

Minutes of the Committee of the Faculty of the School of Graduate Studies- 05/08/2019

Present: Katherine Perkins, Ivan Bodis-Wollner, Juan Marcos Alarcon, Mark Stewart, Nicholas Penington, Riccardo Bianchi, Richard Kollmar, Diana Dow-Edwards, John Carter, Sabina Hrabetova, Bob Wong, Stacy Blain, Ivan Hernandez (*taking minutes*), Doug Ling (*arrived late*).

1) Proposed by-laws changes

A hand-out was given to the Committee members showing the proposed new wording (attached). Everyone agreed that the changes are good. We will present the 2 amendments at the Assembly and put them on the ballot.

2) Elections in June-Nominations for Program directors and Program Executive Committee.

Program Directors Dr. Richard Kollmar (MCB) and Dr. Juan Marcos Alarcon (NBS) will be stepping down. (Dr. Kollmar has served two consecutive terms). Drs. Chirico and Kubie were nominated to become new MCB and NBS program directors. Dr. Perkins requested more nominations to have a true election. In BME, Dr. John Carter will run for re-election as program director.

There are some rearrangements happening in the BME program. NYU wants to have its own program independent from SUNY Downstate. Therefore, SUNY will create its own independent program. Dr. Carter is working on creating the courses. (See more below.)

Dr. Perkins suggested that the outgoing PDs should be encouraged to run for the Executive Committee so that they would be available to help the new PD. She asked members present if they would like to run again for the program executive committees. Drs. Blain, Penington, Bianchi, Bodis-Wollner and Hrabetova agreed to run in the upcoming election.

3) Brief reports on progress of Ad hoc committees to review courses

There was a discussion about the Middle States requirement for the review of courses. We confirmed that those courses that are specific to a program should be reviewed within that program. However, certain courses are from outside of the strict program structure such as Biochemistry I and II, Scientific Writing, the Responsible Conduct of Research, Graduate Statistics and Human Immunology. The Committee of the Faculty is responsible for reviewing those courses.

For Biochemistry: Dr. Perkins (chair) reported that the ad hoc committee to review the Biochemistry course has met twice, the second time with three students (2 NBS and 1 MCB). They have a report draft and are editing that currently. One thing she wanted to share before the report is ready is that the two NBS students felt that they would have benefitted from taking also the latter part of the Biochemistry course. The students felt that creative scheduling would allow NBS students to take Biochemistry II in the first semester simultaneous with Unit 6. A discussion ensued. There was some feeling in the group that the NBS students are lacking MCB knowledge. It was discussed whether it can be a Biochem-MCB course. Dr. Perkins pointed out that this idea was considered in the past at the time the medical school moved the neuroscience unit out of the spring to begin in November. At that time, initial enthusiasm for a Biochem-MCB course was not sustained when the actual logistics of creating that course were considered, along with the effect it would have on the existing successful MCB I/MCB II series. Dr. Blain thinks that it is feasible for NBS students to attend some of the classes within the MCB course to improve MCB coverage for NBS students rather than creating a new course. She said the MCB course is modular, that at present the order of topics is arranged to accommodate professors' schedules. Dr. Kollmar agrees with Dr. Blain. He also pointed out that a new MCB-for-NBS-students course is not

feasible at our current enrollment. Another problem with respect to the NBS students is the academic load since Unit 6 is taught at the same time as Biochem II. If we add particular classes from MCB1, it will increase the load. We may have to reduce coverage of some topics in the current Biochemistry course if we did that. Dr. Perkins said we may want to think about possibly reducing coverage of metabolism if we did that. Dr. Alarcon feels that the NBS program needs to have more advanced courses.

We decided to have an ad hoc committee review the coverage of MCB for NBS students and to consider having NBS students take certain parts of MCB I or II to supplement their NBS courses. It was noted that some MCB material is currently taught in the NBS courses. It was thought that laying side-by-side the course topic lists would be useful.

Volunteers:

Richard Kollmar

Stacy Blain

Nick Penington, but he suggested Peter Bergold would be better

Bill Chirico was suggested, who is the MCB II course director

For Scientific writing: Dr. Hrabetova (chair) is reviewing the course with Drs. Chirico and Kollmar. They will follow the review plan that the Biochemistry ad hoc committee used: review of materials then meeting with students to ask questions, then writing up a report.

The other ad hoc committees have not met yet. The thought is that they could meet in the fall so that not all the courses would be reviewed simultaneously and so that we could get into a rotation of course review.

4) Rotation plan for reviewing courses. The group agreed to review the courses that fall outside a program every three years. Dr. Perkins said that she could add a course review section and the review schedule to the Presiding Officer file that Dr. Mimi Halpern started, which provides tips and continuity as presiding officers pass down the document to their successor. Dr. Alarcon suggested that the reviewing of courses that do fall within a program also occur at least every 3 years, so that each program director organizes a review of the program courses at least once within his term as program director. The committee members present agreed to the three-year plan. Dr. Stewart said that the accrediting agencies care that students review courses and also that they can do so anonymously- pooling three years worth of student comments would help with the anonymity factor.

5) Courses offerings. Katherine passed out a sheet of the course offerings. Some courses are listed under old headings like pathology or pharmacology or biochemistry, and it was asked if there could be a single heading for courses that do not fall within a program. The current headings may be needed in order to find the courses when registering.

When Dr. Perkins asked if any students are currently taking Graduate Statistics, Dean Stewart said that Jay Weedon is no longer willing to teach the course because he is overworked now that Demetri Stefanof, the other statistics person, has left. Dr. Alarcon said that NBS students typically pass their qualifying exam in the fall and then take statistics the following spring. We have a problem. See more about statistics below.

6) Faculty Governance web page. Dr. Perkins showed us the faculty governance page that Aaron Cormier and the Centerwide and COM executive committees have set up. The group voted to set up a similar page with Aaron for the graduate school.

7) Report of Dean Mark Stewart: A new award has been created (Dean's Award for Comprehensive Excellence). There was a discussion about whether MD/PhD students should be eligible in the May just after their defense or the year they are graduating. We decided in the May just after their defense. We looked at the list of students that Dr. Perkins passed out to see who is eligible this year (those grad students who defended this academic year).

Budget. Dr. Stewart said we are OK with the budget and broke down the approx. \$50,000 budget (\$10,000 for each program director and approx. \$8000 for each seminar series). Tom Gray, who understood the graduate school tuition waiver completely, has left Downstate.

BME program. NYU wanted to break off and have their own BME program. Downstate wrote a proposal that NYU is accepting. Current BME students are grandfathered in the existing program. We will not be accepting new BME students until the new format for our BME program is fully developed and approved, which is anticipated to take approximately two years. Meanwhile, students applying to the BME program will be considered for MCB or NBS. This opens up the possibility of us having Masters students in BME.

The competitive renewal grant proposal with Medgar Evers was not funded. We are trying again. It is a strong proposal.

There is a new proposal (MARC program) with Brooklyn College that was submitted in January that can bring new students to Downstate.

The Dean of the School of Public Health wants to create an epidemiology PhD program through the graduate school and a PhD program in Medical Education, but it is going slow. The question was brought up whether the faculty of the School of Public Health could teach the Graduate Statistics course now that Jay Weedon cannot. Dr. Stewart said that all of that has to be negotiated. There was some discussion of School of Public Health faculty that may be useful for us with our research statistics. Names mentioned were Carl Rosenberg, Michael Joseph, and Usha Govindarajalu (used by Stacy Blain).

It was also mentioned that the external review report came in January. Dr. Stewart said he will send it to Dr. Perkins. Dr. Hernandez requested it too.

There was a long speech by Dr. Wong about lack of new faculty and the graduate school. He said that traditionally the time of hiring of a new chair was a time of growth for the graduate school as the new chair hired new faculty. Part of the current reason for the lack of hiring of new faculty is lack of start-up funds. Dr. Stewart said that we have also been asked to address the budget shortfall by not replacing faculty who retire or leave. Dr. Wong thinks that that faculty should push for the hiring of new faculty.

8) Report of the programs:

NBS (Dr. Alarcon provided the following information and the NBS student review of courses via EMail):

1. Students (25 + 3 defended + 2 on leave)

- 3 defended recently
- 1 between pre-defense and defense
- 2 nearing pre-defense
- 3 more (in year 5 or 6) should be nearing pre-defense but are not
- 2 Advanced (in year 4)
- 1 additional in year 4 should be advanced but has not proposed
- 2 Proposed (in year 2 or 3)
- 3 nearing proposal (in year 3)
- 5 between qualifying exam and proposal (in year 2)
- 1 additional should be between qualifying exam and proposal but has not done exam (in year 2)
- 5 in year 1
- 2 on academic leave

2. Student/Faculty Review of Program and Courses

- a. PI accountability in terms of training their students **
- b. Improve courses and more courses
- c. Recognition of student efforts in peer mentoring*

3. Other matters

- a. NBS Program Director transition
- b. NBS webpage
- c. Stringent QE and Thesis Committees to prevent students lingering in the program
- c. Need for SGS Faculty involvement
- d. Excerpts from an applicant's letter

Discussion of NBS report: *The students would like to be recognized somehow for their work on course review committees and as peer mentors. It was suggested that perhaps a mechanism to give them teaching credit for that work could be devised. **The students would like to have more PI accountability in the training of students. This comment got a strong response from committee members who felt that different PIs are going to have different styles. Katherine suggested that perhaps it would be appropriate to make a simple timeline file that got sent to all PIs when they took on a new student that outlines the expected timeline. Katherine said that she remembers a form that she signed to become a student's PI officially. Some people thought that form was still in use and others thought that it was perhaps not still in use. We need to check on that. Perhaps a guide of expectations could accompany that form signing.

MCB. Dr. Kollmar reporting. Several MCB students have (finally) defended. The first-year class has been doing very well academically.

BME. Dr. Carter reporting. Two students successfully defended this spring. Two students will propose this fall and another will re-propose. The courses he has been working on are:

Imaging

Materials and Basic Mechanics

Optics and Lasers

Signals

Instrumentation

Fluid mechanics and Micro-fluidics

Radiation Biology and Safety

Tissue Engineering

Numerical Methods

Dr. Carter knows of some Poly faculty or former Poly faculty who would be willing to teach in these courses. He also mentioned that it might make sense to consider a masters program in medical physics. He is getting a lab with electronic stations set up.

9) Centerwide assembly will be May 10 at 3PM and Grad Assembly May 30 at 3PM in PHAB CR2E.