MINUTES OF THE GRADUATE COUNCIL MEETING
Friday, November 20, 2020 – 3:00 PM
Virtual Zoom Meeting

Chair – Godfrey Gibbison, Dean of the Graduate School

Members Present: Emily Beck (LALE/ESOL), Vince Benigni (COMM/HSS), Brooke Blosser (GSA), Karen Chandler (ARCM), Mark Del Mastro (AA), Melissa Hughes (BIOL/SSM), Alex Kasman (MASC), Kate Keeney (ARTM/SOTA), Jiexiang Li (MASC), Ron Magnuson (MBA), Renée McCauley (CSIS/DATA), Judy Millesen (MPA), mutindi ndunda (TEDU/EHHP), Antonio Pérez-Núñez (HISP/LCWA), John Peters (SMFT), Craig Plante (MBIO), Susan Simonian (MSCL), Emily Skinner (MTLA), Sandy Slater (CGE), Jacob Steere-Williams (HIST), Laura Turner (EDPA), Anton Vander Zee (ENGL), William Veal (EDMG), Kelley White (EDEC)

Guests Present: Mary Bergstrom (RO), Divya Bhati (OIE), Lucy Davis (ENSS), Julie Dahl (RO), Gibbs Knotts (HSS), Nancy Muller (LGC), Normal Salcedo (MBIO)

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

I. Welcome – the meeting was called to order at 3:03pm.

II. Approval of the Minutes October 23, 2020 Meeting – unanimous approval

III. Fall 2020 Enrollments – Godfrey Gibbison, Graduate School

Godfrey Gibbison (GSO) shared the official program enrollments from the Office of Institutional Research. He noted that enrollments are slightly up universally, and he thanked program directors for their outreach work. Ron Magnuson (MBA) noted that these enrollments do not distinguish between full-time and part-time students.

IV. 2021-2022 Graduate School Fellowships – Godfrey Gibbison, Graduate School

Gibbison (GSO) announced that the Graduate School’s merit fellowships will not require the GRE this nomination cycle given the temporary waiver of standardized tests. Only the nominee’s GPA and the program director’s nomination letter will be used to select recipients. Given the loss of an assessment data point, the Graduate School developed a mechanism to use a school’s national ranking in correlation to the student’s GPA. The office used data from previous years to test this method, and it does seem to work in that students who received fellowships were ranked higher. Jon Hakkila (GSO) acknowledged that this is challenging given the loss of the GRE as a universal data point, and it is better to have more information than less when making admissions and funding decisions. But the Graduate School worked on this temporary method to accommodate program directors who raised the issue of test scores being waived for the year. Gibbison (GSO) hopes this will encourage all programs to submit nominations for this fellowship cycle. Several programs do not require a standardized test score and therefore do not submit nominations. Susan Simonian (MSCL) inquired about whether GRE scores would still be considered if a student submits them as her program still required the test be submitted. Gibbison (GSO) asked if other programs were finding that applicants are still submitting test scores. Susan Hallatt (GSO) noted that graduate admissions is not actively collecting GRE scores or reminding applicants to provide them. Anton Vander Zee (ENGL) asked when this change to fellowship criteria was made. Gibbison (GSO) responded that the Graduate School is trying to accommodate program directors like himself who raised the issue of fellowships requiring scores given the Graduate School’s universal waiver.
V. Graduate Student Association – Brooke Blosser, President

Brooke Blosser (GSA) reported that the GSA sponsored a professional headshot opportunity for graduate students with good turnout. The College is also designating one of the upcoming Cougar Night Lights events for graduate students and undergraduate seniors. She will make some remarks alongside the President and EVP for Student Affairs. She announced that the GSA will distribute a student experience survey around Thanksgiving with hopes to share results in January. Gibbison (GSO) complimented the executive team for the newsletter they have developed and thanked program directors for submitted the names of students who will serve as delegates to the GSA.

VI. Announcements, Updates, and Reminders – GSO Staff

A. PS/NS Option

The Provost announced the PS/NS option would not be available for the fall 2020 semester. However, the withdrawal deadline has been extended by approximately six weeks. Students will also have the opportunity to use the PS/NS option for one course during the spring 2021 semester. Ron Magnuson (MBA) reported that a few of his students were disappointed that this was not an option.

B. Award Announcements – 3MT® & Thesis Awards

Hakkila (GSO) announced the winners of the Graduate School’s annual 3MT competition. Even though participation was lower due to the pandemic, the projects were interesting and students did a great job given the circumstances.

Hakkila (GSO) also announced the winners of the annual thesis awards, of which there were three given the rotating categories. The thanked the members of the review committees.

C. Program External Reviews

Each program is peer-reviewed on a seven-year cycle and Hakkila (GSO) reminded the group that several programs are up this academic year. They should being putting together their preliminary report and also start soliciting external reviewers. These reviews should be completed by the end of the spring semester.

D. End of Semester Social Event

The Graduate School transitioned its fellowship reception to a more general end-of-semester social event. There are hopes that an in-person reception could happen during the spring semester. The Graduate School, however, still wanted to provide a virtual event open to all students to celebrate the end of a unique semester.

E. Miscellaneous

Gibbison (GSO) announced that the Graduate School would continue to offer a free application period to encourage applications. Because the priority deadline was moved from March 1 to January 15, the fee waiver period will be from December 1 through January 15. The Graduate School will also be running radio ads to advertise.
Gibbison (GSO) asked that programs that require summer enrollment contact Robyn Olejniczak soon to better plan for possible summer funding for students. Last summer, there were several program directors that reached out at the last minute with requests when funds had already been distributed to other programs. The Graduate School already adjusted the abatement model to now offer partial abatements instead of automatic full abatements for all non-resident students, which leaves additional funds available for the summer. However, programs should still reach out proactively to help the Graduate School better prepare the summer funding budget. Gibbison (GSO) also requested the 21-22 abatement budget from the CFO given the priority application deadline is earlier; programs will need to know what funding is available now that admissions decisions will be made sooner.

Magnuson (MBA) asked for an update on the proposed plan to update the tuition model for graduate programs. Gibbison (GSO) responded that any changes to tuition require approval from the Board of Trustees, and they did not take up the issue this year given the immediate concerns about the College’s finances. He has discussed the proposal with the new CFO; he acknowledged the conversation needs to continue. The adjustment to the abatement model should provide some useful data as to how graduate tuition can be modified and correctly set.

VII. For the Good of the Order

Nancy Muller (LGC) reminded the group that the deadline to submit applications for the LGC opportunity funds is February 1, 2021.

Several members of Graduate Council thanked Dean Gibbison for his service and wished him well in his next role at Cal State – San Marcos.

VIII. Adjournment – the meeting adjourned at 4:22pm