MINUTES OF THE GRADUATE COUNCIL MEETING  
Friday, January 19 – 3:00 PM  
Robert Scott Small – Room 235

Chair – Brian McGee, Dean of the Graduate School

Members and Guests Present: Emily Beck (HISP), Vince Benigni (COMM/HSS), Mary Bergstrom (RO), Josh Bloodworth (OIEP), Timothy Buttram (GSA), Annalisa Calini (MATH), Karen Chandler (ARTM), Lynn Cherry (AA), Roger Daniels (ACCY), Mike Duvall (ENGL), Christine Finnan (MTLA), Grant Gilmore (CPAD), Martin Jones (MATH), Kevin Keenan (URBP), Bret Lott (CREW), Bill Olejniczak (HIST), Craig Plante (MBIO), Silvia Rodriguez Sabater (LALE), Amanda Ruth-McSwain (MCOM), Alan Shao (MBA), Susan Simonian (MSCL), Laura Turner (EDPA), Annette Watson (EVSS)

GSO Staff Present: Jon Hakkila (Associate Dean), Susan Hallatt (Admissions), Michelle McGrew (Student Services), Robyn Olejniczak (Student Records)

I. Welcome – the meeting was called to order at 3:01pm

II. Approval of the Minutes, November 10, 2017 Meeting – unanimous approval

III. New Business

A. Curriculum
   i. ENGL – Foreign Language Requirement

   Mike Duvall (ENGL) introduced the proposal to remove the foreign language requirement from the degree requirements of the English MA. The joint committee between the College of Charleston and The Citadel agreed that the requirement is no longer necessary. The foreign language requirement is a traditional one for English programs, but not universal and language proficiency is defined in many ways. The requirement no longer makes sense for the program and there will be new issues of delivery due to retiring faculty. The requirement will be replaced with a catalog statement that makes students who wish to pursue a PhD aware that foreign language proficiency is usually required for doctoral programs. Brian McGee (GSO/AA) asked if The Citadel was also submitting this change through their curriculum process. Duvall (ENGL) confirmed that they are.

   The proposal passed unanimously.

   ii. MPA – 4+1 with Urban Studies, Planning and Administration Concentration

   Kevin Keenan (URBP) introduced the proposal to create an accelerated Bachelor’s to Master’s degree between the MPA and Urban Studies major. He described that the overlapping 12 hours of coursework would count as electives in the MPA program and complete the Urban Studies concentration in Planning and Administration. The criteria to qualify for the program include a 3.5 GPA, recommendation by the Urban Studies program director and two other faculty, and review by the MPA admissions committee. McGee (GSO/AA) asked how many students were expected to qualify and then participate in the program. Keenan (URBP) replied that there are about 40
undergraduate Urban Studies majors so he anticipates about one or two a year would join the 4+1. McGee (GSO/AA) added that SACSCOC requires undergraduate degrees to be at least 120 hours and master’s degrees to be at least 30 hours for a combined 150 hours. If a proposed 4+1 is going to generate less than 150 total hours, there must be extreme justification as SACSCOC is somewhat vague about the guidelines for these programs. Craig Plante (MBIO) asked if a 4+1 student was getting six credits for one three-credit course. McGee (GSO/AA) responded that they are not, they are double-counting one three-credit course towards the bachelor’s and master’s degrees. Bill Olejniczak (HIST) asked how many undergraduates can be in a graduate course and what grading scale is used in these courses. McGee (GSO/AA) responded that the graduate grading scale is used in graduate level courses. If an undergraduate 4+1 student does poorly or fails in a graduate course, they may not be allowed to continue towards the master’s. Course capacity and makeup are determined by the department and academic school. Alan Shao (MBA) asked what the GPA requirements are for the current 4+1 programs. McGee (GSO/AA) responded that 3.5 has been the requirement for all 4+1s so far. He added that 4+1 programs are complex and can pose managerial and administrative issues.

The proposal passed unanimously.

B. Scholarships Updates

McGee (GSO/AA) continued the conversation about changes to the Graduate School scholarship offerings. He said that changes will planned to be memorialized by mid-February in order to meet the March 1 admissions deadline. He discussed that the Graduate School has a relatively robust pool of scholarship funds, but that only a small percentage is being used to recruit new students – most of the funding is used for continuing students. The goal of these scholarships should be to have students compete for elite scholarships if it entices them to apply. McGee (GSO/AA) also stated that scholarships could be coupled with assistantships, which has been limited previously. A downside to front-loading scholarship funds would that availability would decrease for continuing students. This restructuring is necessary since enrollments are trending downwards. Shao (MBA) and Grant Gilmore (CPAD) both expressed the need for funding for international students. Christine Finnan (MTLA) asked if abatement funding was included in these proposed changes. McGee (GSO/AA) responded that it is not as the Graduate School does not control the abatement budget, but that it is important to still consider abatements in the restructuring. Vince Benigni (COMM/HSS), Rogers Daniels (ACCY), and Timothy Buttram (GSA) noted that $1,000 scholarships do not provide enough incentive for a prospective student. McGee (GSO/AA) responded that it is difficult to know the exact dollar amount that would convince a student to accept, but even $1,000 is a signaling mechanism to a prospective student. There is also prestige in a named fellowship. He noted that he will seek guidance on what an appropriate dollar amount could be. He also tasked the GSA with generated a report on Charleston’s cost of living expenses. Bret Lott (CREW) asked if these proposed fellowships would carry abatements. McGee (GSO/AA) responded that they would. Josh Bloodworth (OIEP) asked why there is a need to distinguish between in-state and out-of-state students for scholarship purposes. McGee (GSO/AA) responded that some existing Graduate School scholarships were put in place by the Board of Trustees so there is not much flexibility for those during this update. Gilmore (CPAD) asked if admissions tracked why students turn down an offer of admissions. Michelle McGrew (GSO) said yes,
but not in an organized manner. Susan Simonian (MSCL) noted that her program loses students because other programs make earlier offers with guaranteed funding and in-state tuition. Plante (MBIO) asked what the timeline for scholarship offers would be since not all programs have the same admissions deadlines. McGee (GSO/AA) responded that students will have a short timeline, which was presented and discussed at a previous Graduate Council meeting. He added that final decisions on changes to scholarships would be made in February.

C. Assistantship Updates

McGee (GSO/AA) continued the conversation about revamping assistantships, but noted that teaching assistantships are hard to manipulate since departments rely on them for staffing courses and labs. Some programs, however, are struggling with time-to-degree and funding issues as a result of this reliance. Daniels (ACCY) asked if these changes would be in effect for the 18-19 year. McGee (GSO/AA) responded that that is the intent. Duvall (ENGL) asked about students with an unofficial promise of a continued assistantship. McGee (GSO/AA) responded that those will not be disrupted, but some programs cannot even fill the assistantships they already have.

D. Distance Education Divisional Plan

McGee (GSO/AA) reminded the group that the Faculty Senate recently approved a new major in General Studies which will be offered fully at a distance, and that there are two graduate programs under redevelopment to be fully online. Many graduate faculty have participated in distance education (DE) training, and the College is trying to offer more courses online. Annalisa Calini (MATH) asked if non-semester based courses could be considered. McGee (GSO/AA) responded that other universities do it so the College would also consider it.

E. Policy and Procedure Revisions

Olejniczak (GSO) posed a few questions to the group related to graduate programs and the graduate catalog that hopefully can be considered for the 18-19 catalog. Two examples included how many times a student can fail a comprehensive exam before it will result in academic dismissal and should thesis credits be graded before the final product is successfully defended.

Finnan (MTLA) as the Chair of the Committee on Graduate Education presented the new workflow for changes to graduate admissions requirements. The workflow would be program > academic dean > graduate dean > graduate committee > graduate council. Faculty Senate would not approve changes to admissions requirements. The Chair of the Committee on Graduate Education will report to Faculty Senate at the end of every academic year about the admissions changes made during the year.

IV. Update from the Graduate Student Association – Timothy Buttram, President

Timothy Buttram reported that the GSA is still working with the Library on a graduate student study space. The GSA chose room 326 that will have a code pad, and there will be a committee to decide what will go in the room. The GSA continues to consider parking issues facing graduate students, but there are limited solutions. They are also hoping to have an alumni networking event and have
constituted an events planning committee to work on this as well as other events for the remainder of the year. Timothy reminded faculty that the GSA will continue to rent regalia for spring Commencement. Benigni (COMM/HSS) noted that the cost of living in Charleston is very high and that students might not be aware of this when they choose to come to the College. Timothy suggested maybe making a flyer that gives a real picture of expenses in Charleston, and also developing an off-campus housing information resource. Bloodworth (OIEP) added that MUSC has a robust housing listserv that serves as a resource for current and prospective students trying to find housing or roommates. He suggested that the GSA or Graduate School office consider developing something similar to help new students moving to Charleston from out of state. Buttram (GSA) said that this is something that should be managed and maintained by the Graduate School office, not the GSA.

V. Announcements, Updates, and Reminders

McGee (GSO/AA) told the group that the cost study analysis has been completed. This report has broken out graduate enrollments from undergraduate, though we already know that graduate programs are more expensive than undergraduate. Program and course enrollments are known to be lower than undergraduate. This is the second time the College has undertaken such analysis, the first was done in 2010-11.

McGrew (GSO) announced on behalf of Susan Hallatt (GSO) that the new recruitment communications plan in TargetX will launch on January 30.

VI. Adjournment – the meeting adjourned at 4:57pm