Dr. George Newkome called the meeting to order at 3:06 p.m.

Present: Heather Blake, NJ Brown, Karen Caldwell, Michael Giannone, Yvonne Gillette, Terry Hallett, Robert Kent, Cheryl Kern-Simirenko, Jesse Mann, Timothy O’Neil, Wolfgang Pelz, James Rogers, Kathleen Ross-Alaolmolki, Mark Tausig, Dudley Turner, Susan Witt, and Baomei Zhao

Absent with Notice: Steven Ash, Ray Gehani, Julia Spiker, and Evonn Welton

1. Dr. James Rogers moved to approve the minutes of the 2005 Graduate Faculty meeting. Dr. N.J. Brown seconded the motion; the minutes were approved.

2. Reports

Dr. Erol Sancaktar, Vice Chair of Graduate Council, was unable to attend. Heather Blake provided the report on his behalf. A copy of the report is attached.

Ms. Cheryl Kern-Simirenko, Dean of University Libraries, provided a report to those graduate faculty members present. An outline of her report is attached.

- Electronic article delivery from local collections has been time saving
- Collection enhancement has resulted from the addition of e-journals, two major e-book collections, and the addition of collections in Nursing and Allied Health
- LibQual+ and IMLIS are two surveys undertaken to gather necessary data. LibQual+ is a user expectation survey used to assess service quality, and IMLIS is a critical incident survey used for the analysis of single article use.
- Learning Commons in Bierce Library are in the in preliminary stages. The first floor of Bierce Library will be transformed into a learning center. Full establishment of the Learning Commons will take approximately two years.

Mr. Michael Giannone, Information Technology Services, provided report on behalf of Mr. Jim Sage, Vice President for Information Technology. A copy of his report is attached.

Mr. Jesse Mann, President of Graduate Student Government, provided a report to the graduate faculty. A copy of his report is attached.

Dr. George Newkome, Vice President for Research and Dean of the Graduate School, provided a report to the graduate faculty.
Dr. Mark Tausig, Associate Dean of the Graduate School, has made great efforts in keeping the Graduate School running smoothly. Graduate School has implemented online processes. Students now apply entirely online as well submit theses and dissertations electronically. Integrative Bioscience Ph.D. program will go before RACGS (Regents Advisory Committee on Graduate Study) on April 28. A proposal to increase graduate assistant stipends has been made. The goal is to make stipends equitable to those at the surrounding institutions.

Dr. Newkome asked Dr. Tausig to make a few comments on what is happening in the Graduate School.

- Apply Yourself, the online application system, is in place and by fall 100% of the applications received should be submitted electronically.
- Pending approval from the Graduate Council, the Graduate School will completely eliminate hard copy submission of theses and dissertations.
- Began sending “Grad News” to all graduate faculty and graduate students each semester. Information is passed on as it is received.
- Industrial/Community assistantship program has done fairly well. Graduate students are working in industry when companies commit to long-term support of these students.
- Department self-studies are due soon for the program reviews. Doctoral program reviews are required once every eight years.
- Conference on Undergraduate and Graduate Research has taken place the past two years. Thus far, each conference has been well-received. Currently there is discussion about switching the conference date to the spring semester rather than holding it in the fall.

3. Action Items Referred from Graduate Council

   There were no action items referred from Graduate Council.

4. Old Business

   There was no old business for discussion.

5. New Business

   There was no new business for discussion.

The meeting adjourned at 4:29 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Heather A. Blake
Graduate School
Since the beginning of the academic year, the Graduate Council has had seven meetings.

- The Curriculum Committee, chaired by Dr. Terry Hallett, has reviewed, approved, and recommended 195 curriculum proposals to Graduate Council so far this year. Graduate Council approved all 195 proposals as recommended by the Committee.

- The Graduate Faculty Membership Committee, chaired by Dr. Okechukwu Ugweje has reviewed, approved, and recommended 78 applications for graduate faculty membership to Graduate Council so far this year. Graduate Council approved all 78 applications as recommended by the Committee.

- The Student Policy Committee, chaired by Dr. Brian Bagatto, reviewed the Guidelines for Preparing a Thesis or Dissertation and proposed revisions to this document, which contained outdated verbiage. The revisions brought the content to date, including reference to electronic thesis and dissertation submission that has been put in to place. Graduate Council approved the revisions as recommended by the committee.

The Student Policy Committee also examined responses to a questionnaire on special non-degree admission that was sent to all department chairs. Most departments did not have any problem with this admission classification.

At the present time, the Student Policy Committee is reviewing the Student Code of Conduct to determine if it should be amended in ways that might make it more appropriate for dealing with matters related to graduate students.

- Graduate Council approved recommendations from the English Language Institute on the Next Generation TOEFL, called iBT. This is an internet-based test, which was approved by Graduate Council as follows:

  The University of Akron accepts a minimum total score of 79 (out of 120) as the admission standard for graduate students who use English as their second language.

  The University of Akron accepts a score of 23 on the speaking section of the iBT for prospective international teaching assistants to demonstrate their speaking proficiency.

  ELI monitors the reliability of these scores to predict student readiness for graduate studies and teaching duties.

  The University of Akron continues to accept previously established minimum scores for the computer-based TOEFL, the paper-based TOEFL, and the TSE, for as long as those tests are administered and the scores reported by ETS.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Erol Sancaktar, Professor
College of Polymer Science and Polymer Engineering
Vice Chair, Graduate Council
Graduate Faculty Meeting

University Libraries
Dean Cheryl Kern-Simirenko
4/19/2006

I. Electronic article delivery from local collections

II. Collection enhancement

III. LibQual+ and IMLIS surveys

IV. Learning Commons in Bierce
VP & CIO, Jim Sage, joined the University on December 1, 2005.

- Create ITS Mission, Vision, Values and Beliefs Statements.
- Create and Implement Appropriate Level of ITS Governance and Project Management.
- Create Objectives, Strategies and Metrics that Support and Enable the Academic Plan.
- Continue Working Closely with Academic Side to Understand Issues and Challenges so We can Recommend Appropriate Technology.
- Identify Ways to Maximize the Return for all Our Investments.

**Transition Our Mindset**

**From:**
- Technology Focus
- Administrative Emphasis
- Cost Control
- Operational Urgency

**To:**
- Holistic University Solutions Focus
- Administrative and Academic Balance
- Wise Investment
- More Strategic Implementations

**Improve ITS Effectiveness by:**

- Creating Objectives and Strategies Tied to Academic Plan.
- Standardizing Work Requests, Prioritization, Project management processes.
- Implementing Appropriate Metrics to Measure Effectiveness and Improvement.

**Student Portal (ZipLine) Improvement**

A student portal focus forum was held on February 23rd. During the forum, students requested three major changes.

1. Keep the portal online 24/7. Today the portal is online 17 hours a day, 5 days per week. ITS is working to improve availability.

2. Improve ease of navigation on the portal. We are confident this can be done with programming and enhanced training.

3. The student email system is cumbersome and too difficult use. We are evaluating other email solutions that will better serve the students.

**Web Strategy**

The first phase of the web strategy, requirements definition and infrastructure assessment, was completed and the findings documented on April 15.

The most significant conclusion was that the current web sites contain all the information required, but it is difficult to find. We are prioritizing and scheduling the organizational improvements that were identified.
Secondly the third-party engaged, Fathom Interactive of Cleveland, recommended we upgrade our web infrastructure, which will make our web sites easier to maintain and our web team more effective. Infrastructure alternatives are being assessed. Our intent is to make a recommendation to the Board in May.

Dr. John Savery, College of Education, to lead Learning Technologies Team
Interim director for Spring 2006. Dr. Savery is an experienced faculty member with an in-depth understanding of teaching and learning technologies. This knowledge, along with his personal skills, strengths and talents, are essential to the success of this position. In this interim role, Dr. Savery will work closely with the Institute of Teaching and Learning and will lead the Design/Development, Computer-Based Assessment, and Audio Visual/Distance Learning teams.

John’s responsibilities will include working with the faculty to maximize the use of the teaching and learning technologies already in place (i.e. WebCT, Clickers, Exercise in Hard Choices, etc.). In addition, the Director of Learning Technologies will play a key role in the creation and delivery of online degree programs.

During the Spring 2006 semester, the full-time director opportunity will be posted on campus. The intent is to select a permanent candidate for this position no later than June
Graduate Faculty Council:  

On behalf of Graduate Student Government and the graduate student body I address you today, to inform you of several successes, as well as several areas of concern. This past year has seen new partnerships formed and new responsibilities undertaken. For the first time in years, possibly ever, the leadership of GSG and the student leaders in the law school have reached out to each other and joined together to better serve and represent our graduate students. We have developed a GSGRC standing committee which has been working diligently with student affairs allocating funding to graduate and law student organizations. Later today, the process of hearing organization funding appeals will begin, and the GSGRC will play an active role as these sessions continue. Additionally, law and graduate student leaders have together reviewed and advised multiple organizations as they have gone through the process of developing constitutions and gaining official group recognition from the university. These have included groups such as Mock Trial Student Law and Sociologists for Women in Society.

Graduate student government leaders have been actively involved within a variety of other areas, from assisting with the universities’ research conference, to serving on university student conduct hearing boards, to being vocal spokespeople for graduate representation in future university governance proposals. Despite these efforts, everything is not well with the graduate student body. A dark cloud has been hanging over our heads, which has only recently been brought to the forefront through the tragedy which occurred with one of our graduate students, Charles Plinton.

A thorough review of this situation and the factors behind it are quintessential for every graduate student on this campus. The results of which will effect the rights and civil liberties of us all. Thus far, this tragedy, has revealed a system where a highly questionable level of protection is being afforded by this university to its graduate students. Whether this is displayed through the incredibly low evidence standards, the inadequate student preparation given, the conflicts of interest between those who are charged with supporting the students and those prosecuting them, the use of informant felons who are living in our resident halls, the retrial of cases where the courts have already found innocence or simply the overly broad and poorly written standards of conduct which pervade our regulation books, yet which our students are held accountable to. This system must be reviewed and graduate students must be a part of that. It is to this end that GSG leadership has advocated
to have a representative on the presidential commission. Due to these efforts on the part of GSG, President Proenza has agreed to one. We have worked to develop a list of acceptable representatives per his request, however, there is no word yet as to which individual from this list has been selected.

Apart from these issues surrounding how graduate students are tried and the usurpation of our academic freedoms and civil rights, there are other egregious regulations of a similar vein in place. Assembly Procedures Resolution 10-71 These procedures established in October of 1971 create what are known as ‘Free Speech Zones’. According to this policy, any assembly, which is any form of expression consistent with the civil liberties expressed in the First Amendment to the United States Constitution, must register with the university calendar office at least 48 hours beforehand, unless the President or their designee waives the requirement. This First Amendment expression will then be restricted to an area of the President’s choosing, or that of their designee. This will normally be Lee Jackson Field, or the gymnasium in Memorial Hall, only if not in use by others and only during certain hours. The President or their designee has the power to veto any expression at their discretion. If any expression might be considered unruly or unlawful then everybody, including any bystanders, will be told to leave. If they do not, they can be immediately suspended and arrested. This is IF the expression MIGHT be considered ‘unruly’, whatever that means. Additionally, these punishments would be valid for any graduate student wishing to engage in First Amendment expression who had not followed other sections of this regulation, with registering, location, specific times etc. The very fact that something like this is on the books at a public university, which is supposed to be at the center of the free exchange of ideas and opinions and viewpoints; controversial or otherwise, is appalling. This trouncing of academic freedom and student civil liberties is unacceptable. In addition to the Presidential Plinton Commission, regulations like Assembly Procedures Resolution 10-71 must be revised, and the rights of our graduate students in all facets must be protected.

Many of these regulations were adopted during the Vietnam era, they were mostly a knee-jerk overreaction to student protests. They go even further beyond what I have discussed thus far. For example, if I, as a student, disobey an instruction from a University administrator, University police officer, or “faculty director” (whatever that means), I am subject to immediate suspension (without a prior hearing) regardless of how trivial the instruction is and regardless of whether my disobedience was intentional. Thus, if a University administrator tells me to be quiet or to keep off the grass and I misunderstand the
instruction and consequently fail to follow it, I can be suspended immediately. These draconian, absurdly harsh, restrictive and excessively broad regulations do not belong at our university. Many of them simply do not even make sense, for example, a University Hearing Board consists of *four* members, including *three* faculty members and *two* students. I suppose that means that one member of the board must be both a faculty member and a student.

What is even more concerning then the fact that the university jerked their knee forty years ago and nobody has cared enough to fix it since, despite that it completely tramples upon and harms our graduate students, are the upcoming threats; which hopefully, somebody will care enough about to take seriously and act upon, despite the obstacles. I am referring to health care. Many graduate students are no longer capable of being covered under their parents’ insurance policies. Meanwhile, the cost and quality of insurance available to graduate students through the university is exorbitantly high and low, sadly in the wrong ways. The cost is exceedingly high, while the quality has hit rock bottom. This is the good news. The bad news is; the insurance companies who offer the policies are losing money, because only those who desperately need it are willing to take it. Thus, the company loses money, and the number of companies willing to bid on the contract is rapidly shrinking. It is expected that in a few years we will have no insurance options whatsoever. This needs to be stopped and addressed now, not later. Mandatory insurance for all graduate students should be considered, in tandem with university subsidies. This has worked at other universities, by both spreading the risk, and making it affordable.

These are the key priorities which must be addressed by the university governance bodies in order to ensure the health, well-being, safety and rights of our graduate students. All of these things are too vital to ignore, to valuable to cast aside, and too pressing to simply pass forward, hoping that somebody else will solve the problem. The graduate students deserve nothing less then your best in addressing these issues. It is my hope that you will provide them with that and more. Thank you.

Best wishes,

Jesse R. Mann
President
Graduate Student Government