

**UNIVERSITY GRADUATE COUNCIL  
MINUTES**

January 24, 2022

10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

WEBEX

Council in Attendance:

Mike Wittie (Engineering)  
Christopher Livingston (Architecture)  
Scott Creel (Letters & Science)  
Sweeney Windchief (Education)  
Michael Brody (Faculty Senate)  
Marc Giullian (Business)  
Dawn Tarabochia (Health & Human Development)  
Catherine Dunlop (Letters & Science)  
Dennis Aig (Arts)  
Hannah McKelvey (Library) Rachelle McLain  
Jane Mangold (Agriculture)  
Craig Ogilvie (Dean of The Graduate School)  
Wade Hill (Nursing)

Also in Attendance:

Lauren Cerretti (Graduate School)

Absent:

Maureen Kessler (Student Representative)

Meeting started at 10:01 am on WebEx

**December 7, 2021 minutes**

- Motion to approve by Wittie, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Tarabochia, motion passes: 6 pass, 0 oppose, 1 abstain

**Announcements**

- **Update from the Dean**
  - Carnegie released preliminary classification, including MSU as R1.
    - We are close to the limit for R1
  - Grad School bought KN-95 masks to distribute to GTAs—most have been picked up so we ordered more
  - Provost will join next UGC meeting to discuss shared governance and policy approvals that affect faculty
  - Thank you to PhD Enhancement review committee (Aig, Hill, Giullian)
  
- **Faculty Senate update (Brody)**

- Faculty serving as family advocates have been disbanded; search committees are encouraged to suggest to candidates that if they have questions about employment they should reach out to HR or the hiring department
  - Area of concern for Faculty Senate
- Dean of Library conversation with FS: subscriptions for digital resources from Elsevier will continue for one more year; Library is thinking about a new system that would entail MSU only purchasing individual articles as faculty/staff/students download the article rather than subscribing to a multitude of Elsevier journals
  - Current cost concerns with journal subscriptions
  - This affects all campuses within the MUS system, including tribal colleges
  - Should not interrupt or limit research
- Dean Ogilvie would like Dean Arlitsch to attend a future UGC meeting

## Old Business

## New Business

- **Age of Courses Policy, potential revision (first discussion)**
  - Background: Age of Courses policies exist to ensure currency in content of degree and also to encourage students to finish their degrees in a timely manner
  - MSU Age of Courses policy is bifurcated: cert/masters is 6 years and doctoral is 10 years
  - Proposal in front of Council is to have **one Age of Courses policy for all degrees and certificates; they would all have 7 years** (with a straightforward appeal to add one extra year already in policy)
  - Many things to discuss—how to handle en route degrees, how to manage students who are already enrolled if policy changes
  - Discussion ensues:
    - Q: how to handle master's en route? Is it 7 + 7?
      - There are options and this would need to be decided
      - Current suggestion is that age of courses used in the en-route masters would still be applied at the PhD graduation date, i.e. it would be 7 years from the start of graduate school at MSU.
    - Age is always moving forward for courses—if one course “ages out,” a new course can take its place
    - Q: are there other exceptions to appeal Age of Courses than those listed?
      - MSU just approved a medical leave of absence that will be added
    - Q: Should we add an absolute max on the policy? No appeals past 10 yrs?
    - FS shared published time to degree data from Office of Planning and Analysis
      - <https://www.montana.edu/opa/students/outcomes/timetodegree.html#Grad>
      - The 75<sup>th</sup> percentile shows times that wouldn't meet new Age of Courses policy
      - Raises procedural question for FS: how can the Grad Council make a policy decision that would affect faculty?
        - A: Council members share with colleges, won't be a decision today. Will likely be reviewed beyond Graduate Council.

- Q: Should we incorporate the time from comp exam for doctoral students? (Shown in example schools)
  - Have something similar at MSU but it is 5 years max allowed between completion of comps and defense
- Q: What is goal? Currency? Shortening time to degree?
  - Having a common time for master's and doctoral was mainly determined by the currency rationale
  - VPR Office is interested in shortening time to degree
- Q: Are there best practices for shortening time to degree? Student support (stipends, dissertation completion awards)? Other schools often have strong financial support for graduate education compared to MSU. Would like to see funding support tied to the time to degree. If going to shorten time to degree should offer more supports.
  - Dean Ogilvie agrees on financial aspect—trying to get more funding into completion awards. Also supports during the time when students transition from coursework to full time research are important and there are practices nationally MSU could explore
- The idea of an 8<sup>th</sup> year student needing to take more coursework is negative
  - Agreed— encourage advising prior to “too late”
- Q: Is the goal time to degree or graduates per year?
  - Carnegie metric is number of docs awarded per year (so reducing time to degree helps that)
  - Increasing the percentage of completion is also a goal. OPA data on students who start vs students who finish (~50%) is also available on web
- Q: if there is a “slower”/less productive student in a department, does that stop the department from accepting more students?
  - Yes, if there are no assistantships or labs available
- Q: Hard to tell what is important. Last year was all about certificates and now it is about doctoral degrees again. What is the prioritization for departments' energies?
  - The right credential for a student can vary
  - For increasing doctorates awarded, attention to time to degree, completion support, and first-second year support/retention initiative
- Not sure this policy (or any) addresses issue of how to speed up production of degrees, retain students, and so on. Seems like a complex issue.
  - Dean Ogilvie can share a list of retention initiatives with Council
- Educ: Attrition often after comprehensive exams so have started doing an integrated 690 experience to keep structure in place for students. Students attend an actual meeting; students who participate tend to make better progress
- Would like to see data Dean Ogilvie presented at Research Council
- As MSU's research expenditures have gone up, so have GRAs funded but a larger increase has been in research scientists
- Council will take age-of-courses discussion back to their departments and colleges; **feedback to be discussed next meeting.**

- **Graduation/Certificate Enrollment Policy, potential revision (first discussion)**
  - Current policy states must be enrolled in three credits during graduation term. Has become complex for certificate students.
    - Proposal to reduce enrollment to one credit based on requests from certificate programs—science teaching certs and the Library Media Certificate program
  - Discussion ensues:
    - Seems like it would help students by lowering cost for final semester and wouldn't hurt others in the process
    - GS will write up proposal for next meeting
- **Dissertation/Thesis language for Grad School website**
  - Background: GS website doesn't have text that explains what a thesis or dissertation is and the varied characteristics that are possible. The attempt is to give guidance to students and committees about the range of options while maintaining a common thread that they advance scholarship in their field.
  - Will allow space for students to add language about their diss being joint scholarship
  - Discussion ensues:
    - Agrees that inclusive language is good idea. Would this be a policy?
      - Not a policy, just language on the web
    - Q: Why couldn't departments do this on their own? Usefulness of GS statement?
      - Faculty and students often come to GS when unsure or experiencing something new
    - Q: Is the goal for Council to work through the statement?
      - GS sharing to be transparent and for any feedback
    - Some general agreement that it is useful to add to web and that departments use GS webpages for guidance
    - Goes a long way toward accessibility—if we are able to teach collaboration and accessibility during the dissertation, that is beneficial to university and the communities we serve
    - Q: Could we add language directing students to departments? To bridge between GS statement and guiding student back to department for expertise?
      - Yes, we can add a sentence about additional guidance

Adjourned at 11:23 am

Next scheduled meeting – Feb 7, 2022