MINUTES OF THE GRADUATE COUNCIL MEETING
Friday, December 14, 2018 – 3:00 PM
Robert Scott Small, Room 235

Chair – Godfrey Gibbison, Interim Dean of the Graduate School

Members and Guests Present: Seaton Brown (MBA), Annalisa Calini (MATH), Karen Chandler (ARMT), Jason Coy (HIST), Roger Daniels (ACCY), Rachel Donaldson (HIST/HSS), Mike Duvall (ENGL), Martin Jones (MATH), Renée McCauley (CSIS), Bob Perkins (TEDU/EHHP), John Peters (SMFT), Craig Plante (MBIO), Emily Rosko (MFA), Camilo Sandoval Leon (GSA), Susan Simonian (MSCL), Laura Turner (EDPA), Annette Watson (EVSS), Kelley White (EDEC)

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

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

II. Approval of the Minutes November 30, 2018 Meeting – unanimous approval with small correction

III. Discussion of Potential Tuition Changes

Godfrey Gibbison (GSO/SPS) reminded the group that the Graduate School is waiving the application fee through the end of January 2019 and there will be some marketing put together to promote this. He introduced the tuition topic by stating that almost 90% of out-of-state graduate students are receiving abatement funding. Because that is not clear to an outsider, our out-of-state tuition rate might create sticker shock for prospective students and deter them from applying. Gibbison (GSO/SPS) wants to propose one graduate tuition rate to the Board of Trustees so there is no difference between the in-state and out-of-state tuition rates. He recognizes that it is a large undertaking that might also have political implications, but this proposal would benefit Undergraduate Admissions because it would free up institutional funds. Gibbison (GSO/SPS) is also considering the idea of tiered graduate tuition rates. For example, there would be a different tuition rate for online programs. Craig Plante (MBIO) and Jason Coy (HIST) both said that the ability to offer abatement funding in addition to an assistantship or scholarship is attractive to a student and we should be careful not to undermine the value of that. Gibbison (GSO/SPS) is willing to request a short-term experiment with the flat rate tuition with the possibility of reinstating in-state and out-of-state rates after several years. He asked program directors to send him a list of their program’s 3-5 top competitors.

IV. New Business

A. Assistantship Issues and Questions

Gibbison (GSO/SPS) wants to establish a committee to examine some assistantship issues the Graduate School is seeing across programs. Some issues include difference in pay for similar positions within the same department or programs, differences in pay between academic schools, and under-enrollment while holding an assistantship. He also let the group know that during the spring semester, the Graduate School is going to request job descriptions for all assistantships. The Graduate School needs to create some standardized documentation in this area before the new president joins the College. The current interim president has noticed the Graduate School’s funding has not been reduced even as enrollments have dropped. Gibbison (GSO/SPS) said that these assistantship positions are a
form of professional development and we should ensure they provide valuable experiences for students.

B. 2019-20 Assistantship Allocation

Gibbison (GSO/SPS) distributed the allocation of assistantships for the 2019-20 academic year. He noted that the same model as the previous year in that Jon Hakkila (GSO) created an algorithm based on three years of enrollment data for degree programs. The Graduate School is holding about 10 graduate assistantships (GA). Emily Rosko (MFA) asked how to address issues with the allocation. Roger Daniels (ACCY) said that the loss of any assistantship support from the Graduate School impacts his ability to recruit students. Coy (HIST) fears that this allocation model will favor larger, “rich” programs and will disproportionately affect smaller programs. Gibbison (GSO/SPS) said there must be an explanation and justification from the program as to why they would need any additional assistantship support from the Graduate School. Rosko (MFA) explained that there may be unintended consequences of the allocations, as one of the MFA’s philanthropic scholarships requires that the student also receive an assistantship. John Peters (SMFT) suggested the dean follow up with programs that might have issues, but he also noted that some programs would rather have scholarship funds than assistantships. Gibbison (GSO/SPS) asked if programs would be willing to trade Old Glebe funding for graduate assistantships. He added that if the tuition proposal is successful, he would request additional funding for scholarships and fellowships. Annalisa Calini (MATH) asked if assistantships around campus not tied to an academic program or department were being filled. Susan Simonian (MSCL) favors the data-driven approach, but one model might not be sufficient to address the specific needs of each program. Hakkila (GSO) said that the Graduate School is trying to develop a minimum level of uniformity on issues like this. The Graduate School is currently functioning as exception managers; the rules need to be established and then exceptions can be considered within that framework. Gibbison (GSO/SPS) let the group know that they will receive their Old Glebe funding allocation for 2019-20 before the College closes for the holiday. Daniels (ACCY) asked why the Graduate School does not permit assistantships to be divided into quarters. Renée McCauley (CSIS) asked about the Graduate School’s expectations for graduate, teaching, and research assistantships. Rachel Donaldson (HIST/HSS) asked what the decision-making process will be for allocating an additional assistantship to a program. Gibbison (GSO/SPS) responded that it would be a conversation with the program and the Graduate School.

VI. Graduate Student Association – Zach Stephens, President

Zach was not present at the meeting.

VII. Announcements, Updates and Reminders – GSO Staff

Gibbison (GSO/SPS) reiterated that he hopes to take his tuition proposal to the Board in January so that any decision can be made before the new academic and fiscal year. Plante (MBIO) asked if there are other state schools that offer one tuition rate. Gibbison (GSO/SPS) responded that there are not, but we are not direct competitors with the other major schools in the state.
Susan Hallatt (GSO) let the group know that the reminded students with unsubmitted applications about free application month. She also wants to discuss the current letter of recommendation as she wants to know if it needs to be updated or adjusted.

Hakkila (GSO) updated the group on the assessment issue with graduate certificates. He reemphasized his belief that there is no meaningful assessment value for programs with less than two students.

Robyn Olejniczak (GSO) announced that some programs still have Old Glebe funds to award to incoming spring students.

VIII. For the Good of the Order

Mike Duvall asked if a student without an active program student organization is still eligible for funding from the Graduate Student Association (GSA). They are, but there are requirements that the GSA has in place for those situations. The student should contact the GSA.

IX. Adjournment – the meeting adjourned at 4:25pm