

Graduate Council Meeting January 28, 2021

Present: Professors: Badovinac, Cwiertny, Doucette, Forbes, Gardner, Gfeller, Hoffmann, Hribar, Kang, O'Shaughnessy; Graduate Students: DeYoung, Gabriele, Piegors; Graduate College Personnel: Arbisi-Kelm, Danger, Keller, Teitle, Varga.

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

The meeting was called to order by Dean John Keller @ 08:18 AM.

1. Announcements and Updates from the Graduate College

- i. Dean Keller welcomes back Graduate Council representatives for the Spring 2021 semester. Wendy Danger is officially resuming Graduate Council secretary duties.
- ii. The presidential search is underway. The search committee, after holding virtual forums, has developed candidate criteria and the position is being advertised. At this point the committee work has quieted down with the search firm receiving inquiries about the position.
- iii. Given that remote instruction is being implemented for the semester, the Graduate College May commencements most likely will be held virtually. The decision on whether commencements are held virtually will be made by the Office of the President.
- iv. The federal government CARES act granted UI funding allocations to the Graduate College and provided emergency funds to graduate students. There are discussions on campus about how to distribute the "CARES ACT 2.0" funding. There is little information available about a third stimulus bill, stay tuned.
- v. The Graduate College is working with the Associate Deans for Graduate Education to distribute funds to PhD and MFA students who were greatly impacted by COVID. A workflow intake form will be utilized in the nomination process. Associate Dean Campo is coordinating this process in collaboration with Dean Keller, Associate Dean Varga, and Donna Welter.

2. Review of Graduate College strategic plan – drafting Phase I priorities

Council members received a copy of the draft strategic plan, written by a committee co-chaired by David Cwiertny and Ann Ricketts, that was submitted to Provost Fuentes. Since that time a pandemic erupted and there was a change in the Provost position. The revised strategic plan timeline asks for revisions to be made and submitted to Provost Kregel by March 1st. Our strategic plan and many other strategic plans in units across campus will be folded into the University of Iowa strategic plan. The University's 2022-2027 strategic plan will be submitted to the Board of Regents for their approval.

The Graduate College leadership had an afternoon retreat last week to review the strategic plan. The SWOT analysis and draft strategic plan documents are extremely thorough. There are 75 action items over five years, approximately fifteen action items each year. It is an ambitious plan. We must be realistic about the constraints of flat finances and the lasting impact of the pandemic and not overpromise given our infrastructure. Today we highlighted items that our leadership team identified as action items to prioritize.

The plan is broken into four sections: student success; research and scholarship; diversity, equity, and inclusion; and public engagement.

Student success: Individual development plans (IDPs) are a best practice. Shelly Campo has incorporated the use of IDPs in fellowship nominations, a lever the Graduate College controls. The Graduate College is often operating as influencers and collaborators. We disperse these best practices where we can and advertise them to many campus stakeholders (Directors of Graduate

Studies, Associate Deans for Graduate Education, Graduate Council). Mentor training of new faculty is not a position in which the Graduate College has authority. We are looking to expand a mentoring academy at the university, but are not in a position to do that. Supporting mental health in conjunction with UI Counseling Services is in the works. Looking at graduate assistantships within the UI Counseling Services that serves graduate students.

A question was raised about how well five years of funding support is implemented across campus. Generally speaking STEM disciplines are close to this, and use research assistantships as primary funding resource. Arts and Humanities disciplines do not have as much research funding available and are dependent upon teaching assistantships which vary from year to year. Graduate College fellowships augment the program's five-year funding model.

The terminology listed in the column "indicator of success" are methods rather than specific measurements. At the time of strategic plan drafting there was a lack of information to base goal metrics on. The committee felt the Graduate College leadership is better positioned to identify what measure is deemed successful. Furthermore, it is difficult to create metrics for the Graduate College when many of the decisions (e.g. funding) is driven by culture within the curricular programs. Incentivizing culture change through funding mechanism mandates may be the way to establish a baseline and monitor improvement. It was noted that a five-year strategic plan will at some point expect the Graduate College to report measurable progress on actions. Bragging about success is difficult when there is not a measuring mechanism. A recommendation was to rename the column title of "indicator of success" to "response." It would be exciting to talk to faculty, postdocs and graduate students about how to measure student success.

With the pandemic shifting the way education is being performed, is there an opportunity to prioritize some of the pandemic lessons learned (e.g. electronic dissertation defence, new graduate student orientation in ICON) and long term financial/social dynamics (e.g. state appropriations, mental health concerns) into the strategic plan.

Currently the Graduate College is working on improving best practices surrounding: IDPs, mental health and wellness, holistic admission, and five-year student funding models. The Graduate Council are interested in the Graduate College developing best practices around faculty training and mentoring, underrepresented minority recruitment and retention (retention is correlated to financial support), and exploration of diverse career paths. A representative remarked how they would like to see the Graduate College sustain current staff commitments over expanding into new committees and advisory boards.

A suggestion was made to reorder the action items in order of Graduate College priority.

The meeting was adjourned at 09:19 AM.

Future 2020-21 Graduate Council Meeting Dates

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