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Graduate Associate Deans' Group Minutes - March 9, 2017

Graduate Council

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MINUTES

Graduate Associate Deans

March 9, 2017

AHT 4th Floor

2:00 – 3:30PM

Members Attending: **Dixie Thompson** (Vice-Provost & Dean), **Jeffrey Fairbrother** (Education, Health, & Human Sciences), **Mary Gunther** (Nursing), **Bruce Behn** (Haslam Business), **Todd Moore** (Arts & Sciences), **John Stier** (Agricultural Sciences & Natural Resources), **Masood Parang** (Tickle Engineering), **Alex Long** (Law), **Stephen Kania** (Vet Med), **Joan Rentsch** (Communication & Information), **Holly Mercer** (Library), **Claudia Kirk** (Vet Med), **Sherry Cummings** (Social Work)

Ex Officio: **Yvonne Kilpatrick** (Graduate School), **Savannah Ladage** (Graduate School), **Sarah Stone** (Graduate School)

1. **Welcome & call to order** at 2 p.m. by Dixie Thompson.
2. **Minutes of the February 9, 2017 meeting were amended and approved.**
3. **3MT- Dr. Thompson**

The semi-finals were great. Dr. Thompson attended every session. The students were all very appreciative of the opportunity to share their work.

The finals will be 1-4 p.m. in Hollingsworth Auditorium on April 7. Dr. Thompson asked that this group share what they have learned that we can apply to the final. Responses:

- Dr. Fairbrother's group had nearly 50 people attending...their marketing strategy obviously worked!
- We noticed that some of the early heats came to the later ones.
- Be sure to provide orientation for the judges to make sure they are all on the same page in terms of what they are expected to do and how.
- Provide more pre-event structure.
- In the future, spend time training these students about how to talk with people who are not in the same field.
- It's hard to say "slow down" in a competition like this, but some accents were very hard to understand, especially when they only have 3 minutes to speak and they are rushing.
- Not everyone has stage presence. Encourage them to read up on how to present.

- Sound: we want to mic everyone in a timely fashion.
- Make sure the finalists and the timekeeper can both see the clock...but not the audience.
- Remind everyone to turn off cell phones; even a buzzer can be distracting.
- Judges need to let us know they are done.
- Format example of ½ present, take a short break, then the other ½ present; however, some felt the rest break was unnecessary.
- Allow time for socializing.
- Halfway through, allow a stand up break; doesn't have to be a formal stop.
- At the end, do a Q & A, perhaps while judges are deliberating.
- Hold reception in the back of the auditorium before the event begins.
- Post-reception? Something to retain the audience.
- Moving forward to next year, we'll need an earlier start.

Dr. Thompson thanked everyone for the suggestions. If there are other ideas, please let us know. She and Dr. Brothers are currently working on arranging judges for the finals.

Graduate Admissions:

Dr. Thompson asked Yvonne Kilpatrick to share information related to Graduate Admissions for the coming fall. As background, Dr. Thompson explained that the number of applications is down a little, which is problematic as we are trying to grow our graduate programs. We need to talk about it and understand what is going on in order to address it. Last year it was really helpful as we got information into your hands to have departments make decisions in a timely fashion. As we look at that timeline, applicants deserve to know if they are in or out, and also, departments need some flexibility. Basically, there are three categories of applicants:

1. Those departments know they will admit
2. Those departments know they will not admit.
3. Those in the middle.

We need that middle group in case those we have admitted don't come, but it should be narrow. We want to go ahead and admit, go ahead and deny, but keep that number in the middle reasonable. Dr. Thompson turned it over to Yvonne for further discussion.

Yvonne asked Savannah Ladage, Graduate Assistant in the Office of Graduate Admissions, to talk about the data that has been gathered and analyzed. (Handouts distributed: data set for each area). For the purposes of this report, "GA" review means graduate admissions. Also, finalized applications include admit, denies, withdraws, waitlist, etc.

Discussion:

- We did add a waitlist decision this year, although it is not yet heavily used. If departments are holding on to files, not sure whether to admit or deny, the waitlist may be a good option, just to get a decision finalized on their application.
- We would like to make use of dashboards so departments can readily see the status of their applications in these various stages.

- Those applicants still in review at this point are likely missing documents. Currently, there are 2857 that are still in department review.
- 5564 applications came in, 468 are still under review at Graduate Admissions (probably due to missing documents), 2857 are still in department inboxes waiting on decisions, and 2239 have a final decision made.
- It would be helpful to have this broken down by international/domestic.
- The process: once an application is submitted, it is reviewed for minimum requirements (GPA, TOEFLE, etc.) then it is sent on to the department. If they do not meet the minimum requirements, it shows up as a finalized rejection.
- Currently, departments are not sure how many people are stopped at the Grad School that departments never see (Dr. Thompson shared that we can provide that information.)
- Is there a best practice or goal? Perhaps not everyone has the same interpretation of what this data means. Is the goal to move the culture to having a certain number by a given date?
- Yvonne shared that she has a personal research survey that was sent out to about 800 institutes, all members of NAGAP, so additional information will be available related to best practices in the next month or so, and we can share that. Some departments are developing their own guidelines related to turn-around practices.
- Thompson: we do want a quick decision. If we use the waitlists, departments should be able to quickly put students into one of those three areas, so the student gets notified.
- Dr. Behn: Would it be possible to get a list of all of all the colleges in each of these categories by week to see where we are, at least until we get the best practices in place? Dr. Thompson said she would be fine with that.
- Comments that the process seems a little like a rolling admissions. Sometimes the PhD programs have a hard constraint of the number they can take in; so the practice is to wait until later (usually February/March) when they can look at all applicants and compare.
- Some do a cohort admissions and they either do a date, or wait until there is a critical mass because they don't want to miss someone more qualified who may come along.
- Most folks probably don't really look at it until January/February. Most units are not rolling all year.
- Yvonne shared that a colleague at another institution said that for some of their Master's programs that have very defined requirements, they make decisions centrally based on those requirements and turning them around quickly (1 day).
- Dr. Fairbrother shared that one way to move decisions very rapidly is to screen on a rolling review and put everyone in the waitlist and then in February or March go to that list to determine who we are actually going to admit. However, that may cause concern for top students, especially as part of the goal for early decisions is to notify students and let them know as soon as possible some notion of what is happening with their application.
- Dr. Thompson shared her goal on a broad scale would be that when classes are over for this semester we have notified those students who will be joining us, and those

who are not would know it. The earlier the better, but certainly by the time we finish our spring work, they should know if they are in or out for the next fall.

- We also need to also be sensitive to the needs of our international students and the time it takes to process their paperwork/visa.
- Dr. Fairbrother suggested that it would be helpful for departments to know what the communication is to the students from the Graduate School, especially since ours is a two-step process of admission to the Graduate School then the department. Students sometimes call the department with questions regarding correspondence from the Graduate School.
- Dr. Thompson added that perhaps we could create a “Faculty Guide to Graduate Admissions.” We could share what the process is, what the letters look like that go out, what the flow of decision making is, etc.
- Yvonne shared that a manual was created a few years ago, so it would just need to be updated and then it could be put online for availability.
- Dr. Parang shared that since Graduate Admissions doesn’t hold for GRE scores, it is possible that some of the files being held at the department are actually incomplete files. There doesn’t appear to be a way to distinguish those cases from instances of files just not moving through in a timely matter.
- Dr. Thompson said that because we know what the departmental requirements are, perhaps we could put it in a hold that says “incomplete” (whether for department or graduate admissions). This way it is clear that the situation is one where the applicant hasn’t provided their materials, instead of an issue of processing. It also allows us to report back to the student that their materials will not be reviewed until certain items are completed.
- Yvonne shared the current process of an application is:
 - Receive application
 - Confirm receipt and tell them of the portal where they can access status and the workflow.
 - Students receive direction via email to check the portal for results when they are available.
 - It is the minimum requirements and do not include departmental items. We would have to add those.

Savannah and Yvonne encouraged everyone to contact Graduate Admissions if they have questions or need additional information about the processes.

Dr. Thompson wrapped up the conversation thanking everyone for their feedback and for helping to make the process the best it can be. We can’t act on applications that are not complete, so we need to continue to think through this and improve the information we provide and how we share it.

Dr. Stier asked for perhaps a clear goal regarding graduate admissions and growth. Vol Vision and other initiatives just seem to state “more.”

Dr. Thompson shared that there are targets set out in Vol Vision with specific numbers for Masters and PhD. We will soon have 4 million dollars in non-recurring money to invest in graduate education growth and we will provide a way for colleges to get money up front to fuel growth and create revenue sharing models to sustain it. It will be a shared responsibility from central and the colleges. That will be coming, and the deans have seen the preliminary.

Dr. Stier added that another item for discussion would be to clarify how much graduate education is assessed at the P&T level and annual faculty reviews. Discussion followed regarding graduate student advising/mentoring across campus. Dr. Thompson stated that it really varies by department. The expectations in terms of mentoring graduate students seems to be quite high in some areas, but it clearly varies. Over the next year we will be looking closely at this issue of growth and what it means and how we do it. We have set goals, but not necessarily a path for getting there. We are now trying to create that path and facilitate it.

Announcements

- DGS Spring meeting was yesterday. Very positive, engaged, and informative.
- Information coming soon about GPSAW. The Graduate School will host a couple of signature events:
 - April 3, Open House: Please drop in for a meet & greet. Additional information to come.
 - April 7 – 3MT

 - New Graduate Student and Graduate Teaching Assistant Orientations will be August 8 & 10, respectively. As your colleges are planning events for August, please work around these dates if possible.

 - Brainstorm regarding recruitment: typically it happens at the unit level. Centrally, we own some of that, too. Looking at ways we can provide information, support, etc. Prospect is an example of that—it is becoming a recruitment opportunity for some of our departments. We also have the recruitment group that we have called together and are meeting with. Dr. Shared that there is money for recruitment travel and she would like to put out a call for proposals for ideas related to recruitment that we could provide seed money for. One question is that if it is put out there, would faculty respond? Discussion followed and overall the response was favorable. Dr. Thompson encouraged the group to send her ideas.

Dr. Thompson thanked everyone for their time. With no additional items, the meeting adjourned at 3:20. **Our next meeting is April 12 at 2 p.m.**