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Academic Policy Committee Report - August 29, 2013

Graduate Council

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ACADEMIC POLICY COMMITTEE
Thursday, August 29, 2013, 2:15 – 3:30 P.M.
111 STUDENT SERVICES BUILDING

Present: Stefanie Ohnesorg (Chair), Paul Gellert, Stan Bowie (proxy for Shandra Forrest-Bank), Marian Roman, Donald Hodges, Carolyn Hodges, Elizabeth Hendrickson, Martin Walker, Phuriwat Anusonti-Inthra (via speaker phone)

The meeting was called to order by Stefanie Ohnesorg, Chair, at 2:15 p.m.

The meeting started with a brief synopsis of what was discussed during an APC meeting that was held on April 25, 2013.

On April 25, 2013, APC was holding an “additional” meeting in order to work on a “Leave of Absence” policy. We looked at various examples from other institutions and paid special attention to current leave of absence policies at the University of North Carolina and at the University of Minnesota. The discussion was intended to create a “base module” for a leave of absence policy for graduate students at UT, and this base module can then later be specified for special scenarios, such as, family medical leave, parental leave.

Most campuses have leave of absence policy nested into a “continuous enrollment policy.” UT currently does not have a continuous enrollment policy for graduate student and in order to implement a “leave of absence” policy it will be necessary to first of all create a policy that defines that graduate students are expected to continuously enroll in their respective degree program. Currently at UT, a continuous enrollment policy only exists for doctoral students who have started to enroll in course 600. Once we establish a general leave of absence policy for graduate students there would be no need to have a separate policy dealing with a leave of absence from course 600 (dissertation hours).

The main point of discussion during the August 29, 2013 meeting was the implementation of a continuous enrollment policy. The following draft is presented to Graduate Council as an information item with the request for feedback.

Continuous Enrollment

All degree-seeking graduate students are expected to make a full commitment to their graduate and professional study in order to ensure that they can complete all degree requirements as quickly as possible. Graduate students are therefore required to maintain an active status through continuous registration from the time of first enrollment until graduation. Continuous enrollment is maintained by registering for a minimum of three graduate credit hours per semester (excluding the summer unless stipulated otherwise by the program or department). The minimum enrollment for international students may be different, and international students always

need to check with the Center for International Education (CIE) in order to determine what minimum enrollment they need to maintain in order to satisfy all enrollment requirements attached to their specific visa.

If circumstances arise that make it necessary for students to interrupt their studies temporarily a request for a Leave of Absence for a maximum of 2 years may be granted by the Graduate School upon approval by the student's home department or program.

This text would be followed by a "Leave of Absence Policy". APC is planning to work on this part of the policy at its October meeting and is planning to present both parts -- "continuous enrollment" and "leave of absence" -- at the November meeting of Graduate Council.

Graduate Certificate Programs – Request for Input

APC is charged to work on a policy that determines the basic criteria for Graduate Certificate Programs offered at UT. It would be helpful for our discussion if all departments and programs that currently offer Graduate Certificate Programs would briefly summarize what they consider the basic criteria of the Graduate Certificate Programs offered in their unit with regard to credit hours, capstone experiences, etc., and in particular with regard to what types of assessment are applied to determine what it means to have earned a specific Graduate Certificate Program. In particular we would need input that will allow us to specify expected outcomes. As you will note, our current catalog description is very vague, stating that a Certificate Completion Form needs to be endorsed by a student's academic unit (see below). In most cases the Graduate Certificate program description is far more specific than what is stated in the general academic policy. What we will need is a common denominator that covers all these program specific outcomes so that it can be included in the general academic policy on Graduate Certificate Programs. A revision of the current catalog language will help students better understand what it means to earn a Graduate Certificate Program from UT, and it is also necessary in order to comply with SACS requirements, and input and help for departments and units that currently offer Graduate Certificate Programs will help APC to move forward with this task. Please send brief, summarizing comments to APC chair Stefanie Ohnesorg (ohnesorg@utk.edu) by October 15, 2013.

Currently Graduate Certificate Programs are described as follows in the Graduate Catalog:

Graduate Certificate Programs

A graduate certificate may be earned by successful completion of a series of specific courses. A candidate for a graduate certificate program must be a fully admitted graduate student who has satisfactorily completed (minimum 3.0 grade point average) the minimum requirements for a certificate as

described in the Graduate Catalog. The minimum requirements for the certificate programs are listed under the academic department offering the certificate. A candidate must be a graduate student in good standing and comply with all other applicable policies. Graduate certificate programs require a minimum of 12 semester credit hours taken at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. Use of credits to fulfill requirements for a graduate degree will be at the discretion of the academic department.

To receive the certificate, students must submit a Completion of Certificate Program Form endorsed by the academic department to the Graduate School. Only those certificate programs that are officially approved by the Graduate Council will be posted on student transcripts. To receive a graduate certificate, students must be admitted to a certificate program or a degree program (see Admission for Graduate Certificate Students).

The meeting adjourned at 3:35 p.m.