

Minutes*

**Senate Committee on Educational Policy
Wednesday, May 2, 2012
2:00 – 4:00
238A Morrill Hall**

Present: Thomas Brothen (chair), Barbara Brandt, Lee-Ann Breuch, Emily Combs, Eva von Dassow, Norman Chervany, Amanda Koonjbeharry, Alon McCormick, Robert McMaster, Cody Mikl, Kristen Nelson, Peh Ng, Jane Phillips, Peggy Root, Leslie Schiff, Henning Schroeder, Elaine Tarone, Cathrine Wambach

Absent: Kirsten Barta, John Cwodzinski

Guests: Kate Dobson, Dakota Johnson (MPIRG), Lauren Schrader (Senate Committee on Student Affairs); Professor Nita Krevans (Chair, Graduate Education Policy Review Committee)

Other: Suzanne Bardouche (Office of the Vice Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Education); Tina Falkner (Academic Support Resources)

[In these minutes: (1) excused absences on Election Day; (2) revised fellowships policy; (3) initiatives to improve retention and 4-year graduation rates; (4) update on graduate education]

1. Excused Absences on Election Day

Professor Brothen convened the meeting at 2:00 and welcomed Mses. Dobson and Schrader to present a motion from the Student Senate recommending that the policy Makeup Work for Legitimate Absences, which includes this language, be amended: "Students will not be penalized for absence during the semester due to unavoidable or legitimate circumstances. . . . Such circumstances do not include voting in local, state, or national elections." The motion read as follows (between the * * *):

* * *

MOTION:

The University of Minnesota Student Senate recommends to the President that the University revise its policy¹ regarding legitimate absences to include voting in local, state, or national elections as a legitimate absence for which students will not be penalized.

COMMENT:

The Senate Committee on Student Affairs (SCSA) moves the above resolution for the Student Senate. The SCSA believes that voting is a basic right guaranteed to voting-age students at the University of

* These minutes reflect discussion and debate at a meeting of a committee of the University of Minnesota Senate; none of the comments, conclusions, or actions reported in these minutes represents the views of, nor are they binding on, the Senate, the Administration, or the Board of Regents.

¹ <http://www.policy.umn.edu/Policies/Education/Education/MAKEUPWORK.html>

Minnesota; and many students encounter difficulties in scheduling time for voting due to constraints including commuting, and academic and extracurricular commitments.

The Minnesota Public Interest Research Group reports that not having sufficient time to vote is the top reason students give for failing to vote. Revising the University's policy would help ensure students have the time to exercise this basic civil [sic] duty and would increase the number of students participating in the democratic process.

Moreover, Minnesota State Statute Section 204C.04² gives every employee who is eligible to vote the right to "be absent from work for the time necessary to appear at the employee's polling place, cast a ballot, and return to work on the day of that election, without penalty or deduction from salary or wages because of the absence." The SCSA believes students should be accorded a similar right to vote without risk of academic penalty.

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Ms. Dobson explained that they were bringing the motion to the Committee on behalf of MPIRG, which has put a lot of work into getting out the vote for a number of years and which has talked with thousands of students about the barriers for them in getting to the polls. Students are very busy and it is difficult for them to find time to get out to vote. There was a record turnout of students in 2008 but a lower turnout in 2010, and it is very important to vote because it is about who will represent students for their entire career at the University. They believe the University should encourage voting and should not create hurdles, and they believe it is time to include voting as an excused absence. Their proposal has received endorsement from the Minnesota Student Association, the Office for Student Affairs, and the Senate Committee on Student Affairs.

Ms. Schrader said that the Senate Committee on Student Affairs discussed this at length and felt it an easy way to let students get out and participate, but not the entire day. It is important that students get out to vote because they are under-represented and legislators can ignore them. With extracurricular work and classes, it is hard to find time to get out to vote.

Ms. Combs asked if they had any information about the practice at peer institutions. Ms. Dobson said that their proposal mirrors state law, providing that any employee may take time off to vote. Ms. Phillips observed that students are not employees and said that is not a good analogy; the Committee needs information about what other institutions do with regard to students and Election Day.

Professor Wambach asked how students would document the fact that they missed class in order to vote. Instructors may request documentation for other absences, such as a note from a doctor or something appropriate from a funeral. Ms. Dobson said that because the proposal is based on state law, they did not include provisions for documentation. Instructors could ask to see the "I Voted" sticker. How would they prevent students from excusing themselves for the entire day, Professor Wambach asked, and not just the period it took them to vote? This is a critical issue in large courses where exams are held; the instructor has to prepare a make-up exam for students with excused absences, which is a lot of additional work. Some of the instructors will want documentation.

² <https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/?id=204c.04>

Professor von Dassow commented on the possibility of documentation from someone at the polling place. She said that she volunteers at the polls, which in 2008 meant working a 16-hour double shift with a break to go to campus and teach her class, yet she managed to vote. While she is sympathetic to encouraging civic engagement, several Committee members are asking why 13 hours is not enough time for students to vote and why any documentation could not be used for all the day's classes. There is also no mechanism at polling places to provide a note to students, she said. The analogy with employment does not work, Professor von Dassow agreed with Ms. Phillips; employees are not excused for the entire day. She also related that she had received a note from an MPIRG member indicating that students who have been working on this proposal have been excluded from expressing their views. That is not true now, since students are here presenting the issue before the Committee.

Ms. Schrader said that they need to figure out something on the documentation question; perhaps the time of the vote could be noted. She observed, however, that someone could use a doctor's note for two or three days. With respect to the 13 hours available to vote, she puts an effort into it and does vote, but many students, with school and work, do not make voting a priority because it is a hassle.

The time it takes to vote varies by student, Professor Tarone said. If one lives close by, it could take 30 minutes. For others, it could take three hours. Are there other ways to make it easier for students to vote, such as an absentee ballot station on campus? Ms. Dobson said they have testimony from commuters that it can take a lot of time to get to the polling place; it is not acceptable to have barriers for some students and not others. In Minnesota, about 500,000 people register the same day they vote, and are establishing life-long habits to serve their civic duty of voting. On absentee voting, the form must be sent in, returned, and sent back, and it is difficult for some students to do that. Absentee voting is not available for everyone.

Ms. Combs recalled that Professor Cramer, the chair of the Faculty Consultative Committee, had sent an email message to the Senate Consultative Committee and others noting the ease with which one can vote by absentee ballot in Minnesota and suggesting that

We all SHARE the goal of making voting as easy as possible for as many students as possible. On that basis, I would suggest that, rather than calling for a policy change, the University Senate (not just the Faculty Senate) call on the Provost's office to send, sometime before the start of the fall semester, a communication to all faculty asking that they CONSIDER structuring their courses so that any classes falling on Election Day are (i) arranged to have non- or less critical content, or (ii) moved or otherwise rescheduled to a time suitable for all students. The message would further ask that ALL faculty discuss with students on the first day of class (and ideally add to the syllabus) the effect of Election Day on the course content, if any, with the particular goal being to alert students who may need to consider absentee options if curricular demands do not permit their absence. I'd be happy to put that on the next SCC agenda for Senate action and to ensure that the Provost's office is reminded at the appropriate time later this year. By addressing the matter on Day 1, students should have ample time to make plans, and indeed may be inspired to start thinking carefully about election issues early.

Especially for undergraduates, Ms. Combs commented, it is important to teach them to vote, but it is also important for them to go to class and not miss exams. Ms. Dobson responded that even if a student is excused, he or she must still make up the work. The Department of Political Science supports this request, she reported, and the faculty have agreed they will not have major assignments on election day; that shows a commitment they would like the entire University to demonstrate. She agreed, however, that it is a good idea to get students familiar with absentee voting.

Professor McCormick said, with respect to exams and the like, that many juniors and seniors have labs or work in teams, and one person's absence can affect the work of the entire term.

Professor Wambach said she has seen many scenarios; in one case, a student was going home to vote in New Jersey and planned to leave Sunday and arrive back on Wednesday—and hoped that the absence would be excused. What was she to say? Ms. Dobson said those are extenuating circumstances and a faculty member would treat them just as they would any other excused absences.

Professor Nelson noted that MPIRG has a long-standing interest in getting out the vote; does the local chapter? (It does.) How was this issue selected? Because it is a part of the get-out-the-vote effort and they heard from thousands of students that the lack of an excused absence is a barrier to voting, Ms. Dobson said. But they have no data, Professor Nelson asked? They do not, Ms. Dobson said. Ms. Johnson, who attended the meeting with Ms. Dobson and Ms. Schrader, reported that she had worked with MPIRG on this issue of excused absence and it was now coming back two years after their initial package had been turned down. They do keep a tally of responses to their questions and this was the number one problem students identified.

Professor Ng said she agreed with Professor von Dassow and said there is a big difference between elections, caucuses, and lobbying. Professor von Dassow earlier observed that there are 13 hours available to vote, Professor Ng said; so the students are actually saying, for those who do not vote, that they are in class or doing something else for 13 continuous hours. Ms. Schrader said they were not saying that; most of her day, she said, is going to class or waiting for class. Being in class, going to class, or being in extra-curricular activities, Ms. Dobson added.

Professor Chervany said he was sympathetic to the view that students should be encouraged to vote but believes that the burden is on all voters to fit voting into the rest of their schedule. One may need to move something around in order to vote. Students are not more or less busy than other people. He said he is not a cynic at heart, but said he is not sure all those who say they did not vote failed to do so because they could not find the time. He said he did not like an excused absence as the first choice among the options to encourage voting.

Ms. Phillips inquired about the effect on professional students and those who are in clinics. Ms. Combs reported that the Graduate and Professional Student Assembly (GAPSA) has indicated that professional students would not miss class and would vote absentee if they could not make it to vote on Election Day. Professor Root said that veterinary students go early or late, just like the faculty.

Professor von Dassow said there are two elements conflated: one is knowing one can vote and being encouraged to do so; the other is making it easier. The first element is the focus of voter education and get-out-the-vote efforts, while the request for an excused absence involves the second.

Ms. Combs said that as an employee, she can legally take time off to vote. Ms. Phillips said she has never had an employee ask for time off to vote; they vote before or after work, like everyone else.

Professor McCormick said he liked drawing attention to ways to make voting easier. While students may not be in class for 13 hours, he agreed that it could be difficult for them to get back to their residence to vote and then return to campus. Transportation is a bigger issue for students than for faculty and staff, Professor Tarone surmised, and if events are only separated by a couple of hours, it could be hard to get back to campus in time.

Professor Brothen concluded the Committee believes it important to vote; does it wish to change the policy? Do what the Political Science department has done? Or identify a middle ground?

If transportation is the issue, could the University provide transportation, Professor Ng asked? She said she would be troubled by changing the policy.

Professor Tarone said she wished to reinforce Professor McCormick's position view: The solution is to devote energy to making it easier for students to vote in as many ways as possible. That could include doing what Political Science is doing, promoting use of absentee ballots, providing transportation, etc. She agreed on the goal of making it easier to vote and said there are a number of ways the University could do so.

Dr. Higdon said he agreed with the way that Professor Chervany had framed the issue and not reached a conclusion. People who squeeze in voting are educated professionals; "because it is easy for us does not mean it is easy for students." He supported the faculty taking the step of sending a message to students that voting is important.

If there is to be an emphasis on citizenship, Professor von Dassow said, there must also be an emphasis on the responsibility for participation without receiving an excuse. When working at the polls she registered many students on the same day; moreover, the people she saw voting were from all walks of life, not just educated professionals. Dr. Higdon said there is political-science evidence that people who punch a clock have a hard time getting off work to vote.

Ms. Combs said she supported Professor Cramer's compromise and not necessarily giving students the entire day off. But a message to the faculty about not requiring exams or important assignments on Election Day, and asking them to inform students about absentee ballots, would be a good idea.

Ms. Phillips said the Committee would need a lot more data about why students are not getting to the polls before it should turn the request into policy. She said she would like to see the Committee defer action in the proposal. One option is to vote the policy change up or down, Professor Brothen said, or to take up Ms. Combs' suggestion and adopt a statement. The Committee could return to the subject next fall. Professor Tarone said she would favor action on a resolution at this meeting; faculty would need to make a statement at the beginning of classes, which would precede the first fall meeting of the Committee. Professor Schiff agreed, because faculty are looking now at their syllabi for the fall.

There was no motion made to take up the motion presented by MPIRG. The Committee agreed unanimously to adopt a resolution to be sent to the provost; the motion, adopted after the meeting by electronic vote, read as follows:

The Senate Committee on Educational Policy requests that the provost's office send, as soon as reasonably possible but well before the start of the fall semester, a communication to all instructors asking that they consider the possibility that some students may be unable to attend class on election day due to factors outside their control, such as long lines at polling places. While accommodating absences for voting is not required, instructors should consider accommodations such as avoiding scheduling an in-class assessment on that day. We also believe the message should further ask that all instructors discuss with students on the first day of class (and ideally add to the syllabus) the effect of Election Day on the course content, if any, with the goal of alerting students who may need to consider absentee voting options if curricular demands do not permit their absence. Addressing the matter on the first day of classes should enable students to make plans, and indeed may inspire them to start thinking carefully about election issues early.

Professor Brothen thanked Ms. Dobson and Schrader for joining the meeting.

[Subsequent to the meeting, Professor McCormick communicated with the Office of Student Affairs about a message to students early in fall semester with information about voting; a message will be sent.]

2. Revised Fellowships Policy

Professor Brothen welcomed Professor Krevans back for one of her have-become-regular meetings with the Committee on graduate-education policies.

Professor Krevans explained that the fellowships policy was before the Committee for action and has been revised to reflect comments and suggestions from this Committee and from the Faculty Consultative Committee. She reiterated the points she made previously: This is a basic policy that sets standards for administering and awarding fellowships and traineeships. The policy looks for three things: providing information to students and units so all know the ground rules; ensuring consistency, fairness, and accountability in making the award choices; and notifying people of the important ground rules. The revised draft has been cleaned and reorganized to make it clearer.

Committee members discussed briefly what items should be in the FAQs and what links to other policies should be included in this one. Professor Krevans also explained, in response to questions from Professor McCormick and Ms. Combs, that while some additional work may be required of DGSs and deans, the policy does not try to get into details on how departments will meet the goals of consistency, fairness, and accountability. The procedures they choose to award fellowships will vary widely, and as long as they provide the necessary transparency, they would be acceptable.

The Committee voted unanimously to endorse the revised policy for presentation to the Faculty Senate [which approved it on May 3, 2012].

3. Initiatives to Improve Retention and 4-Year Graduation Rates

Professor Brothen asked Vice Provost McMaster to provide an update on initiatives to improve retention and 4-year graduation rates.

Vice Provost McMaster provided details as well as a preview of new initiatives that will be implemented in the next few years. The University auditors recently completed an audit of the efforts to improve the 4-year graduation rate; the report will be provided to the Board of Regents and he will also bring it to this Committee. Dr. McMaster then touched on a number of topics.

-- He provided bar graphs showing the first-year retention rates for the seven freshman-admitting colleges on the Twin Cities campus; in most cases, the rate has increased from 2005 to 2010, while in others it has fluctuated slightly—but at high levels. (The first-year retention data is based upon the proportion of students who were enrolled here in the fall of one year and also enrolled in the fall of the next year.) The colleges together have exceeded the goal of 90% retention in two of the last three years. What is particularly impressive is the retention rate for Access to Success (ATS) students, who are starting to be retained at high rates (and in CLA, ATS students are retained at higher levels than the rest of the CLA student body). It is probably possible to increase first-year retention to 92-93%, Dr. McMaster commented, which is where the University's peers' rates stand, but it will never be 100% or even 97% because there will always be students who decide they want to go elsewhere. In response to a question from Ms. Phillips, Dr. McMaster said they do not have comparative data on why students leave an institution. They do survey those who leave to learn why they did so; the reasons typically revolve around finances, fit, and the like.

-- Four-year graduation rates for the seven colleges have also risen steadily since 2001, to about 54% for 2007 freshmen. In 1992 the 4-year graduation rate was 15%. The Board of Regents has set a goal of a 60% rate. The Office of Undergraduate Education also maintains records on five-year and six-year graduation rates, Dr. McMaster reported; the latter are important because many national surveys use the six-year rate and calculate the difference between the predicted and actual graduation rates. If a student matriculates at one college in the University and changes to another, that student will count; the same is true for retention. (If a student transfers from one campus to another, however, that student does not count for federal reporting purposes, even if the student graduates from the second University campus.)

-- Initiatives and improvements over the last ten years include the following:

- enhanced first-year programs (Welcome Week, freshman seminars)
- creation of the Center for Academic Planning and Exploration (CAPE) to help undecided or overly decided students get on a path to graduation
- new tools to help students (e.g., the grad planner)
- new support programs (e.g., Access to Success, attention to students who could be at risk)
- increased attention to financial aid, and fiscal literacy
- improvement in the metrics of the incoming classes
- year-long registration for high-demand courses
- sample graduation programs to show students how to get through a major and complete liberal-education courses
- the 13-credit registration rule (students are taking about 14.8 credits per semester)

Professor McCormick said the average is approaching 15 credits per term; would the University like everyone to be at 15? That is not necessary, Dr. McMaster said; students may take 13 credits one semester and 17 the next, and students are coming in with an average of 20 credits already completed. Professor McCormick asked if there has been any consideration to structuring tuition as appropriate to encourage students to take the credits they need. They have talked about whether the University should increase the requirement from 13 to 15 credits, but his sense is that because students are almost at 15 now, they need some flexibility, but the standard could perhaps be increased to 14.

Professor Tarone said that as the University admits more international students and becomes more diverse, it needs to look at support for language learners. The four-year graduation rate for international undergraduate students has been going down, not up. She emphasized the need to look at language skills for international and non-native speakers.

Professor von Dassow said that manipulating the numbers in aggregate to raise national rankings can be bad for individual students, who must often work many hours per week, attend to family obligations, etc. Even 13 credits could be difficult if a student is spread thin. To treat faster as better and accordingly speed up graduation is fundamentally erroneous because it can harm students both as individuals and as members of a community. She recalled that Dr. McMaster has reported that students are betting better and better, but she is seeing students less able to do work that she assigned ten years ago. Some students would be well served by staying a little longer, but the tuition structure pushes them out.

Dr. McMaster did not agree. He said that the goal is that 6 out of 10 students graduate in four years. Departments have designed their curricula and majors so students can finish in four years; liberal-education requirements have been set the same way. This is a fiscal issue, he said; the longer students are in school, the more loans and indebtedness they incur, whereas if they get through in four years, they would not have a fifth year of tuition and debt. In addition, many financial aid sources stop providing aid after four years.

The indebtedness is because the University has raised tuition so high, Professor von Dassow said; if one could wave a magic wand and halve tuition or reset it to where it was ten years ago, cost would cease to be an argument for speeding graduation. That goal is beyond the responsibility of his office, Dr. McMaster commented; his goal is to get students through.

Professor Wambach said that there would be little support for research in a number of fields except for undergraduate tuition—it pays in part for research and graduate education. Her conclusion is that that is why, as state funding declines, undergraduate tuition is skyrocketing. This is a big political issue in the country: how to maintain the enormous infrastructure in public research universities if public funds are withdrawn. That involves the question of how to get public support for the research mission of the University. Professor Nelson commented that the relationship between undergraduate tuition and research varies by college.

Ms. Combs asked how commonly students are exempted from the 13-credit requirement. That is up to the college, Dr. Falkner said. If a student has a legitimate case, it is approved. The colleges are reasonable, but they won't approve an exemption if the student just doesn't feel like taking 13 credits.

Professor Nelson said that course offerings are not responding to the tightened timeline required for four-year graduation. Courses could be offered in the summer.

Dr. McMaster said, apropos of tuition, that one of President Kaler's major goals is to slow down the rate of tuition increases, and the proposal for next year is a 3.5% increase for Minnesota resident undergraduate students. He concluded his comments by noting the four major areas of initiatives: admissions, advising, curriculum, and financial aid (making sure there is enough so that students do not have to take out a significant amount of loans or work 30-40 hours per week).

Professor Brothen thanked Dr. McMaster for his report.

4. Update on Graduate Education

Professor Brothen turned now to Vice Provost Schroeder to provide an update on graduate education.

Dr. Schroeder distributed copies of a report to the Committee (appended to these minutes) and highlighted the major points.

On the subject of fellowships and block grants, which have been decentralized, there are advantages and disadvantages, Dr. Schroeder said. College must learn to make offers that are risky (e.g., 15 offers for 10 slots), knowing that not all will be accepted—but that more than they expect could be. Professor McCormick asked if there is any way central administration could help programs that are shocked by the number of acceptances in any one year. Dr. Schroeder thought there would be and reported that the issue has been discussed by the Graduate Education Council, among others.

Professor Wambach asked about the faculty response. Before, faculty members had to write nominations for awards, even though it could be that the student would not come to the University. How do the faculty feel about no longer having to go through this time-consuming nomination process? Dr. Schroeder said that positive feedback from the colleges centers on the newly-gained flexibility at the local level and the ability to make discipline-specific recruiting efforts. This has meant more work but also more degrees of freedom. He said he has not asked if the faculty miss making nominations.

Professor Wambach noted that there was also concern that the cost pools would decrease, leaving the colleges more money, but that the colleges would not use the money for graduate education and instead siphon it off for other uses. Have they tracked the use of the money? They have and they made it clear to the deans that the funds would be monitored. They will not be a bureaucratic police but in the interest of all, they can put up data on how the funds are used.

Ms. Combs said that fellowship dollars now go to the colleges and fee dollars are used for services that the Graduate School used to provide; do they track those funds? Dr. Schroeder said the colleges cannot use fellowship funds for services; they must be used for direct student support.

Committee members and Dr. Schroeder discussed issues related to costs and processes and the objective of reducing time and cost. Dr. Schroeder mentioned that Provost Hanson would receive

feedback from Academic Support Resources to be informed about what is done to streamline and digitize processes and to actually reduce workload at the collegiate level. Professor Tarone commented wryly that she remembers criticisms of the Graduate School because of the money the colleges had to pay it to do things that they did not know about, and the colleges are now shocked that they must do those things. The Committee is looking for accountability on time and money spent by the colleges. Dr. Schroeder promised that they will take a close look at questions of increased workload.

The process is complicated by the fact that the University never capitalized unit costs even when the Graduate School existed. Programs had shadow systems with their own data, so much support staff time was taken to manage data, costs that were not visible in unit budgets. Now colleges are seeing what must be done. Professor Tarone said she believes the shadow systems and duplication still exist.

Dr. Schroeder said the news about NSF Fellows is excellent. The 48 in 2010 was too low; The University has made the effort to increase applications, and they are now at 85 Fellowships. As the number increases, the base builds and that helps to attract more of the Fellows from outside the University.

With respect to metrics and allocation of funds, there will be no significant change in allocations for next year (FY14) because the colleges need to know soon. They need more data to adjust what has been done; they have been asked to incorporate a component that takes into account size of graduate programs, and while no final decision has been made, even if it is incorporated it will not change the overall allocations that much because of the guideline that no college may decrease by more than 15%. For FY15, they are convening an extended metrics-review team with representatives from each of the colleges, including graduate students, to discuss next steps.

Professor McCormick inquired what role this Committee plays in recommendations from the Graduate Education Council. Does the GEC bring matters directly to the Faculty Consultative Committee? It does not, Vice Provost Schroeder said; policy issues come to this Committee first.

Dr. Schroeder turned next to GRIP, or Graduate Review and Improvement Process, a new program-assessment model. The old process no longer exists, and it was only every seven to ten years, a snapshot, and not always forward-looking. Some colleges have taken the initiative to create external review processes. In the meantime, they have developed GRIP, which is not intended to replace external review processes but to add value to graduate programs. The process is student-centric and ongoing and does not include external reviewers, and it emerged from the discussions at the second Graduate Education Council Assembly and a collaboration with the College of Education and Human Development.

Programs that join GRIP commit to three objectives:

1. Examining the goals of the graduate program and deciding what kinds of information the program needs to answer the question: "Is what we're doing aligned with our goals?"
2. Engaging with qualitative and quantitative evidence to assess how programs are doing in key areas identified by faculty and students.

3. Creating an internal "state of the graduate program" report and a focused plan for improvement in two or three selected aspects of the program.

This is considered to be a formative/developmental process, whereas an external review is typically considered summative. This process is more owned by the programs and they can develop their own discipline-specific metrics; it is a more qualitative evaluation, not just numbers. Vice Provost Schroeder said that so far eight programs have volunteered to go through the process; after those reviews are completed there will be a report and action plan.

Dr. Schroeder reported that when GRIP was presented to the Twin Cities deans, Provost Hanson and Vice Provost McMaster thought it would also be applicable to undergraduate education. If it were enlarged that way, it could lead to a more holistic evaluation of programs, and he is working with Dr. McMaster on expanding it to undergraduate programs.

Professor Brothen thanked Dr. Schroeder for his report, and adjourned the meeting at 4:00.

-- Gary Engstrand

University of Minnesota

Senate Committee on Educational Policy
May 2, 2012

Graduate Education Update

Background

In 2010, the University began the implementation of an ambitious plan to restructure its oversight and support of graduate education, based on recommendations developed by several committees and task forces beginning in 2009 and in response to increasing international competition. The goals of this effort are to enhance the quality of education, to modernize and improve the efficiency of the graduate education enterprise, and to conserve and refocus available resources for the support of student and academic programs.

Most of the recommendations are divided into five main categories:

- 1) Policy and Governance
- 2) Operational and Budgetary Efficiency
- 3) Fellowships, Block Grants, and Other Student Financial Support
- 4) Metrics and Measurement
- 5) Graduate Student Experience and Advising

Policy and Governance

A group of 15 elected faculty members and three graduate students replaced the provisional members of the Graduate Education Council in January of 2012. The first U-wide election of the faculty council members was held in December 2011 with a 46% participation rate. More information and meeting notes of the Graduate Education Council can be found at:

<http://www.grad.umn.edu/Transition/council>

Nine key graduate education policies have been reformulated, approved, and are available in the University-wide policy library (three of those will be available very shortly). There are five remaining policies in various stages of the consultative and approval process. The Graduate Education Policy Review Committee is expected to complete its work in summer 2012. The Graduate School, with the help of the Graduate Education Council and other consultative groups, will address ongoing policy issues.

Operational and Budgetary Efficiencies

The Graduate School operation has been streamlined with a staff reduction of 28% since fiscal year 2010, resulting in recurring cost savings of \$1 million per year. Four additional staff members and their related job functions will be permanently transferred to Academic Support Resources effective July 1, 2012. The effort to digitize and automate graduate education administrative processes continues with a suite of online forms expected to be rolled out in the 2012-13 academic year.

The online version of the Graduate Education Catalog, made possible by the significantly upgraded Program and Curriculum Approval System (PCAS), is expected to be available in summer 2012.

Fellowships, Block Grants, and Other Student Financial Support

Effective fiscal year 2013, the First-Year Graduate Student Fellowship Fund will no longer be collected as part of the cost pool. Colleges are responsible for packaging their own funding support offers to recruit their graduate students through cost pool savings and for some colleges, a one-time recurring base budget adjustment.

In response to President Kaler's decision to allocate an additional \$2 million per year for 3 years to the Doctoral Dissertation Fellowship (DDF) program, significantly more faculty reviewers were recruited to handle the 20% increase in nomination slots from last year to a total of 284. Final DDF decisions will be made this week.

As a result of the first Graduate and Professional Education Assembly (GPEA), it became apparent that the University could provide better support for external training grant applications to help improve the overall success rate. Therefore, the Graduate School requested a new budget line item to provide matching fund support for training grant applications and to leverage support from the relevant departments and colleges. Since the line item became effective 10 months ago, eight support commitments have been made. Five of them are either already in effect or will become effective July 1, 2012 with over \$12,000,000 in total funding awards. The remaining three are still awaiting decision from the external funding agency.

Among the newly funded training grants is "Interacting with the Brain: Mechanisms, Optimization, and Innovation" being supported by the National Science Foundation (NSF) through its Integrative Graduate Education and Research Traineeship (IGERT) program. The IGERT program emphasizes interdisciplinary training and the recruitment and retention of underrepresented minority students. Each university can only submit one IGERT application per year. Since 1998, the University has been awarded four other IGERTs. The Graduate School is now responsible for the process that results in the selection of the single applicant. For this year's competition, eight IGERT pre-proposals were received.

A budget line item that has been significantly increased is the Bridging Fund to cover the education allowance gap for the National Science Foundation (NSF) Pre-doctoral Fellowship. There has been a tremendous growth in the number of NSF Fellows in the past few years.

NSF Fellows by College, 2008-2013

	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
CSE	14	22	26	36	46
CBS	4	3	8	11	17
CLA	5	1	6	7	10
CFANS	2	2	2	4	5
CEHD	1	3	4	5	4
Med	0	0	0	1	2
Interdis*	2	2	2	3	1
Total	28	33	48	67	85

* MCDBG MCDBG MCDBG MCDBG BICB
 BMBB BMBB BMBB Plant Bio

With the increasing costs of tuition, health insurance and fees, the total gap in education allowance for the 85 NSF Fellows in 2012-13 will likely exceed \$700,000.

The Graduate School is also collaborating with the Institute of International Education (IIE), the largest non-profit placement service for international Fulbright Scholars, in an effort to improve the recruitment success rate of these scholars.

Metrics and Measurement

Funding allocation decisions for the FY13 Quality Metrics Allocation Plan were issued to the colleges in November 2011.

Quality Metrics Allocation Plan details:

- Data from graduate programs offering the Ph.D., MS, MA and MFA degrees were considered.
- Time to degree, completion rates, Bostrom Efficiency Index (for Ph.D. only, see explanation below), and placement data were included.
- Colleges were asked to provide narratives on placement details of their graduates as well as specific information regarding the programs that might have led to certain trends in the data.

- A Metrics Review Committee consisting mostly of Associate Deans was formed to provide input on the allocation plan.
- For Ph.D. programs that also offer an M.A. or M.S. degree, data from the Ph.D. component were weighed more heavily than data from the master's component.
- Master's-only programs were categorized as either "Y" (appears to be on the right track with no major concerns) or "N" (not enough data to make a determination at this time or with noted concern[s]).
- Each master's-only program in the "Y" category results in \$15,385 of allocation credit for its home college, independent of the size of the program; each master's-only program in the "N" category results in zero allocation credit for its home college.
- The Ph.D. programs were placed in one of three categories:
 1. program appears to be going in the right direction with no major concerns;
 2. some concerns are noted;
 3. program's status is unclear—e.g., too few data to make a judgment at this time (10 or fewer degrees awarded in the last 10 years), new program with little or no data; or, the program has major concerns.
- Each Ph.D. program in category 1 results in twice as much allocation credit (\$40,366) as category 2 (\$20,182) for its home college, independent of the size of the program, while each program in category 3 results in zero allocation credit for its home college.

It is important to note that the FY13 Quality Metrics Allocation Plan was developed in parallel to, but mostly independent of, the recommendations issued by the Enrollment Management Committee. Specifically, the three categories being used for the Quality Metrics Allocation Plan are **completely different** from those outlined by the Enrollment Management Committee. At this point, the next step for the Enrollment Management Committee Final Report is still unclear. However, discussions on the approach and options for the FY14 Quality Metrics Allocation Plan have been ongoing.

Graduate Student Experience and Advising

In the fall 2010 Graduate and Professional Education Assembly (GPEA), a break-out session was dedicated to advising as one of five critical issues. Discussion identified training of advisers (initially and ongoing) as the top priority in this area, with incentives and evaluation. The spring 2012 GPEA "From First Course to First Job: Developing and Rewarding Excellence in Graduate Student Advising", held last month, attracted more than 100 participants engaging in facilitated discussions on the following key aspects of advising:

- What are the hallmarks of excellent graduate student advising?
- What are the critical skills and principles of good advising that apply across disciplines?
- What are best approaches and techniques for advising at the early stages of a graduate student's degree progress? During the research phase? As the student begins to explore career options?
- What do you need to think about when advising different student populations (e.g., part-time versus full-time, international students)? What skills are needed to successfully navigate difficult conversations with students?
- How should we recognize and reward excellence in graduate student advising?

Ideas and resources available at the University were shared. A similar event was held on the Duluth campus last week. The Graduate Education Policy Review Committee has consulted with various groups regarding the value of having a University-wide policy on advising. The general consensus is that it is more useful to have resources such as best practice guides, workshops, and training programs available for new and existing faculty.

The Graduate School will continue to work with other units such as the Office of Conflict Resolution to promote available resources on advising and with the Office of Faculty and Academic Affairs to incorporate this topic into the new faculty orientation. Additional workshops on advising will also be developed.

The spring 2011 GPEA focused on program evaluation. Discussions and exercises demonstrated how the program evaluation process can be used to articulate, evaluate, and reward high quality advising and improving graduate student experience and learning outcomes. As a continuation of that event, a workshop was held in November 2011 for a group of collegiate representatives to share their initiatives and experience in promoting internal program assessment.

The Graduate School is collaborating with College of Education and Human Development (CEHD) in the Graduate Review and Improvement Process (GRIP) Project to develop a new model of student-centered and action-oriented program assessment at the University. In 2011-12, GRIP was successfully piloted in one department in CEHD - Organizational Leadership, Policy, and Development. Seven other pilot graduate programs have volunteered to participate in the process during 2012-13.