graduate faculty.

M. Kightley reported on the recommendations of the ad hoc committee. The committee recommends that the purpose of outside observers be defined to include: to ensure that the university's procedures are properly followed; to ensure fair treatment of the student; to ensure that the rigor of the defense is appropriate to the degree sought, thereby assuring academic integrity; and to contribute to the university's scholarly community and enhancement of interdepartmental connections. With these purposes in mind, the committee proposes the following definition of the role of outside observers: *Outside observers are objective representatives of the Graduate School that are tasked with reporting to the Graduate School on the fairness and rigor of thesis, dissertation, and synthesis project defenses at both the master's and doctoral levels. Outside observers are not members of the defense committee; thus, they should be present for the entire defense, including the defense committee deliberations, but should not participate in those deliberations.*

M. Kightley offered additional recommendations from the committee: (1) Outside observers will remain an important part of such defenses, but will not automatically be assigned to every defense. (2) Any college or department can request that an outside observer be assigned to all of its defenses by the Dean of the Graduate School. (3) Any stakeholder in a specific defense (including the student, a member of the defense committee, a department- or college-level official, the Graduate School, etc.) can confidentially request that an outside observer be assigned by the Dean of the Graduate School. (4) Defenses in recently established programs will automatically be assigned an outside observer by the Dean of the Graduate School; recently established programs are those which have had fewer than 10 defenses. (5) The Dean of the Graduate School will automatically assign an outside observer to a random and representative sampling of defenses that would not otherwise be observed. The committee recommends approximately 20% of such defenses be observed.

The Council then agreed to take these recommendations back to their colleges and departments for feedback and suggestions. Motion made to accept the report of the Ad Hoc Committee and to solicit feedback from the graduate faculty. Motion seconded and passed.

W. Ferguson noted that the University Guidelines on Graduate Faculty Membership Revisions have been added to the Graduate School website.

#### **New Business:**

W. Ferguson requested nominations for Commencement Grand Marshals for both the Spring and Summer graduation ceremonies. Nominations were made to appoint Dr. Mary Jane Ford from the College of Education for the Spring Commencement and Dr. Brian Lock from the College of Science for the Summer Commencement. Motion made to accept these nominations. Motion seconded and carried.

R. Gonzales asked the Council to consider and to speak to their faculty about creating an institutional repository for University digital resources, publications, and research. He noted that Dupré Library and Vice President Ramesh Kolluru have expressed support for such an endeavor. J. Lemoine noted that the College of Nursing and Allied Health Professions has discussed the issue in the past. D. Bellar seconded that those in the College of Education have also discussed the creation of a repository. W. Ferguson asked the Council members to reach out to their faculty.

S. Gawronski notified the Council about changes coming to the GSO process for awarding funds to graduate students as a result of the Banner ERP implementation and changes being implemented by the Purchasing Office. Ultimately, the process should be simplified for graduate students and the GSO.

Motion made to adjourn the meeting. Motion seconded and carried. Meeting adjourned at 4:05pm.