

MINUTES
GRADUATE COUNCIL
MARCH 21, 1996

MEMBERS PRESENT: Dr. Bill Chamberlin, Dr. Nicolae Cristescu, Dr. David Jones, Dr. Pauline Lawrence, Dr. Scott Powers, Dr. Rachel Shireman, Dr. Patricia Ashton, Dr. Patricia Craddock, Dr. Allan Burns, Dr. Richard Yost, Ms. Ruth Troccoli, Dr. Karen Holbrook

MEMBERS ABSENT: Dr. Karen Bjorndal, Dr. Susan Frost

STAFF PRESENT: Dr. Richard Lutz, Ms. Helen Martin, Ms. Julie Shih, Ms. Phyl Schmidt, Ms. Bernice Thornton, Ms. Coral Clements

STAFF ABSENT: Mr. Robert Woods

GUEST PRESENT: Dr. John Kraft, Ms. Laura Sullivan, Ms. Jill Miller, Mr. Clay Scherer, Dr. Jack Fry, Dr. Richard Kilmer

The Graduate Council meeting was called to order at 1:35 p.m. by Dr. Richard Lutz. Dr. Lutz introduced the three students who were running for the Student Council representative position for the Graduate Council. They are Ms. Laura Sullivan, Ms. Jill Miller and Mr. Clay Scherer.

INFORMATION ITEMS:

1. Dean John Kraft informed the Council of a change in the format of the MBA Managers III program. Instead of meeting every Saturday, the classes will be held once a month for 3 or 4 consecutive days. This change will permit the program to draw students from a wider geographic area and is similar to a program at Purdue University.
2. Dean Kraft also presented the Engineering Management outreach program, which is offered jointly by the College of Business Administration and the Department of Industrial and Systems Engineering in the College of Engineering. Previously it has been offered only on campus. Beginning Fall 1996, it will be available in South Florida at UF's Ft. Lauderdale Research and Education Center. Instruction will take place once a month in three-day blocks.
3. Finally, Dean Kraft informed the Council of a new joint degree, the "International Executive MBA Program in Miami." This is an academic partnership with Vanderbilt University that allows UF to enter the South Florida market. It is a Vanderbilt and not a UF degree. The students will be enrolled as Vanderbilt students and will receive only a certificate from UF, similar to a Continuing Education certificate. UF will split the

revenue with Vanderbilt. There are two reasons for this partnership: (1) to access the Miami market which UF cannot do directly and (2) to bring high-quality competition into Florida. Caribbean and Latin American countries will be targeted in addition to South Florida. The Graduate Council did not need to approve this program; it was presented as an example of innovation in graduate education.

The Council continued the discussion after Dean Kraft left. There was some concern about the certificate implying a “stamp of approval” by the Graduate School. The Council would like to see a copy of the certificate to be used by the new program.

4. At the request of the Registrar’s office, the Graduate School made the decision that a student’s GPA will be recomputed after the first Ph.D./Ed.D. degree is earned.

ACTION ITEMS

1. The minutes of the Graduate Council meeting of February 8, 1996, were approved with one correction. Under Action Item I, section 4, paragraph 5, the sentence “The Council was persuaded by Dr. Downie’s arguments in favor of the policy and gave its blessing to it” was deleted, since that was not a consensus position.
2. Dr. Lutz asked for volunteers for the nominating committee to provide a slate of six or more candidates for election to the Graduate Council. The members are Dr. Rachel Shireman (chair), Dr. Scotty Powers, Dr. Susan Frost and Dr. Patricia Craddock.
3. The Council discussed a petition to transfer 12 credits (over the 30 credits that were already transferred from her Ph.D. in Mathematics to her new degree, a Ph.D. in Marketing) on behalf of Ms. Sonja Radas, allowing her to finish her second Ph.D. during summer 1996.

The following motion was made:

"The Council reaffirms the policy of the 30-hour rule; it is extremely important to protect the integrity of the degree. Notwithstanding that policy, the present instance has sufficient justification to grant an exception to that policy."

In Ms. Radas’ case, (1) she has earned a total of 180 graduate credits (the equivalent of two Ph.D. degrees); (2) all her graduate course work has been completed at the University of Florida; (3) the twelve transfer credits were not required as part of her first Ph.D.; (4) the twelve transfer credits were directly related to her second Ph.D.; and (5) her academic record is superior.

The motion was approved with 10 for and 1 opposed.

The Council noted the need to revisit the issue of credit transfer from previous PhD degrees, as well as between departments within the University. Neither of these instances is addressed explicitly in the Graduate Catalog.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

1. There was a lively discussion of the nature of the Ph.D. degree at the University of Florida. There was an overriding concern over standards. We all have internal standards, but no agreed-upon external standards exist for dissertation research.

The problem can be solved by placing more responsibility on the supervisory committee. Ph.D. defenses are not held to a uniformly high standard across campus. The supervisory committees need to give a more careful and thorough critique, and final defenses should be more penetrating and analytical. The quality of the performance of the supervisory committee needs to be assessed. On the other hand, some Council members argued, the defense can be largely a ceremonial event. The hard work has been done prior to the defense. Because of the diversity of approaches across campus, recommendations and guidelines are desirable, but not rules and regulations. There is no need for micromanagement by the Graduate School.

It was suggested that each department/college develop procedures to certify each thesis/dissertation, essentially asking the units to report on quality control. Helen Martin pointed out that each committee member signing a thesis or dissertation is endorsing the following statement:

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis (dissertation) for the degree of . . .

Adding another report or form to be completed does not appear to address the problem. It was suggested that colleges ensure that all students are informed of their rights and responsibilities associated with dissertation research as a mechanism for promoting more uniformity in the quality of dissertations.

There was some concern that the original problem had not been addressed, i.e., the relationship between grant-funded research and a student's own independent research. It was suggested that guidelines for Principal Investigators supervising PhD students be developed.

Some final comments included the fact that at least one department uses external peer review of dissertation research prior to the execution of the research. This led to the idea of sharing more information across colleges about "best practices" for ensuring dissertation quality.

The Council suggested that Dr. Holbrook and Dr. Lutz mention these concerns to the deans.

2. A last minute addition to the Discussion Items was the tentative agenda for the Spring 1996 meeting of the Graduate Faculty.

The Council felt the agenda needed the following improvements:

1. More exciting items
2. More specificity in the items
3. Faculty need to know these are urgent matters.

Under "Positives," the Council suggested another item: "Increased diversity of students and faculty."

Under "Negatives," the Council suggested adding "The need for independent dissertation research" (i.e., the previous discussion item).

Under "Discussion Items," number 2 states "Growth in graduate enrollment." The Council suggested adding, "Does every discipline need growth?"

Adjournment at 3:31 p.m.