MINUTES OF THE GRADUATE COUNCIL MEETING
Friday, December 16, 2022 – 3:00 PM
Virtual Meeting

Chair – Kameelah Martin, Dean of the Graduate School

Members Present: Emily Beck (LALE/ESOL), Keonya Booker (GSO), Mike Braswell (ACCY), Tim Callahan (ENSS), Mark Del Mastro (AA), Alex Kasman (MSC), Kate Keeney (ARCM), Brian Lanahan (EDEL), Mike Lee (MCOM), Ellie Lovellette (CSIS), Ron Magnuson (MBA), Shawn Morrison (CGE), Matt Nowlin (MPA), John Peters (SMFE), Craig Plante (MBIO), Susan Simonian (MSCL), Jacob Steere-Williams (HIST), Allan Strand (BIOL/SSM), Laura Turner (EDPA), Anton Vander Zee (ENGL), Tony Varallo (MFA)

Guests Present: Suzanne Austin (Provost), Tom Buchheit (RO), Lucy Davis (ENSS), Kris Ghosh (CS), Gibbs Knotts (HSS), John Loonan (CFO), Jerry Mackeldon (RO), Aimée Pfeifer (Registrar), Seth Pritchard (SSM), Norma Salcedo (MBIO), Paul Schwager (SOB), Fran Welch (SOE)

GSO Staff Present: Susan Hallatt (Admissions), Robyn Olejniczak (Assistant Dean), Erica Shirley (Admin Coordinator)

I. Welcome – the meeting was called to order at 3:00pm

II. Approval of the Minutes November 18, 2022 Meeting – unanimous approval

III. Graduate Tuition Study – Suzanne Austin, Provost; John Loonan, EVP Business Affairs

Kameelah Martin (GSO) introduced the topic by providing some background. The Kennedy & Company consulting firm was retained last year to do a comprehensive study of graduate tuition with the purpose of making recommendations for changes by reviewing internal and peer data and conducting regional market research. Martin (GSO) reminded the group of similar work done by an ad hoc group of administrators and program directors several years ago under the guidance of then Interim Graduate Dean Godfrey Gibbison. She noted that the current proposal is not significantly different from the proposal presented by that ad hoc group. The consultant’s recommendation has been presented to a steering committee. The CFO and his team in Business Affairs are now reviewing the proposal and reconciling it against their own data. This work is ongoing and the timeline for implementation is still under consideration. Feedback from program directors and other campus stakeholders is being sought now, however. The lead from Kennedy & Company could not attend the meeting, but Provost Suzanne Austin and CFO John Loonan will add their comments and answer questions.

Provost Austin (AA) thanked Martin and reiterated that the proposal is comparable to Gibbison’s model. CFO Loonan (BA) confirmed that Business Affairs is still conducting their analysis and finding some small obstacles. He stated that the goals is to make the cost more transparent and to correct the pricing so prospective and current students have a better understanding of what they will pay; the current pricing and abatement model is confusing. The recommendation is to reduce out-of-state tuition and remove the need for abatement funding altogether, as well as create tiers or categories of programs that pay different rates. Loonan (BA) continued that there is a question, however, regarding the state proviso and its application to graduate tuition. The state proviso restricts increasing in-state tuition rates. The hope is to make these changes all at once so further changes are not incremental and confusing. This simplification could also foster growth in programs.
Susan Simonian (MSCL) asked if the research was national as not all programs have regional peers. Austin (AA) responded that the focus was regional, but asked for national comparative data to be shared if it is available. She continued that the goal is to address the issue of out-of-state tuition being too high and in-state tuition being too low compared to the College’s peers.

Alex Kasman (MASC) asked if current students would continue with the same tuition and funding model through a grandfathering agreement as is typical when there is significant change. He advocated for the change to apply to all students at the same time to reduce confusion. He also suggested students be provided with more and better information about the residency process in hopes of removing or addressing current administrative hurdles.

Anton Vander Zee (ENGL) asked for more information about proposed tiers of tuition based on program type or category. The English MA may be considered traditional in its current format, but changes to modality and target audience are being explored. Loonan (BA) responded that there is already a rough outline of tiers based on discipline and enrollments, but it is not finalized and there would need to be some agreement. Online programs require important consideration. Austin (AA) stated that the national practice for online programs is to have no distinction between in-state and out-of-state tuition. However, marketing matters a great deal for online programs. Emily Beck (LALE/ESOL) continued that the consultant’s recommendation suggests that online programs charge the in-state tuition rate. Currently, the College has a special tuition rate for online programs that allows them to compete nationally. Austin (AA) agreed that some programs might have a national market, but the College cannot currently compete against major flagship and R1 universities where there are immense marketing efforts.

Jacob Steere-Williams (HIST) asked how the proposed changes would impact joint programs. Austin (AA) responded that the existing agreement with the Citadel indicates that each school pays the other for its teaching in the joint program. She continued that this should not be the case and this agreement is an outlier for these types of arrangements between universities; she cited UNC, Duke, and NC State as an example to model. Austin (AA) noted that because the College maintains higher enrollments in these programs than the Citadel, the funds exchanged between the school have been unbalanced. Another goal of the tuition study is to negotiate the end of this model with the Citadel. Austin (AA) speculated that the College may be capable of administering some of the joint programs by itself, however, this the tuition changes should be undertaken first. Steere-Williams (HIST) added that there is also an imbalance between institutions with faculty labor (advising, thesis supervision, administration) within some joint programs. Ellie Lovellette (CSIS) noted that a benefit to the joint programs is a wider variety of faculty expertise and to separate may cause the dissolution of the program altogether. Austin (AA) responded that the state will not allow the duplication of programs at both schools and that this issue will take some work to resolve.

Martin (GSO) wondered if the new model without abatements will cause programs to lose some of their recruiting abilities as an offer of tuition reduction can entice a prospective student. Austin (AA) responded that other schools like the Citadel do not offer abatements and have healthy enrollments across their graduate school. The question of funding is typically more focused on doctoral students and not master’s students. She continued that if tuition is set at a reasonable rate, our programs will still attract students, and other funding like assistantships should be awarded on merit and need.

Vander Zee (ENGL) asked about the timeline for the proposed changes. Loonan (BA) responded that sooner is better to eliminate confusion, but tuition changes require approval from the Board of Trustees (BOT). The goal is to present to the BOT no later than their June 2023 meeting and implement in Fall 2023, but that may be optimistic. Vander Zee (ENGL) wondered how this timeline will impact recruiting activities that are already underway for fall admissions. Loonan (BA)
responded that there will more information about the timeline after the January BOT meeting, and there is hope that it can be presented at the March meeting. Austin (AA) added that program directors should proceed as normal and any changes will be announced once it is approved.

Laura Turner (EDPA) commented that the out-of-state sticker price is too high, and abatements confuse prospective students. Austin (AA) noted that the use of the word abatement is specific to South Carolina; other states use phrases like tuition discount or scholarship, which the College should consider implementing. This adds another layer of confusion for students and may cause them to stop considering a graduate program at the College.

Austin (AA) and Loonan (BA) thanked everyone for the discussion and asked that feedback continue to be shared with them and the Graduate School.

IV. Curriculum Proposals – Shawn Morrison, CGE

A. Data Science and Analytics, MS
   i. DATA 531 Database Concepts: new course, cross-listed (CSCI 431)
   ii. Program change: update required courses (add DATA 531, remove CSIS 604)

The proposals passed unanimously without discussion.

B. Computer and Information Sciences, MS
   i. Accelerated program update

The proposal passed unanimously without discussion.

V. 2023-2024 Funding Allocation – Kameelah Martin, Graduate School

Martin (GSO) presented the funding allocation for the coming academic year in preparation for the priority admissions deadline on January 15. She reminded the group that a 3-year average of enrollments and the previous year’s funding usage are the two metrics primarily used to determine the allocation. Martin (GSO) noted that there may be some needed adjustments due to the termination of two programs and the approval of the PhD. Vander Zee (ENGL) asked if other factors like program efficiency could be considered for the allocation. He added that programs may have a harder time affecting their 3-year average enrollments if their enrollments are small to begin with. Simonian (MSCL) restated the anxiety about the timeline for potential changes to the tuition model as she is recruiting now and does not want to misrepresent anything. Martin (GSO) responded that we should carry on with the current process until there is new information to share with students. Magnuson (MBA) said that the MBA program uses phrases like “subject to change” to communicate that tuition, fees, and funding are not guaranteed or certain. Simonian (MSCL) responded that even a modest increase to tuition could impact students. Martin (GSO) responded that some situations may need to be reviewed on a case by case basis, and those recruiting students should be mindful of the language they use. Craig Plante (MBIO) asked if there was a guarantee there would be no increase to in-state tuition. Martin (GSO) responded no, there is no guarantee and some other schools in the state are moving forward with increases to in-state graduate tuition. The College is still working to verify what is allowed under the state proviso. Allan Strand (BIOL/SSM) raised his concerns over the use of the term “glebe” in one of the Graduate School’s scholarship names due to its meaning and connotation. Martin (GSO) responded that she tried to figure out the process for updating scholarship names and solicited suggestions for a new name.

VI. Approval of the Fall 2022 Master’s and Graduate Certificate Candidates – unanimous approval
VII. Announcements, Updates, and Reminders – GSO Staff

Martin (GSO) announced that the Ph.D. in Mathematics with Computation was approved by CHE, who also granted the College PDU status. She continued that the relevant units/departments are also working on proposals for an Ed.D. and D.B.A.

Susan Hallatt (GSO) announced that the new application review process is live and to contact her with any issues. Kasman (MASC) asked if the new review system notifies program directors of new application submissions. Hallatt (GSO) responded yes, but that process needs to be ironed out.

VIII. For the Good of the Order

Plante (MBIO) asked whether the Graduate School’s name is being changed. Martin (GSO) responded yes, CHE acknowledged the name update. The Graduate School office is working on how to implement the update as there are differences between marketing materials and official documents like transcripts and diplomas.

Kasman (MASC) noted that the Registrar currently characterizes a “C” grade as “acceptable” and wondered if that should be reconsidered.

IX. Adjournment – the meeting adjourned at 4:12pm