GRADUATE COUNCIL (GC)
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, April 11, 2024
11:30am – 12:40pm
COB 2 - 392

Documents available in box
Graduate Council Duties

I.   **Consent Calendar – Chair Scheibner – 11:30am – 11:35am**
   A. Agenda
   B. March 14 Meeting Minutes
   C. Draft Memo re: SSHA Proposal for a Neuroscience Degree Program
   D. Draft Memo re: Proposed Academic Senate Statement on UC Quality

   Action:
   ➤ The agenda and March 14 meeting minutes were approved as presented, and GC Analyst will update the Senate website accordingly.
   ➤ The two draft memos were approved and will be transmitted to the Senate Chair.

II.   **Chair's Report – Michael Scheibner – 11:35am – 11:50am**
   A. March 25 DivCo Meeting

- Former Interim EVC/Provost Zatz reported on the Financial Management Working Groups making progress. She stated that she has heard less about faculty wanting to leave, and therefore, believes the campus is on the correct path for improvement.
- DivCo approved GC's proposed amendments to Senate Regulation III.3.A.d (Satisfactory Progress – P/NP), as well as GC's and UGC's proposed amendments to Senate Regulation I.1.E (Passed/Not Passed). DivCo had concerns related to UGC's proposed amendments to Senate Regulation I.2.B (Dropping a Course), which UGC will revisit.

   B. April 3 CCGA Meeting

- Chair Dean Tantillo reported on the overall state budget allocation and President Drake's concerns about the budget model (will not increase this year but may next year).
- Several systemwide Congresses took place - one for The Future of Graduate Education, one for Artificial Intelligence (AI), and there are forthcomings for online education, academic freedom, and research, etc.
- Executive Advisor for Academic Planning & Policy Development Todd Greenspan reported that California State Universities (CSUs) are allowed to offer practical/applied doctoral degrees, and there is a tool being developed that allows CSUs to check for duplicated doctoral degree programs that is similar to a tool already in use by community colleges for checking bachelor's degree programs. More information on the

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latter is available here. The tool does not allow for the checking of proposed programs and programs currently under review.

- UC Davis VPDGE Jean-Pierre Delplanque reported on FAFSA issues, and UC systemwide is working with Federal funding agencies to address funding limits.
- UC systemwide is short on master's students and there is a push to look into responsible research requirements on campuses.
- Academic Senate Vice Chair Steven Chuang reported that the Regents have been reappointed for 12-year terms.
- Regular meetings will take place in preparation for the next round of UAW negotiations for graduate students and postdocs.
- UC Davis circulated guidance for managing academic progress over the Summer. An email will be circulated to voting members with the guidelines, and further discussion will take place at a future GC meeting.

C. TAS Budget Work Group Meetings

Members are preparing documents with recommendations to share with the faculty.

D. ES Graduate Program Site Visit

The site visit took place from Sunday, April 7 through Tuesday, April 9. The program reviewers were impressed by the program, and the faculty are awaiting a written report.

III. **Vice Chair's Report – John Abatzoglou – 11:50am – 11:55am**
A. March 20 PROC Meeting

Members discussed the Environmental Systems (ES) Program site visit, which focused more on undergraduate aspects.

B. March 27 SNS/SoE Chairs' Meeting

The Graduate Group Chairs' meeting was cancelled.

IV. **Graduate Students Teaching Graduate Students Policy – 11:55pm – 12:00pm**
Throughout the Spring semester, members discussed under which conditions to grant exceptions for qualified PhD students to teach graduate courses.

Vice Chair Abatzoglou, VPDGE Hratchian, Senate Executive Director Paul, and Associate Dean of Graduate Studies Cisneros proposed amendments to the current policy. During the March 14, 2024 GC meeting, members proposed the following additional edits:

- Separate the first enumeration into two separate items (both sections).
- Remove "than" in item 4 (first section).
- Add language in item 5 (second section) stating that if the instructor or record is not a Senate faculty member, a petition for how the TA would be supervised must be filed with GC for approval.

All proposed revisions are available in tracked changes, here. A clean version is available here.

Requested Action: Members review the additional proposed revisions. If there are no further recommended revisions, voting members vote to approve the proposed revisions.

A member recommended moving item 4 (first section) to the opening paragraph of the document, and Vice Chair Abatzoglou clarified that the item only pertains to Instructors of Record. In that case, a suggestion was made to separate the two sections into different documents, and members ultimately agreed to add titles for each of the two sections instead.

A member also noted the discrepancy in item 4 (first section) regarding the grading of students. It is unclear whether this means final letter grades or grading homework and exams. It was recommended to revise the item to state that a Senate faculty member is responsible for assigning the final letter grades.

Action:
  ➢ Members agreed to two additional revisions to the policy:
    o Add headings to each section.
    o Item 4 (first section) – revising, "If these graduate students are in the same graduate program as the IOR, responsibility for grading these students must be assigned to a Senate faculty member" to "If graduate students in the course have the equivalent qualifications to the Graduate Student IOR, or if these graduate students are in the same graduate program as the IOR, a Senate faculty member is responsible for assigning the final letter grades to these students."
  ➢ Members are to send their vote to approve the final version of the updated policy to GC Analyst **by 10:00am, Friday, April 19, 2024.**

V.   **Assignment of Initial Advisor/Change of Advisor – 12:00pm – 12:20pm**
      How should an advisor be assigned? When an advisor leaves the graduate group, will the graduate group chair become the student's default advisor, and is a change of advisor form formally needed in this case?

      Today, members are to discuss whether the Graduate Group Policies and Procedures Handbook (GPPH) should be revised to provide guidance to graduate groups for managing assignment of initial advisor and change of advisor. Members are also to review the current change of advisor form and recommend revisions.

      Requested Action: Members discuss the current process for assigning an initial advisor and a change in advisor. Members determine whether the GPPH should include guidance for graduate groups and recommend revisions to the current change of advisor form.

      VPDGE Hratchian noted that the change of advisor form that is linked to the agenda is outdated. The most up-to-date version is available here.

      Chair Scheibner noted that the current graduate policies and procedures for assigning an initial advisor or changing an advisor is unclear and asked the membership whether GC should develop guidance for the faculty. He wondered whether the graduate chair of the program should be the default advisor for incoming students and for when a student's advisor leaves the graduate program.

A member expressed that incoming students should be assigned a regular advisor, otherwise every single student would be required to complete the change of advisor form. VPDGE Hratchian noted that Banner has a requirement whereby every incoming student is automatically assigned an advisor, which is typically defaulted to the graduate group chair. Then later, the graduate group chair will inform the staff that certain students are working with certain faculty, and the staff will manually update Banner without a change of advisor form. GC's Mentoring Guidelines state that, "if an advisor is not assigned, temporary advisors to help students initiate relationships with faculty during the first year of graduate school should be assigned."

VPDGE Hratchian questioned the requirement for the current advisor to sign off on the change of advisor form. Sometimes the reason for a student changing advisors is because of a toxic relationship with their current advisor, so asking them to confront them for a signature may cause issues. Historically, students have been informed that if they do not feel comfortable acquiring their current advisor's signature, their graduate group chair can sign the form in their place. A member noted that it may blindside the current advisor if they are not made aware of the change. A recommendation was made to include a check box on the change of advisor form to indicate whether the student has discussed the change with their current advisor.

A member wondered whether it would be appropriate to do away with the change of advisor form entirely, to which VPDGE Hratchian suggested GC establish a policy that states, "under any circumstance where a student does not have an advisor of record at the time that an advisor's approval is required, the graduate group chair can act as the designated advisor".

VPDGE Hratchian also noted that he can neither compel a student to work with a particular faculty member as their advisor nor can he require a faculty member to become a student's advisor; they both must agree.

VPDGE Hratchian recommended that he consult the graduate group chairs at their next meeting and provide GC with recommendations, to which members agreed.

Action:
 ➢ VPDGE Hratchian will discuss GC's concerns with graduate group chairs at the next Graduate Chairs' meeting and provide GC with a recommendation from the graduate group chairs at a future GC meeting.
 ➢ GC Analyst will draft a formal memo to VPDGE Hratchian.

VI. VPDGE Hratchian's Report – 12:20pm – 12:35pm

VPDGE Hratchian updated the membership on current admissions noting that UC Merced has received 126 total graduate student Statement of Intent to Register (SIRs) for Fall 2024. Last year to-date, there were a total of 127 graduates, so UC Merced is currently down by 1 this year. 16 students from the last cycle have deferred, so approximately 10-12 are anticipated to also arrive this fall. VPDGE Hratchian estimates a total of around 135 incoming graduate students in Fall 2024.

As of April 11, 2024, UC Merced has received 117 doctoral SIRs, whereas a year ago to-date, there were 101. UC Merced is up by 6% (16) doctoral students that have accepted their application and will be joining UC Merced in the fall.

The entire UC system is low on master's students compared to out-of-state institutions. As of April 11, 2024, UC Merced is down by 65% master's students. Electrical Engineering and Computer Science (EECS) has not admitted any students.

A. Recruitment Fellowship Outcomes

VPDGE Hratchian realized that many students are fully funded from Recruitment Fellowships, so he conducted a holistic review and determined that a significant amount of funds are spent on these fellowships with less-than-ideal outcomes. Between 50% and 60% of those who are offered a Recruitment Fellowship accept. Recruitment Fellowships also cost a lot of money because the rates have increased, but the budget has remained constant. Therefore, the Graduate Division has less funds for Recruitment Fellowships this year.

VPDGE Hratchian's list of incoming Graduate Student Fellowship Awards is available here.

B. Summer Bridge Program

Eight to nine graduate programs have joined the Summer Bridge Program. Offer letters and fellowship offers for Summer Bridge have been sent. The program will take place two weeks later than usual, which will help students establish housing. Many faculty members travel during the summer, as well, which makes it difficult to mentor students who attend the Summer Bridge Program. The target is 40 students, and as of April 9, 2024, 27 have committed to attending. The deadline for students to commit is May 1, 2024.

C. Graduate Group Funding

VPDGE Hratchian hopes to provide a presentation to GC members with information regarding the Graduate Division manages its funding. Student support has been transferred to Block Grants, so that it is less restricted. The Graduate Division's total budget for student support is approximately $6.4 million. Approximately $1.5 million is allocated to graduate groups as Block Grants, and another $2.5 million is for Nonresident Supplemental Tuition (NRST). The remaining $2.4 million becomes the Fellowship fund.

VII. **Any Other Business – 12:35pm - 12:40pm**
   A. Systemwide Review Item
      a. UC Regents Policy on Public and Discretionary Statements by Academic
         GC is not a lead reviewer, but members are welcome to comment. Members are to send any comments to GC Analyst **by 5:00pm, Friday, April 12, 2024.** Comments are due to the Senate Chair by Wednesday, April 17, 2024.

VIII. **Executive Session – Voting Members Only – 12:40pm – 1:00pm**

No minutes were recorded during the executive session. The action items were shared with GC voting members.