RAC
April 9, 2012

Present: Maggie Aftahi, Gary Andersen, Bonnie Anderson, Kristeen Anderson, Rockne Bergman, Rhonda Bjurlin, Frank Blalark, Brad Bostrom, Earlene Bronson, Sara Cannon, Lolita Davis Carter, Amber Cellotti, Agnes Chagani, Sarah Huhta Corrigan, Dan Delaney, Eric Eklund, Tina Falkner, Renae Faunce, Vicki Field, Carol Francis, Wendy Friedmeyer, Michael Galegher, Liz Goebel, Lois Graham, Stacey Grimes, Constance Hessburg-Odland, Christina Holdvogt, Lisa Hubinger, Jill Johnson, Sue Johnson, Bri Keeney, Kara Kersteter, Mandee Kuglin, Aileen Lively, Jo Ellen Lundblad, Carla Mantel, Heather McLaughlin, Katherine Murphy, Nan Nelson, Khosi Nkosi, Ingrid Nuttall, Margie O'Neill, Laurie Pape Hadley, Heather Peterson, Robin Peterson, Genny Rosing, Cindy Salyers, Mary Ellen Shaw, Kate Sophia, Susan Suchy, Georganne Tolaas, Travis Trautman, Sue Van Voorhis, John Vollum, Lisa Wiley, Ellyn Woo

Graduate education agenda items

Announcements

Amber Cellotti reminded the group, on behalf of Dean Tsantir, about the graduate admissions spring worksop, “E-Review – Part 2!” on May 10. If you are registered but are unable to attend, please contact Dean (tsan0006@umn.edu) so that your spot may be given to someone on the waitlist. Also contact Dean if you would like to be added to the waitlist.

Tina Falkner updated the group on the degree progress and completion policies that had been discussed in previous RAC meetings. The policies were passed by the faculty senate and will be moving forward in the process.

Sue Van Voorhis announced that the small group meeting to discuss PeopleSoft Fit/Gap issues will be meeting April. Those interested in attending can contact her for more details

Updates

PCAS – Travis Trautman

There are four Colleges (with just a few programs) that haven’t completed their program information review.

The Grad PCAS team has also been doing a comparison of what is in PCAS and what is in PeopleSoft. There are some discrepancies that need to be resolved and they are being followed up on individually.

If there are programs within your college or department that need to be officially discontinued the required information needs to be submitted as soon as possible to Vicki Field (field001@umn.edu) and Joe Schultz (shul0048@umn.edu) in order to make it on to the Board of Regents docket for May.

Catalog update – Ingrid Nuttall

The University catalog production is transitioning to ASR. A temporary employee will start April 16 to begin work on this project. University Relations has committed to completing the graduate catalog, so questions should continue to be directed to Bill Magdalene (w-magd@umn.edu) and Kristin Cleveland (cleve064@umn.edu) for the time being.

Changes to the G042 and Faculty Role Detail report – Frank Blalark
The link connecting the G042 and Faculty Role Detail report will be removed. The reports themselves are not changing, but it will not be possible to navigate between them within the reports any more. To access the information, you will need to go to the appropriate report directly.

Calculating PhD Time to Degree – Brad Bostrom
A copy of Brad's presentation is available at http://blog.lib.umn.edu/asrweb/theledger/2012/04/calculating-phd-time-to-degree.html.

Brad Bostrom described how he calculates time-to-degree for PhDs by way of several examples. Two points to note: 1) the calculation doesn't start until the first day of the academic term of admittance and 2) it is a simple calculation based on dates (the number of days between the first day of the first academic term and the date of conferral divided by 365.25 days).

Some other points based on specific scenarios:

- If a student is discontinued due to lack of enrollment and is readmitted, the time away is included as part of the time to degree.
- If a student has an approved leave of absence, the time of the absence is not included as part of the time to degree
- If a masters is earned in the same graduate program as the PhD, then the time to degree starts with the first day of the academic term of admittance regardless of the initial degree objective (i.e., would include time spent working on masters).
- If a student completes a masters in a different graduate program or at a different institution, the time spent working on the masters is not included in the time to degree calculation

Defining a graduate program for these purposes is somewhat controversial. It is not an "Academic Program" (acad_prog) or an "Academic Plan" (acad_plan), but is similar to a department. A graduate program has one or more DGSs, graduate faculty, and one or more degree objectives, certificates, and minors.

Moving forward, time to degree will be computed in different ways for different purposes (e.g., degree progress policies, external requests for surveys and data exchanges).

Someone mentioned a concern of a program/department looking bad (even though they are working very hard to move students through in a timely fashion) because of the inclusion of the time spent working on a masters before working on a PhD. Brad Bostrom mentioned that more than just the time to degree is considered when making the evaluation. The question was asked if there was the potential to label certain programs with this structure so that they wouldn't need to focus so much on developing a narrative to explain the scenario. Brad Bostrom said it is possible that something like that could be considered in the future. Genny Rosing mentioned that one metric also considered in the evaluation is the number of degrees earned in the time period. So longer timelines with more than one degree earned are more favorably viewed than longer timelines with only one degree earned.

Someone said that their PhD program requires a masters degree for admission. Because the time to degree doesn't count the time spent on a masters for external students, but does count that time for internal students, it almost provides a disincentive to admit your own students.

Vicki Field pointed out that the goal of looking at these metrics was to evaluate trends over time. The time to degree itself isn't as important as the trend of that time staying the same or getting longer/shorter. So even if the time to degree is longer, that isn't necessarily seen as negative.

Update on adviser & committee assignment workflows – Heather McLaughlin

Sue Van Voorhis started the presentation by accepting responsibility for a misunderstanding of the policy regarding committee assignment and approval. Previous work on the committee workflow had progressed with the understanding that the college-level approval (required by the policy) could be designated to another individual such as the director of graduate studies and the college would retain strategic oversight of the process and policy enforcement via reports. This is not the case. The approval needs to come from the college-level and the workflow must conform to that requirement.

Heather McLaughlin presented a new process map that incorporated the college-level approval into the process. It continues to be student-initiated. The assumption is that prior to starting the workflow, the student will work within the department (i.e., consulting with their adviser and PLC). Once the student is ready to make the assignment, they will access the online form on the Graduate School website. They will continue to be given a checklist to assist them in making sure committee make-up requirements are met. The proposed process then has the form routed to a "college coordinator" (a new role) who will review the committee to verify that collegiate and program level requirements are satisfied. If the college coordinator determines that the committee members meet the requirements and recommend approval, then the form will be forwarded to the adviser and then the DGS. The roles the adviser and DGS play in the process are not changing. They will know the student and committee members well enough to know if the committee is appropriate for the work the student has done.

Someone asked who the college coordinator would be. Heather McLaughlin replied that the team would need to work with each college to identify the appropriate person. Sue Van Voorhis reiterated that the person would need to be at the college level. Someone asked for an example of who might be considered a college coordinator. Heather McLaughlin reiterated that the team would need to work with each college to assign an appropriate representative, but one such person might be Wendy Friedmeyer from CLA.

Georganne Tolaas asked why the college-level approval was occurring prior to the adviser and the DGS. Heather McLaughlin responded that it was to ensure that the adviser and the DGS wouldn't need to worry about the members being eligible to fulfill their University and collegiate requirements. Frank Blalark added that by the time the adviser and DGS are reviewing the committee, they should know that the members are eligible.

Several people mentioned the need for PLC involvement as the PLCs are the ones who understand the eligibility rules (including department/program requirements that wouldn't be known at the college-level) and have access to the information to check. Amber Cellotti asked the group if that could be addressed with students working with the PLC before the workflow was initiated. Katherine Murphy said that could work, but it's not enforceable. Sue Van Voorhis remarked that it's also not enforceable with a paper process. Heather McLaughlin stated that adding a fourth level of approval to the process would mean losing process efficiency, which is a guiding principle of this work.

There was some discussion about maintaining the same three levels of approval, but reordering them such that the college-level approval was at the end of the process. Matt Nuttall said that one aim was to create some process improvement. By having the college do the eligibility checks at the beginning of the process, it allows the adviser and the DGS to have meaningful conversations about the committee being appropriately selected for the work the student has done. Sue Van Voorhis also raised the question as to whether it was possible to change the order and still be in compliance with the policy. Vicki Field and Tina Falkner believed that switching the order would be acceptable. The team will move forward with having the College Coordinator approval as the final step in the workflow process.

Someone proposed keeping the three levels of approvals, but adding a notification to the PLC as the college-level approvers wouldn't necessarily know about the specifications programs may have that go beyond the requirements the University and college have. Heather McLaughlin and Matt Nuttall indicated this would be possible, but would need to be carefully looked at as far as timing and frequency to avoid sending too many emails. It would likely be one email when the student submits the form.

Based on this discussion, the process flow will proceed as follows: the student will initiate the form. It will then be reviewed by the adviser. If the adviser approves, the DGS will review. If the DGS approves, the college coordinator will need to review and approve the committee before it is sent to a central office for data entry. The PLC will be notified of the proposed committee upon submission of the form by the student.

Heather McLaughlin also updated the group on the degree program form. The ASR communications team has been involved to make sure the form meets form standards and still collects the information not related to adviser and committee assignment. Because this will be such a major revision to the form, the Graduate School will not be able to be as flexible as it was in the past with accepting older versions of forms. Once the adviser and committee workflows are released, the new form will need to be used. Information collected on this revised form will continue to be submitted to and reviewed, processed, and recorded by the Graduate School.

Someone asked what the timeline for this change would be. Heather McLaughlin said that the college coordinator information would need to be collected and some reprogramming of the workflow form would need to be done. The team is still hoping to move forward quickly as a lot of the work is already done. It will definitely be completed before fall term.

Transition of GSSP and GSDM staff to ASR – Karen Starry

Beginning July 1, certain GSSP office and GSDM office functions and staff will move to ASR to be a team dedicated graduate education within the Office of the Registrar. This team is composed of Amber Cellotti (Knapp), Renae Faunce, Stacia Madsen, and Genny Rosing. They are physically moving offices, but their contact information will remain the same and they can still be contacted for the same questions they field now. Karen's future role has not been completely solidified, but she will remain in the Graduate School and likely serve as a liaison to ASR and collegiate contacts. Regular updates on the transition will be posted to The Ledger and sent in the PBED Digest. If you are not on the mailing list for the PBED Digest, contact Kate Sophia (ksophia@umn.edu) to be added.

An online form for submitting questions about the Graduate Education Transition is being developed and will be on both the ASR and Graduate School websites. While personal responses are possible, the intent is to collect questions and publish answers publicly for the common good.

Starting May 14, the elevator in Johnston Hall will be unavailable until August 14 due to repair work. If there are students with mobility issues who need to do business in Johnston Hall during the outage, contact the Graduate School so that arrangements can be made to accommodate them.

Policy discussion: Fellowships – Tina Falkner

Tina Falkner opened the discussion by asking if anyone had any initial thoughts about the policy draft as distributed.

Georganne Tolaas raised a concern about language around the doctorate dissertation fellowship. The language in the draft states “fellows may not hold more than a 25% assistantship, or its equivalent in other support,” but it does not expressly state if that means time or money. The previous policy language was specific in stating that it was a financial limitation and this language leaves that open to be interpreted as a time limitation. Vicki Field said she would need to check on that. The concern is the student working too much

Michael Galegher asked if students working toward a joint degree could be denied a fellowship if they are not registered in one part of the degree. Tina Falkner said that it depends on the terms of the fellowship. The policy states that “recipients of graduate student fellowships and traineeships must meet registration requirements and other terms and conditions of their award” and since there is generally a requirement of continuous enrollment, and that could mean forfeiting the award, but it is ultimately dependent on the terms of the individual fellowship.

Tina Falkner said that there has been a lot of discussion about service obligation. The current drafted language splits it apart such that fellowships do not have a service obligation and traineeships may. If research is part of the fellowship, that is not considered a service obligation as they are not logging their hours as they would when collecting a paycheck. Georganne Tolaas asked if a departmental fellowship could stipulate that the funding was granted on the understanding that the student is working on his/her dissertation so long as there is not a test at the end. Tina said that would be acceptable. Fellowships are to be viewed as money that allows the student to focus on completing the program without the worry of financial obligations.

Submission of the Thesis Proposal form – Frank Blalark

Once the committee and adviser workflows go live, the “Thesis Proposal” form will only have two remaining components: the proposed abstract and the proposed thesis title. Since those two pieces of information are typically not the same at the completion of the thesis, there is a question as to the usefulness of the form and if it can be eliminated once the workflows are in place.

Tina Falkner asked how the form is currently used. Several people responded that they do not use the form. Some said they complete it because it is required. One person mentioned that it is used only for committee information.

Karen Starry said that historically it was a way for advisers to help move their students along by having them articulate what they were going to do. Sue Van Voorhis said that programs and departments who would like to retain that kind of functionality can make it a requirement for their programs and handle it internally. Brad Bostrum said that the date on the form was used to calculate committee service time (which can now be captured by the workflow).

By show of hands of those present who deal with the form, it was unanimous that it could be eliminated once the workflows are live.

Data conversion – Frank Blalark

Frank Blalark said that there needs to be a cut-off date for converting faculty/instructor data from custom tables to PeopleSoft delivered tables. The proposal is that the cut-off be 1999. The older data would still be available upon request, just not as readily available as it is now. Cindy Salyers wanted to clarify that data in reports such as Faculty Assignment and Degree Report would no longer go back to 1981. Sue Van Voorhis reiterated that the data would not be deleted, it would just not be available when running those reports. Frank Blalark said that OTR would rather respond to individual requests for that information.

Someone asked when this would happen. Frank Blalark said that there isn't currently a date in mind and there would be a lot of communication around it happening, the team was most interested in hearing a reaction to this proposal before moving forward on planning work for the future.

Someone asked about the criteria for converting the data: if a student was active in 1999, would their data older than that be converted? Frank Blalark said that active student data would be converted. Cindy Salyers said that they would use the same model that was used for undergraduates. Brad Bostrum asked if a student was awarded a degree in 1981 and the data was in a delivered PeopleSoft table if that data would still be there. Frank Blalark said it would be. Aileen Lively said that this doesn't have to do with student data, it's more about faculty information contained in custom tables. For example, being able to run a report on every student a faculty member worked with.

There was consensus among those in attendance that a 1999 cut-off for data conversion would be acceptable.