Graduate Council Minutes

March 19, 2009

Attending: Kurt Baker, Randall Brown, Bret Carroll, David Colnic, Diana Demetrulias, Chet Jensen, Nathan Lovaa, Carolyn Martin, Peter Nelligan, Arnold Schmidt, Nancy Jean Smith (for Ramón Vega de Jesús), Margaret Tynan, Shawna Young

Excused: Ann Kohlhaas, Pam Roe, Dennis Sayers, Andrew Wagner

Ex-Officio: Sari Miller-Antonio (for Carolyn Stefanco), Ken Potts (for Carl Whitman), Mark Thompson

Shawna Young called the meeting to order at 2:30 p.m.

I. Approval of Agenda. The agenda was approved with the following revision:
   A. Add item III B. Agenda Inventory (Young).

II. Approval of March 5, 2009 Minutes. The minutes were approved.

III. Information and Announcements

   A. Questions about Reports (Young). There were no questions.

   B. Agenda Inventory (Young). In addition to items remaining on the agenda, the following agenda items are to be addressed by the Council:

      1. At the 4/2/09 meeting, Carl Whitman and Priscilla Peters from the Library will present information on the new institutional repository and the long-term plans for electronic thesis/dissertation archival.

      2. As a follow-up to the Provost’s report at Academic Senate, S. Young asked D. Demetrulias to give a brief report. D. Demetrulias indicated the possibility of funding from federal appropriations for a Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies with a concentration in green technologies. A proposal requesting funding (not a curriculum proposal, which would come later for campus review/approval if funding to develop a program was approved) will be sent to the Council for information.

IV. Discussion

   A. Assessment Plan Revised (Demetrulias)—Attachment #0809-22. D. Demetrulias presented the Graduate Assessment Plan, reflecting revisions made in response to Council recommendations. It was generally agreed that the revisions were accurate and acceptable, and S. Young will forward the final document to SEC as an information item.
D. Demetrulias indicated that the WASC team is working on the WASC exhibits for the Educational Effectiveness Review and needs to complete the exhibit for the assessment of graduate programs (both the assessment materials for the overall 6 graduate learning goals and the materials that are program specific. She will be contacting the graduate directors to ensure that we have complete and updated documents we began assembling last spring term (assessment plans/reports and curriculum maps).

B. Academic Program Review Revisited (Young) — Attachment #0809-16 and #0809-16 Addendum previously distributed. Discussed was the need to articulate a written response to the WASC recommendation that we consider ways to improve the graduate-level APR process. In particular, the issue of external reviews surfaced again as a specific recommendation by WASC; the Council previously decided external reviews should be “encouraged” but not mandated. The Council further explored how we might show the level of thought and consideration that went into reaching that decision and how we have responded to that recommendation. In addition, discussion addressed the WASC standard relating to the fostering of a graduate culture, and how that might be addressed within the APR process.

A subcommittee, consisting of S. Young and D. Demetrulias (and others who wish to join the work group), will develop a draft document that incorporates the ideas of the Council and identifies specific actions for improving the graduate-level Academic Program Review process. Included will be the results from a survey of graduate programs to determine the number of graduate programs (a) with external reviews by accrediting agencies, (b) that have employed external reviewers, and (c) that express a willingness to include external reviews in their current/next APR process (with funding available by the Office of Assessment and Quality Assurance). In addition, the subcommittee will review WASC language related to graduate programs and determine other areas the Council might wish to address. Further, the subcommittee will consider the possibility of recommending revised language for the APR policy that includes a demonstration of how programs foster graduate culture.

The general agreement was that the Council has many processes in place and shared values for graduate education that may not be articulated in formal documents, recognizing that it may be helpful to do so. This would allow us to communicate better our processes for ensuring the quality of our graduate programs.

C. Policy on Graduate Academic Advising (Young) — Attachment #0809-14 previously distributed. This discussion item stems from a question asked in Senate early this year: will the Graduate Council be considering a policy parallel to that used for undergraduate advising? After brief discussion the Council determined that such a policy is not necessary given the explicit advising responsibility of each program coordinator.

The question was raised of whether such a policy might prove useful as a tool to strengthen the faculty’s argument to keep assigned time for graduate coordinators in the current budget climate. It was thought that documentation of the very real need for frequent and extensive advising on the part of the coordinator might become important during discussions of budget cuts and assigned time. Overall, it was still determined that while the need to defend assigned time may become a concern, an academic advising policy is not needed for graduate education.

D. Graduate Culture Document Revised (Demetrulias) — Attachment #0809-23. Deferred.

E. Commencement — Council Members’ Student Survey Results (Young). Deferred.

F. Graduate Education Strategic Plan (Young) — Attachment #0809-21 previously distributed. S. Young distributed a handout (hereafter designated Attachment #0809-25). The handout was the Council’s proposal to the Master Academic Planning (MAP) Committee, submitted in April 1998. This document reflects
thoughtful consideration of the state of graduate education at the time and concrete and specific goals and plans for the future.

After much discussion, the Council agreed that the document is a good starting point for determining our current state and future goals as they stand now, in 2009. Council members will review the MAP document, along with the 1995 Graduate Council Enrollment Management document which will be distributed as Attachment #0809-26 and which addresses some of the same issues and values.

Council members will determine what goals for graduate education set in 1998 have been reached; which have not been reached but should still be considered goals; which, if any, are no longer relevant or appropriate goals; and what new goals/actions are needed.

After the 4/2 meeting, at which the Council will attempt to frame four or five essential questions with regard to the mission, goals, and priorities of graduate education, members will take those questions back to their departments and solicit thoughtful feedback from the faculty. Feedback will then be discussed at the 4/23 meeting, with the ultimate goal being to determine an overall identity, mission, and set of specific priorities and goals for the Graduate Council (and graduate education) in 2009 and beyond.

It was noted that while budget constraints are certainly a consideration, they should not limit our planning for the future; rather we should plan now, ensuring that when the budget returns to stability, we are prepared to act.

In addition, the Council will examine how the priorities determined during this process fit into the overall University Strategic Plan, specifically those strategic priorities that relate to quality and support of graduate programs. Council priorities identified within the University Strategic Plan will be forwarded to the Strategic Plan Working Group when appropriate.

G. Thesis/Project Review (Demetrulias). Deferred.

H. Doctoral Education (Demetrulias)—Attachment #0809-24. Deferred.

I. GA/TA Fundraising (Young). Deferred.

J. Alumni Survey (Colnic, Young). Deferred.

K. CGS/Peterson’s Award for Innovation in Promoting an Inclusive Graduate Community (Demetrulias). Deferred.

Shawna Young adjourned the meeting at 4:30 p.m.
Respectfully submitted by Alyssa Mazzina