MINUTES OF ACADEMIC POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING
Thursday, September 7, 2017, 2:00 P.M.
111 Student Services Building

Attendees: Maria Stehle (Chair), Mary Albrecht, Mehmet Aydeniz, Sergio Bedford (GSS President), Eric Boder, Lars Dzikus, Yvonne Kilpatrick, Jennifer Morrow, Michael Palenchar, Reza Seddighi, Dixie Thompson, Catherine Cox

The meeting was called to order by Maria Stehle at 2:00 p.m.

1. One of the working groups Dr. Thompson charged this summer was to investigate issues related to students for whom English is not the primary language. Yvonne Kilpatrick led the summer working group. Yvonne will bring us up to date on how that working group is progressing.

   Yvonne Kilpatrick: The two items we reviewed are 1) the English language certification (standardized testing required at time of admission) and 2) English proficiency (English placement testing after matriculation). Yvonne gave background information on these two English polices in the catalog:

   - The English proficiency is required for both undergraduate and graduate students.
   - The English Proficiency (placement into courses) was redesigned a couple of years ago by English as a Second Language (ESL), housed in the English Department. Dr. Tanita Saenkhum is the Director of ESL.
   - Because of the challenges and conflicts the English Proficiency model caused with student registration (registration for English 122) and within the departments with program requirements, a different model or redesign was selected.
   - The redesign combined the efforts for both undergraduate and graduate students. It was decided to use the standardized test scores for testing the English proficiency. The two standardized tests that we use at UT are the TOEFL and IELTS.
   - This new model came forward to APC in 2016, but a question arose with concern, how would the policy be enforced? Undergraduate APC also had questions, so this proposal came to a halt.

   Because our practice is not in alignment with the policy in the Graduate Catalog, we need to determine the best practice and submit a proposal to APC for consideration. We worked with the Graduate Associate Deans' group in the summer and discussed different ideas and practices for this policy. I also met with Sarah Melton from the English Department in the summer. Sarah is the Associate Director for ESL.

   We believe the best practice to determine English proficiency is to use the results from the English language certification (TOEFL and IELTS).

   Some questions and issues that came forward:
   - How will our policy affect cohort groups with their registration?
   - Should all departments have the same minimum score requirement? Actually, some departments require higher test scores than the minimum.
   - A student may not take more than 9 additional hours of course work while enrolled in English 121/122. This causes issues for some programs that require 10 or more program hours in the students' first year.
   - How is it interpreted on the admissions application, with the question, is your native language English? Will we require certification that the degree or courses from a foreign institution were taught in English?
   - What about those students who earn a bachelor's degree within the US? What about a master's degree?
   - If course English 122 is no longer available, a scholarly writing course might be an option. There are a few options for other courses at UT that students could take.
   - Should our students take English 122? Further, the content of English 122 is not comparable to the content of taking 500- and 600-level courses.
   - How about just raising the TOEFL score, to where English proficiency would then not be necessary.
   - Instead of mandating a course, maybe indicate after their admission, that because English is not their native language, that we have resources for them to succeed – and list those resources. And, to educate the departments that good mentoring is necessary for student success.

   Yvonne distributed handouts.
   - An Environmental Scan. Looking at the 2016 peer groups and aspirational peer groups. This review is just the requirement for admission, not how the policy is enforced.
   - English Certification description.

- English Proficiency description.
- English Proficiency Scores, Placement, and GPA Outcomes. This handout is a report Yvonne created to determine the GPA outcome of students taking English 122 versus those who did not take English 122. The GPA was almost the same. However, is the GPA the best indicator of how well the student did at UT? We might need to look at what would be the difference where writing is required for assessment. For example, passing comps. Using a different measurement for English proficiency.
- Excerpts from English Course Placement for ESL webpage.

Maria Stehle:

- How do we want to proceed with this information? Is the best evidence to change the policy or drop the policy?
- Yvonne, we request your Working Group bring a proposal to clarify the exception for the English certification.
- Second, we need more data/input before we make a proposal to revise the English 122 requirement. We want a policy or requirement that will help the student succeed in graduate school.
- Collect more data and have input from across campus, and, if possible, qualitative feedback and/or evaluations of course English 122. Jennifer Morrow offered that a student in her program could conduct an evaluation of course English 122 for Graduate Council.

2. Mary Albrecht: Working Group – Graduate Catalog text
   - I am ready to send catalog revisions. How do you want to receive the revisions? Do you want to see items side by side?
   - For the reorganization of catalog text, can I send you those by email?
   - We will begin with reviewing by email. If that process doesn't work, we'll change it.
   - Any policy issues or changes will come as a proposal to APC for approval.

3. Change in MS non-thesis final exam policy for the courses only option – Jens Gregor, Department of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science.
   - Current policy indicates, "Each non-thesis student must pass a final comprehensive written examination."
   - Gregor is requesting a courses only option with no final comprehensive written examination.
   - Do we want a non-culminating experience for earning a master's degree?
   - We will ask Dr. Gregor to provide data so we can compare what non-thesis master's requirements are at peer (aspirational) institutions.
   - We will review this proposal again at our next meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 3:40.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Cox
Graduate Council Liaison