

## Graduate Academic and Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes of Aug. 26, 2015

Attending: Laura Bender, Karen Jenson, Don Hampton, Holly Sherouse, Jayne Harvie, Daryl Farmer, Donie Bret-Harte, Mike Castellini, Sean McGee

Addition to the Agenda: update from the graduate school

- I. Donie Bret-Harte provided an introduction to GAAC and went over the current bylaws and those that are pending (passed out of GAAC, but pending full Senate approval).
- II. Donie Bret-Harte agreed to serve as Chair for GAAC in this academic year, and was elected.
- III. Mike Castellini provided some updates from the graduate school.
  - a. **Health insurance for students.** Changes in the health insurance program for graduate students are coming in order to comply with the Affordable Care Act. Some questions that the university is grappling with include: 1) Are students employees or not? 2) How many hours per week do they work? The current situation is that everyone is insured, and no one is going to jail, but costs are rising rapidly. At present, the university is offering a “corridor plan,” which provides coverage with a gap above a threshold. This is adequate for the next 18 months, but a different solution will have to be found after that. It was suggested (by some graduate students) that the university divide the money available for insurance, pay it to the students, and allow them to buy insurance on the exchange. However, that is illegal. Another suggestion has been to increase the pay rate to students and allow them to buy their own health insurance, but that is also not legal. Over the longer term, it is not clear what will happen, but many universities are struggling with this issue at the moment. Health insurance for graduate students will be looked at again in spring of 2016 for the fall of 2016. The situation is changing rapidly. At present, there is no option for undergraduates to purchase health insurance through the university at present. They have to be insured on their parents’ policies or purchase insurance on their own. At present, there is nothing for GAAC to do, but we may be asked to assist in polling students in the future..
  - b. **Outside examiners on graduate exams.** At present, the graduate school asks for volunteers to serve as outside examiners on Ph.D. comprehensive exams and defenses, but they are not getting enough faculty who volunteer to do it. Mike has approached the other Deans to get individual departments to manage finding outside examiners, because the graduate school has fewer staff to round up volunteers. No action is needed right now, and there is no solution available at the moment.
  - c. **References in theses.** The graduate school staff has noticed recently that references don’t match properly in complete theses, and this was not detected at previous levels of review. The graduate school is encouraging

training in EndNote for students, to help them avoid mismatches. This may be coming up as an issue in the future, as there is no solution yet.

- d. **Interdisciplinary Studies.** The interdisciplinary studies program (INDS) is being revamped. The program has been reviewed, it will be run as a department, with defined admissions standards, and will be “rigorous but flexible.” This is a positive development. INDS is actively recruiting students from around the world. GAAC may see more course proposals for the INDS program in the next year.

IV. New Assignments for course review were made.

V. Holly Sherouse provided an update from the Registrar’s office. They have purchased CourseLeaf, which is a new course/catalog management system that will streamline production of catalog and degree works, and provide better alignment with banner. This will require new attention to deadlines. They will provide a further update later. All paperwork for course changes will be submitted through CourseLeaf by fall of 2016. The catalog will be available online, but you can pay for a paper catalog. Karen Jensen indicated that the library will archive all the catalogs.

VI. GAAC’s next meeting will occur September 9, at 3:00 pm