BLUE RIBBON COMMITTEE CHARGE

Graduate Programs – JoAnn Zelasko (Chair), Chris Bowman, John Crimaldi, Mike Hannigan, Kurt Maute, John McCartney, Carol Rowe

The committee was charged with (1) collecting best practices in graduate recruiting and admissions, and making recommendations on coordinated efforts in these areas at the college level, (2) creating an inventory of graduate fellowships in our college and a process for stewarding graduate fellowships, and (3) recommending coordinated programs, courses, certificates or other efforts that will improve our graduate programs.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

GRADUATE EDUCATION COUNCIL (GEC) (from College Rules)

Responsibilities. The Graduate Education Council is responsible for developing and coordinating graduate educational initiatives as described in the College’s Strategic Plan, for those responsibilities specifically assigned to the Graduate Education Council in these Rules, and such other activities related to graduate education within the College as may be brought before the committee.

Membership. This committee consists of a faculty representative appointed by the Chair of each graduate degree granting department and program within the College of Engineering and Applied Science (normally this faculty member will be the Chair of that department or program’s Graduate Committee), a staff representative appointed by the Chair of each degree granting department and program within the College of Engineering and Applied Science (normally this staff member will be the staff Graduate Coordinator or Advisor of that department or program), and the Assistant Dean for Students. The Graduate Education Council is chaired by the Associate Dean for Education. Voting members include the faculty representatives and the Associate Dean for Education.

DISCUSSION TOPICS (BOLD=COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS)

Graduate Education Committee (#1 Priority Recommendation)

- Although not specifically listed in the charge to the committee, the committee recommends that the GEC be “revitalized.” The Associate Dean for Research should be added as a voting member. Administrative work, such as reviews and approvals of courses, should be conducting outside of the meetings via electronic review and approval. Stronger staff support is warranted to allow the GEC members to focus on strategic topics. The GEC faculty members should be very engaged in strategic growth in graduate students (quality and quantity) and provide the oversight/guidance in the creation of new degree programs and certificates. The GEC should also oversee the initiatives listed below. This action is already underway. Diane Sieber and Kurt Maute are working together on this effort. A mid-year “follow up” (January, 2013) to get an update on the new GEC is recommended.

Status: The GEC has been revitalized. All departments have active representation. Course review and approval is now an online web-based process.
Fellowships

- The departmental nomination processes for Dean’s Fellowships varies widely. Some departments have a review of nominees and select the top students; some departments allocate nomination “slots” by research area, with no departmental review.
- The tracking of fellowships also varies widely. AES was able to provide detailed historic data on their departmental fellowships. CS has no departmental fellowships. The other departments could not provide data for BRC review.
- CU Foundation data are not accurate. For example, the Balsells Fellowships are not identified as graduate student fellowships in the CU Foundation data base. Have been unable to get “scrubbed” data from the Foundation to date.
- **The Assistant Dean for Administration should continue to develop an accurate list of fellowships, funding, and recipients.**
- **The GEC should evaluate developing college criteria for the selection of Dean’s Fellowships (ex.: targeted to key growth areas, develop interdisciplinary areas, etc.).**

Status:

- **The Assistant Dean is working on an accurate list of fellowship endowments/gifts, however this task is more arduous than anticipated because CUF records do not easily identify fund agreements that can be used for multiple purposes (ex., a fund that can be used for either fellowships or scholarships is coded as a scholarship fund) and there has not been uniform tracking of such endowments/gifts by the departments and programs.**
- **The GEC is tackling the nomination process for Dean’s Fellowships; the process is on the 2/26 agenda.**

Recruiting and Admissions Best Practices

- Wide variance in % applicants enrolled (low: 4.5%, high: 20.9%) and admits enrolled (low: 21%, high 87%), implying the review/selection processes vary widely.
- Most departments are not using the application fee waivers to target desired students.
- Mean GPA of new graduate students range from 3.9 to 3.53. Except for ChBE, where the mean GPA has increased from 3.67 in 2009 to 3.9 in 2011, the mean GPA over the past 3 years has remained basically the same.
- The committee members have observed that students applying to graduate schools make significant use of departmental web sites to explore research opportunities. In addition, funding agencies are also making significant use of web sites to assess ongoing research. Our department and faculty web sites vary widely in the amount, accuracy, and ease of finding information. The committee agreed that a “good” web site provides a description of the research understandable by a person with a BS degree in science or engineering and describes projects that resonate with people who work in that research area. With the advent of the new campus web development tools, the time is ripe to tackle faculty web sites. **The Associate Dean for Research and the College Communications Team should develop templates/guidelines for faculty web sites and develop a “pool” of web developers who can work with the faculty to create and maintain the web sites. (This was the #2 top priority recommendation.)**
- **Departments should use application fee waivers as a tool for recruiting targeted students.**
- There is a large amount of data collected on graduate students who declined admissions, but the committee could not identify any use of the data to shape recruiting/admissions process.
The GEC should launch a sub-committee to look at the data collected and figure out next steps (ex.: set goals for key metrics, streamlining the amount of data collected).

- The committee members agreed that each department should continue to run its own recruiting visit and develop its own improvement plan (ex., better faculty availability during the visit day(s)). The visit programs and improvement plans should be shared across departments.
- The committee recommends that the value of, and logistics for, conducting a special visit program for top and/or key interdisciplinary research areas be evaluated. Key faculty would need to be engaged in this visit and Centers and Institutes should also participate. This action item will be under the purview of the GEC.

**Status:**

- *Terry Mayes is leading the metrics review and will report to the GEC.*
- *The GEC does not include recruiting visits in their charter, so the question of additional/special visit program is returned to the chairs. Do the departments want to initiate a college-wide special visit program for top students and/or interdisciplinary research areas? Would the value of such a program warrant the cost (travel logistics, event planning, lining up key faculty)?*
- *The GEC has had significant discussion regarding international recruiting and the need for the college to coordinate strategic recruiting trips by faculty to international locations, primarily Latin & South America (Brazil, Chile, Mexico, Argentina).*

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**New and/or Coordinated Programs, Courses, or Certificates**

- There was agreement that there should be stronger sharing of courses across the departments, but the committee did not have time to delve into this topic in any detail.
- We need to recognize the different structures and mission of the graduate programs, in particular the existence/absence of a MS program. The application process makes it difficult separate "true" PhD students from "MS-only students", because students often do not know or understand the difference between the PhD and MS tracks. The committee did not have the time to delve into this topic, and whether it has a positive, neutral, or negative impact.
- There is a natural tension between MS and PhD programs. MS students want a focused, “get it done” course plan, while PhD students are best served with more freedom and the opportunity to study/work on interdisciplinary topics. There was insufficient time to reach a recommendation on decreasing or increasing MS programs, or the creation of new certificates.

**Status:**

*The new professional degree/certificate “seed funding” from the Graduate School could be very useful. Are any departments considering new certificates and/or professional degrees?*