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Academic Policy Committee Report - September 10, 2015

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ACADEMIC POLICY COMMITTEE
Thursday, September 10, 2015, 2:00 – 3:15
Graduate School Conference Room (111 SSB)

Present: Stuart Waters (proxy for Mehmet Aydeniz), Shandra Forest-Bank, Hillary Fonts, Carolyn Hodges (ex. Officio, Dean of the Graduate School), Stephanie Galloway (ex. Officio, Asst. Dean of the Graduate School), Stephen Kania (Chair of Graduate Council), Maria Stehle (Chair, APC), Eric Boder, John Keny (Graduate Student Senate President)

Meeting was called to order by Dr. Maria Stehle at 2 PM.

Brief Welcome and Introductions

1. Feedback on proposal of changing grading scale for graduate students: Dr. Stehle presented a summary of feedback collected so far. The feedback was mixed; mostly positive from a few departments, some undecided, and some voiced concerns. Graduate students from the veterinary school have sent emails voicing their opposition to the proposed change. The understanding of APC was, however, that each graduate council member should come to the next meeting prepared to cast their vote representing the opinions of their constituents.

The members present discussed the feedback and possible recommendations the committee could or should make. Since APC has already decided to make a motion that the proposed change of grading scale should be voted on by the Graduate Council, the committee decided that they should move forward with this vote at the next Council meeting. The information that was sent out to Council members will be sent again together with an amendment that explains what each newly introduced grade will mean at the graduate level before the next Council meeting. Dr. Stehle agreed to write up this explanation and circulate it among APC members. Members emphasized again that if the Council votes to approve the proposed change, faculty can still choose not to use the additional plus and minus grades at the graduate level; however, the grade values for B+ and C+ (the GPA point values) will have changed.

2. GTAs as graders of papers: Discussion
APC received a request to create a written policy regarding the appropriate use of graduate assistants as graders. The request originated in an email discussion about whether it was appropriate to use graduate students as graders in graduate level courses. While Dr. Hodges emphasized that graduate students should not grade graduate student work, there does not seem to be a clear policy on this in the Graduate Catalog. In a discussion among APC members it became clear that different colleges have different needs and handle this issue differently. It is clear that the evaluation of the students should be in the hands of the instructor of record. Dr. Hodges suggested that colleges should monitor this, but that a general policy might be good since ethical issues, and possibly FERPA issues and complaints could arise from not having a policy. The committee agreed to gather information on this issue and continue the discussion in the next meeting.

3. Old Business/ New Business

Dr. Galloway presented two issues that the APC will discuss in their next meeting. After gathering more information, APC will decide if there is a need to make policy recommendations.

First:

Dr. Galloway had a question about the language in the catalogue that indicates that students have to have a 3.0 GPA to graduate. Students can apply to graduate with a GPA of less than 3.0. Students will apply to graduate under the assumption that by the time they graduate,

their GPA will be at or above the required 3.0. APC discussed whether we should consider making a policy recommendation to change the language in the catalogue (so that, for example, students can only apply to graduate if they have a 3.0). The committee decided to gather more information on this question for the next meeting

Second:

The explanation of “clerical error” as a reason for a change of grade appears to be used very often and sometimes even a few semesters after the grade has been submitted. Is there a way to clarify the language on the form or in the catalogue to limit the use of “clerical error” or to put a timeline on such changes? APC will brainstorm about how to reduce these “clerical error” changes.

Meeting was adjourned at 3:15.