

Minutes

Commission on Graduate Studies & Policies

November 6, 2002

3:30 — 4:30

206 Sandy Hall

Present: Dr. Stephen Boyle, Dr. Ron Daniel, Dr. David de Wolf, Dr. Klaus Elgert, Ms. Patricia Foutz, Dr. Ruth Grene, Dr. Eileen Hitchingham, Mr. Brian Johnson, Dr. Rakesh Kapania, Ms. Megan Madden, Ms. Margaret Merrill, Dr. Mike Moore, Dr. Kent Murrmann, Dr. John Ney, Mr. Rishi Pande, Ms. Mary Schaeffer, Ms. Miya Simpson, Dr. Andy Swiger

Absent with Notification: Dr. Karen DePauw, Mr. Nick Amico, Dr. Mehdi Setareh, Ms. Angie Webb, Dr. Brenda Winkel

Absent without Notice: Mr. Anthony Scardina, Mr. Murali Krishnan Gunasekaran

Invited Guests: Dr. Roger Avery, Dr. Robert Bush, Mr. Marvin Foushee, Ms. Nancy Feuerbach, Dr. Donald Mullins, Dr. Scott Salom

Dr. Avery announced that there were three new members to the commission, recently appointed by the Graduate Student Assembly: Ms. Megan Elwood Madden, Mr. Murali Krishnan Gunasekaran, and Mr. Anthony V. Scardina.

Dr. Stephen Boyle called the meeting to order and asked for approval of the agenda.

Approval of the agenda: Approved.

Dr. Ruth Grene asked for approval of the minutes.

Approval of minutes from October 16, 2002: Approved with one correction. Dr. Ney asked that it be noted in the minutes of October 16 that he did attend the meeting.

Committee Reports

Graduate Curriculum Committee: Submitted electronically, and approved as submitted.

Graduate Student Appeals: The first meeting is scheduled for November 13, 9:05 AM in 206 Sandy Hall to discuss a current appeal. Dr. Kent Murrmann will serve on this committee in the place of Dr. Ney for this appeal. Dr. Grene will serve as chair in the place of Dr. de Wolf. The graduate dean is required to appoint an additional faculty member with expertise in the student's field of study. Dr. Kapania will serve on this committee in this capacity. Ms. Feuerbach will send a reminder prior to the meeting.

Graduate Student Relations: No report.

Degree Requirement Standards Criteria and Academic Policy (DRSCAP): The first meeting of DRSCAP will take place immediately following the CGS&P meeting.

Other Reports

Graduate Student Assembly (GSA): Ms. Megan Madden reported that the Graduate Student Assembly had enjoyed numerous guest speakers and recently completed a successful professional school day.

Graduate Honor System (GHS): Mr. Johnson reported that GHS is making progress and decreasing the amount of cases.

University Library Committee: Dr. Hitchingham reported that the library had its first meeting November 5. Items to be worked on during the year include: (1) the increase of fees and fines for overdue books (2) the dissemination of the results from the library review conducted last spring (3) the completion of the strategic plan (4) the sharing of the results of a survey that included graduate students, faculty; the survey will be repeated this spring with the undergraduate student population (5) the creation of an RFP for a library system; the current VTLS system will no longer be supported or enlarged in any way after December 2003 (6) the creation of a needs assessment list for the upcoming capital campaign.

Old Business:

Residency Request: Dr. Avery presented the document submitted to him from the College of Engineering entitled "Satisfaction of Residency Requirements at Naval Surface Weapons Center Dahlgren Division for PhD Programs in the College of Engineering." He reviewed the handout, Policy Memorandum No. 200, Residency for Doctoral Candidates. He explained that this was the latest policy memorandum on residency, approved in spring 2000. It allowed units (who wished to have programs off-campus) to seek permission to satisfy residency requirements without having to spend the time in Blacksburg. He noted that at the top of page two, the document stated that "Requests for such alternative location residency must be made in writing to the Graduate Dean."

The document submitted from the College of Engineering is seeking approval to have residency satisfied at the Dahlgren site. Dr. Avery stated that this item is being brought to CGS&P because (1) the dean wishes to work closely with CGS&P on these kinds of issues and (2) the College of Engineering, through this document, wishes to lay the groundwork for the submission of a more formal proposal. A final proposal would require a document from the Naval Surface Weapons Center Dahlgren Division. The document submitted from the College of Engineering does address the nine itemized issues in the policy memorandum. Dr. Avery discussed the additional handout, which documented the number of PhDs working at the Dahlgren site which addresses item two in the policy memorandum.

In the discussion, Dr. Avery pointed out that largely Virginia Tech faculty will teach the courses, and VT faculty will supervise the research. The major professor could be adjunct faculty [Dahlgren] with perhaps a co-chair Virginia Tech faculty member. Dr. Avery also reminded the commission that this concept is not new; similar programs exist at the Northern Virginia Center and the Virginia Consortium of Engineering and Science Universities (VCES).

Dr. Boyle noted on page two of the policy memorandum the reference to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) as the accrediting agency for Virginia Tech and the agency that recommends the residency requirement. Dr. Avery recalled a discussion of this topic at the time of the policy memorandum development but did not recall the specific content of the discussion. Dr. Hitchingham stated that SACS was changing some of its criteria. Dr. Avery agreed, saying he had heard some of the "musts" would not be as rigid.

Dr. Elgert asked if this document [College of Engineering] would be considered an exception to the Policy Memorandum 200; if another department in a different college wanted to do the same thing, would they go through this same approach? Dr. Avery responded in the affirmative. Dr. De Wolf said that historically, in the seventies and eighties, there were a number of programs for physics and engineering at Dahlgren that came to an end in the late eighties. Dr. de Wolf stated, "This is one instrument for increasing our involvement with Dahlgren and having more sponsored research coming from there." Dr. Kapania voiced support for engineering effort. In particular, the ocean engineering program in the Department of Aerospace and Ocean Engineering would benefit. The budget cuts in the late eighties diminished the working relationship between Dahlgren and the ocean engineering program. The granting

of this exception would help start the relationship. Dr. Kapania stated that Dahlgren did invite faculty from Virginia Tech and other universities to give seminars.

Dr. Boyle asked if the Graduate School and dean were satisfied with the proposal as submitted by the College of Engineering. Dr. Avery replied in the affirmative; he stated that the dean just wanted to work in concert with CGS&P. Dr. Avery reminded the commission that this document is an initial presentation to the commission. Dahlgren, as the industrial partner, would contribute to the final proposal. A majority of commission members voted to accept the document submitted by the College of Engineering. Dr. Avery will report the discussion of the commission to the dean.

New Business:

Professors Donald Mullins and Scott Salom from the Department of Entomology, and Professor Robert Bush from the Department of Wood Science and Forest Products, presented an overview of a study commissioned by the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALs) Commission on Faculty Affairs. An ad hoc committee was asked to examine current issues pertaining to graduate students and to make recommendation on what will be needed to improve the ability of the College of Natural Resources (CNR) and CALs faculty to recruit and fund more graduate student research. The ad hoc committee submitted their report to the CALs Faculty Executive Committee and the CNR Commission on Faculty affairs. The report and recommendations represent the combined deliberations of both of these bodies of the governance system.

Dr. Mullins stated that in 1994 the university adopted the policy of mandatory payment of tuition. Some departments/colleges experience difficulty with this policy because some funding agencies do not allow tuition to be included in the budget request. Dr. Scott Salom, who summarized the study and results, chaired the ad hoc committee that was formed to investigate tuition concerns. A handout of the summary was available to meeting attendees.

Dr. Salom described the survey, which was distributed to both colleges for the purposes of the study. The survey was designed to determine what kind of funding faculty were getting, who were the sponsors, what sponsors were allowing for tuition payments for supporting graduate students, how the faculty were coming up with the resources to pay for tuition. The results of the survey were telling. A high percentage of faculty in CALs do support graduate students on research assistantships and faculty are required to pay for tuition for research assistantships. For faculty with two to three students, this can mean \$10,000 - \$15,000 per year. There are a number of granting agencies that disallow tuition as a categorical cost. The faculty member must come up with funding from elsewhere.

Dr. Ruth Grene noted that first year graduate students' efforts are spent in course work; putting a first year graduate student on a grant would not be the best use of research dollars. First year graduate students often do not even have sufficient laboratory skills. Dr. Grene's recommendation was that the university explore ways to provide tuition waivers for any graduate student who qualifies for admission and is accepted.

In the recommendation that the tuition policy at Virginia Tech be re-evaluated, Dr. Salom presented a suggestion for a two-track approach for payment of graduate tuition:

- (1) Retain current policy when a funding agency provides both stipend and tuition and
- (2) When tuition will not be paid by a grantor
 - a. Allow university approved payment of a higher stipend level to compensate for the cost of tuition and
 - b. Use university resources to pay graduate student tuition

Dr. Salom asked that the university understand that not all colleges are created equal. For example, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) funds a great deal of their research. Unless it is a special project program, USDA will not pay tuition. In other colleges, grantors are willing to include tuition as part of the budget request. Some other agencies that will not pay tuition include, Virginia Ag Council, some EPA programs, American Nurserymen's Association, Virginia Ag Foundation, Virginia Department of Education; a lot of state sources of funding will not support tuition. Dr. Moore added that overhead is sometimes not allowed so that there is no cost recovery available to departments.

Dr. Avery said that, coincidentally, Dr. Karen DePauw is indirectly working on both items (a) and (b). Dr. DePauw had developed a model of a different stipend organization, which will be discussed in a DRSCAP meeting. The provost has already given his support for the direction she is taking. Dr. DePauw is also doing what she can, given budget constraints, to argue that the university provide more money for tuition. Dr. Avery stated that the recommendation from CALS and CNR strengthened the dean's position.

Ms. Foutz asked if this was a university or state policy. Dr. Avery stated he believed it might be a state policy. Ms. Foutz suggested that it might be necessary to seek SCHEV approval for tuition waiver.

Dr. Boyle suggested that the problem might originate with the funding agency; the agency may need to be convinced that providing more extramural dollars is in its best interest. Dr. Salom added that USDA is woefully under-funded [extramurally] by Congress. Dr. Boyle said it might behoove the university to approach our congressional representatives to persuade them to support the changing of the funding policy.

Ms. Foutz stated she thinks this recommendation [CALS/CNR] is a reasonable request. There should be some university funding resource established for graduate student tuition when funding agencies do not allow this expense.

Dr. Ney noted that an agency in the USDA [like the Forest Service] will pay more money to the student, but the agency won't pay tuition. Dr. Ney said that what was being asked was that enough flexibility be afforded faculty so that a student could be paid enough in stipend monies to then be able to pay his/her own tuition.

Dr. Grene expressed support for some means of internal university support to be found for students entering graduate school, completely separate from an outside funding agency. This would allow students [and faculty] at least a year before identifying with whom they wished to work and in what research area they wished to concentrate.

Ms. Foutz cautioned the commission to be sensitive to the differing stipend levels awarded students; students may be awarded the same stipend amount, but only some asked to pay tuition. She recommended a fee waiver approach instead; perhaps a pool could be established in which monies could be collected for the sole purpose of funding tuition waivers.

Dr. Bush stated that in the short term, CALS and CNR were really just asking for more flexibility to use available dollars in the most efficient system possible. Dr. Bush clarified that GTA do get tuition waivers.

Dr. Grene stated that a suggestion has been made that students with teaching assistantships be placed in a pool and assigned to teach where needed, regardless of college. For example, if you could cover the teaching needs across the life sciences, people from any number of departments could teach biology. Dr. Grene noted that she could not speak for engineering or the humanities. Ms. Shaeffer stated this was already being done in her department [Biology]. Dr. Grene stated this model needed to be publicized.

Dr. Ney pointed out that this still would not be sufficient to adequately address this problem; there were so few GTA's in their area.

Dr. Elgert stated that, in some cases, it was appropriate for students to work with a selected faculty member from the beginning, rather than wait for a year while practicing a rotation. He said that faculty often recruited students to work specifically with the faculty member in his/her field.

Dr. Boyle said this sounded like an issue that could be folded into the graduate school dean's current discussions about funding for graduate students. Dr. Avery confirmed this.

Ms. Megan Madden expressed concern that unless extreme caution was exercised in the awarding of stipends, the university could create two classes of graduate students. Dr. Ney reassured Ms. Madden that safeguards would be built into any system to ensure that equity exists.

Dr. Elgert expressed interest in more discussion of the issue. He stated that this issue should not be restricted to just two colleges. Dr. Grene expressed an interest in surveying other colleges. Dr. Salom stated that he believed it was up to the dean of the graduate school and her colleagues should additional surveys and information be requested.

Dr. Mullins stated that as a point of order, CALS and CNR, having gone through their governance, are providing a test case. He recommended to the commission that the recommendations presented by CALS and CNR be reviewed and revised as needed and then be moved forward to the next level of governance.

Dr. Avery suggested that the discussion and review be tabled until the next meeting. The commission agreed to table the discussion until the meeting scheduled for November 20th. Dr. Grene invited Drs. Bush, Salom, and Mullins to attend the next meeting if they were interested in participating in the ongoing discussion.

Announcements: None

The meeting was adjourned at 4:52 PM.

Respectfully submitted:

Ms. Nancy B. Feuerbach, on behalf of

Dr. Karen P. DePauw, Vice Provost for Graduate Studies and Dean of the Graduate School