

MINUTES
GRADUATE COUNCIL
SEPTEMBER 21, 1995

MEMBERS PRESENT: Dr. Michael Weigold (representative for Dr. Bill Chamberlin), Dr. Nicolae Cristescu, Dr. David A. Jones, Dr. Pauline Lawrence, Dr. Scotty Powers, Dr. Patricia Ashton, Dr. Karen A. Bjorndal, Dr. Patricia Craddock, Dr. Anita Spring, Ms. Ruth Troccoli, Dr. Karen A. Holbrook

MEMBERS ABSENT: Dr. Bill Chamberlin, Dr. Rachel Shireman, Dr. Susan Frost, Dr. Richard Yost

GUESTS PRESENT: Dr. Jean Casagrande, Ms. Kathy Kidder, Dr. Jack Fry, Dr. David Brown, Dr. David Ling

STAFF PRESENT: Dr. Richard J. Lutz, Ms. Dorothy Long, Ms. Helen Martin, Ms. Phyl Schmidt, Ms. Julie Shih, Ms. Coralu Roessner

STAFF ABSENT: Ms. Bernice Thornton

The Graduate Council meeting was called to order by Dr. Karen A. Holbrook at 1 p.m.

ACTION ITEMS

1. There were minor changes to the minutes of May 23, 1995. Under Action Item #6, the term "DSR Board" should be changed to "ORTGE Board" and at the end of sentence six it should read "the representative." The minutes were then approved as corrected. [It was later determined that the Board is still officially DSR and not ORTGE.]
2. A motion was made that the Department of Finance, Insurance and Real Estate offer a non-thesis option M.A. degree program in real estate that would incorporate the current M.A. non-thesis degree program in the appraisal area. It was noted that the 4000-level REE course in the proposal is to be converted to a 5000-level course and that the 4000-level URP course will become a 6000-level course. The Graduate Council unanimously approved this motion.
3. Dr. Jean Casagrande and Ms. Kathy Kidder presented a request for the Graduate Council to set a policy on the new Test of Spoken English (TSE) passing scores for Teaching Assistants so the Graduate School can apply appropriate and fair standards to international students assigned to teaching responsibilities. The following is the motion considered by the Council:

"Before being appointed, instructors at UF must demonstrate, either by proof of birth and residence in an English-speaking country or by submission of a TSE or SPEAK score that they are sufficiently fluent in English.

Of those who are tested with TSE or SPEAK, those who score a 55 or above will be allowed directly to [to teach in] the classroom, laboratory, or other appropriate instructional activity; those who score 45 or 50 will be allowed to teach on the condition that they enroll concurrently in ENS 4502, a course designed to help their interpersonal and public speaking communication skills; those who fail to score 45 points may not be appointed to teach. To be able to raise their score on the TSE they are advised to take ENS 4501, a course to improve general oral language skills. They must subsequently submit a TSE or SPEAK score of 45 or higher to be appointed to teach, and they fall under the rubric outlined above."

The Graduate Council unanimously passed the request as amended (replacing underlined words with those in brackets). The new scoring will be implemented immediately. However, the old test will be administered locally for now because the new one is unavailable. Since the new test is in use in other areas, mixed scoring will exist for several months. The new test will be administered locally as of next summer. This will be an Exchange item.

4. Dr. Richard Lutz presented a request to make a change in the fellowship/graduate assistant policy. The policy will read as follows:

"A student holding a full fellowship also may hold up to a .25-FTE assistantship, provided that the assistantship is directly related to his/her academic program [and does not deviate from the terms of the fellowship]. The student must be in good academic standing, maintain at least a 3.0 GPA, and [normally must] enroll for a minimum of 12 hours per semester. Any exceptions must be approved by the Graduate School."

The rationale for the change is that .25-FTE assistant ships are approved routinely and are not really an exception that requires a petition.

The new policy was unanimously approved as amended by the material enclosed in the brackets.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

1. There was a discussion regarding correspondence courses at the graduate level initiated by a request from the Division of Continuing Education (DOCE). The conceptual difference between correspondence and distance education was discussed. The interactive component seems to be a cutting point. Many seminar courses couldn't work even via interactive media, and student participation is critical to graduate course work, but the use of Chat mode on internet could simulate it. A question arose as to how the Graduate

School could identify DOCE vs the “regular” on-campus courses vs. correspondence courses. Any graduate-level course would have to be approved by the Graduate Curriculum Committee. Also, the student needs to be accepted by an academic department. There would have to be confirmation from the library regarding availability of research materials. In general, the Council was much more favorably predisposed to distance education via electronic media than traditional correspondence work through the mail. A need was expressed for additional information on what departments are doing already.

2. Dr. Jack Fry spoke on behalf of Dr. Rachel Shireman regarding the final examination for non-thesis masters students. She perceives an unfairness in the exam structure between thesis and non-thesis students. It was noted that a similar situation exists in English between continuing MA students and terminal MA students. Helen Martin clarified that the Graduate Catalog specifies only a written exam--not an oral--for non thesis MA students. Journalism, for instance, uses only a written exam. However, the Master of Agriculture requires both written and oral exams. Although the written exam may seem redundant when a lot of graded course work and projects have been undertaken by the students, it is required in lieu of a formal thesis. And, while the oral portion may seem onerous, some students may find the oral portion desirable because it allows the student to defend his/her written answers.

Dr. Lutz will speak with Dr. Shireman directly about the requirement.

3. Julie Shih presented the results of a study of the graduation requirements at other universities. UF requires a minimum of 30 credits for a master’s degree and 90 for a Ph.D. The issue to be addressed was whether to relax those requirements. Some other universities have similar requirements, while others have none at all. One opinion is that we need to keep the requirements or run the risk of losing funding (due to fewer thesis/dissertation credit hours), but to allow for exceptions. However, granting a single exception may be a “slippery slope” and lead to a rash of petitions. The Council noted that the real problem is the lack of full funding for tuition payments. Most students can receive only 9 hours of tuition payment per semester; if they were allowed to receive more, registering for sufficient hours to meet the requirement would no longer be an issue.

It was noted that the requirement may stem from a desire to assure that students have been immersed in a community of scholars for a sufficient period of time. However, the fact that a student may count off-campus DOCE courses as fulfilling his/her period of concentrated study runs counter to that philosophy.

If any change were to be made in the requirement, it would fall on the departments to develop their own minimum standards, a process that will require some lead time.

This led to a more general discussion of the nature of graduate education. It was felt that the Council’s deliberations were being shaped by financial concerns and credit-hour requirements, rather than by a coherent philosophy of graduate education. What are UF’s expectations regarding graduate students and their progress toward a degree. The Graduate Catalog (pg.

23-24) states, “Doctoral study consists of the independent mastery of a field of knowledge and the successful pursuit of research ... general requirement is ... that it should include an appropriate number of credit hours of doctoral research” (emphasis added). This provides little guidance with respect to the credit-hour requirement.

Similarly, the Mission and Vision statements produced by the strategic planning committee are not specific enough to provide guidance on this issue.

Ultimately, the Council decided that exceptions are not a good course of action. Rather, a change in policy should be researched thoroughly, including such issues as time-to-degree.

In the meantime, it is the responsibility of departments to counsel their students as to the current graduation requirements and ensure that they meet them.

A subcommittee will be formed to consider the issue further.

4. There was a discussion of the issue of spouses serving together on students’ supervisory committees. In a phone conversation prior to the meeting Dr. Hemp said that while it would not technically be a violation of the nepotism law, it is desirable to avoid having spouses on the same committee due to the appearance of conflict of interest. It was noted by several members of the Council that such situations often cannot be avoided in smaller departments. Several members of the Graduate Council have been a part of a spousal situation on supervisory committees and have had no problems. The key point is that the student chooses his/her own supervisory committee and should be free to select whomever s/he wishes. The chair should not suggest or insist on a spouse or any other person. The student should be informed of potential relationships between faculty (even hostile relationships) and be allowed to make an informed choice.

Any policy prohibiting spouses from serving on the same supervisory committee would discriminate against married couples, which could create a bigger problem. Why single out married couples when other “close” relationships exist among faculty?

INFORMATION ITEMS

1. There was a degree name change from Agricultural Engineering to Agricultural and Biological Engineering.
2. There was a degree name change from Electrical Engineering to Electrical and Computer Engineering.
3. Julie Shih reported on the research credit hours taken by master’s and doctoral students. Dan Hanson created a database which contains the 6971, 7979, and 7980 hours accumulated by students who graduated from 1991-92 to 1994-95 with a master’s or doctoral degree. The number of credit hours taken was remarkably stable across the four years studied. With regard to the issue of the University falling below its “corridor” target of thesis/dissertation credit hours, Julie surmises that the BOR bases its estimates on the previous year; this could

be off by a large margin when the base year is an “unusual” year. She believes that the estimate would be more accurate if a 5-year moving average method was used.

The Graduate Council adjourned at 3:08 p.m.