MINUTES OF THE GRADUATE COUNCIL MEETING  
Friday, December 13, 2019 – 3:00 PM  
Robert Scott Small, Room 235  

Chair – Godfrey Gibbison, Interim Dean of the Graduate School

Members and Guests Present: Emily Beck (LALE/ESOL), Vince Benigni (COMM/HSS), Seaton Brown (MBA), Jason Coy (HIST), Julia Eichelberger (ENGL), Grant Gilmore (CPAD), Alex Kasman (MASC), Gibbs Knotts (HSS), Brian Lanahan (EDEL), Jiexiang Li (MASC), Ron Magnuson (MBA), Renée McCauley (CSIS, DATA), Nancy Muller (LGCC), John Peters (SMFT), Craig Plante (MBIO), Ashley Fisher for Susan Simonian (MSCL), Emily Skinner (MTLA), Allan Strand (BIOL/SSM), Rafael Teixeira (SCIM/SOB), Annette Watson (ENSS), Kelley White (EDEC), Mikey Zinn (GSA), Robert Scott Small (Chair), Godfrey Gibbison (GSO/SPS), Jon Hakkila (GSO), Robyn Olejniczak (GSO), Erica Shirley (GSO)

GSO Staff Present: Laura Everett (Recruitment & Marketing), Jon Hakkila (Associate Dean), Robyn Olejniczak (Student Records), Erica Shirley (Admissions & Support Services)

I. Welcome – the meeting was called to order at 3:02pm.

II. Approval of the Minutes November 22, 2019 Meeting – unanimous approval

III. Council of Graduate Schools Annual Meeting – Godfrey Gibbison, Jon Hakkila, Graduate School

Godfrey Gibbison (GSO/SPS) provided a recap of the annual meeting of the Council of Graduate Schools that he and Jon Hakkila (GSO) attended in early December. After attending this meeting for the second time, he notes that the College of Charleston offers a relatively low number of graduate programs for its size; other schools of similar size offer 50-60 programs that do not necessarily include PhDs, though most of the growth is happening online. He acknowledged the longstanding assumption that the College is a primarily undergraduate institution, but he intends to meet with each school dean to discuss the future of their graduate programs. Gibbison (GSO/SPS) added that most new programs are being developed at the intersection of disciplines and are intentionally interdisciplinary. There are different models for implementing online programs, some of which include third-party contractors. These contractors often provide much of the marketing, admissions, and program facilitation, but take 70% of the revenue; Gibbison (GSO/SPS) noted that many schools are doing a cost-benefit analysis to determine the value of this model. Vince Benigni (COMM/HSS) added that it may be beneficial to forego the tuition revenue in these cases, but retain the student fees.

Hakkila (GSO) attended a session on the interaction of the business community and graduate education. The business community finds greater value in demonstrated skills as opposed to credentials such as badges or certificates. Programs should consider this as they develop and market certificates or consider their program audience. He also attended a session dedicated to programs in data science since they are popular in graduate education at the moment. Schools are struggling because the focus of these programs seems to be undefined; there are definitional issues with the level, focus, concentration, etc. Hakkila added that interdisciplinary program development must be more intentional, especially when there are issues of program prerequisites. Offering the program may not be valuable if it is not going to be competitive.

IV. PhD in Computer Science – Jon Hakkila, Graduate School

Hakkila (GSO) updated the group on the status of the PhD in Mathematics with Computation, which is effectively stuck at the state level with the Commission on Higher Education (CHE). The College was granted permission from the Legislature to develop a doctoral program, but the program was required to be in computer science. To ameliorate the situation, the President has asked the School
of Sciences and Mathematics to fast-track a PhD in Computer Science. A committee was formed, of which Hakkila is a member, and a proposal is already in development; the committee was asked that no new courses be created in order to expedite. One obstacle the proposal is facing is the desire for 9 credit hours of interdisciplinary coursework, which the committee is having a hard time defining. Hakkila (GSO) asked those present to consider if any of their program’s regularly scheduled courses could contribute towards these 9 credit hours. Alex Kasman (MASC) asked if the course content should be application or cognate. Renée McCauley (CSIS, DATA), also a committee member, responded that it is not currently defined, but application is likely favorable since it may be useful towards the dissertation. Hakkila (GSO) added that Martin Jones and Norm Levine suggested courses in environmental statistics and GIS respectively. Kasman (MASC) asked for clarification on the status of the PhD in Math; Hakkila (GSO) responded that it has not been eliminated or rejected, just tabled at the state level.

V. Marketing Campaign – Laura Everett, Graduate School

Laura Everett (GSO) provided the group with an update on the Graduate School’s marketing campaign since her presentation at the August program director retreat. The Graduate School has since adopted ParDot, which is the automated marketing component of TargetX. The inquiry forms on the Graduate School website are also synced with ParDot and TargetX. Everett is developing an automated email campaign that will be triggered once a prospective student submits an inquiry form. She hopes to develop program-specific email campaigns in the future. Everett added that she works closely with the Division of Marketing and Communication and there will hopefully be a shift in focus and priority towards the Graduate School. They will attend the next Graduate Council meeting to demo the College’s new website, which may launch by 2021. Gibbison (GSO/SPS) also added that hopefully these smaller meetings will generate some momentum to keep the work moving for the Graduate School.

VI. Graduate Student Association – Mikey Zinn, President

Mikey Zinn (GSA) noted that there is a high level of food and housing insecurity among the student population. GSA is interested in creating a commuter lounge. Several members noted that these spaces already exist on campus and maybe this is something to do in collaboration with SGA. Zinn said GSA is still working on developing a resource manual for prospective students and still intends to distribute a survey to current student to gather useful information. Benigni (COMM/HSS) added that it might be helpful to communicate that parking discounts do exist, just outside of normal business/school hours. Ron Magnuson (MBA) added that there are sometimes issues with students accessing a building after hours, which they may need to do in order to complete a group project. Grant Gilmore (CPAD) said that the program or department is responsible for the cost if it wants to require special building access with a swipe card or key fob; the cost can be considerable.

VII. Approval of the Fall 2019 Master’s and Graduate Certificate Candidates – unanimous approval

VIII. Announcements, Updates and Reminders – no announcements from GSO staff

IX. For the Good of the Order

Craig Plante (MBIO) noted that the process for updating IP (in progress) place-holders and assigning final grades to thesis credits can be confusing to affiliate program faculty.

Allan Strand (BIOL/SSM) asked what medical documentation is required for students seeking exceptions to Graduate School policies such as degree time limits, late course withdrawals, etc.

X. Adjournment – the meeting adjourned at 4:02pm