

Minutes

Commission on Graduate Studies & Policies

February 7, 2007

3:30 pm – 5:00 pm

Graduate Life Center at Donaldson Brown

Present: Ms. Linsey Barker, Dr. Scott Case, Dr. Ron Daniel, Dr. Karen DePauw, Dr. François Elvinger, Professor Bill Galloway, Dr. Eileen Hitchingham, Dr. Tim Mack, Dr. Kumar Mallikarjunan, Ms. Gail McMillan, Ms. Margaret Merrill, Dr. Tom Ollendick, Dr. Carolyn Rude, Ms. Rebecca Slutzky, Ms. Chris Thomas, Mr. Brian Whitaker, Dr. Audrey Zink-Sharp

Absent with Notification: Mr. Greg Lemmond, Ms. Penny McCallum, Dr. Suzanne Murrmann, Dr. Gerhardt Schurig

Absent without Notification: Mr. Sherif Agha, Dr. Jim Collier, Ms. Mary Ann Norman

Conference call: Dr. Rosary Lalik

Invited Guests: Mr. Marvin Foushee, Dr. Brian Mihalik, Ms. Jory Ruscio, Dr. Sheryl Ball, Ms. Laura Freeman

Approval of the agenda: Approved

Approval of minutes from January 17, 2007: Approved.

Committee Reports

Graduate Curriculum Committee (GCC): The minutes of the January 25 meeting were reviewed and approved.

Graduate Student Appeals: No report.

Graduate Student Relations: No report.

Degree Requirement Standards Criteria and Academic Policy (DRSCAP):

The commission reviewed and discussed revisions to the residency requirements for the Ph.D.

The following approved revision includes amendments recommended by the commission.

Residency Requirements for the Ph.D.

At least two consecutive semesters of full-time enrollment must be completed at the Virginia Tech Blacksburg campus to fulfill the Residency Requirement. Individual degree programs may request an alternative to the Blacksburg campus requirement by petitioning the Graduate School.

The Graduate School will report annually to the Commission on Graduate Studies and Policies on the success of the alternative residency. The Graduate School retains the right to withdraw the permission for alternate forms of residency, if deemed necessary.

Requirements for the Doctor of Education

Residency for the Ed.D. involves full-time study during two consecutive semesters (including summers, which must be of an extended nature. This also applies to the Ph.D. in educational research and evaluation.) The dissertation for the Ed.D. typically demonstrates the candidate's ability to investigate phenomena in educational institutions or service agencies to increase practitioners' understanding of practical problems and issues. The Ed.D. student and the advisory committee develop and submit a plan of study that is designed to build on the unique strengths and interests of the individual. A total of 90 graduate credits is required for the degree.

Purposes of the Residency Requirement for Doctoral Degrees

The basic goals for doctoral students include the ability to understand and critically evaluate the literature of their field, to understand the issues and problems at the frontiers of knowledge in their field, and to cultivate and exercise their ability to make original contributions to knowledge in their field. These goals are not exclusive to particular career paths, but are fundamental to the level of achievement and mature scholarship that the doctorate certifies. Specific purposes of residency are based on recent recommendations of the National Academy of Sciences, the National Academy of Engineering, and the Institute of Medicine and the residency requirement of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (the accrediting agency for Virginia Tech):

1. To ensure access to a wide spectrum of courses in the student's own discipline as well as related disciplines.
2. To ensure substantial interaction with a large pool of faculty. This is important not only to support dissertation work and studies, but as a source of advice, perspective, and guidance in formulating career objectives.
3. To ensure a similar level of interaction with fellow graduate students.
4. To guard against over-specialization and provide a broad range of professional development.
5. To ensure access to library and laboratory resources.
6. To provide access and exposure to a wide spectrum of seminars, professional presentations, and contact with leaders in their own discipline as well as others.
7. To ensure quality and rigor of the program through involvement with and scrutiny by peers in other disciplines.
8. To require that students transferring several course credit hours from other institutions complete a minimal amount of course work at Virginia Tech.

The residency requirement addresses these objectives by bringing the student into the rich academic environment of the university campus.

Other Reports

Graduate Student Assembly (GSA): Ms. Jory Ruscio, president of the Graduate Student Assembly, reviewed activities of the GSA, including (1) a social, (2) the development of recommendations for health insurance renewal and negotiation process, (3) the upcoming comedy troupe, "The Galileo Players". Ms. Ruscio introduced Ms. Laura Freeman, the GSA vice president for programs and a graduate student in statistics, who opened for discussion the topic, "The Statistical Consulting Center".

Ms. Freeman reviewed the history of the Statistical Consulting Center. In 2004 the center lost financial support from Virginia Tech and was forced to initiate a cost-recovery operation, charging fees to student and faculty users. The decline in center usage suggests that fees may deter potential users. Ideally, users would take advantage of a consultant from the [experiment] design stage through analysis. Often, however, researchers may wait until after an experiment is run and discover it is too late to effectively use the center's staff expertise.

The GSA delegates surveyed graduate students in January. There was an overwhelming positive response from students supporting the need for the services of the Statistical Consulting Center.

Dr. DePauw noted that [only] the College of Science is covering fees for graduate students in their college. She asked the commission to discuss whether or not the university should have a role in providing this support to graduate students.

Dr. Case suggested that this issue falls under the broader topic discussed at the retreat, i.e., “what are some of the basic support services that we need to make available to all graduate students?” He reiterated that it was important to identify these services.

Ms. Freeman felt that, as a statistics student, the consulting center was the important activity for graduate students in this field. She suggested, as a possible change, that the center be run by a fourth year doctoral student. Ideally, two funded graduate student positions could support the center.

Dr. Hitchingham broadened the discussion to include undergraduate students involved in research.

Drs. Mallikarjunan, Mack, Ollendick, DePauw and Ms. Freeman volunteered to form a subcommittee to continue this discussion.

Graduate Honor System (GHS)

Mr. Brian Whitaker reported that two cases from last semester have been completed, four are still under investigation, and there are no new cases to report this semester. Currently, Mr. Whitaker is training about twenty new panelists. A new investigator will be hired in the near future, and plans are underway for participation in Graduate Education Week.

University Library Committee (ULC): Dr. Hitchingham will review minutes from the most recent meeting after they are circulated to commission members.

University Council: Dr. Elvinger reported that the *Master of Arts in Foreign Languages, Cultures, and Literatures* was presented for a first reading. The *Doctor of Philosophy in STEM Education: Engineering Education* was reviewed and approved following a second reading.

Old Business: [see Residency Requirements, under DRSCAP]

New Business:

Virginia Tech – Georgetown University Master of Science Degree in Biomedical Technology Development and Management

Dr. Sheryl Ball presented the Virginia Tech – Georgetown University Master of Science Degree in Biomedical Technology Development and Management. Professor Galloway described the GCC review and approval of the new joint degree proposal. Following discussion, and at the request of the College of Science, the commission voted to approve the joint degree proposal without a second reading.

Interdisciplinary Degree Programs

Dr. Case reported that the metrics for departmental evaluation contributions do not accurately reflect the contribution of interdisciplinary degree programs. Because departments, and therefore their faculty, are given the credit, faculty involved in interdisciplinary programs do not receive recognition. Dr. Mack recommended that Dr. Case contact Ms. Janice McBee, a research analyst

with Institutional Research (jmcbec@vt.edu). Dr. Case suggested that a more appropriate measurement would be to count graduate students by advisor affiliation (rather than degree program). Dr. DePauw suggested that the commission invite Ms. McBee to an upcoming meeting. Dr. DePauw noted that another issue was “where students are counted”, for example, if enrolled in Blacksburg *and* Northern Virginia.

Non-Tenure track faculty members on graduate advisory committees

The commission addressed the issue of appropriate representation on advisory committees. Dr. DePauw noted that we currently allow non-tenure track faculty to serve on committees, with some restrictions currently in place. Dr. Mihalik currently reviews the requests for non-tenure track committee members.

Doctoral defenses are open to the public. Dr. DePauw would like upcoming defenses posted on the Graduate School website.

Dr. Lalik explained that occasionally, in education, a committee member is invited to serve because they may be “conversant with the experiences of public schools”, particularly if the research is going to be done within a public school context. Dr. DePauw stated that this happens in other disciplines, such as architecture, when committee members need to have expertise in areas other than research in order to remain “current”. Dr. Lalik said it would be helpful to explain the particular expertise the committee member brings to the process. Currently, the form requesting the committee member does not ask for documentation of their area of expertise. In addition, Dr. Mihalik said the forms he received did not require the name (or signature) of the committee chair.

Announcements: Ms. Gail McMillan announced that rather than a one-year appointment, she has been elected to a three year term serving on the Virginia Intellectual Property Board. She has a document from the board meeting earlier in the week that can be made available to commission members.

Dr. Kumar Mallikarjunan volunteered to chair the next commission meeting.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 5:01 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Ms. Nancy B. Feuerbach, on behalf of

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