

Minutes of the Committee of the Faculty of the School of Graduate Studies 12/10/2018

Present: Katherine Perkins, Ivan Bodis-Wollner, Juan Marcos Alarcon, Maja Nowakowski, Mark Stewart, Helen Durkin, Nicholas Penington (*taking minutes for Ivan Hernandez*), Riccardo Bianchi, Richard Kollmar, Xian-Cheng Jiang, Diana Dow-Edwards, John Carter, Sabina Hrabetova, Bob Wong.

Missing: Stacy Blain, Greg Gick, Peter Bergold, Doug Ling, Randall Barbour, Bill Lytton, Sundeep Mangla, Ivan Hernandez

An appeal was made for everybody to come to the semiannual meeting of the Graduate School Faculty on Wednesday at 3:30 in lecture hall 1B.

First order of business was to discuss the resolutions from the University Faculty Senate (statewide) as it proposes to make SUNY a "test optional school" with regards to the SAT and GRE, meaning that the SAT and GRE would not be a required part of the application. This is of relevance to us because the Graduate School uses the GRE in the application process. The current policy is that each applicant must submit a GRE or MCAT score. The question was asked: How important is the GRE to applicant assessment for the admissions committee? The general feeling was that it was important but that we should keep our current policy of no threshold score for admission. It was asked whether the TOEFL test was a requirement for foreign applicants (it is requested from them). The graduate admissions committee tries to be holistic in its use of the several parameters used in the application process. It was stated that when we do not know the rigor of a particular school, it can be difficult to assess a GPA, then the MCAT or the GRE is very helpful in assessing a student and especially with foreign students.

The GRE consists of three parts and very often the students do poorly in language if English isn't their first language, but those students often do very well on math. The NBS and MCB admissions committees have been using a table with something like 7 criteria and giving a score for each to come up with a total score. GRE score is one of those criteria. The job of the admissions committee, it was decided, would be more difficult without a GRE score. The question will be raised at the Semi-Annual Meeting of the Grad School Faculty on Wednesday.

The Graduate School needs to have spring elections, and so one of the first orders of business at the semiannual meeting will be to create a nominations committee, which needs to be elected at the meeting.

Program Directors are only allowed to serve two consecutive 3-yr terms and so Dr. Richard Kollmar will be ending as program director of MCB August 31, 2019. Dr. Alarcon raised the suggestion that there be a transition period so the new Program Director can learn the job. This was thought to be a good idea, but two stipends would not be available for this overlap period. Dr. Perkins suggested that the outgoing PD should be encouraged to run for the Program Executive Committee so that they would be available to help the new PD. We also discussed creating a helpful document that could be passed from program director to program director, like the one that has been passed from presiding officer to presiding officer.

Discussion about the Middle States requirement for the review of courses: It was decided that those courses that were run by NBS and were specific to NBS should be reviewed within the NBS program and the same goes for the BME and the MCB programs. However, certain courses are from outside of the program structure such as Biochemistry one and two, Scientific Writing, the Responsible Conduct of Research, Graduate Statistics and the two Immunology courses. It was discussed that we should have

ad hoc subcommittees that include student members to review these seven courses. Dr. Alarcon said that the NBS students working on course committees have been extremely helpful with making changes to the NBS courses. We decided to have three different ad hoc subcommittees- one for Biochem 1&2, one for the two Immunology courses, and one for Scientific Writing, the Responsible Conduct of Research, and Graduate Statistics. Katherine gathered the names of volunteers and suggestions of names of persons who were not present for each of the three ad hoc subcommittees.

Biochemistry 1&2 volunteers were Richard Kollmar and Nick Penington. Suggested other names were Alan Gintzler, Greg Gick, and at least one student. The two immunology courses: Helen Durkin and Maja Nowakowski volunteered. Suggested other names were Allen Norin, Rauno Joks, Haseeb Siddiqui, Chris Roman, and at least one student. For Scientific Writing, the Responsible Conduct of Research, and Graduate Statistics: Sabina Hrabetova, Diana Dow-Edwards, and Ivan Bodis-Wollner volunteered. That group will also need a student. It was suggested that the student president and Ellen Telesca can help to identify students who would be willing to sit on these committees.

Someone commented that the list of courses that was distributed by Ed Throckmorton might need to be updated. Some of the titles of courses on the list seem to be the old titles. There are several things at play. One is that some courses may have changed names but are still using the former name on the list due to the fact that the old name is still the official name of the approved course. Some retired courses are left on the books in case we want to give them in the future. Some courses do not have official syllabi, etc., and so use a Directed Readings course number.

Dean Mark Stewart reported that the original estimate of \$10 million that needed to be cut from the budget of the COM and the graduate school in order to pay for UUP raises at this time is apparently more like \$2.7 million. The point was raised that several highly paid administrators are leaving in January and quite a significant savings will be coming from those salaries.

Downstate was finally able to pay the external reviewers for the report on the Graduate School. They had to be hired as faculty and then fired in order to pay them! We haven't seen the report yet but hopefully we will soon since they have now been paid.

There was a discussion about how many active faculty there were on the email list for the School of Graduate Studies. Dr. Perkins said there are approximately 100 Downstate faculty on the list. Mark said that there are additional faculty stationed at other campuses. It is apparently not possible to make a mailing list in Outlook for people that do not have an Email address in the style `firstname.lastname@downstate.edu`. Those other names have to be added one at a time each time there is a mailing.

Someone raised the point that when the administration needs to reduce costs, the employee cuts fall disproportionately on faculty. Why don't they talk about reducing the number of administrators? This raises the question of what proportion of the budget is taken up by administration? It was remarked that on some SUNY campuses a review of the performance of administrators by the Faculty is a real thing.

One of the recommendations of the panel who reviewed the graduate school is likely to be that our main problem is that we need more new young faculty. When we hire a very highly paid administrator such as a Vice President for Research it makes it impossible to hire three new faculty. One of the casualties of the recent budget cuts is the simulation center, which will not be able to open this year.

Report of the programs: Starting with Dr. John Carter for Biomedical Engineering. It appears that we may be about to lose the NYU Poly affiliation, and this might require us to sunset the BME program here at Downstate. The person at Poly said that our current students will be grandfathered, but John is hesitant to take new students in 2019 with the future of the program being uncertain. NYU created their own Program with all of the teaching that they need to be done at NYU Poly. We have 11 students in the program now, and within about four years it is thought that all could be graduated. It's a shame but we may not have the resources here on campus to continue the program. Further discussion about this will be required.

The report of the MCB program by Dr. Richard Kollmar was that we currently have 23 students. Some have recently graduated or will graduate soon so we'll be down to 13 soon.

Comparing 2008 to 2018, we can see that NBS has approximately the same number of students, but MCB has a much smaller number of students, so there has been some shrinkage in this program.

The report of the NBS program was that we have 29 students and that progress within the program is normally distributed now (pretty graph), and most of the students are making good progress. One of the problems that was identified by Dr. Alarcon was that we have a shortage of faculty who are willing to teach within this graduate program, particularly in the field of behavior.

Someone pointed out that we should be sure to Email the grad student president about the faculty assembly on Wednesday. Dr. Perkins said that she just read the by-laws today, which say that there should be one non-voting student member of the assembly. Dr. Perkins will send the Email.