

Graduate Academic and Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes for January 24, 2011

Voting Members Present: Ken Abramowicz (Chair), Donie Bret-Harte (phone), Lara Dehn, Regine Hock, Orion Lawlor, Anupma Prakash, Amber Thomas.

Ex officio members present: Laura Bender, Anita Hughes, Lillian Anderson-Misel, Karen Jensen (for Library Dean), Libby Eddy.

Guests for the discussion on the M.A. - Political Science proposal: Jonathan Rosenberg, Jerry McBeath, Mary Ehrlander, and Terrence Cole.

A quorum was not initially present at the beginning of the meeting. Items 2 and 3 of the agenda (approval of minutes for 12/13/2010 and 11/29/2010; and the proposed motion to clarify graduate grading policy) will be voted upon electronically (or, in the case of the minutes, by negative confirmation).

Item 4 (guidelines for stacking of 400/600 level courses) was postponed until the February 14 meeting. Rainer Newberry will attend that meeting for Curricular Affairs Committee.

The remainder of the meeting time was used to discuss the MA in Political Science and related courses. Jonathan Rosenberg presented the proposal, stating that with six FTE's now in the department, they were ready to deliver the program. He provided reasons why this program was the next logical step in their offerings. Mary Ehrlander spoke to the new program being complementary to the Northern Studies program. A past fear had been that such a program might draw away Northern Studies students, but there are enough differences between them that this is not the case.

Terrence Cole raised the issue of TA-ships necessary to make delivery of the program realistic, even with enough faculty members. Jonathan R. confirmed that funding was being sought for three TA-ships. Currently, three TA's teach their PS 100X core course.

Anupma P. suggested that perhaps that funding could be sought from EPSCoR (which is furnishing funding for faculty already). Amber T. commented that only three TA's seemed to few for the program. Jonathan R. noted that while it would be nice to have TA's to teach more of the lower division courses and he sees them as essential, not having them would not make it impossible to deliver this program. Amber T. brought up the point of needing faculty to serve on graduate committees, and that need was acknowledged by Jonathan R.

Ken A. noted that hiring of adjuncts was mentioned on page 33 of the proposal. Jerry M. commented that this is a proposed measure to address a future scenario of potential need should there be a large number of graduate students entering the program. Ken asked whether three or four graduating students per year were enough to make the program viable. Jonathan R. responded that they're part of a larger cohort in their programs. Jerry

M. noted there would likely be six to 10 in the program at any given time. Amber T. noted similarity in this respect with English programs.

Ken raised the issue about the rigor of stacked courses which affects five courses required for the degree (page 12 and 13 of the proposal). Jonathan R. responded by noting the required coursework and seminar papers, along with reading assignments. Jerry M. mentioned his use of graduate seminar courses as stacked courses, making an efficient use of his time in light of limited resources.

There was lengthy discussion on the issue of the internship required by the program proposal. Jonathan R. noted it was modeled on the undergraduate capstone course requirement. Students have a designated supervisor who reports to a faculty; and the students must do a paper. Jerry M. mentioned the internship is graded, and this is a widely-used component at government agencies in other Political Science graduate programs. Ken A. questioned why this replaced a thesis requirement, noting the paper requires only 15 pages. Laura B. noted projects are often a requirement rather than papers. Jonathan R. noted that a student's career path will dictate whether an internship or thesis is required. Amber T. asked about guidelines to differentiate an undergraduate internship from a graduate level.

Anupma P. asked what the normal thesis requirement entailed. Jerry M. noted that 100-150 pages was the normal expectation for a thesis which should examine existing literature and detail new insights to new knowledge in the field and/or new data for study. This is equal to the requirements for theses in other social sciences. Because the internship is individualized to the student, there are no firm guidelines. An overview of the literature examination requirement could be furnished.

Lara D. noted that agency supervisors may require a lot of grunt work from the students, so how would progress be gauged? Jerry M. noted that contact with a faculty is maintained by the supervisor, and the student keeps logs which are also reviewed.

Ken A. asked about the justification statement that was made about students who are already in the workforce doing an internship. Jerry M. noted they could add strictures to address that. Lara D. noted the possibility of a conflict of interest if a student is the employee of one agency, but doing an internship at another. Jonathan R. said they could add language to broaden lines of internships between public and private agencies. Jerry noted these students are likely to be part-time, with their agency of employment paying some of the tuition costs. Several GAAC members endorsed making the internship a course instead, however both Jonathan R. and Jerry M. said this approach would change the intent of the program proposal based upon their market research.

Ken A. suggested adding an internship course requirement which could lead to a thesis project. Jerry M. stressed the liberal arts nature of the degree, in addition to their response to the agencies they surveyed initially. There was disagreement expressed concerning the importance of having a thesis paper requirement.

Regine H. expressed concern about students taking the program while employed at an agency. Jerry M. commented that it was assumed the internship would take place outside of any employing agency. It was noted that it's not the role of GAAC to evaluate the internship itself, but it is the role of GAAC to examine the overall rigor of the program.

Jonathan R. brought up having a Memorandum of Understanding with agencies regarding the standards for the internship. Ken A. requested revision of the program proposal in light of the idea for a project-based internship.

The meeting was adjourned shortly after 10 am.