

Minutes

Commission on Graduate Studies & Policies

January 15, 2003

3:30 PM — 4:30PM

206 Sandy Hall

Present: Mr. Nick Amico, Dr. Stephen Boyle; Dr. Karen DePauw, Dr. David de Wolf, Dr. Klaus Elgert, Dr. Ruth Grene, Dr. Eileen Hitchingham, Ms. Megan Madden, Ms. Margaret Merrill, Dr. Kent Murrmann, Dr. John Ney, Ms. Mary Schaeffer, Dr. Mehdi Setareh, Dr. Brenda Winkel

Absent with Notification: Dr. Ron Daniel, Mr. Brian Johnson, Dr. Rakesh Kapania, Mr. Anthony Scardina, Ms. Miya Simpson

Absent without Notice: Dr. David M. Moore, Mr. Murali Krishnan Gunasekaran

Invited Guests: Dr. Roger Avery, Mr. Marvin Foushee, Ms. Nancy Feuerbach, Ms. Angie Webb

Dr. Ruth Grene called the meeting to order.

Approval of the agenda: Approved.

Approval of minutes from November 20, 2002: Approved.

Committee Reports

Graduate Curriculum Committee: Minutes for November 14 and December 12 were approved.

Graduate Student Appeals: Dr. David de Wolf reported that the committee was currently in the process of reviewing an appeal. He hopes to have a report at the next meeting of CGS&P.

Graduate Student Relations: Ms. Patti Foutz has retired, leaving a faculty vacancy on the committee. Dr. Roger Avery noted that any faculty member of CGS&P could serve as a member of the Graduate Student Relations Committee. Ms. Foutz's replacement on CGS&P is a separate issue. Ms. Merrill noted that Ms. Foutz's participation on the Rights and Responsibilities Committee was invaluable due to her leadership abilities and her comprehensive knowledge of the university. Dr. Karen DePauw stated that Ms. Foutz wished to continue serving on the committee in an advisory capacity. Dr. Grene will ask a faculty member of CGS&P to serve on this committee. Dr. Avery suggested asking Mr. Doug Strickland to represent the extended campus as he directs the Roanoke Center and has assumed temporary responsibility of the Abingdon Center. Ms. Feuerbach will contact the president's office to determine how this CGS&P vacancy is filled. Report approved.

Degree Requirement Standards Criteria and Academic Policy (DRSCAP): Dr. Kent Murrman presented the minutes from the December 2, 2002 and the December 17, 2002 DRSCAP meeting. The committee presented three recommendations to the commission.

- (1) Procedures for evaluation of the progress of graduate students

Dr. Murrmann discussed the procedures with the committee's proposed changes. Dr. Murrmann explained that the edits were not intended to change the thrust of the original document [Policy Memorandum 1, Procedures for Evaluation of the Progress of Graduate Students], but to reinvigorate and emphasize the importance of a systematic evaluation procedure. Dr. Avery stated that DRSCAP had tried to maintain flexibility in this procedure. This proposed procedure

would allow the Graduate School to become more aware of potential student issues or problems. Dr. Boyle stressed the importance of informing students of specific departmental policies.

The commission voted to accept the proposed changes to Policy Memorandum No. 1.

(2) Number of credit hours of enrollment required to be classified as a full-time student

Dr. Murrmann presented the proposed policy concerning graduate student credit hour enrollment requirements. The commission was asked to replace the following policy (p. 26, Graduate Catalog):

Fellowship Recipients

Fellowship and scholarship recipients are required to take no less than 12 credit hours each semester in which they are receiving a stipend. These hours must represent work toward satisfying minimum degree requirements. Audited courses do not qualify in satisfying this minimum.

Enrollment

Full-time enrollment for graduate students other than those on fellowships and scholarships consists of 9 hours per semester during the academic year. Graduate assistants may not enroll for fewer than 9 hours per semester. Graduate assistants are not required to enroll during summer sessions.

to the following, which combines both paragraphs:

Enrollment

Full-time enrollment for graduate students, including fellowship and scholarship recipients, consists of a minimum of 12 hours and a maximum of 18 hours per semester during the academic year. Graduate assistants may not enroll for fewer than 12 hours per semester. Graduate assistants are not required to enroll during summer sessions. Fellowship and scholarship recipients must enroll in at least 12 hours in each semester in which they are receiving a stipend. These hours must represent work toward satisfying minimum degree requirements. Audited courses do not qualify in satisfying this minimum.

Dr. DePauw stated that she would like approval for more than 12 hours of credit to rest with the faculty. The Graduate School would continue to approve hours above the 18-hour maximum. Dr. DePauw also explained that the state defines full time enrollment as 12 hours. Consequently, by defining full-time enrollment as 9 hours, Virginia Tech is underreporting the effort of both graduate students and faculty. Dr. DePauw said the 12-hour enrollment minimum would not mean an increase in cost to the students. Dr. DePauw asked for feedback from graduate student representatives to the commission. Ms. Megan Madden reported that in her department most students were enrolled in 12 hours. Mr. Nick Amico felt that as long as students could use research hours as a part of the 12-hour minimum, he didn't feel the change would be an issue with graduate students. For clarity, Dr. DePauw recommended that **GA** and **GRA** should follow the text, **Graduate assistants**

The commission approved the proposed policy concerning graduate student credit hour enrollment requirements.

(3) Proposed changes in the structure of the graduate stipend financial aid matrix

Dr. Murrmann reviewed the proposal to change the structure of the graduate stipend structure. He reviewed the handout, which outlined the current situation, the problems with the current matrix, and the proposed solution, as follows:

Current situation:

- *Stipend matrix for GTA, GRA, GA appointments is a 5 level — 4 step grid; Level D is reserved for Post DVM students*
- *Across levels & steps, the stipends range, for example, from \$1065/month to \$1930/month; Level D (range \$2185 — \$2355)*
- *In addition, there is a separate matrix for senior GRA and GTA ranging, for example, from \$1735/month to \$2110/month*
- *Departments are authorized to award stipends only at the approved level*

Problems with current matrix:

- *Puts a limit on the maximum (and minimum) that graduate students can be paid*
- *Limits the ability to offer competitive stipends for outstanding graduate students*
- *Limits the flexibility of department of choose an appropriate stipend level*
- *Invokes a tier system that causes inequities across departments*
- *Highest authorized stipend level is below the recommended stipend allowed by funding agencies (e.g., NSF)*
- *Limits the ability to provide stipends without tuition remission where funding agencies will not fund tuition (e.g., USDA)*

Solution: Create an incremental step system for stipends

- *Provides for greater flexibility for departments in making offers to graduate students*
- *Allows departments to receive funding for graduate assistantships at higher levels than currently exists*
- *Provides departments the opportunity to pay at a higher level and the student pays tuition*
- *Increases the range of stipend levels*
- *Can be modified to incorporate partial appointments (.75, .25) and 9-month, 12-month appointments*
- *Doesn't mandate additional funding from university but allows colleges/departments the ability to appoint students at appropriate levels using their sources of funding*

A sample assistantship salary grid from Washington State University was distributed.

The commission agreed that the current structure of the graduate stipend financial aid matrix should be changed. Dr. DePauw has been in conversation with the provost's office and the budget office. She commented that the commission's action is advisory to the Graduate School and the budget office.

Other Reports

Graduate Student Assembly (GSA): Ms. Megan Madden reported that the GSA is working on health insurance issues. The president of GSA, Jan van Aardt, is currently reviewing the GSA constitution. The commission approved the report.

Graduate Honor System (GHS): No report.

University Library Committee: Dr. Eileen Hitchingham presented the minutes from the November 19 meeting (submitted electronically) including: (1) University Libraries Virginia Tech Communication Committee, (2) Review of Fines, and (3) Library Review. Dr. Grene suggested that faculty and graduate students be invited to serve on communications committees. Dr. Hitchingham reported that the December library meeting was cancelled. The next meeting will be in January. The minutes were approved.

Old Business:

Policy on Untaught Courses [Policy Memorandum No. 11]: Dr. Roger Avery reviewed Policy Memorandum No. 11, Deletion of Untaught Classes from the Graduate School Catalog. He reported that this policy had been discussed in the fall of 2002 at a Graduate Curriculum Committee meeting. Mr. Marvin Foushee reported that the registrar's office had a new program, which was currently being tested, which should be able to capture courses that have not been taught since the fall of 2000. These courses can then be reported to the Graduate School, and the Graduate School can then contact the departments. Mr. Foushee believes that by inserting a term year (a termination date) in a Banner field, a course can be deleted. To reinstate a class, the term year would be manually changed. Departments wishing to reinstate a course may need to seek approval from the Graduate School to determine if the course content and materials are current.

New Business: None.

Announcements:

Dr. DePauw had four announcements:

- (1) Transient Graduate Students will now be known as Visiting Graduate Students effective spring 2003.
- (2) The Graduate School will be assessing a fee from Commonwealth Campus Students, Visiting Graduate Students, and Professional Certification Students. The Commonwealth Campus fee will be forty-five dollars. This is a one-time fee; students will not have to pay this fee again should they wish to later apply to Virginia Tech for regular admission. Visiting Graduate Students and Professional Certification Students will be assessed a fee of twenty-five dollars. The provost's office and the budget office have approved this proposal. These changes are not ready for public announcement as the planning for implementation is still underway.
- (3) The Graduate School and the Alumni Association have established a Graduate Alumni Achievement Award. This annual award will be presented for the first time at the Graduate Commencement in May 2003. Dr. Avery will chair the selection committee.
- (4) Graduate Education Week has been rescheduled to the last week in March. Dr. DePauw announced that Dr. Bob O'Neil, former president of the University of Virginia, and current director of the Thomas Jefferson Center for Academic Freedom, will be the featured speaker on Wednesday evening, March 26. He will be presenting on the topic of Academic Freedom Post-September 11.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:30 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