MINUTES
The Graduate Council
January 6, 2021
Via Zoom

Members Present: Ron Bramhall (ex officio), Robin Clement, Katherine Donaldson (ex officio), Ihab Elzeyadi, Felicia Gutierrez, Beth Harn, Burke Hendrix, Andy Karduna (ex officio), Hauxin Lin, Kate Mondloch (ex officio), Fabienne Moore, Dorothee Ostmeier, Ellen Peters, Jeremy Piger, Julia Pomerenk (ex officio), Leslie Straka, Frances White (ex officio), Chelsea Wright, Hong Yuan

Members Absent: Marina Guenza, Joan Rocklin

Graduate School Staff in Attendance: Padma Akkaraju, Lisa Howard, Tara Kaiser, Jered Nagel, Hannah Schneider-Lynch

The meeting was called to order at 3:32 pm. Ellen Peters motioned moved to approve the November minutes. Fabienne Moore seconded and the minutes were approved.

Graduate Education Administration and Long-Term Planning

Provost Patrick Phillips and Executive Vice Provost for Academic Affairs Janet Woodruff-Borden joined Graduate Council to discuss next steps for the Graduate School. Patrick opened by acknowledging Kate Mondloch’s work as Interim Dean and Vice Provost of the Graduate School and that rather than launching a search for a permanent Dean, the Graduate School will undergo restructure and be more closely integrated with the Provost Office, specifically under Janet in Academic Affairs. Kate will be returning her position as a faculty member at the end of winter term. The purpose of restructuring the Graduate School is so that the unit can be more aligned with institutional priorities and so that the staff can be better supported in moving forward within the institution. There have also been a number of recent changes to higher education on a national level and it is important for the Graduate School to be flexible, well-supported, and adaptive to those changes.

Janet will hold conversations with Graduate School staff, Graduate Council, Senate Leadership, and other partners to gather feedback on how to go about a new model that creates a robust environment that is supportive of the UO students, vision, and staff. She hopes to learn about what is working well within the Graduate School and what areas need improvement. Other topics of discussion could include the program approval process, curricular issues, and how to make graduate education more in order to better the work that support students.

Several Graduate Council members voiced concern such as how it will be possible to create a robust academic environment when there have been recent cuts in GE and faculty positions. Patrick acknowledges that the institution is dealing with the burden of financial loss, but that we must have these conversations to find ways to ensure that the excellent work within the schools, colleges, and departments continue in a well-supported way, even as resources change. Janet recognizes that the shift in funding to doctoral students has created worry within master’s programs on how they will be sustained, which is another reason to rethink things structurally. Discussion topics could include finding ways to attract tuition paying students or how to create additional online degree programs so that tuition dollars could be used to support other activities.

Some Graduate Council members fear that the restructure is an attempt to further centralize all decision making, and wonder about the future of the Graduate Council in being able to provide diverse feedback on certain issues. Patrick assured that it is not the intention to centralize graduate activities of schools and colleges, but rather make sure they continue to be funded and maintained. It’s also important to think about ways to expand graduate opportunities in a strategic and sustainable way, and to give more
independence to schools and colleges so that they can flourish. He also believes that good work at the university is done with collaboration between faculty and staff, so he doesn’t anticipate any changes in the role of the Graduate Council. Rather he hopes that it could be enhanced by having issues presented more broadly.

Patrick and Janet departed the meeting. The Graduate Council agrees that there are pros and cons to centralizing leadership within the university. Some main concerns include the fact that there may be conflicting missions across the different units and having an all-encompassing mission is undesirable. They voiced that some departments may be better suited to utilize GEs in support of their mission compared to others, and that when there are changes regarding GEs, it affects undergraduate programs in terms of enrollment and ability to teach. They believe that having one unit rely on another for funding compromises the mission.

Lastly, the possibility of not having a Graduate School Dean is worrisome to the Council since it is such an important role. Robin will compile all of these concerns and present them to Janet when they meet individually.

Revision to MS Architecture Program

Professor Ihab Elzeyadi briefly explained that the revision to this program involves an update in catalog description so that it more closely matches with what is occurring in the program. There was also change in residency requirement from 4 quarters to 3 quarters, meaning the minimum amount of time a student is required to stay in the program is lessened, making the program more competitive with other institutions.

Before approving the revision, Professor Frances White needs more clarity on what the defense of the terminal project or thesis will look like. She will follow up with Ihab, and then the Council vote by email.

Update: On February 18, 2021, the Graduate Council voted by email in favor of this proposal.

Environmental Humanities Certificate

Before the Graduate Council could vote on approving this certificate, Professor Dorothee Ostmeier requested clarification on the relationship between Center for Environmental Futures, the Environmental Studies program, and the Environmental Humanities program, to make sure they are not in competition with each other. The Graduate Council believes that these entities are affiliated with the Environmental Studies program and share some overlap, but are not part of the same thing. Robin will confirm this information with Marsha Wiesiger and the Graduate Council will vote by email.

Update: On February 18, 2021, the Graduate Council voted by email in favor of this proposal.

The Council adjourned at 4:47 PM.
Respectfully submitted,

Fabienne Moore
Graduate Council Secretary