

GRADUATE COUNCIL MINUTES

February 18, 2009

Present: Susan Awbrey, Tom Blume, Jacqueline Drouin, Donna Free, Frances Jackson, Rob Kushler, Mildred Merz, Claire Rammel, Joe Shively, Julia Smith, Mohamed Zohdy

Guests: Jim Ciplewski, Cindy Hermsen

Staff: Julie Delaney, Lynette Folken, Evonne Mitchell,

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was convened at 2:05 p.m. by Susan Awbrey, Chair.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of January 31, 2009 were approved with corrections.

III. REPORT FROM THE CHAIR

Susan Awbrey reported a 6% drop in graduate admissions. She urged Council members to ask their faculty colleagues to contact Graduate Study with ideas for new graduate certificate programs as well as marketing ideas. She advised members to direct graduate program ideas to Claire Rammel in Graduate Study. New applicants should be directed to Kathy Rowley in Graduate Admissions and marketing ideas should be directed to Christina Grabowski. Graduate students with financial challenges should be referred to Financial Aid.

Ms. Awbrey shared the current Board of Trustees policy for in-state tuition which states that students enrolled in courses associated with an approved online degree or graduate certificate program will be charged in-state rates regardless of residency. The Provost in consultation with the President will determine which programs will qualify as "approved on-line" programs. A subcommittee for e-learning has proposed three different ways programs might qualify as on-line, thus qualifying students for in-state tuition rates. The Provost and the President will make the final determination of the resident tuition rate based on the justification of need report submitted by the program department.

Possible qualifiers include:

1. All courses are taught completely online with no campus contacts.
2. Coursework is taught online except for an internship which may or may not take place on campus.
3. 50% of coursework is taught online with the remaining courses taught at off-campus facilities.

Ms. Awbrey announced that the non-degree performance certificate in piano proposed by the Department of Music, Theatre and Dance will be assigned to a subcommittee to review and determine whether it conforms to OU graduate certificate guidelines. She asked Frances Jackson

and Donna Free to serve on the subcommittee, review the proposal and report their findings at the next Council meeting.

IV. OLD BUSINESS

Executive MBA - Graduate Program Modification – Second Reading

At issue, renaming the Executive MBA in Health Care Management to the Executive MBA and changing the foundation courses from the existing HCM rubric to the new MBA rubric.

Millie Mertz asked if additional money should be requested for library resources for the Information Systems Leadership (ISL) courses. She suggested that these new courses were developed toward *leadership* rather than *management*, and they may require more resources for books, research, technical and mentoring support.

Donna Free responded that the proposal did not identify the need for additional library resources, and she did not anticipate a future need.

Susan Awbrey asked Graduate Council for a motion to approve the Executive MBA program modification.

Tom Blume motioned to approve; Jackie Drouin seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

Time to Degree Completion Revision– First Reading

At issue, change the time to degree completion requirements for students enrolled in a Ph.D. degree program.

Jim Ciplewski summarized the proposed policy that would extend the current maximum of eight (8) years for completion of the doctorate to ten (10) years for completion of the doctorate. The proposal allows for six (6) years to candidacy which reflects the completion of coursework and the successful passing of qualifying and comprehensive exams, plus an additional four (4) years to complete the dissertation.

Frances Jackson asked if there should be any caveat or statement that addresses students who are not progressing in a timely manner. Claire Rammel responded that the program can return the students to pre-candidacy, initiate a probation option or dismiss the student. In support of Ms. Jackson's concern, Julie Delaney said that Graduate Study sees variances in advising and policy knowledge and feels that there is a need to redefine the doctorate policy in all departments. Ms. Rammel reminded Graduate Council that this policy reflects a maximum time limit. PhD programs may have their own unique requirements for which the student is responsible, including the monitoring and evaluating of progress toward the degree requirements. These should also be included in each program's graduate program student handbook.

Susan Awbrey asked Council for a motion to approve the Time to Degree Completion proposal.

Tom Blume motioned to approve; Donna Free seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

V. New Business

Final Grade – Thesis, Dissertation and Doctoral Capstone Research Projects

Proposed Modification to Grading: Discontinue assigning temporary “P” grades for dissertations, doctoral projects and thesis research courses and begin awarding real – time, permanent grades.

Graduate students pursuing a degree, which requires completion of a thesis, dissertation or doctoral research project, are expected to fulfill the research credit hour requirements as set forth in the Graduate Program Catalog for their discipline. Currently, for each continuous term of enrollment in a specified dissertation, doctoral project or thesis research course, a temporary "P" grade (Progress) is assigned to the course for satisfactory work and remains on the transcript until the graduate student satisfies all degree requirements, including defense and acceptance of the manuscript by Graduate Study & Lifelong Learning. The "P" grades, corresponding to all dissertation, doctoral project and thesis research credit hours are then converted to a final grade (S) prior to conferral of the degree.

Because earned credits are not assigned to the temporary "P" grade, graduate students are exceeding the minimum percentage of cumulative attempted/earned credit hours required to meet the standards of satisfactory academic progress for federal, state and institutional financial aid at Oakland University. These students are deemed as not making satisfactory academic progress and are denied financial aid.

The proposal is to discontinue assigning temporary "P" grades for dissertation, doctoral projects and thesis research courses and begin awarding real-time, permanent grades. The proposed grades are as follows:

SP - satisfactory progress made toward completion of the thesis/dissertation

NP - unsatisfactory progress made toward completion of thesis/dissertation

S/U - final grade given for the last semester of thesis/dissertation research AFTER successful defense and acceptance of the dissertation, doctoral project or thesis by Graduate Study and Lifelong Learning.

Final grades of **NP, SP and S** do not affect grade point averages. The "SP" and "S" grade are included in credit hours attempted and earned (pass) semester hours, while the "NP" grade is included in credit hours attempted, but not included in credit hours earned.

Because the "NP" grade is not used in calculating the GPA, no direct academic sanction, such as academic dismissal from the University, will be imposed for earning one or more "NP" grades. However, departments may wish to use a series of "NP" grades as a basis for terminating the

student from a graduate program. Departments and programs should establish these criteria and document them fully in their graduate student handbooks.

Cindy Hermsen, Director of Financial Aid, reported a growing problem for graduate students to qualify for financial aid because of a “P” grade on their transcript. Ms. Rammel added that the proposal was created with input from the Registrars’ office, and it was modeled after other universities’ policies.

Mohamed Zohdy stated that the “NP” or “SP” grading does not look good on a transcript because it could be interpreted as a bad cycle and shows too much fluctuation on a student’s record.

Tom Blume disagreed and stated that the “NP”, “SP” and “S” grading is a better way to track student progress toward a master’s or doctoral degree. He pointed out, that in the end it is not any different than a student getting 3.0 in one course and 3.9 in another.

Jim Ciplewski stated that the new proposal would be particularly helpful for King/Chavez/Parks Future Faculty Fellowship (KCP) recipients. The State of Michigan requires that they are making satisfactory progress toward their master’s or doctoral degrees. If they are not making satisfactory progress, they must pay back the award. This is a particular hardship for this group of students.

Julia Smith asked at what level “NP” grades would be established. She posed a hypothetical scenario where a student received an “NP” grade and was 4 credit hours short of the 16 credits required to complete the dissertation. The “NP” grade could cause severe financial consequences and might cause people to retain a lawyer. Claire Rammel indicated the evaluation of academic work is the prerogative of the instructor. The rules for determining “NP” final course grades would be established by the graduate program, published in their student handbook and defended as any other grade.

Donna Free asked if a grade change form would have to be submitted when the project is complete. Claire Rammel responded that there will be no need for a grade change form because it will go through as a permanent grade.

Julia Smith asked are we grandfathering the current “P” grade do we convert them to “SP”? Claire Rammel replied no; the conversion process is manual right now and Graduate Study and Financial Aid office are working closely together so that no one’s financial aid is impacted.

Jim Ciplewski asked if course action forms must be completed by the program once the proposal is approved. Claire Rammel stated that course action forms will not be necessary. Once the proposal is finalized, Banner Catalog will be updated by Graduate Study.

Susan Awbrey asked Council for a motion to approve the **Final Grade – Thesis, Dissertation and Doctoral Capstone Research Projects** proposal.

Tom Blume motioned to approve; seconded by Julia Smith. The motion was approved

unanimously.

Cindy Hermsen thanked the Council and asked that the members ask faculty members to direct any student experiencing financial hardship to the Financial Aid Office.

Master's Thesis – grading issue

Susan Awbrey advised Council of a grading issue that has been brought forward by the School of Engineering and Computer Science

On March 29, 2006, David Downing recommended the elimination of numeric grades for dissertation or thesis research credit courses. The Council agreed, indicating the purpose in requiring the writing and defense of dissertation or thesis is to assist the graduate student in acquiring research and presentation skills. Therefore, the final evaluation should focus on whether the student has achieved or failed to achieve the skills (S or U grade) rather than an evaluation of the level of mastery (numeric grade).

Last year Graduate Council voted again on whether or not a master's thesis should be graded Satisfactory/ Unsatisfactory or should be graded numerically. At that time, the Council voted unanimously that a master's thesis should not be graded numerically and that future theses should be graded Satisfactory/ Unsatisfactory.

Susan Awbrey reported that Bhushan Bhatt, Associate Dean of the School of Engineering and Computer Science (SECS), wants to address Graduate Council regarding this issue, as SECS is still using and wants to continue to use numeric grading for a master's thesis. However, Mr. Bhatt was unavailable for this meeting.

Mohamed Zohdy stated that he supports the use of numeric grading for a master's thesis. One of his students submitted an excellent thesis, and the "S" grade awarded to this student "does not fully recognize the greatness in his work."

Susan Awbrey directed that the grade of S/U would remain in place for everyone except for thesis grades in the School of Engineering. Bhushan Bhatt will be at a future Graduate Council meeting for further discussion on this issue.

Mohamed Zohdy objected, stating that he was representing the Acting Dean of Engineering (Manohar Das) and that a decision on the issue could and should be made immediately.

Susan Awbrey reiterated that the Council needs all parties present in order to discuss this further. This topic will be continued at a later date.

New course approval request from the School of Business Administration (SBC 580, Business Project Support)

Donna Free presented a new graduate course proposal to offer SBC 580, Business Project Support, for 0 credits. The course is modeled after 0-credit courses offered in the undergraduate

ACHIEVE program which utilizes the Center for Integrated Business Research and Education (CIBRE). When enrolled in the SBC 580, a graduate student, working with a faculty member, will partner with a business that has made a contribution to Oakland University. Using this partnership, the team will work together to solve problems the business is experiencing. Tuition assistance and a stipend will be provided.

Donna Free explained that in order for graduate research assistants to get recognition for participating in the program, the 0 credit course was developed. The course will be graded Satisfactory/ Unsatisfactory.

Susan Awbrey asked how much work would be expected of the student. Donna Free replied that a graduate research assistant would work approximately 20 hours.

Rob Kushler asked if participation in the program would be an academic requirement. Donna Free confirmed that it would not be an academic requirement and reiterated that the reason for creating the course is to have student participation listed on transcripts.

Frances Jackson stated that she does not think that this course proposal is a Graduate Council issue since it is not really a graduate course and it should be resolved with assistance from the Registrar's office. The Council agreed it was not an academic course, but rather an event that the School of Business wanted to notate on the transcript. The issue should be resolved through the Registrar's office.

PM Graduate Certificate in Criminal Justice Leadership Proposal

PM Graduate Certificate in Health Care Administration Proposal

Susan Awbrey asked for two volunteers to serve on the subcommittee to review the proposal and present their findings at the next Graduate Council meeting. Joe Shively and Jackie Drouin agreed to review the proposal.

VI. GOOD AND WELFARE

Susan Awbrey circulated a copy of the OU home web page showing new locations for Graduate Study and Lifelong Learning. While Council was pleased with these revisions, they expressed disappointment in the overall planning and execution of the new OU website. Consequently, Ms. Awbrey suggested that Council invite a representative from Communications and Marketing to address specific concerns and suggestions provided by Council members.

Frances Jackson reported that the OU snow policy has changed. The new policy states that class cancellations due to heavy snow conditions can not be made by individual faculty members. The university will make decisions about snow day class cancellations.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 3:51 p.m. The next meeting is scheduled for March 18, 2009 in 100 Kresge Library.