

Graduate Council Meeting October 01, 2020

Present: Professors: Badovinac, Cwiertny, Doucette, Gfeller, Forbes, Hoffmann, Hribar, Huber, Kang, O'Shaughnessy; Graduate Students: DeYoung, Piegors, Waldstein; Graduate College Personnel: Arbisi-Kelm, Keller, McKibben, Meintel, Teitle, Varga; Guest speaker: Melissa Meisterheim

Absent: Professors: Butali, Greyser; Graduate College Personnel: Campo; Graduate Students: Gabriele

The meeting was presided by Dean John Keller and called to order @ 8:16 AM.

1. Approval of September 17, 2020 Meeting Minutes

No revisions to the distributed minutes were offered, a motion for approval was presented (Huber), seconded (Cwiertny), and unanimous consent obtained.

2. Announcements and Updates from the Graduate College

- Forthcoming DGS /Graduate Faculty Meeting scheduled for Wednesday, October 07, 2020 at 4:00 PM (Live virtual meeting). The meeting will continue important conversations related to DEI critical issues and features guest speaker, [Kimberly McKee](#), Associate Professor in Integrative, Religious and Intercultural Studies, and Director of the [Kutsche Office of Local History](#) at Grand Valley State University. Professor McKee will be speaking on graduate student experiences of Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC).
- Review of spring 2021 fellowships (i.e. [Ballard and Seashore Dissertation Fellowships](#), [Graduate College Post-Comprehensive Research Awards](#)) have been delayed in part due to careful budgetary monitorization, including the consideration of possible budgetary revisions for the next calendar year.
- At the UI and in the nation's research universities there is an emerging concern with managing next year's admission cycle because of the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on budgetary shortfalls, the need to maintain support for currently enrolled students and the career outcomes of PhD students.
The Graduate College leadership, in collaboration with collegiate deans, is evaluating this issue and seeks input from council members from within their departments given the numerous implications that could transpire; among these are options to suspend all admissions or limit admissions to smaller cohorts for one year.
- New federal government legislature has been proposed potentially impacting adversely international students (F, J, and I visa holders) affecting, in part, time limits for degrees, delayed extension reviews, and one-year limit duration for postdoctoral appointments.
The [UI International Programs](#) has contacted international students to alert them of this legislative matter and the Graduate College leadership requested council members to please identify and reach out to any international students in their departments to assess their well-being and concerns.
Dean Keller conveyed assurance to the council that the Graduate College is working with their federal governmental relations in D.C. in developing a rebuttal response and delayed action.

3. Proposal to Create Master of Science (MS) in Sustainable Development (Keller, 20 minutes)

A proposal to create a new Master of Science degree in Sustainable Development, which had been under previous consideration by the council prior to the onset of the pandemic, was re-introduced by Dean Keller. Professor David Cwiertny, both a council member and a leading proposer, provided an overview of the proposal to the council members, followed by a Q&A session and vote (Cwiertny, abstention).

Main Topics of the Proposal (Cwiertny)

- Origins
 - i. Per the start-up of an NSF Grant awarded to the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering on implementing sustainability concepts and the ensuing recognition of the transdisciplinary nature of sustainability beyond engineering per se.
 - ii. Broader program envisioning and development through collaboration among the UI faculty members in [Geographical and Sustainability Sciences](#) (Dave Bennett), [School of Planning and](#)

[Public affairs](#) (Charles Connerly) and [Civil & Environmental Engineering](#) (David Cwiertny, Michelle Scherer).

- iii. Graduate Education Challenge Grant (Graduate College 2018) support to start the process of building an interdisciplinary graduate program developed around the [United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Goals \(UN SDGs\)](#), which encompasses many aspects of life and community development and makes for a signature program unique in academia.
- Program Model (Academic Unit: Graduate College)
 - i. Year One (30 s.h., 10 courses, Non-thesis): Largely coursework open to all students, which would include the development of four new core courses for students in the program: a team-taught introductory primer on sustainability that introduces the SDGs, a technical and non-technical communication course (Schrerer, Team Lead), a course focused on translational professional skills to include responsible conduct of research tenets (Cwiertny, Team Lead), and a capstone course in community engagement (Connerly, Team Lead).
 - ii. Year Two (Thesis): A thesis project with a program partner culminating in a project portfolio required for graduation.

- Funding Model

Noting the variance in funding resources across the different colleges and inherent challenges, CoE students are only research assistant based; there are no teaching assistants.

- i. Year One: During year one of coursework, it is envisioned that students would be largely self-supported, building on the success of the BSM program and the U2G programs that have been increasing in CoE enrollment, as well as the large number of non-thesis master's student that self-support in a course-work only degree program.
- ii. Year Two: A flexible model envisioning a partnership that would bring financial support and practical experience in the professional networking.

Q&A

- Take-aways

- i. The target for the initial cohort (Fall 2022) would be between 5-10 students—to ensure there are meaningful opportunities with partners for the second year project-based thesis—with the intent to grow the program steadily with a target incoming class of 20-30 each academic year.
- ii. Admission and coursework success will not include any absolute core courses; rather intentionally based on a broad version of STEM fields and some quantitative social science disciplines.
- iii. The emphasis on SDGs, while having an international development aspect, there is an important distinction directed toward domestic community, development in urban poor and rural communities; integrating more sustainable principles in the management of resources, health and in providing context for broader applications.
- iv. Career placement is foreseen in state and local agencies and governments.
- v. The interdisciplinary defining feature of the proposal is about developing resilient communities as a byproduct of more sustainable development; to coordinate in an organizational effort existing sustainable facilities and programing assets at Iowa in training our students to think about how to carry resiliency, sustainability, strategic envisioning, etc. with them beyond the University into local communities and beyond.

- Proposal Approval

Further questions for consideration were taken into account by the council members and endorsement yielded to the Graduate College administrative deans to work directly with Professor Cwiertny to strengthen the proposals with revisions noted in the following areas: admissions (articulating the connection between undergraduate and graduate; e.g., the majors which would be eligible and competitive), greater elaboration in defining SD as both a field and

applied concept, examples of career outcomes and with presenting a case for both the acquisition of higher-order learning outcomes/skills and applied preparation for careers.

A motion for approval was presented (Gfeller), seconded (Forbes), and unanimous consent obtained by the voting members (Cwierty abstention).

4. AAU PhD Initiative Update (Varga, 10 minutes)

Associate Dean Steven Varga presented a broad overview on the [Association of American Universities \(AAU\)](#) PhD education initiative project undertaken by the Graduate College—interrupted similarly by the onset of the Coronavirus pandemic—that included key components of the initiatives, including goals and action plans, funding, organizational structure, data transparency, outcomes and expectations.

- Introduction

- i. In August 2019, the University of Iowa was selected among eight institutions to participate in the AAU education initiative project, with notable progress achieved into the spring semester until the start of the pandemic.
- ii. Originally a three-year award (September 2019 start date), the funding organizations have now extended the award one additional year which has enabled the Graduate College to reconvene their efforts and re-engage the participating departments.
- iii. The eight participating institutions in the PhD initiative are Boston University, Duke University, Indiana University-Bloomington, University of Iowa, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, University of Missouri, University of Texas-Austin, and the University of Virginia.

- Goals & Institutional Role

- i. The goal of the program is to promote a more student-centered doctoral education by making the full range of career pathways for students *visible, valued, and viable*.
- ii. The University of Iowa Graduate College's participation in the initiative builds on its long history fostering diverse career outcomes for their students, while investing considerable energy and resources into data transparency and administrative assistance over the years to be able to achieve these goals.
- iii. The AAU desires in earnest to ensure that the new ideas that emerge from the initiative are assessed and widely disseminated for all the participating institutions in order to be able to learn and be supported across the campuses at each of the universities.

- Participating Departments & Anticipated Projects

- i. The University of Iowa has four departments that are participating: English and History in the Humanities disciplines and Mathematics and Physics and Astronomy in the STEM disciplines. (It was noted that The University of Iowa and the University of Illinois both have the same participating programs and thus the two institutions will be meeting virtually to engage further on the initiative.)
- ii. Anticipated Projects beyond transparent data collection include: Creation of program sub-tracks, course upgrades and format changes, local and national paid internships, alumni engagement, academic job training and website optimization.

- Interannual Activity Plans (Three years)

- i. Year One (Fall 2020): The goal is for departments to engage multiple constituencies in a landscape analysis and develop subsequent action plans toward evaluating potential changes in graduate student training.
 - a. In October and November, the AAU will host listening posts and discussions for participating departments across disciplines at the eight institutions in order to engage faculty in thinking about how they deliver graduate education and can make it more student centered.
 - b. Similar listening posts and discussions will occur with students across disciplines and institutions.
 - c. The UI Graduate College will host for their faculty and students in the participating departments local listening posts to gauge where UI faculty are in each of the departments regarding these discussions.
 - d. In spring 2021 the AAU will have a virtual site visit with each of the institutions to learn more about the plans that are being developed.

- e. For summer 2021 there are plans for either an in-person or virtual meeting to bring together the participating faculty and administrators from each of the eight universities to discuss jointly their developing plans.
 - ii. Year Two (Fall 2021): Implementation of the programs' developed plans.
 - iii. Year Three (Fall 2022): Further implementation and onset of assessment.
- A survey will be administered to the faculty and students in each of the participating departments in fall 2020 and at the end of year three to assess how faculty and student perceptions and thoughts related to the initiative may have changed over the span of the grant.

- Funding

- i. The grant is centered around driving institutional change and very limited inter-institutional grant resources are available primarily only for faculty members intended originally for travel between participating institutions, in addition to attend the summer 2021 inter-institutional meeting and for the convening of data team members.
- ii. Each of the participating departments have been given a substantial amount of resources. Building on the Graduate College's Innovation in Graduate Education Challenge Grant awards offered in 2018, one hundred and twenty thousand in funds over the three-year period has been committed for each of the departments to be able to effect change however they deem the best for each of their departments. Their involvement as the initiative unfolds will enable information to be shared across the Grand Challenge recipients to obtain a broader impact across campus.

- University Organization (AAU Scheme) – Team Leads

Four primary team leads comprised of Graduate College administrators, faculty and students from participating departments (Project Leader, Keller): Administrative Team (Varga, Team Leader), STEM and Humanities (Campo and Teitle Team Leaders, respectively) and Data Transparency Team (Jenkins, Team leader).

- Data Transparency

One of the goals of the project is to have transparent data collection with regard to student enrollment and student outcomes and to have that information reported on the web sites of each of the participating departments so that prospective students and current students can see what those trends are in both enrollment as well as in placement data.

- Outcomes

By virtue of implementing the goals of the initiative, considerable potential changes could transpire depending on the outcomes within each department.

5) Q&A with Melissa Meisterheim, ESL Programs (10 minutes)

Melissa Meisterheim, Director of [English As A Second Language](#), presented to the Graduate Council on the offered programs and requirements for the [Iowa Intensive English Program \(IIEP\)](#), [Teaching Assistant Preparation in English](#) (TAPE), and [English Speaking Proficiency Assessment \(ESPA\)](#)

- TAPE

- i. ESPA. All students for whom English is not a first language and who have first-time appointments as graduate teaching assistants (TAs) are required to take the [English Speaking Proficiency Assessment \(ESPA\)](#) exam administered by the ESL Program to assess their effectiveness in speaking English (i.e., oral language and listening skills) before they are assigned assistantship responsibilities. Students receive official notification (i.e., the ESPA requirement) when they receive their teaching assistantship offer letters ([CLAS Administrative Manual – Graduate Appointments](#) > Forms > 2020-21 *TA Template for an Offer Letter for Graduate Assistants*, Pg. 4). Departments (DGS/admin liaison) are contacted by the ESL program to submit the names of their students in need of testing and the ESL Program thereafter contacts the students that have been identified with specifics about the test.
- ii. ELPT. A supplement to the ESPA test is the [English Language Performance Test \(ELPT\)](#) designed to measure prospective TAs' ability to communicate in English in a classroom context in their own field of study. [[Website excerpt TAPE](#): The ELPT is given to students who have scored 50 or 55 on the ESPA and to foreign language TAs who have scored 45.]

[[Website Excerpt Results – ESPA & ELPT](#) :

Exam result forms contain the following information:

- i. The Level of Certification achieved by the examinee
- ii. The types of teaching assistant responsibilities the student has language proficiency to perform
- iii. The TAPE program courses, if any, which the student is required to complete.]

- Retesting

Students who do not achieve the required passing score on the ESPA can retest if they take one of the required TAPE classes or if they wait an entire year.

Q&A

- Take-aways

- i. Exemptions/Non-Exemptions. If the student has completed within two years of their appointment the [Educational Testing Service](#) TOEFL exam and has an official speaking score of twenty-six or higher and listening score of twenty-five or higher, they are exempt from ESPA.
- ii. Notwithstanding University of Iowa Office of Admission requirements, a Bachelor's or Master's Degree conferred from a U.S. institution of higher education or a degree received at a school where English is either the first language or language of instruction (e.g., International Teaching Assistant programs), degree recipients as such are not exempt by the University's ESL Program *if the student or department has identified that English is not their first language*.
- iii. The three public universities governed by the Board of Regents (BOR)—the University of Iowa, Iowa State University, and the University of Northern Iowa—have the same English As a Second Language (TAPE) requirement and exemption policies.
- iv. Currently the ESL Program is undertaking an internal review (i.e., an ESPA survey, keeping track of occurring trends, determining enhancements to current practices/policies, etc.) and the director will be meeting with Russell Ganim, Associate Provost and Dean of International Programs, to share how the faculty have envisioned improvements. It was stated that the TAPE programming—given its vibrancy and a field of study extensively researched (i.e., in areas of testing, courses, guidelines for students, etc.)—is regularly reviewed. It was also put forward that a broader conversation might include as well other academic units in addition to the ESL Program, such as the Graduate Admissions Office and the Graduate College Office.

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 AM

Future 2020-21 Graduate Council Meeting Dates

2020: October 15, 29, November 12.

2021: January 28, February 11, 25, March 11 April 1, 15.