**Minutes from Graduate College Council (GCC) meeting on April 10, 2023**

Meeting called to order 3:30 PM

Agenda Modified by approval vote. Original item 2 regarding upcoming election with request for member support changed to status of next years Graduate College Council.

Minutes approved.

Paul Laux, Delight Morehead, Lou Rossi, Jeff Buler, Mary Martin, Elise Corbin, Mark Blenner, Francis Kwansa, Rebecca Davis, James Korman, Silyan Wang, Federica Bianco, Constantin Bacuta, Heather Justison, Bill Repetto, Kelli Kerbawy, Nigel Caplan, Ryan Zurakowski, Thanduanlung Kamei, Marlina Kloepfer, Michael Michaud, Myae Han, Carolina Williams, Suprawee Tepsuporn, Shannon Robson, LaRuth McAfee, Ramona Nieunuebel, Aviva Heyn, Samantha Alkridge, Eva Alfoldi, Jill Higginson, Lars Gundlach, Greg Kane, Jesus Botello, Mary Anne Purciello, Barbara Settles, Danilo Yanich, Deb Jaisi

Paul Laux: College contacts have made in March for election of new GCC members.

Status:

COE: Wesley Jordan, sending out to elections head (Doug Butrey has cycled off)

CEOE: Katherine Billups and Trace DeLiberty (on TLs email recently, not responded)

CANR: Tanya Gressley (process believed to be underway)

CAS: John Morgan (process believed to be underway)

LERNER: Rick Andrews (process believed to be underway)

CHS: Buz Swanik (not responded yet, gentle reminder sent, is there another contact that is better?)

BIDEN: Amy Schwartz (first response, routing underway I think)

CEHD: Completed their elections

If you note that I do not have the correct contact, let me know if I should reach out to someone else or if you another way of making contact. We would like to have the new council in place in less than 6 weeks.

EC June meeting for old and new council hand off to be determined at next executive committee meeting.

Dean Lou Rossi’s Report:

* Admissions: Update year over year comparisons: Approaching April 15 deadline for those received funded offers.
  + Most numbers of matriculating students are up.
  + Doctoral applications, accepts and matriculations are down. If broken out by college…down across the board with a couple of very small exceptions.
    - Health sciences is slightly up, but their numbers are accreditation limited so capped.
    - Arts and Sciences/Engineering had fewer students, and assumed to be a conscious decision? New yield strategy? Done in response to funding? Funding commitment in out years?
  + Masters students are generally not funding limited, and we’ve admitted a lot more and more are interested in coming
* Stipends: Peers and Decliners competition institutions (institutions where a student receives an offer from UD and the other institiution then chooses other institution).
  + BU and UMD have made big moves in stipends (BU increased by 7.6% to $28,690 for 9 month contract; UMD increased 13.5% to $25,266 for 9 months)
  + UD is at the bottom of the list even with 3% increase to $22,660 for 9 months
  + Peen State, Georgia Tech, Ohio State have not announced changes.
  + Temple is not a top 10 decliner this year, but has similarly ranked graduate programs, increased 29% to 25K for 9 months. It is not much more expensive to live in Philadelphia. Temple predicted to be a top decline next because of recent Union action.
  + Perspective: not just an annual trend but multi-year trend, e.g., UMD were very behind the times 3 yrs ago and they have been moving aggressively year after year; BU mult-year; Temple phenomenal jump due to strike action damaging reputation
  + UD motions modest over the last 3 years.
    - It is not just our minimum, the median is pretty close to the minimum for our stipend. A lot of our students live at the minimum
  + Vision: Where we need to be by fall 2025 if going to be top doctoral granting institution
    - All programs achieve a $27k min 9 month stipend (12 mo. Equivalent: $36K vs 2023 NSF GSRF $37k)
      * Top programs pegging their stipend around the NSF standard so we need to get close to it.
      * Need to move there and may mean fewer doctoral students in some programs to get there… fewer, but stronger and better.
      * Means we have to move more students on to summer funding, which we have made steady progress
        + Goal at 75%
      * Means doctoral programs need to continue to be highly selective and we need to find the resources
        + Need to stop fully funding internally our masters programs, which is not a common practice, however there are pockest of masters students receiving full stipends and tuition to be here.
        + The exceptions is terminal masters. Eg., MFA
      * Effect Sept 1, Grad college competitive fellowships: Grad scholar, doctoral fellowship for excellence, and the frontier award program
        + Increase from university mins. To $24.5k (9 mo), $32,667 (12 mo)
      * Departments with masters programs not making progress toward the elimination of internally funding tuition scholarships for the masters students (not terminal masters) will have last priority for competitive awards
        + Don’t think it fair to have some programs scraping to fund doctoral students while some programs direct resources, internal resources, university resources that are not available to other units.
        + Under discussion to increase tuition off-loaded to grants that would provide revenue for stronger stipends

**Discussion:**

**Kwansa:** Is it the plan to have departments phase out masters degree programs phase them out to provide financial support to grad students?

**Lou:** No. So the plan is if you want to. The plan is to phase out internally funded masters students completely. So, if you have a teaching need, there’s no doctoral student who needs it, you want to offer them a stipend to come teach a course for you…great, go do that. But you don’t have to offer them the tuition that is reserved for graduate students, or if you have a a grant and have a spot for a grad student, great do it! So there’s many forms of financial aid available to masters students, but just not this. Not a full package, a full stipend, a full tuition waiver for being a masters student with us.

**Kwansa:** So let me be clear here. We are facing the tuition part but not the stipend.

**Lou:** That’s right.

**Nigel Caplan:** We have been fighting this for years. The MA Tsall program is an example. This is a degree, even though it is in a college that also offers a PhD, which currently takes all the tuition and does not allocate any tuition scholarships to us. As a result, we basically have not domestic students. It would be a shame to have this avenue completely shut down. It essentially shuts down a domestic program.

**Lou:** The MA Tsall program is a self-pay program, correct?

**Nigel Caplan:** Students pay for it, but we lose students to university that do offer tuition, stipend and teaching assistantships for an identical program so we cannot recruit domestic students. If there is no hope of us being able to give a tuition and stipend package, we will only have international students.

**Lou:** Ok good to know.

**Fedrica Bianco:** It was a comment in chat….rejection doesn’t make us a great place. It’s a consequence, right?

**Lou:** No, no, no. Having a lot of applicants makes this a great place. I agree our goal is not to reject more people.

**Rebecca Davis:** I am in the history department. I think this MA program proposal is a challenge for the humanities where we have very different funding models and our graduates frankly have very different earing prospects. We have a MA program that is extremely popular among people who want to be museum professionals. With a certificate in history and one in museum studies, we recruit the best students interested in doing this because we offer them a fully funded MA. We would not be able to recruit those students without funding, and we win over other more prestigious institutions and have truly stellar MA students because we offer them funding. So in a way, it is sort of a terminal MA in that they are not planning to be in academics. They are planning to work at historical societies and foundations and museums. So I really worry about it and thery’re going to earn $35K most likely. If they are lucky to get a job at a museum, so their ability to pay back loans is prohibitive if they’re taking on debt as grad students. My concern is that if we didn’t fund the MA, we would lose 50 students in our graduate program.

**Lou:** Thanks. I hear you.

**William Repetto:** Thank you for your commitment to this Lou. Grad students and the GSG have been asking for stipends around these numbers for 2-3 years so really appreciate the effort.

Lou: No trouble, I appreciate it Bill.

**Maria Anne Purciello:** Does that mean you are separating out t uition from stipend in the future, whereas now you can’t offer a stipend without tuition?

**Lou:** That’s correct. We’ve been transitioning that for at least the last year. It is not an uncommon practice in a couple of colleges. What we’ve done is made it possible university-wide. For doctoral students, by policy and essential our value right for doctoral students. If you receive a stipend, you receive tuition scholarship for doctoral programs. For masters students it can very.

**Maria Anne Purciello:** So you can make stipend no tuition awards, no stipend with tuition or both together at the masters level.

**Lou:** Correct and it is in effect, e.g., international students with stipend provided, we share costs offering tuition. Other programs offer a stipend to come teach, but it doesn’t include the tuition scholarship.

**Maria Anne Purciello:** So we don’t need external funding, it’s just a separate category of offer.

**Nigel Caplan:** I hope there will be a process whereby programs can make a case for an exemption from the new rule by demonstrating that their qualification is considered a terminal degree in their professional field.

**Lou:** I am listening. There will be follow conversations with the Deans about where we would like to see progress. The big pictures is our stipends are not where they need to be for our doctoral students. What we do in some of our graduate programs is not normal with the funding of masters students with a full package. With the change, I think we can get our doctoral stipends up to where the need to be. The books might not completely balance, but it is a substantial sum, and yes, I’m willing to listen to people who contend that their degree is terminal. We will take about 100 students in the $22k range and shift them to the $22.5k range and have a substantial effect on the median.

**Jeff Buler:** For external grants, what is the rationale for increasing the partial tuition request from 40%?

**Lou:** The rational for an increase in contributions from the sponsor is the free resources to provide stronger stipends and so forth.

**Jeff Buler:** Do you also expect that we need to increase our stipend request from the sponsor:

**Lou:** Yes if the minimum increases 3%, and you do not have to peg your grant to the minimum.

* **Housing:**

I want to thank Student Life and the Real Estate Office. They have drafted a comprehensive housing plan that they think they can implement for Fall 2023. The plan is in internal review, but I anticipate being able to contact international students and students with dependents that there is an option for them here at UD.

* **Parental leave policy:**

GSG requested to move from 6 to 8 weeks paid leave as grad student parental accommodation. Additionally there was some discussion about rooms for nursing and other things, which have already been addressed with the office of Institutional Equity.

* + Benchmark: 6-8 wks is the norm with a few offering 10-12 wks. UD staff receive 8 wks.
  + Grad college can afford 8wks and is happy to just do this Sept. 1. Faculty input is important so if you want a motion and a vote we can do that.

**Paul Laux:** It is within the Dean’s purview to go ahead without faculty vote. If a vote is desired, it would have to come back next meeting as new business.

**Carolyn Williams:** No vote necessary.

**Graduate College Council Diversity Committee:**

**Paul Laux:** For reboot of the DEI committee, Lizzie Naylor is pulling people together with the first DEI committee last month. Report forthcoming in May.

**Interdisciplinary Curriculum Committee:**

**Mary Martin:** Two new graduate certificates housed in the Grad College (Computing and data science for soft materials, and Leadership and social innovation) were unanimously approved by the Grad Studies Committee and move forward to the Senate for final approval at either the April or May agenda.

**Paul Laux:** Need ne members for the committee for next year. If involved with an interdisciplinary program, please consider joining the group or refer someone who can. Council membership is not needed.

**Student Life Committee:**

**Ryan Zurakowski:**

In consultation with external people, a report was genterated identifying 5 areas of changes that should be made in the future. Shared with Paul and Lou for possibly sharing more broadly.

Paul Laux: Will send out the report as a basis of discussion next time.

**Graduate Student Funding Working Committee:**

Joe unavailable for report

**Faculty Graduate Student Relations Working Group Report:**

**Paul Laux**: Faculty, some administrative leaders and grad student leaders have meeting since January to talk about gaps in the way UD addresses workplace type difficulties between faculty and grad students, lab leaders and grad students, etc, and if the Council can assist. Broad categories include the Bill of Rights and specific items include how to get information into the system to determine if someone has a problem that needs to be addressed.

* Would like to bring back something to the council that is actionable

Lou: A lot of the pieces are present and just need to be assembled in a different way.

Paul: We are pointedly not saying what the pieces are now and wanting a the group to come to a single opinion for discussion and we will get back to you.

**Graduate Student Council**

**Michael Michoud:** The Student Caucus is continuing to work on the new student housing information from various committees to assemble the information. The COE now has a Engineering Graduate Student Association advocating for students within the college. We are working with the GSG to make sure that we have representatives for each college for next year to keep the working group going. We also want to thank everyone for the work they have been doing to address stipend and housing pressures and continue to make them a priority for the institution.

* GSG will meet next week and vote on legislation covering graduate student housing priorities, disabilities support for graduates students, sustainability and all gender bathrooms.

**Ombudsperson**

**Paul:** Joanne Miller – New business item of possible GCC endorsement of establishing an Ombuds person. The Executive Committee is responsible for deciding what comes to the GCC and is positive, but decided against appointing a working group, i.e., a resolution directly on today’s agenda.

* Instead the GCEC would like a discussion because there is already a working group at the University headed up by Amy Hagstgrom (past Faculty Senate President) and did not want to slow or detract the process.
  + Want to avoid something that leads to a vote which may not matter much.
  + May be useful to help administration know what unfilled functions an Ombuds person might accomplish and what such person would reflect on
    - What are the gaps in UD function, oversight, communication, etc regarding grad students, post-docs, and the GC that an ombusdsperson might be expected to address?
    - What is preventing those gaps from being effectively filled by excising employees?
    - What would an ombuds person do (actions, rolls) to fill the gaps?

**Discussion:**

**Ryan Zurakowski:** The students that are having grievances with advisors are hesitant to bring it up with the chairs of the dept, because they feel chairs are conflicted and people they are willing to speak with are generally people with no authority to protect the students or enforce any sort of resolution. When trying to enforce compliance with policies regarding treatment of grad student employees, there is a lac of a non-conflicted office with the authority to protect the students and enforce compliance.

**Willian Repetto:** Other universities have fleshed out the ombuds person’s office with what they call conflict resolution specialists who do have the authority to resolve conflict and ensure that policy and practice over whatever the case is. The ombuds person is supposed to conduct the conversation that is level headed and fair, but there should be conflict resolution specialists and I believe that is a gap right now.

**Paul:** The GCEC would like to know what things are particularly germane to grad students and post-docs that might not be thought of by people who were thinking about undergraduates and employees in there ombuds person discussions.

**Suprawee Tepsupoorn:** What I am hearing is we need an authority who can enforce policy and on the flip side, what ombuds persons do is to provide coaching and mentoring to the grad student or the faculty member to navigate conflict. I’m hearing 2 things, an authority figure who can enforce change and be influential beyond being a support person and maybe help students self-advocate in situations in which they have limited capacity in this unequal power dynamic with the faculty advisor; also that faculty member may share with another faculty member who may not be providing neutral ground or ability to have such conversations because they have a relationship with that faculty member.

**Paul Laux:** Perhaps we need to bring this topic back next time so we can think about it or just by voting a preference.

**Rebecca Davis:** We should have a resolution to vote on. The issue is self obvious and why grad students and faculty should have an ombuds person. I’ve been advocating for this for 12 years. When you have such disparities of power between grad students and their advisors, where money, safety, health, progress and well being are involved, you should absolutely have a neutral party who can help mediate disputes and help people make progress within their programs.

**Paul:** The GCEC wanted some graduate student focused reasoning, but that’s not to argue against the resolution idea.

**Caroline Williams:** I think it obvious we need this ombuds position. Moving from the idea that most faculty agree on an ombuds person, let’s solidify that the GCC thinks this needs to be done to add pressure to the powers that be that can make this happen.

**Paul:** The GCEC did not develop a resolution but came up with the idea of this discussion with you. I think what I am hearing from you is you like to see a resolution and we can do that. It might be a very short resolution.

**Barbara Settles**: We should move on it and take a stand on it because I believe there are other groups taking action to say where they stand.

**Paul:** The executive committee will work on a resolution for the next meeting. It might be short and pointed, i.e., expressing whether this group recommends that there be such a position, but might not say much more than that. I am sensing there is more agreement rather than fearful disagreement.

**Mark Blenner:** I fully support the overall idea. It may be more useful to have a little more flesh on the resolution, be logic based, rather than being something that is long overdue and we should definitely do it. I think it would be helpful to use it as a model for getting other groups on campus to put support behind it in a formal way and having the logic already presented.

**Paul:** I think you see why the GCEC came back to you in this way, i.e., whether we vote yes or no, may not be a big influence. If we can give some flesh on it as you discussed, that could be useful. I don’t know the GCEC has that deep-seated reasoning to express to you.

**William Repetto:** I think a lot of the reasoning comes from the previous letters endorsed by faculty senate and other groups including Rebecca Davis for the one in 2013 as well as similar reasoning by the 2018 committee. So the case is built up, but there may be new ways of expressing it.

**Paul**: GCEC is concerned that if we just say we are in favor of all the things other groups are in favor of, that might not change much, but if we can say something about graduate students and post-docs, maybe that helps administration see reasoning.

**Caroline Williams:** Are you basically looking for graduate student testimonials?

**Paul:** Are there additional reasonings that this group might want to put forward to help the administration understand what gaps might be filled by this position? What I think I am hearing is some value with a vote just to have a vote. That can happen. I’m not pushing against that.

**Caroline Williams:** If you are looking for graduate student input to the resolution, perhaps as a student caucus can dig into it. Other student caucuses approach has been let’s vote on this. The GSG has already adopted, which is obviously an entire body of graduate students whose voices were in the resolution.

**Paul:** I feel like we should move forward. I am hearing this and you know many of the Ex. Comm. Members are here and hearing it as well. I, at least, will go back to the GCEC to say there is a taste for a short and sweet resolution that Bill might lean on and call the reasoning of other bodies for affirmation.

**Ryan Zurakowski:** You have the whole letter Paul. This was just language for a resolution that explained our reasoning. If you want horror stories to back it up, reach out to people like Jill Higginson and some other people. Ruth mentioned her office had stories as well. They can hear some pretty egregious things that happen to graduate students that almost uniformly are not resolved because of the fact that it is not clear who has the authority to resolve them and the students don’t feel safe moving forward with it.

**Paul:** Thank you for clarifying that was the language from that point and could be a basis for what comes, actually that might be just a great process for the Grad College Council. If what comes from the working group then feeds to council is a resolution, that seems healthy organizationally. We will go back and deal with it and be back to you in May… it sounds like a resolution. I do want to thank the Ex. Comm for their thoughtful approach to Joanne’s item, you bring it to the floor and the group was imaginatively trying a slightly different tact. I think we also hear the reaction.

**Paul:** Is there any new business? Anything having to do with the Dean’s intention that was expressed regarding parental leave? It doesn’t seem controversial and if you folks would like it to be on record.

Meeting adjourned 5:02 pm.