

Minutes
Commission on Graduate Studies & Policies
April 17, 2002
206 Sandy Hall

Present: Ms. Kim Aylward, Mr. Edward Boone, Dr. Stephen Boyle, Mr. Ron Daniel, Dr. David de Wolf, Dr. Klaus Elgert, Dr. Rakesh Kapania, Mr. Jay Khare, Dr. Joseph Merola, Ms. Margaret Merrill, Dr. John Ney, Ms. Miya Simpson

Absent with Notification: Dr. Ruth Alscher, Dr. Peter Graham, Dr. Eileen Hitchingham, Ms. Theresa Kanter, Dr. Kent Murrmann, Dr. Joseph Scarpaci, Ms. Mary Schaeffer, Mr. Jan van Aardt

Absent without Notice: Dr. Greg Brown, Dr. David M. Moore, Ms. Tracey Slotta

Conference Call In: Ms. Patti Foutz

Invited Guests: Dr. Roger Avery, Mr. Marvin Foushee, Ms. Nancy Feuerbach, Provost Mark McNamee, Ms. Angela Webb

Approval of the agenda: Approved. Dr. de Wolf asked that the meeting agenda be adjusted to accommodate Provost McNamee's arrival and presentation. Dr. Boyle noted that Provost McNamee was not scheduled to arrive until 4:15 PM.

Approval of minutes from April 3, 2002: Approved with amended paragraph under New Business. The text, "Mr. Dye was pursuing a special certificate in education" will replace "Mr. Dye was not pursuing a masters or doctorate degree, so input from committee members did not need to be sought".

Committee Reports

Graduate Curriculum Committee: reported electronically prior to meeting. Dr. Merola requested clarification on the item, (1) *Merger of the M.S. and Ph.D. Graduate Programs in the Near Environments Department*, listed under the report item entitled, "REMOVED" in the April 11th minutes. Mr. Foushee explained that this proposal was withdrawn; the GCC committee never considered it. Ms. Foutz asked Mr. Foushee to explain the phrase "Sent back to Registrar's office". Mr. Foushee stated that the proposal was out for fifteen days for a review period or until, as in this case, a department or college requests that the proposal be put on hold. The report was approved as submitted.

Graduate Student Appeals: no report.

Graduate Student Relations: no report.

DRSCAP: Dr. Elgert invited discussion of the written report presented at the April 3rd meeting. Dr. Avery commented that his impression, from reading the report as well as attending Council of Graduate School meetings, is that the graduate dean at Virginia Tech is less involved in program review. Dr. Elgert agreed, with one exception. He noted that the graduate dean at the University of Florida has no involvement in the review process. The report was approved as submitted.

Other Reports

Graduate Student Assembly (GSA): no report.

Graduate Honor System (GHS): no report Dr. Merola announced that Mr. Jay Khare has submitted his resignation as chief justice in order to concentrate on the pursuit of his degree. A search will be conducted for a new chief justice. Dr. Merola extended a hearty thanks to Mr. Khare for all that he has done.

University Library Committee: no report

Old Business: Dr. Roger Avery distributed the executive summary of the housing survey that was commissioned last Fall. Dr. Avery said the summary, overall, showed that there did not appear to be a problem with graduate student housing. Dr. Avery reviewed the purposes, method, strengths and limitations of the study, and the results and conclusions. Dr. Avery reported that the results of the study do not make a case for building new university married/family housing. Mr. Boone suggested that offering married student housing might be useful in recruiting students who chose not to attend Virginia Tech because of the lack of housing options. Dr. Avery said that in past surveys, housing has rarely been a reason for non-selection of Virginia Tech. Dr. Kapania noted that the 2% of students who reported that married/family housing is needed might be low because it represents a percentage of all students surveyed. He suspects that this percentage would be higher if only married students were polled. Dr. Boyle asked if it were possible that the survey was biased because only new graduated students were surveyed. Students who take four to five years to graduate may get married while still pursuing their degree. Dr. Boyle suggested doing an exit survey for graduating students. Dr. Avery said this question could be added to the existing exit survey.

Dr. Mark McNamee, University Provost: Dr. Boyle introduced Dr. Mark McNamee. Provost McNamee presented an overview of the coordinating councils. The councils were formed in order to evaluate, implement, and support campus initiatives that cut across multiple schools and colleges. Members of the council, deans and vice-provosts, as stakeholders could discuss and evaluate proposals, determine what resources could be invested in these initiatives, and what additional resources might be needed. The three councils formed were in the areas of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences; Biomedical, Health, and Life Sciences; and Engineering, Physical Science, and Information Technology. In some cases, the councils have overlapping memberships. The councils initially dealt with some items which were pending which needed decisions about resources. Councils were also designed as a vehicle for faculty to bring projects to the council for discussion at an early stage. In each council, the provost has appointed a member to serve as a senior fellow who provides coordination and leadership so that the deans could focus on substantive issues. Mr. Jim Bohland is the senior fellow for the life sciences council, Dr. Leonard Ferrari is the senior fellow for the physical sciences council, and Dr. Beverly Sypher is the senior fellow for the arts, humanities and social sciences council. Provost McNamee meets with the senior fellows on a regular basis to discuss the work of the council. Provost McNamee expressed his hope that these councils would be a long-term continuous way in which initiatives are evaluated.

With budget reductions, there is interest in reinvesting some money in new initiatives. The councils will analyze, compare, and evaluate reinvestment proposals, and make recommendations as to which ones have the highest potential for advancing scholarship at Virginia Tech.

Dr. Avery clarified that there were two types of proposals the councils would consider: (1) proposals generated by faculty and (2) proposals developed by the blue ribbon faculty panels within each council.

Dr. Merola noted that, within the university, the deans have most of the resources. They can be viewed as a board of directors for the university's academic programs, helping to shape where investments are made and how to guide these decisions. They are in the best position to commission groups to investigate areas and can be responsive in their role as dean. Councils will be able to review new programs prior to the fifteen day review process.

Dr. Boyle asked about procedures for new faculty who wished to present suggestions for program proposals. Provost McNamee noted that this could vary among departments, but that new faculty should always approach the department head first. If a consensus can be reached within participating departments, and even the graduate school, Provost McNamee suggested a pre-proposal could be brought before the council. If the deans think the proposal has merit, then the faculty would work through governance to develop the program. If the new program proposal is successful in passing through governance and again presented to the deans, they would be in a more informed position as to the merits of the proposal.

Dr. Boyle asked Provost McNamee to address the resolution, introduced by Dr. de Wolf and passed by the commission in February of 2002, concerning the reallocation of resources. The resolution reflected the concern of the commission that the current system for reallocation of resources within colleges needs to be reviewed in order to rectify the shortages in key graduate programs which are experiencing rapid growth. Specific examples cited in the resolution were inadequate classroom size and limited graduate assistant support in spite of a growing graduate enrollment. Provost McNamee stated that this was an area in which more data needed to be collected, and agreed that there were not enough graduate teaching assistantships. Dr. Merola observed that, even with budget reductions, colleges have avoided cutting assistantships unless there were no other options. Provost McNamee predicted that the upcoming year will be difficult. He said we need to focus on attracting the best students we can, focus on quality Ph.D. programs, enable and encourage faculty to get more research grants, but recognize that expansion in numbers will be modest. We also need to examine novel ways to support students.

In response to a question from Dr. Kapania, Provost McNamee said that the University of Wisconsin-Madison has been the most aggressive in pursuing the cluster hiring model. Virginia Tech is investigating this hiring model.

In terms of restructuring, Provost McNamee stated that Virginia Tech was making a lot of progress, and Dr. Merola is working closely with him. Provost McNamee stated that the changes are constructive, and not as radical as some might envision.

Dr. Boyle thanked the Provost McNamee for his presentation and discussion with the commission.

New Business: none

Announcements: Dr. Merola announced that Dr. Karen DePauw from Washington State University has officially accepted the position of Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School and will be arriving sometime in the beginning of August. The provost has asked Dr. Merola to assume the position of Senior Fellow to lead the university through the restructuring process. The provost and Dr. Merola have been meeting extensively with faculty who were nominated by the deans or by the Faculty Senate. Discussions have been frank and open. Dr. Merola stated that it is the intention of the provost to put together a broad scheme by May 1st so that he can present it to the Board of the Visitors in June for general approval. Dr. Merola noted that restructuring ideas will be put into practice over the next two years; it is not something that will happen overnight. Dr. Merola will be meeting with university architects because restructuring of programs and departments impacts physical structure. Dr. Merola asked the commission to encourage faculty and staff to read the e-mails about restructuring and give input. Dr. Merola said that he has enjoyed his fifteen months as Acting Dean of the Graduate School and is looking forward to the challenges of his new position. Dr. Avery stated that the commission had likewise enjoyed and appreciated Dr. Merola's service to the Graduate School.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 5:10 PM.

Respectfully submitted:
Joseph S. Merola, Acting Dean of the Graduate School