



**The University of Akron
Minutes of Graduate Council
February 18, 2019
Leigh Hall, Room 414**

Dean Chand Midha presided.

Present: Dr. Wondimu Ahmed, Ms. Heather Blake, Dr. Amanda Booher, Ms. Hayley Cargill, Dr. George Chase, Dr. R. Ray Gehani, Mr. Alec Gerrerd, Interim President John Green, Dr. Gary Holliday, Dr. Carolyn Murrock, Dr. Alex Povitsky, Provost Rex Ramsier, Dr. Francesco Renna, Dr. Jina Sang, Dr. Martha Santos, Associate Dean Marnie Saunders, Dr. John Senko, Dr. Mark Soucek, and Dr. Claire Tessier.

Guest in Attendance: Dr. Phil Allen

GC Members Absent with Notice: Dr. Todd Gaffke, Dr. Coleen Pugh, and Dr. Baffour Takyi

Call to Order: Dean Midha called the meeting to order at 9:06 a.m.

Roll Call: Heather Blake recorded the attendance of those present.

1. Remarks – Dean Midha

Dean Midha thanked Interim President Green and Provost Ramsier for joining today's meeting of Graduate Council. Dean Midha stated that comments were sent to the Faculty and Interim President Green as a result of the discussion that took place at the January Graduate Council meeting regarding enrollment and current budget challenges.

2. Remarks – Interim President Green

Interim President Green stated this was his first time attending a meeting of the Graduate Council and appreciated the opportunity. He expressed that shared governance only works with commitment of the faculty like members of Graduate Council. Interim President Green shared that he received comments from Dr. Soucek regarding the budget challenges the University is currently facing. He stated that the University faces major fiscal challenges; revenue challenge, enrollment decline particularly in undergraduate, and decline in SSI. Due to enrollment decline tuition lost may possible be \$35M. SSI is very complicated. A rough estimate of loss in SSI may be approximately \$15M. This leaves the University with a \$45M structural deficit. Demographic factors have contributed to this deficit. This region of the United States is growing slowly, thus we must recruit outside of both our region and Ohio. Interim President Green said that the University is in a position now where tough decisions have to be made. The plan is to make a large down payment on the \$45M deficit. Every entity will share in this reduction. It is important that we bring in more students and see their course and degree completion.

3. Remarks – Provost Ramsier

Provost Ramsier acknowledged that Graduate Council has seen the enrollment numbers and are aware of the challenge. He said that Graduate Council's help is needed for determining how to stabilize the current financial challenges as enrollment is rapidly declining. Some of the reasons for the decline have been the change in the funding model and a decrease in international student enrollment. The International Center has been trying hard to open up new pipelines. Provost Ramsier emphasized that we need to try new things. A competitive fellowship has been proposed where students would be provided a tuition waiver with money we already have. These students would serve as tutors for certain courses in the academic departments. Provost Ramsier shared that from last fall to this fall 2,000 of the 8,000 students identified as college ready by the Office of Admissions did not return. This is a significant financial loss. Some of those that did return did not complete 24 credit hours in one calendar year. He attributed this to a customer service problem. We must spend more time focusing on our students.

Provost Ramsier said that this has been a very difficult year, and next year will not be much better. He stated that Graduate Council has to lead for the Graduate School by providing assistance to Dean Midha and Associate Dean Saunders. We have a plan and need to stay the course.

Dr. Soucek stated that we need another source of money for remedial education. This is the only way we are going to get students here.

Provost Ramsier responded that he disagrees with that notion. The University has fully implemented a new admissions policy wherein preparatory students are not admitted. The University is not supposed to be teaching remedial courses. Remedial courses were offered for a number of years. These students are not ready for college, and it is unfair to continue taking their money.

Dr. Soucek said that with the shrinking demographic the competition for the best students will be even greater. Students that we would like to have may go elsewhere. He added that even some of those students identified as college ready may not be ready. Good students often have difficulty.

Provost Ramsier replied that it is difficult to compete for the best students. We find ourselves competing for the middle. Undergraduate admissions received 1,000 less applications for fall 2019 as a result of weaker students not applying. The applicant pool may be smaller; however, there has been a higher yield.

Ms. Cargill said that funding is the main thing that draws graduate students in. Students with their options on where to attend is often based on whether or not they will be funded.

Provost Ramsier stated that money to fund graduate students comes from undergraduates. Why should these students fund undergraduate students? He added the University essentially gave away MBA degrees.

Dr. Gehani said that he took this information back to his college and was told that this was not exactly the case. CBA thought they were only granting scholarships. Dr. Gehani stated that management issues exist, and to say that there is a customer service issue implies that faculty are the customer service problem. He added that an administrative service issue may also exist. Dr. Gehani inquired as to who is responsible for our growth plans.

Interim President Green responded that everyone is responsible for growth.

Dr. Gehani stated that marketing is key, and it is important to determine whether to centralize or decentralize certain functions.

Provost Ramsier indicated that the College of Business Administration took advantage of the graduate industrial assistantship program. Students were getting paid to do someone else's work. The amount spent was approximately \$2M. Provost Ramsier stated that once he became aware of this it was stopped.

Dr. Povitsky stated that the Graduate School will fund teaching assistants for five years, but if the student needs an additional year of funding it must come from a research grant. He indicated that he has a teaching assistant for whom he provided funding for two years. He questioned why he should have to fund the student on a research grant beyond five years if an extension in funding is needed.

Provost Ramsier said that it is his understanding that all students receive up to five years of University funding.

Dean Midha stated that doctoral students receive five years of funding, stipend and tuition, if the department needs a teaching assistant. No research assistants are supported by the Graduate School. The department determines who they want to hire.

Dr. Povitsky questioned if the Graduate School would pay for six years. He was advised to contact Associate Dean Saunders for clarification and follow-up.

Dean Midha stated that funding for doctoral students has not been cut in the last three years. He said that the information shared at the last Graduate Council meeting was shared with the deans. They did discuss the concern that last year we followed the recommendation of a May 1 deadline to accept students; prior to that some departments accepted students after June 1. Dean Midha stated that requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Dr. Ahmed asked if we know why students are coming to the University of Akron and why student are not returning.

Provost Rasmier responded yes. We have a lot of data; however, we cannot always fix the financial piece. It is important to reach out to the students who are leaving. All information has been shared with the deans. Faculty must be involved as well. The Graduate School has no centralized recruiting.

4. Discussion

Dean Midha stated that \$15M must be cut for next year; however, there is very little room to cut anything more. He referred to Dr. Gehani's comment that marketing may help attract students. Dean Midha mentioned that webpages in many units have not been updated in a long time. Updating and revising webpages may help capture students.

Dr. Allen said our undergraduate students are a captive audience. He recommended looking at the possibility of establishing 4+1 programs.

Dr. Gehani suggested allowing the Graduate Council to have a task force to examine these issues regarding future growth. Such issues may not be raised in colleges. More emphasis may be placed in some colleges on research than on teaching.

Dean Midha said it is necessary to know what response is received from the colleges when the issue of marketing is raised. Interim President Green stated that everyone is responsible for growing the University, including Graduate Council. How do we keep finding new ways to grow our enrollment? What are the targets we should establish? What can be done in non-STEM area and what help is needed? Ideas need to be vetted through the colleges. Everyone needs to be connected.

Dr. Renna mentioned that it is difficult to have a target without a vision. He referred to former President Proenza's marketing of the University as the premier public research institution in Northeast Ohio. We must determine our current vision and the role we want to have. This information is necessary before any targets can be identified.

Dr. Senko inquired about the proposed tuition waivers for students to serve as tutors.

Dean Midha responded that the Graduate School approached Provost Ramsier with an idea to provide support to students who may be having difficulty in particular courses. Tuition waivers could be awarded to graduate students to serve as tutors for those students in need of additional assistance. Dean Midha will bring this topic to the next Graduate Council meeting for discussion.

Dr. Holliday said that his college is beginning to discuss workload. He asked what role the Graduate School has in terms of workload policy.

Dean Midha stated that workload policy was discussed at the last Council of Deans meeting. By Fall 2019 every unit will have a workload policy. The Graduate School has no involvement in workload policy.

Meeting adjourned at 10:40 a.m.

Dr. R. Ray Gehani
Secretary

Upcoming meetings: Mondays 9:00 – 10:30 AM, March 18, April 15, and May 6, 2019.