The Graduate Council
October 21, 2020
Via Zoom

Members Present: Ron Bramhall (ex officio), Robin Clement, Ihab Elzeyadi, Felicia Gutierrez, Beth Harn, Burke Hendrix, Andy Karduna (ex officio), Haixin Lin, Kate Mondloch (ex officio), Fabienne Moore, Dorothee Ostmeier, Ellen Peters, Jeremy Piger, Julia Pomerenk (ex officio), Joan Rocklin, Leslie Straka, Chelsea Wright, Hong Yuan, and Annie Zeidman-Karpinski (ex officio)

Members Absent: Marina Guenza, Frances White (ex officio)

Graduate School Staff in Attendance: Jered Nagel, Tara Kaiser

The meeting was called to order at 3:33pm. The September 2020 minutes were approved as distributed.

Interdisciplinary Studies: Individualized Program (IS:IP)

Assistant Dean, Jered Nagel began conversation by providing a general overview of the current program and the proposed changes. Currently, this is a program that allows graduate students to pick 15 credits of coursework from three different departments and combine them into a cohesive program of study, concluding it with a terminal project or thesis. Students are required to submit a tentative program of study, as well as a statement of purpose to be approved by each department. One faculty member would have to agree to be the student’s advisor.

The most prominent changes to this program include:

1. Allowing students to create a program that incorporates just two areas of study instead of three.
2. Allowing students to choose an internship option and submit a written reflection on their experience as their final project, instead of a terminal project or thesis.
3. Remove the “Individualized Program” label from the title and change it to “Master’s in Interdisciplinary Studies.”
4. Encourage involvement from all departments by requiring DGSs or Department Heads to sign an agreement that they will support the student and allow them into their courses.

Jered continued to voice that the program lacks structure, and that students participating in it do not feel they have much guidance or an academic home. Their advisors are usually not familiar with the program and unable to offer advice beyond recommending courses or assisting with their thesis or final project. The hope is that this proposal for changes is the first step in improving the structure of the program, and as well as the ability for the Grad School to recruit students into it. It also creates an opportunity for departments to collaborate with each other, and could also be an excellent platform to pilot new courses.

The goal is to revise this program and start admitting students for fall 2021. This topic was presented for discussion only, no vote took place.

Education Policy and Leadership Program Revisions

This proposal was presented to the Graduate Council, and EMPL representative, Professor Ilana Umansky, joined the meeting to offer clarification and answer questions. Graduate Council Chair, Robin Clement, had previously reviewed the proposal with UOCC representative, Frances White, and found that several courses are still going through the regularization process. There was confusion on whether or not the courses were variable credit, but Ilana confirmed that they had shifted the courses from variable credit to set credit in order to make them cohort-based and more traditional.
Several Council members also discussed the notion of having a GE teach a required master's class in the summer. Many thought this was not possible, but Jered explained that as long as departments petition for the GE to teach a class, and there is no overlap between the courses they are taking and the courses they are teaching, it is allowed. In the case of this proposal, Ilana stated that a high level doctoral student will be teaching a master’s seminar course to introduce key ideas that will be applicable for the rest of the year. Graduate Council questioned why the program could not have a faculty member teach, and was informed that it is because many tenure-track faculty members are not on contract during summer. Additionally, it was pointed out that teaching a master’s course is a great professional development opportunity for the GE. The GE would receive guidance on organizing and creating the course to make sure it is successful.

Professor Beth Harn pointed out that all the required classes listed in the proposal are EMPL and EDUC classes and believes that opening the program to classes outside the department, such as SPECS, would be a great enhancement. Ilana explained that while the goal is to design the program to not be reliant on other departments, they do want to promote flexibility. Therefore, it could be possible to allow students to take outside classes with the approval of their advisor, or classes could be added to the electives list later on.

Robin Clement praised the program for having such a high rate of people of color participating in it, as outlined in the proposal. Ilana elaborated that currently 60% of PhD cohorts in EMPL are people of color, and that there is high need for them in education and policy making positions. She hopes to continue and improve this trend.

Because this proposal is still under review by UOCC, the Council could not vote on it.

**Work Plan for the Senate’s Anti-Racism Resolution**

Graduate Council Chair, Robin Clement, provided information received at the last Senate meeting regarding a work plan for anti-racism. The Graduate Council will need to work with the Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity Committee to determine how to best meet the requirements of the resolution, including working with stakeholders and other representatives across campus. Robin will be working with this committee and visiting academic units to examine and update their mission, and promote scholarships and curriculum for the purpose of improving graduate education as a whole. Robin opened discussion with the Council by asking for ideas on ways we can move forward with this resolution. Ideas that the Council had to offer included:

- Review and update the Graduate Council’s mission statement
- Ask departments to include an equity, inclusion, and diversity statement in their proposals
- Invite an United Academic representative to a Graduate Council meeting to offer their perspective
- Collaborate with other committees
- Gather data and identify programs that have higher number of students from non-white backgrounds, learn about their recruitment, retention, and graduation strategies, and offer those best practices as a suggestion to other departments
  - This could be difficult for some departments, however, like German, due to pandemic issues and international students not being allowed to come to the US.
  - Qualitative data, such as student feedback on experience and the support they receive throughout their educational journey, should also be considered.
- Identify graduate level courses already in existence that address issues of equity, inclusion, and diversity, and make it widely available to both faculty and program directors so that they could promote them to students.

This discussion served as a starting point for a much larger task, and Graduate Council members were asked to review the work plan, brainstorm, and offer any other suggestions to Robin and Andy via email.
The Council adjourned at 4:58PM.

Respectfully submitted,

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Fabienne Moore
Graduate Council Secretary