

## **GRADUATE COUNCIL MINUTES**

**October 24, 2007**

Approved: February 13, 2008

**Present:** Tom Blume, Dave Downing, Jacqueline Drouin, Lisa Hawley, Frances Jackson, Paul Licker, Mildred Merz, Zissimos Mourelatos, Meir Shillor, Joseph Shively, Mohamed Zohdy

**Guest:** Christina Grabowski

**Staff:** Julie Delaney, Lynette Folken, Eilene Lohmeier

### **I. CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was convened at 2:10 pm by D. Downing, Chair.

### **II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

D. Downing stated that the minutes of October 10, 2007 will be deferred to the next meeting.

### **III. REPORT FROM THE CHAIR**

D. Downing welcomed Zissimos Mourelatos, School of Engineering and Computer Science, as a new member of Graduate Council.

### **IV. INFORMATIONAL ITEMS**

#### **a. Spring/Summer Status**

D. Downing reported on the formation of a committee to address financial aid difficulties for students taking courses that overlap both spring and summer sessions. Due to accreditation requirements, programs in the School of Nursing, for example, that must offer courses for a full 16-week period do not comply with federal financial aid regulations. The committee met with an SCT Banner representative to focus on these issues, and a consultant will be retained to make further recommendations.

#### **b. North Central Association Site Visit**

C. Rammel reported that the North Central Association (NCA) will conduct a full-program site and review visit April 6-8, 2009. A steering committee has been convened in preparation for the visit.

#### **c. Graduate Assessment**

C. Rammel reported that she recently attended the workshop "Assessing Graduate Programs" hosted by Laura Schartman, Director of Institutional Research, and presented by Kelly Funk, Director of Assessment, Michigan State University. Shannon McNair, Chair of Oakland

University's Assessment Committee, will be invited to an upcoming Graduate Council meeting to discuss assessment as it relates to program reviews.

## **V. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

### **a. Transcript Requirement for Graduate Admissions**

C. Rammel presented an updated transcript proposal and distributed a handout detailing transcript requirements at other Michigan institutions. As is traditional with most Michigan institutions, the current Oakland University graduate admission policy requires students to submit degree and non-degree transcripts from all educational institutions. The proposed policy, however, requires only transcripts relating to the student's bachelor's degree.

C. Grabowski presented an overview of Oakland's graduate admission process and stated that students are currently required to provide all transcripts from every educational institution attended. Students are notified of missing admission materials, and some admission decisions are delayed while waiting for non-degree transcripts.

To expedite the process, some program coordinators/advisors have questioned the necessity of waiting for unnecessary transcripts that are not helpful in making admission decisions. Some programs elect to waive certain transcript requirements by signing a waiver form. C. Grabowski reported that the process of consistently securing waivers and programs waiving non-degree transcripts has become very labor intensive. It was proposed that the process may be expedited by introducing a more minimal graduate transcript policy that allows the department/programs to determine which specific transcripts are required in order to make admission decisions.

P. Licker suggested that the policy require only the transcript from the latest or highest undergraduate degree granting school and allow the individual programs to establish specific requirements. C. Grabowski stated that the departments/ programs will need to provide program-by-program specific requirements in order to assure that the requirements will be posted accurately on the web.

C. Rammel stressed the importance of mandatory student disclosure of all institutions from which the student is attending or has attended in case of future academic issues.

J. Delaney asked if there would be accreditation issues resulting from the proposed policy change. Also, she cautioned that the possible downside of waiving non-degree transcripts during the admission process would be the sizeable number of students who would later choose to seek approval for transfer credits and petitions. That equally important approval process would be delayed while waiting for additional transcripts.

D. Downing summarized the discussion and noted consensus and support for a policy which establishes a baseline statement providing the maximum flexibility to the individual programs in determining what transcripts and information is required for their admission decision. He added the need to be careful with non-matriculated coursework at the graduate level because it is not relevant. Council members, particularly those associated with clinical programs, disagreed

stating that all transcripts including non-matriculating transcripts were important for their admissions review and decisions.

It was agreed that there are two primary issues: 1) that a mandatory list of all institutions attended by a student must be provided on the admission application and 2) that departments establish and provide program-by-program transcript requirements to Graduate Admissions for posting on the web.

Accreditation issues will be investigated and General Counsel will be asked to review the policy before it is brought back for Council review. Language changes will be incorporated into the proposed policy and presented at the next meeting.

### **b. Doctoral Final Projects – Format and Submission Requirements**

D. Downing presented the Doctorate of Nursing Practice, (DNP) and Doctor of Science in Physical Therapy (DScPT) format and submission requirements proposal. The proposal provides minimum format and submission guidelines for a clinically-based research project or doctoral project.

M. Zohdy asked why neither program requires the submission of a dissertation.

F. Jackson stated that the DNP research project requirement is modeled after other similar DNP programs which do not require a formal dissertation. J. Drouin explained that the DScPT program is clinically based and attracts students who are pursuing teaching and/or research. Though not a Ph.D. dissertation, the project is clinically relevant and is a scholarly work that serves students and the profession. The proposal is based on the framework of a traditional dissertation, but the outcome is a publication in a peer-reviewed journal rather than dissertation.

M. Zohdy questioned the use of the term “doctoral project” and recommended renaming the exit project. Also, he objected to the DNP exit project consisting of either a report that could take the form of a manuscript submitted for publication, a grant proposal submitted for funding, or a report that represents the outcomes of the research effort. J. Delaney stated that there is a discrepancy between what was approved in the original program proposal and what appears in the current graduate catalog. L. Hawley asked how approved program requirements could be changed by an academic unit without going through the Graduate Council governance process and requested further discussion.

J. Drouin noted that the DScPT requirements do differ from the proposed policy and that an oral presentation is required.

### **c. Academic Standing, Probation and Dismissal**

C. Rammel requested that the discussion be deferred to the next meeting in order to address existing problems with the dissertation thesis grading issue that is a piece of academic standing built into the dismissal. Based on previous approval, there is a problem with doctoral components.

## **VI. NEW BUSINESS**

### **a. Grading - Thesis, Dissertation and Doctorate Research Projects**

The issues and inconsistencies in the grading of dissertations and theses with numeric grades and satisfactory/unsatisfactory grades were discussed.

C. Rammel stated that dismissal can be problematic when a student has consistently received satisfactory progress reports in the form of numeric grades. At two earlier meetings, Graduate Council agreed to discontinue the use of numeric grades and to use the Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory grade mode.

Financial aid standards require that a student maintain satisfactory progress which calculates into earned credit, in order to be eligible for aid. If the “P” grade is defined as an incomplete grade, financial aid does not calculate the grade as earned credit. If a “P” grade does not calculate into earned credit, a doctoral student with a series of these courses with “P” grades runs up against the 60-70% cumulative federal aid requirement between attempted credits and earned credits.

C. Rammel reported that by Senate definition, “the P (Progress) grade is a temporary grade that may be given only in a course that cannot be completed in one semester or session. The “P” grade is given only for satisfactory work.” Based on that, a “P” grade verifies that a student is making satisfactory progress. An issue arises when looking at financial aid loans because they are based on attempted credit and earned credit. Some Graduate Assistants have been made ineligible or put on financial aid probation because they do not appear to be making satisfactory progress. Graduate Council’s previous recommendation was to provide a “DF” deferred grade for thesis and dissertation credits. However, to satisfy financial aid requirements, the designation must immediately calculate those credits as attempted and earned. A new grading process for dissertations and theses must be created in order for these students to be financial aid eligible.

J. Delaney stated that there is inconsistency in dissertation grading. Some programs use satisfactory/unsatisfactory grading, numeric or combination grading. Council members agreed that numeric grading is not appropriate for research. It was articulated that some programs do not want to evaluate whether a student is making satisfactory progress or not, and their main concern is the completion of the dissertation.

Also, J. Delaney reported that there is a similar grading issue at the master’s level for exit plans that are projects or theses. Projects are graded numeric, but there is a difference between the programs on whether to grade thesis research satisfactory/unsatisfactory or numeric. C. Rammel reported that Graduate Council approved satisfactory/unsatisfactory grading for theses, but programs have objected because they prefer to assign a numeric grade to a thesis.

L. Folken stated that she has received course action forms requesting approval to revert back to numeric grading for master’s theses. Following a brief discussion and based on the previous and current discussion, members agreed that numeric grading of master’s theses will not be allowed. D. Downing requested that numeric grading be corrected in Banner Catalog immediately.

## **VII. GOOD AND WELFARE**

D. Downing reported that L. Hawley and F. Jackson have agreed to sit on the Student Conduct Committee. In accordance with Graduate Council minutes of 1984, members of this committee are selected from the Graduate Council membership.

T. Bloom asked which governing body has the authority to determine how graduate policy decisions are implemented and how are these decisions communicated back to the departments.

D. Downing stated that Graduate Council has the authority to make policy decisions. After some discussion it was agreed to increase department input and to improve communication with the departments to ensure full inclusion and support. To better facilitate communication regarding Graduate Council information and policy changes, the minutes will be distributed to Deans and Associates Deans and will be posted on the Graduate Study website.

## **VIII. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 3:47 pm. The next meeting is scheduled for November 14, 2007 at 2:00 pm in 100 Kresge Library.