

The University of Akron
Minutes of Graduate Council
April 3, 2017

The Graduate Council met on Monday, April 3, 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, Dr. Ronald Otterstetter, Dr. Judit Puskas, Dr. Martha Santos, Dr. Shivakumar Sastry, Dr. John Senko, Dr. James Steiger, Dr. Baffour Takyi, and Dr. Nicole Zacharia.

GC Members Absent with Notice: Dr. Gary Holliday, Dr. Qetler Jensrud, and Dr. Margaret Tung

GC Members Absent: Marina Pelemis, Dr. Harvey Sterns, and Dr. Andrew Thomas

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.

Approval of Minutes

Dr. Otterstetter made a motion to approve the minutes of March 20, 2017. Dr. Booher seconded the motion. Minutes of the March 20, 2017 meeting were approved without dissent.

Remarks – Dean Midha

Dean Midha said that a couple members had indicated concern about the status of the savings, especially the GRA reductions, and he invited Provost Ramsier to attend today's meeting to discuss the status of the potential savings plan; however, due to his schedule he was unable to attend. Dean Midha stated that there is a Faculty Senate meeting on Thursday, and questions may arise related to the status of the savings plan.

Dr. Senko asked if this refers to overall University savings, or savings just from the Graduate School. Dr. Allen responded that this refers to overall University savings.

Dean Midha said that there will be a number of factors that will influence graduate enrollment this year. These include the number of self-funded students that may enroll as well as the number of international students that may enroll. Current immigration changes will likely have an effect on international students.

Dean Midha stated that he and members of the Executive Committee could not travel to Columbus to meet with Vice Chancellor Jim Bennett since the meeting was pre-empted by the Vice Chancellor. This meeting will be rescheduled. He added that representatives from Ernst and Young have developed a model for SSI calculation and circulated it to the deans. This calculation did not include the dollars set aside for doctoral programs.

Dean Midha said that on March 24 he attended a CCGS meeting in Columbus at which there was a conversation about who can teach graduate courses and who cannot. Many institutions have a separate category for graduate faculty status that allows faculty to teach graduate classes even when they are not eligible to supervise graduate thesis.

Instructional Support Graduate Assistantships

Associate Dean Beneke stated that the only place graduate assistants are addressed in the University rules is 3359-60-066 that states that a graduate assistant renders service through teaching, research, and other duties. The Graduate Assistant Handbook only identifies three types of graduate assistantships: Teaching/Laboratory Assistantships, Research Assistantships, and Administrative Assistantships. In the Graduate Assistant Handbook it states that teaching assistants must prove oral English proficiency before teaching assistant duties can be performed. English proficiency can be proven by a minimum score of 23 on the speaking component of the TOEFL, a score of "pass" on the U-ADEPT, or departmental assessment. On the assistantship contract there is a category titled Instructional Support. This was created, so that students who do not have English proficiency can receive a TA-like assistantship without teaching responsibilities. This creates a problem when

a student is offered a teaching assistantship contingent upon proving English proficiency once he or she arrives, and the student does not pass. Should the student be supported, or should the student return home? Associate Dean Beneke suggested returning to three types of assistantships, teaching, research, and administrative. He stated that there should only be a small number of administrative assistants and some fellows.

Dr. Sastry said that no teaching assistantship contract should be written without the student having proven English proficiency. By doing so there could be difficulty with the advisor, department, or Graduate School, especially when the student has difficulties with an advisor after arriving at UA. Dr. Takyi asked about those students coming from English speaking colonies. Associate Dean Beneke responded that in order for students from those areas to meet English proficiency English must be the medium of instruction as well as administration at their institutions.

Dr. Allen questioned if externally funded research assistantships could be an option for students who had not yet passed the English proficiency requirement. Dean Midha responded that a teaching assistant must pass the English proficiency requirement, and if he or she does not pass, what is a possible option? Departments could consider awarding a research assistantship to the student, but funding will not come from the Graduate School; however, if the department does not have funds for a research assistantship, and the student has not passed English proficiency, what should we do?

Dr. Puskas said that a research assistantship should not be offered to students who do not meet the English proficiency requirement, and conditional teaching assistantships should not be offered. Associate Dean Beneke stated that specific duties must be outlined on assistantship contracts.

Dr. Sastry made a motion to remove the word "Laboratory" from Teaching/Laboratory Assistantships as indicated in the Graduate Assistant Handbook. Dr. Puskas seconded the motion. Unanimously approved. Motion carries.

Dr. Puskas made a motion that teaching assistantship contracts cannot be issued without the student already having scored at least 23 on the speaking portion of the TOEFL. Dr. Sastry seconded the motion with a friendly amendment that for Fall 2017 some options be provided for students who have not yet proven English proficiency.

For Fall 2017 students must pass the speaking component of the TOEFL with a score of at least 23. Students who do not pass the speaking component of the TOEFL may only be offered research assistantship contracts supported with department funds. If these students then take the U-ADEPT upon arrival at the University and receive a score of "pass" they may be converted to teaching assistantships subject to funding availability.

Ten aye votes and one nay vote. Motion carries.

HLC Graduate Faculty Requirements for 2017 and beyond

Associate Dean Beneke referred to the sections of the HLC Policy where it states that instructors possess an academic degree relevant to what they are teaching and at least one level above the level at which they teach, except in programs for terminal degrees or when equivalent experience is established. When faculty members are employed based on equivalent experience, the institution defines a minimum threshold of experience and an evaluation process that is used in the appointment process. Instructors teaching in graduate programs should hold the terminal degree defined by the discipline and have a record of research, scholarship, or achievement for the graduate program. Instructors teaching at the doctoral level have a record of recognized scholarship, creative endeavor, or achievement in practice commensurate with doctoral experience. He stated that an evaluation process needs to be established as well as a baseline for equivalent experience.

Dr. Takyi stated that one size will not fit all. This can vary a great deal across departments. Dr. Zacharia noted that the policy indicates "should" and "or." It does not state "must." Dean Midha said that what HLC is indicating is that an individual teaching in a particular discipline hold the terminal degree for that discipline. In the case that the individual does not hold the terminal degree he or she must have significant experience.

Dean Midha stated that Ad Hoc graduate faculty status is granted to adjunct and part-time faculty, so every department should have some criteria for graduate faculty for teaching purposes.

Data on the number of graduate courses taught by Ad Hoc graduate faculty members was shared with Graduate Council. Associate Dean Beneke stated that departments offering graduate courses must develop a

process for defining equivalent experience. Dr. Braga-Alves stated that departments should not determine their own equivalent experience. Dr. Allen suggested that this be discussed with Provost Ramsier the next time he meets with Graduate Council.

Dean Midha asked Dr. Takyi to discuss this with the members of the Graduate Faculty Membership Committee and develop some recommendations for further discussion at the next Graduate Council meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 10:27 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Shivakumar Sastry
Secretary