MINUTES OF THE GRADUATE COUNCIL MEETING
Friday, September 20, 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), Mary Bergstrom (RO), Divya Bhati (OIEP), Seaton Brown (MBA), Jason Coy (HIST), Roger Daniels (ACCY), Julia Eichelberger (ENGL), Lynne Ford (UAS), Alex Kasman (MASC), Brian Lanahan (EDEL), Mike Lee (COMM), Ron Magnuson (MBA), Jon Marcoux (HSPV), Renée McCauley (CSIS), Melissa Ochal (CIE), Bob Perkins (TEDU/EHHP), John Peters (SMFT), Craig Plante (MBIO), Emily Rosko (CREW), Susan Simonian (MSCL), Emily Skinner (MTLA), Allan Strand (BIOL/SSM), Laura Turner (EDPA), William Veal (EDMG), Annette Watson (ENSS), Fran Welch (AA), Mikey Zinn (GSA)

GSO Staff Present: Laura Everett (Recruitment & Marketing), Susan Hallatt (Admissions), Jon Hakkila (Associate Dean), Robyn Olejniczak (Student Records)

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

II. Approval of the Minutes April 24, 2019 Meeting – unanimous approval

III. Graduate School Dean search – Fran Welch, Interim Provost

Provost Welch (AA) announced that she and the president agreed that there would be a national search for a provost and executive vice president for business affairs that would occur this year. They also agreed that there would be a search for deans of the two largest school, Humanities & Social Sciences and Sciences & Mathematics. They are currently soliciting feedback on whether those searches would be internal or national. Welch (AA) added that she and the president decided there would not be a search for a permanent graduate dean this year. This is somewhat based on the current budget shortfall the College is experiencing due to missed undergraduate enrollments goals. We are down about 350 undergraduates, which translates to a $4 million loss in revenue. The search for a graduate dean would launch in fall 2020. Emily Beck (LALE/ESOL) asked what should be expected for graduate leadership in the meantime. Welch (AA) responded that Godfrey Gibbison will remain interim dean until that time. Godfrey Gibbison (GSO/SPS) responded that this is still under discussion. Roger Daniels (ACCY) asked if the provost can lobby the Board of Trustees to take up the issue of graduate tuition. Welch (AA) responded that we need to collect and review more data before moving forward. She added that the institution does not put a lot of thought into graduate enrollment and we need to be better about understanding where we are and where we want to go. The school deans need to take control of enrollment management, and graduate directors may have to, too. Welch (AA) noted that she supports growing the graduate school. John Peters (SMFT) said that President Hsu appears to be leaving the question of where the graduate school goes fairly open – it is at the undergraduate level where the College is feeling pressure. He added that in-state tuition is a solution for growth. Ron Magnuson (MBA) said that the College needs to consider a fixed cost approach and determine at what point the graduate school is going to generate revenue. Laura Turner (EDPA) thanks Provost Welch for her work chairing the ad hoc committee on graduate education and graduate school organization in 2017. Welch (AA) responded that the president has reviewed the final report submitted by that ad hoc committee.

IV. International Opportunities for Graduate Students – Melissa Ochal, CIE

Gibbison (GSO/SPS) announced that the College has numerous exchange programs that are not solely offered to undergraduates; he asked programs to leverage those opportunities to increase
our international student enrollment and also encourage more study abroad at the graduate level. Melissa Ochal (CIE) added that South Carolina also has sister-state agreements with several countries that allow student to enroll abroad, but only pay their home institution’s tuition.

Typically, international graduate students coming to the College enroll at the undergraduate level – though, there are some exceptions for MBA and Math students. When an international student comes to the College, CIE and the department review the enrollment requests and then register the student. Beck (LALE/ESOL) asked how international students are currently being recruited. She also asked what could we offer international students who were here during their undergraduate career that would incentivize them to come back for graduate school. Undergraduate Admissions has an international recruiting team; they sometimes bring graduate program brochures with them during travel. Gibbison (GSO/SPS) added that we are currently developing a general brochure to have for this purpose. Laura Turner (EDPA) suggested we target international businesses with a local footprint – perhaps there are trailing spouses that want to pursue a graduate degree. Jon Hakkila (GSO) suggested that we tap into international students that are currently on campus to gauge their interest and possible recruit them. Ochal (CIE) added as a final note that international students cannot get visa sponsorship if they are enrolled in an online program.

V. Letters of Recommendation – Susan Hallatt, Graduate School

Seaton Brown (MBA) updated the group on the progress of the ad hoc committee currently reviewing the admissions and applications processes. He said they are currently working on updating the online application, which is planned to launch on Monday, September 23. The group is still considering whether programs find a recommendation form or recommendation letter more useful in their review processes. Gibbison (GSO/SPS) senses that programs prefer a letter. Laura Everett (GSO) added that the intent is to add communication campaigns timed to deadlines. Susan Hallatt (GSO) wants to ensure that there is consensus between programs before removing the recommendation form and only asking for a recommendation letter.

VI. Thesis Awards – Jon Hakkila, Graduate School

Hakkila (GSO) announced that the last two years of thesis submissions in the areas of life sciences and social sciences, business, and education can be considered for this year’s round of thesis awards. Annette Watson (ENSS) asked where environmental studies would fall? Hakkila (GSO) responded that if the argument can be made for one the categories, it should be submitted for consideration.

VII. Graduate Student Association – Mikey Zinn, President

Mikey Zinn (GSA) let program directors know that he intends to restore some of the structure and formalities of GSA that may have been lost over the years. He’s currently working with sub-organizations on their org renewals and delegate nominations as required by the by-laws. Zinn (GSA) also plans to use Cougar Connect as the primary interface for GSA – that’s where students go to apply for grants or other forms of funding. Due to GSA’s budget cut this academic year, the executive team is planning on delaying the research symposium one semester or year. The goal of the symposium is to highlight the students, faculty, and alums of the Graduate School to the public. Zinn (GSA) also announced that the Graduate School is considering partnering with the Charleston Chamber of Commerce to sponsor the upcoming mayoral forum on October 9 hosted by the College’s Bully Pulpit. If the Graduate School is going to sponsor, we’d like to ensure there are some education-related questions posed to the mayoral candidates. Laura Turner (EDPA) asked how programs should communicate with GSA – should they join the symposium planning committee? Jason Coy (HIST) asked when the sub-organizations would get their budgets? Zinn (GSA) responded
that sub-orgs would no longer have individual budgets allocated to them, they would make all expenditure requests directly to the GSA and appropriations committee.

VIII. Announcements, Updates and Reminders – GSO Staff

Gibbison (GSO/SPS) announced that he has an upcoming meeting with the president and provost regarding many graduate issues and plans to highlight the tuition issue. He added that the Graduate School will be hosting an open house on November 2 and that programs should work with Laura Everett if specific populations should be targeted for an invitation.

Gibbison (GSO/SPS) announced that the Grad School is starting to consider adjusting the application deadlines to align better with competitors. Our current fall priority deadline of March 1 is relatively late; an earlier deadline would allow programs to make funding and admissions offers sooner. July 1 will still remain the final deadline for fall applications, but the priority deadline could be adjusted to January 15 or February 1.

Gibbison (GSO/SPS) noted that those who have seen President Hsu’s presentation may have been confused by his interpretation of the graduate enrollment data. He wanted to confirm that the data in the presentation includes professional development in education (EDPD) enrollments, which have fluctuated greatly over the last few years. These fluctuations make graduate enrollments look volatile, when the reality is that degree-seeking enrollments have been stable for 20 years – usually between 450-500 students. EDPD courses are offered to teachers needing to fulfill the state’s professional development requirements. These courses are not catalog courses and cannot be applied to a master’s or graduate certificate at the College. He hopes the president updates his slides or the language used when speaking about graduate enrollments.

Gibbison (GSO/SPS) acknowledged the stress related to the current abatement funding issues. The Graduate School has a very limited abatement budget and is trying to maintain some equity amongst programs. The number of non-resident students has increased while the abatement budget has not. The Graduate School had to ask Business Affairs for about $100k to cover an abatement shortfall last year. The Graduate School is going to continue to use priority criteria to make award determinations. He encouraged program directors to appeal to their deans on this issue to increase the support behind either an increased abatement budget or an adoption of a different tuition structure. Hakki la (GSO) added that program directors are doing the right thing by attracting and recruiting students from outside the state. Coy (HIST) noted that a lot of the funding is focused on first-year students; we need ensure we are not leaving second-year students with no funding options. Allan Strand (BIOL/SSM) said we should be aware of the impression we leave on alums. Gibbison (GSO/SPS) reminded the group that if any program directors have students with questions regarding their residency status, they should direct them to the Office of Legal Residency. He also added that the Graduate School is currently reviewing the graduate assistantship policy.

Hallatt (GSO) thanked Jason Coy, Seaton Brown, and Ron Magnuson for their work on the application/admissions review committee.

Robyn Olejniczak (GSO) reminded the group that the next Graduate Council meeting will meet an hour earlier to accommodate the inauguration ceremony happening on the same day.

Hakkila (GSO) thanked the assessment committee who are in the midst of their review work.
Everett (GSO) announced that she is planning on bringing back the Graduate School newsletter and hopes to distribute it quarterly. She asked that program directors please send any news or highlights for her to include.

IX. For the Good of the Order

Strand (BIOL/SSM) brought up his concerns with the name of the Old Glebe Fellowship.

Alex Kasman (MASC) brought up the issue of graduate courses having no expiration – there is no mechanism to review/withhold credit for previously taken graduate courses at the College regardless of their age. He asked that the group consider creating this shelf-life for graduate courses.

Gibbison (GSO/SPS) asked that program directors review the graduate grading scale. Some program directors have asked why there are no minuses – is this something people want to consider adding?

X. Adjournment – the meeting adjourned at 4:34pm