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Academic Policy Committee Report - January 9, 2020

Graduate Council

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REPORT OF THE ACADEMIC POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING
Thursday, January 9, 2020
3:30 – 5:00 p.m., 111 Student Services Building

Committee members present: Maria Stehle (Chair); Eric Boder, Julie Bonom, Lars Dzikus, Luis Finotti, Melissa Hines, David Willis (GSS President).

Other attendees: Sara Bradberry, Yvonne Kilpatrick, David Patterson (Graduate Council Chair), Dixie Thompson, and Catherine Cox (Graduate Council Liaison)

Maria Stehle called the meeting to order at 3:30 p.m.

We have one item for discussion.

Discussion item submitted by Dr. Dixie Thompson, Dean of the Graduate School.

Graduate Restart Program

The Graduate Restart Program is intended to assist former University of Tennessee graduate students whose cumulative UT graduate grade point average (GPA) is below a 2.0 to re-enroll in a degree program or graduate certificate program without having to overcome the burden of previous unsatisfactory academic performance. To be eligible for the program, a period of at least 3 years (36 months) must have elapsed since the former student's last enrollment. Students can apply to their previous graduate program, or a different graduate program under the Graduate Restart Program. If granted admission through the Graduate Restart Program, zero credit will be assigned for all graduate courses previously taken at UT; thus the GPA will revert to 0.00. No courses previously taken can be used toward a degree or certificate. All previous academic work and grades will remain on the permanent record, but the grades for such work will not be used in computing the GPA or in determining academic standing. Courses previously taken may be repeated.

Eligible students who seek admissions to the Graduate Restart Program must submit a written petition to the Dean of the Graduate School. The petition to the Dean must include the following information:

1. The student must complete the Graduate Restart Program form on the Graduate School [website](#). Students will be ask to provide the following information:
 - a. Explain what factors resulted in the previous graduate academic record and how those obstacles will be overcome if allowed to return;
 - b. Discuss in detail the plan for academic success (i.e., proper study habits, strong time management, utilize campus resources, etc.); and
 - c. Discuss how earning a graduate degree will help meet long-term goals and objectives.
2. The appropriate Department Head or Director of Graduate Studies must submit a letter of support strongly advocating for the student's petition to the Graduate Restart Program.
3. The student must submit a detailed first year academic plan developed by both the student and the academic mentor demonstrating how the student will successfully complete the degree program if the student were admitted through the Graduate Restart Program.

Each student who petitions to the Graduate Restart Program will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. To participate in the Graduate Restart Program, a student must meet all requirements for full graduate admissions, no conditional admission is allowed through this program. Petitions to the Graduate Restart Program can only be granted to an eligible student once.

For students granted full admission through the Graduate Restart Program, the following requirements must be met by the student while enrolled:

1. The student must be in Good Standing (3.0 GPA or higher) with the university each semester, or the student may be subject to academic dismissal.
2. During the first year of re-enrollment, the student will meet with the Assistant Dean and Director of Student Services each semester who will actively monitor the student's academic progress.
3. The student will be required to meet with the departmental mentor for support and to help ensure positive academic progress is occurring each semester.
4. The student will utilize campus resources and support as needed.
5. The student will comply with the academic plan that was submitted in the petition documents to the Dean of the Graduate School.

Dr. Stehle asked Dr. Thompson to give background and bring us up to date on the Graduate Restart Program.

Dr. Thompson reported; from the last document you reviewed, we updated a couple of items.

1. Qualifying GPA of 2.0. We had discussions on what the qualifying GPA should be for a student to qualify for the Graduate Restart Program. It should be significantly below a 3.0. There should be a gap as to what the GPA is on the student's record (to qualify) and the required 3.00 GPA to graduate.
2. The period of time a student is out. We chose three (3) years as this coincides and is consistent with what the UTK undergraduate program has for their restart program. There should be a significant period of time between when the student last attended and the restart. We want to make sure that whatever issues the student was having at the time of receiving those low grades (resulting in the low GPA) that those past issues are fully resolved before they are readmitted and start back again.
3. The look of the transcript. The other pertinent information we revised has to do with the previous academic work and how it will appear on the official transcript.
 - a. One of your concerns in our previous discussion was if the previous grades were to "go away" on the transcript, then the admitting program would not fully understand the student's background and history (whether here or at another institution). Dr. Sara Bradberry did some research with the Registrar's Office and we discovered that the grades can remain on the transcript, and will show as zero credit. Showing zero credit means the grades will not count either for them or against them. The grades will show on the official transcript, but they will not calculate into the GPA. A statement will also appear on the transcript stating that the student is in the Graduate Restart Program.

Are there any questions?

A question was asked concerning the endorsement letter from the department?

An endorsement letter is required from the department on the front end. This will communicate to the Graduate School that the department believes in the student and is willing to take a chance on him/her. We do not want to have a student appeal to the Graduate School and we say yes, and then find out when the application goes to the department that the department says no. The departmental faculty are really the ones who need to be convinced that the student can come back and succeed. The key to making the Restart Program work is that the department believes in the student and writes an endorsement letter for them. It is better for the student to know on the front end if the department will accept them and readmit him/her to their program.

With no further questions, Dr. Stehle asked for a vote.

Vote: APC voted and unanimously approved the Graduate Restart proposal. We will move this proposal forward with recommendation for approval to the Graduate Council.

Dr. Thompson communicated that Dr. Sara Bradberry has new information about the Enrollment Deposit, which was also previously discussed at APC.

Dr. Sara Bradberry reported:

The Graduate School Enrollment Deposit idea came about because we want to begin to communicate with those graduate students that are truly coming to UTK as soon as possible. Currently, we have no idea who or how many

graduate students are going to show up on the first day of classes. We know the number of admitted students. But, we do not know how many of those admitted students will actually show up on campus. If we knew how many, this would be beneficial to us as we create materials and make plans for orientation.

We want to engage with those students who will be attending to create a positive contact. This information will likewise be beneficial to the graduate programs to know whom, from those you have admitted, will actually be attending.

Currently, most of our graduate programs do not require a deposit. We have a few programs that do – business, nursing, social work.

At our last discussion, there was a question about what our aspirational and peer schools are doing. In my research, I found that none of our aspirational schools have an across the board enrollment deposit requirement. In our peer schools, Auburn does. Clemson, like us, have some programs that do, with about a \$500.00 fee.

We discussed maybe to have a \$100.00 enrollment fee. Currently, UTK undergraduates pay a \$250.00 fee. From the \$250.00 fee, \$150.00 goes toward tuition and the remaining \$100.00 goes toward housing. The fee is paid with TouchNet and then that information feeds into Slate. So, from those admitted students, when they pay the Enrollment Fee they will go into a sub-category of students that have paid (confirmed enrollment) and now from those students we can send them a welcome letter and begin our communication with them. We can at this point communicate with them about professional development, when orientation is and get them on board with what it means to be Volunteer.

Keep in mind, those programs that already have a confirmation fee, this will not be an additional fee. We will not add the Enrollment Fee on top of the program's confirmation fee. It is one fee or the other – not both.

From the graduate Enrollment Fee, the amount paid will go toward the student's fees, not tuition. Those fees not paid by an assistantship.

We are thinking about a June 1 date for the enrollment confirmation. For those students admitted for the fall semester, the enrollment fee would be due immediately.

If you are in agreement with this idea, we will write a proposal and bring it to APC for the February 6 meeting. The APC members were in agreement.

With no further items of discussion, the meeting adjourned at 4:15.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Cox
Graduate Council Liaison