

The University of Akron
Minutes of Graduate Council
January 30, 2017

The Graduate Council met on Monday, January 30, 2017, in the Student Union, Room 310. Dean Chand Midha presided. Present were Dr. Philip Allen, Associate Dean Charles Beneke, Heather Blake, Dr. Amanda Booher, Dr. Marcus Braga-Alves, Karen Caldwell, Dr. Gary Holliday, Dr. Ronald Otterstetter, Dr. Judit Puskas, Provost Rex Ramsier, Dr. John Senko, Dr. James Steiger, Dr. Harvey Sterns, Dr. Baffour Takyi, Dr. Margaret Tung, and Dr. Nicole Zacharia.

GC Members Absent with Notice: Dr. Qetler Jensrud, Dr. Martha Santos, and Dr. Shivakumar Sastry

GC Members Absent: Dr. Andrew Thomas and Marina Pelemis

Ms. Mary Kryska from Ernst and Young joined the meeting via conference call.

Call to Order

Dean Midha called the meeting to order at 9:14 a.m.

Roll Call

Heather Blake recorded the attendance of those present.

Approval of Minutes

Minutes from the January 23, 2017 meeting of Graduate Council were unanimously approved.

Remarks – Dean Midha

Dean Midha stated that there were good discussions held last week regarding the University's Transformation Plan. A summary of the discussions being held in Graduate Council was provided to the Leadership Team. A draft of the Graduate School Savings Focus Areas was distributed to Graduate Council, Council of Deans, and the Leadership Team. He thanked Graduate Council members for getting engaged in conversation. All discussions are greatly appreciated.

Dean Midha said that spending \$30 million is simply not sustainable due to the budget challenges facing the University. What the Graduate Council is doing is to identify areas of savings in the Graduate School. This is one of several efforts being made across campus.

Dean Midha said that he received an email last night from Dr. Donald Visco, Interim Dean, College of Engineering, who shared that the college has held a couple of meetings to discuss the graduate funding issues, and there is a need to identify best practices. Interim Dean Visco offered two suggestions. The first suggestion is that all external grants must include 10% support for tuition with this requirement being waived for external grants that do not allow for support for tuition to be included. The second suggestion was that tuition support should not exceed the number of credits required for the degree.

Dean Midha thanked Provost Ramsier for attending this meeting at the invitation of the Executive Committee of Graduate Council.

Provost Ramsier said this is not an easy discussion. He stated the Graduate Council is the executive committee of the graduate faculty, and he is glad to see these conversations taking place here and likes a lot of the ideas that Graduate Council has developed. He stated that the University is operating on a \$30 million deficit this fiscal year, and it is anticipated that enrollment will be down again next year. Provost Ramsier emphasized that things must change dramatically this year, or the University is going to be in bigger trouble next year. The data clearly indicate that the University is out of line with other institutions when it comes to graduate assistantship funding.

Provost Ramsier shared that is unlikely that savings from the buyout will be at the amount originally targeted. Saving \$8 million the first year and \$12 million the next year is not going to happen. He continued that \$15 million will need to be cut on the graduate side, this is a big cut, and it will be a big change.

Provost Ramsier stated the changes are not only going to take place on the academic side. Athletics is also being discussed, and discussions are not just taking place at Faculty Senate but also at Leadership meetings and will be discussed at the Board of Trustees meeting.

Provost Ramsier concluded his comments by stating that he really appreciates the work of Graduate Council and is here to answer any questions.

Continued Discussion of Graduate School Funding and University's Transformation Plan

Graduate Research Assistantships

Dr. Puskas sought clarification on the data related to graduate research assistantship funding.

Associate Dean Beneke stated that data were pulled from multiple sources.

Discussion followed regarding graduate research assistantship funding.

Dr. Allen made a motion that the Graduate School will no longer fund stipends for graduate research assistantships.

Dr. Puskas seconded the motion.

Approved unanimously. Motion carries.

Tuition Charged to Grants

Dean Midha stated that neither research grants nor community/industrial graduate assistantships cover tuition. We want to encourage entrepreneurship and get money coming in from the outside. For example, if \$3,000 is brought in then match it with \$3,000 toward tuition.

Dr. Allen stated that for CIGAs the value of the tuition waiver cannot exceed the value of the stipend, and the tuition waiver is based on in-state tuition.

Discussion followed related to granting in-state tuition for out-of-state students funded by CIGA award.

Dr. Allen made a motion that for community/industrial grants the tuition waiver cannot exceed the value of the stipend, and these students will be considered as in-state tuition paying students.

Dr. Sterns seconded the motion.

Approved unanimously. Motion carries.

Dr. Allen made a motion that for extramural grants the grant writers should include tuition coverage.

After some discussion this motion was put on hold.

Restricting Credit Hours for Tuition Remission

Dr. Allen stated that graduate students are currently registering for more credits than required for their degree programs, and their graduate assistantships are covering these additional credits. Restricting credit hours to degree requirements can result in an estimated savings of \$1 million.

Dean Midha mentioned that commitments to current students will be honored. Any exceptions will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

Dr. Puskas made a motion that stipend and tuition waiver will not exceed the required number of credit hours. Exceptions will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

Dr. Allen seconded the motion.

Approved unanimously. Motion carries.

New Funding Model for Master's Students

Dean Midha stated that, based on the numbers provided, the University spends roughly \$9 million in tuition and \$3 million in stipends for master's students (stand-alone master's not Master's/Ph.D.). These dollars are allocated over a two-year period. It is expected that half of the students will graduate, thus freeing up \$4.5 million in tuition and \$1.5 million in stipends. From the \$4.5 million tuition freed up \$1 million will be maintained for tuition awards for new incoming master's students, and from the \$1.5 million stipends freed up \$.75 million will be maintained for student funding. The result of this new model will be a savings of \$3.5 million in tuition and \$.75 million in stipends. This savings will occur for two consecutive years, resulting in an approximate total savings of \$8.5 million. The roughly 30% of maintained funding will be strategically used to support programs where funding is essential.

The college deans will need to determine the areas where funding is necessary.

Provost Ramsier added that the goal is to be strategic so as not to damage programs. This may provide an opportunity to grow some programs.

Dr. Allen made a motion that approximately 30% of the current funding will be maintained in support of a new model for terminal master's degree funding. This is subject to annual review of the funding.

Dr. Puskas seconded the motion.

Approved unanimously. Motion carries.

Meeting adjourned at 11:05 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Heather A. Blake
Graduate School