COUNCIL OF THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

MINUTES

Three Hundred-and-Forty-Ninth Meeting
Wednesday, 21 November 2007
ST 147 4 p.m. – 6 p.m.

Chair: F. L. Hall
Recording Secretary: K. Murdoch/L. Rose

Attendance:

Members Present
Azaiez, J.
Brennan, P.
Bertazzon, S.
Coeotto, D.
Collins, J.
Donovan, E.
Ellis, J.
Franceschet, A.
Goss, K.
Graham, S.
Groen, J.
Haines, V.
Jackson, L.
Keenan, T.
Kertzer, A.
Koshan, J.
Lipton, S.
Lytton, J.
MacIntosh, B.
McCaugherty, D.
McFarlane, S. (Stell, W.)
McKay, D.
McKeough, A.
O'Brien, M.
Oetelaar, G.
Pounder, A.
Ranson, G.
Rohleder, T.
Shimizu, G.
Sicotte, P.
Sideris, M.
Tettey, W.
van der Hoorn, F.
Weingarten, H.
Wen, J.-F.
Westwick, D.
Williams, M.

Members Absent
Brown, C.
Budiman, A.
Chen, W.
Chu, A.
Cook, F.
Dyck, R.
Edwards, M.
Eggum, T.
Este, D.
Evans, S.
Ewashen, C.
Ferris, J.
Goldstein, R.
Grant, M.
Habib, A.
Hajji, I.
Hawkes, R.
Hebert, M.
Herzog, W.
Hughes, L.
Ingelson, A.
Kelly, R.
Krebes, E.
Kremer, R.
Kulechitsky, J.
Mains, P.
McWhir, A.
Milton, L.
Mitchell, D.
Mocquais, P.-Y.
Pearce-Guichon, C.
Rowney, J.
Raparell, T.
Shrive, N.
Simmins, G.
Smith, F.
Vinogradov, O.
Walker, S.
Willment, J.
Woods, D.

Faculty of Graduate Studies Officers
Robinson, G.
Rose, L.
Slot, R.

Guest
Aarsen, C.

349.1.0 APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The Chair called the meeting to order. The Chair noted that to accommodate the President’s schedule item 7.0 needed to be moved to the beginning of the agenda and asked for approval of the agenda with that change.

MOTION: WEN/ROHLEDER

That Council approve the revised agenda for the Faculty of Graduate Studies Council Meeting #349 21, November 2007.

CARRIED

G. Ranson suggested that action items be moved to the beginning of the agenda, The Chair’s response was that a decision will not be made on these items today, but that they are for preliminary discussion.

349.2.0 APPROVAL OF MINUTES

It was noted that statements by individuals will be recorded in the minutes with first initial and last name only. There were no objections.

MOTION: DONOVAN/MCKAY

That Council approve the minutes of the Faculty of Graduate Studies Council Meeting #348 24 October 2007.

CARRIED
349.3.0 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

349.3.1 Notice of Master’s Thesis Oral Exam (F.Hall)

The Chair referred Council to the November 20, 2007 draft memo in the meeting package re: Notice of Master’s Thesis Oral Examination. He explained that item 3 of that memo indicates a change in process for administering the Notice of Master’s Thesis Oral Examination. The Chair noted that if the process outlined in the memo is approved by Council the signatures of the Graduate Coordinators and Supervisor will serve to verify that the student has met all degree requirements (except for the thesis) and that the Graduate Program Officers (GPOs) will accept the signatures as indicating this. No further check that the requirements have been met will be made. It was noted that this is not a change in policy but an amendment to the current practice.

The following concerns were raised and discussed:

- The reason for changing the practice of GPOs double-checking that Program criteria have been completed was questioned. The Chair explained that the practice indicates a redundancy in processes and suggests that Program Coordinator signatures are not acceptable for verification of program completion. The suggested change in practice would alleviate the redundancy and accurately reflect article 7.2 of the Supervisor Handbook which states that the Program verifies completion of degree requirements.

- Risks of not having a system to double-check Program completion were discussed. It was noted that some discrepancies between the FGS records and Program records regarding student completion have been noted and addressed by the GPOs before the student was permitted to proceed to the Master’s Thesis Oral Examination.

- Criteria for a deferral of the Master’s Thesis Oral Examination were discussed. Responses regarding how various Programs handle requests for deferral of oral examinations once scheduled indicate a broad range in decisions for approval of deferral.

- Challenges in meeting the 4 week timeline for receipt of the Notice of Master’s Thesis Oral Examination prior to the scheduled date of the exam were discussed. It was noted that the primary purpose for the 4 week timeline was to allow time for the approval of the membership of the Examining Committee and make changes where necessary. Suggestions to separate this component from the Notice of Master’s Thesis Oral Examination form were discussed.

- The requirement for submission of a complete draft of the thesis was discussed. It was noted that the draft may change significantly over a 4 week period.

It was recommended that this issue should be reviewed by the FGS Policy Committee. It noted that the Policy Committee has been inactive for the past year. Council agreed that the Policy Committee would be reactivated. The Notice of Master’s Thesis Oral Examination was referred to the Policy Committee.
Differential Tuition Update (R. Slot)

In response to a request at the last meeting for a breakdown of Faculties that give a rebate of the tuition differential fee back to International students, the Chair presented the following:

- One unit gives back less than $1000
- Ten units give between $1000-$2000
- Sixteen units give back between $2000-$3000
- Nineteen units give back between $3000-$4000
- Three Programs give $4000-$5000
- Five programs give back more than $5000
- In total there are 2.5 million transferred in differential fees, departments recognize 1.9 million
- $83,000 more goes to International students than departments recognize receiving
- $72,000 goes to non International students
- The average across the University that goes to International students is $2200

It was asked if there was a way to encourage all Departments to rebate funds to international students and if guidelines for dollar amounts could be developed. The Chair stated that he will raise this with the Deans' Council.

REPORT FROM THE CHAIR

GA(T) Negotiations

The Chair noted that there are three clauses in the current Agreement that he recommends being removed:

2. Article 11.02 defines the composition of the negotiating committee.
3. Article 11.07 that Faculty council is required to endorse the agreement.

Council identified the following issues of concern during its discussion:

- The model of having the negotiations between the Board of Governors and the Graduate Students’ Association (GSA) may be more adversarial. The Chair responded that the current agreement is officially an agreement between the Board of Governors and the GSA, and that the review of FGS made an explicit point that FGS should not sit opposite the GSA during the negotiations, as FGS should be working with the GSA. He noted that at the University of Alberta (U of A), FGS sits on the same side of the negotiations as their GSA.

D. Coletto (President, GSA) commented that he agrees that FGS should not be sitting across from the GSA. He noted that the budget for paying GAs falls under the responsibility of the Deans and wondered if the Deans’ Council should be on the negotiations committee.

- It was questioned that given that the negotiations are between the Board of Governors and the GSA, is there some sort of agreement between the Board and this Faculty such that if they negotiate an increase for the students, that there is going to be a corresponding increase in the GA(T) budget. A. Kertzer responded that no, since they are working with the decentralized budgeting model, there will not be a corresponding increase.

- It was asked if a negotiated increase in remuneration for GAs would result in a corresponding increase in the Faculty budget lines for GAs. A. Kertzer responded that the decentralized budget model implemented by the University Budget Committee last year does not incorporate budget increases that may be negotiated in the GA (T) Collective Agreement. It was noted that this could impact the number of GA (T) positions offered by Departments.

FGS Business Plan (Scholarship) Budget
The Chair stated that all Deans are required to submit their Faculty Business plans to the Provost by mid December and circulated components of the draft FGS Business Plan.

He noted that the circulated comparison table of completion rates and times to completion at the Uof C to the G13 was likely to be included in the Business Plan as a performance measure. He noted that the U of C is doing quite well on these standard indicators of program success with a higher percentage of students graduating from their Graduate Program in less time compared to the average rate of completion at other G13 institutions. He invited suggestions via email for other outcome indicators and input regarding the proposed measures to be included in the Business Plan.

349.5.0 REPORTS FROM ASSOCIATE DEANS

F. van der Hoorn explained that the U of C is a member of the National Postdoctoral Association. He stated that this association has just updated their website and one page is devoted to developing Postdoctoral handbooks. He noted that the UofC Postdoctoral Handbook is listed on their website as an excellent model for institutions wanting to create or improve handbooks. He acknowledged M. Mooibroek’s excellent work as the Postdoctoral Coordinator at Uof C and congratulated her on the recognition received from the National Post-doctoral Association.

349.6.0 QUESTION PERIOD

349.7.0 President Harvey Weingarten

349.7.1 Remarks

- The President explained that there has been an increased awareness in Canada of low enrollment in Graduate Studies nationally and internationally, particularly at the PhD level. He noted that Alberta currently ranks fifth in Canada for Graduate Studies enrollments on a per capita basis. He noted that federal policy papers from the Finance and the Science and Technology Ministries have recognized a need to improve this. He stated that he believes that the raised awareness should lead to increased support both provincially and federally in graduate funding. He noted that he would not be surprised to see expansion of the Canada Graduate Scholarship Program and commented that the Province of Alberta has priorities for higher education, including increased graduation in the number of people who will work in the healthcare sector and an overall increase in the number of graduate students.

- He commented that Graduate enrollment represents approximately 19% of student enrollment at the U of C and that the academic plan at the U of C aims for 20% of students to be enrolled in graduate studies.

- In addition to increasing enrollment numbers in Graduate Studies, he noted that the quality of those students must be maintained at a high level.

- He noted that an analysis of graduate support dollars to students was needed in order to determine whether graduate support dollars are being applied in the right way, to get the right students, into the right program. He commented that historically, some funds have been allocated to graduate studies in preference to other allocations that could have been made and he expects that there will be pressure to continue this trend. However, he is looking for an analysis of the graduate student cohort to determine where the students are, whether they in the right programs, if adequate support is provided to current students and what additional supports are required if enrollment in Graduate Studies is increased.

349.7.2 Question and Answer Period

- It was asked whether Alberta has always lagged behind in terms of enrollment, and why this is the case. H. Weingarten answered that Alberta has lagged for some time, but it is unclear for how long. He noted that in contrast to other provinces, there is no explicit appreciation in funding dollars for graduate students in Alberta. Graduate Students in other provinces are weighted 6 times Undergraduate Students. He noted that a change in funding allocations is needed and commented that government response has been encouraging. Uof C previously received funding for energy enrollments for approximately 1,000 students, including approximately 150 students at the graduate level. H. Weingarten stated that if Canada wants to address the small size of the graduate student cohort, it is going to fall on twenty Universities in Canada; it is not a Canadian wide problem but a twenty University problem. He noted that 75% of all PhDs produced in Canada are produced by the G13 Universities. Therefore, if the problem
is going to be fixed, attention is going to be on a subsection of the Universities. In Alberta, it is largely going to be the University of Calgary and the University of Alberta.

- It was asked if there would be an increase in support for areas of healthcare and technology. H. Weingarten responded that this will largely be dependent on the nature of the program that is established by the government in conjunction with the willingness and the capacity of the areas that will deliver the programs.

- In response to a question regarding how to ensure that student quality is maintained in enrolment expansion, H. Weingarten stated that it will be the responsibility of Graduate Council, the Dean of Graduate Studies, and FGS to exercise quality control. He added that in Ontario, incremental funding is tied to increased enrolment of domestic graduate students and added that he does not want this to happen here. He also stated that the quality of the student cohort must be maintained and that he is not prepared to expand programs if the quality cannot be preserved. He noted that a consequence of this is that there will have to be more recruitment of International students.

- The Chair noted that the Academic Plan indicates 7,000 as a target number for graduate enrolments and asked whether his expectation was correct that it is intended as a notice to the government of a Uof C goal, but that we will not achieve this without funding from Alberta. H. Weingarten responded that growth is not expected without sufficient resources so that quality is maintained. He noted that in order for UofC to ranked number one in terms of graduate enrolment, on a per capita basis, we would have to double our intake.

H. Weingarten ended by commenting on bureaucracy and that anything that Faculty Council can do to minimize bureaucracy and the processing of paper would be welcomed.

349.8.0 SCHOLARSHIPS

8.1 St. Lazarus Bursary – circulated for information

349.9.0 Admissions

349.9.1 Format for receiving references

The Chair noted that FGS will accept faxed or emailed reference letters, and will no longer require hard copies.

Council identified the following issues of concern during its discussion:

- As there have been some cases of forged letters in the past, it was asked if there will be some attempt to investigate this issue. G. Robinson answered that at the current time FGS does verify references that are received internationally, and that there has been, on occasion, evidence that there have been forged letters, but that there are no resources to verify every single reference. Unless directed otherwise this will continue to be the Admissions process.

- It was asked why international references are verified whereas domestic ones are not, and what is the basis behind this method. G. Robinson responded that this practice is partly based on resources available and that it may be more likely that there will be knowledge of the referees in that field in Canada at the program level. She also noted that there is no reason that programs should not verify references themselves, if they wish to do so. The Chair commented that a common way for the programs to verify is to send a thank you note. It was noted that it may be useful to require that electronic references come from an institutional address.

349.9.2 Change in number of referees required

It was explained that national granting councils and other universities require 2 referees. In an effort to facilitate faster assessment of admission applications and to align the UofC graduate admission practice with that of national granting councils and other universities it was motioned that the number of referees required be reduced from three to two.

**MOTION: SHIMIZU/WILLIAMS**
That the number of referees required be reduced from three to two.

CARRIED

349.10.0 Candidacy Examinations

349.10.1 Post-exam procedures when recommendation is “fail”

The Chair noted that currently, if there is a failure in a candidacy examination, all members of the examining committee must write a report and send it to the Dean regardless of whether the decision is to allow a retake or require withdrawal. He stated that the FGS executive suggests that reports should be necessary only when there is a failure with no opportunity for retake. He invited input and discussion from Council.

Council identified the following issues of concern during its discussion:

- It was noted that written documentation is necessary in case the decision is appealed and that the Appeals Committee will need to see written reports as to why the student failed. It was suggested that in the event of an appeal, the committee could be asked to write a letter. The Chair responded that this is a possibility.
- It was commented that without written documentation there would be no avenue for appeal in cases where the decision was failure with a retake of the exam. The Chair noted that currently, if a student receives a decision of failure with retake the remedy is still a retake. Therefore, it seems redundant to require written documentation for an appeal that can only decide to uphold the decision to allow a retake.
- It was commented that having no documentation on file would be unfair to the student and that a student may want to appeal the first failure based on the procedural grounds. It was noted that there have been previous cases where the student was right and the examiner had made an error. In those cases, documentation is crucial.
- Given that there is an indicator on transcripts that a retake has occurred, there is justification for a student to appeal even if there is an option of retake.
- It was asked if documentation will be required if there is a failure on the second examination. The Chair responded that yes, documentation will be required.
- It was commented that the current policy that the student cannot see the examination reports unless permission is granted by the examiners is unfair to the student and was suggested that this policy should be changed. It was noted that this policy makes it difficult to assess an appeal.

The Chair stated that this will be referred to the Policy Committee as many issues were raised. He added that the Policy Committee should also consider why it is the Dean is making the decision on whether appeals go forward.

349.11.0 Examination of PhD Theses

This next three issues were referred to Policy Committee.

349.11.1 Review of Draft Theses by Exam Committee prior to defence

349.11.2 Requirement for Unanimity

349.11.3 Role & Effect of Co-supervisor

349.12.0 Other Business

V. Haines explained that additional members were needed on the Scholarship Committee and noted that Council must approve membership of that committee. As timelines would not allow for approval of new members to be held over until January 2008, V. Haines asked that Council grant permission to the Dean to choose members of the scholarship committee.
B. MacIntosh asked how many members were needed and G. Robinson responded that at least six more members from a number of areas, including areas of Engineering, Sciences and Kinesiology were required.

**MOTION: MCKAY/OETELAAR**

That approval of the additional new members currently required be deferred to the Dean, Graduate Studies.  

CARRIED

A. Kertzer called for a motion of thanks to Hal Wieser, who is leaving his position as Associate Dean after almost twenty years.

**MOTION: KERTZER/STELL**

CARRIED

349.13.0 **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 5:45 pm.