

## Minutes of the Faculty Assembly of the School of Graduate Studies

May 30, 2019

Attendance: approximately 30 faculty plus several graduate students

### Dean's Report:

1. Dr. Stewart said that our BME Program, which has been run in conjunction with Brooklyn Polytechnic, now NYU, is splitting off from NYU. NYU asked to take it over. We asked SUNY our options. One was to separate, with both schools offering BME programs. We agreed to separate. We will run our own BME Program. We can cover all the academics here that we need, thanks in large part to John Carter. In the past, we did not have rights to the Master of Science degree for BME; the Masters was housed at NYU. Now we will have the option to set up a Masters in BME here. Every student currently enrolled in BME is protected under existing terms and can take whatever courses they need at NYU. We are currently not admitting new BME students until the new program is fully reviewed and approved. That is expected to take one or two years. Students who apply to the BME program now can be admitted as NBS or MCB with the opportunity to transfer to BME when the program is fully reviewed and approved.
2. Pipeline programs. The RISE grant with Medgar Evers was scored but not funded. The revision is going in soon. The MARC grant with Brooklyn College will allow them to set up a Neuroscience major with students getting their research experience at Downstate.
3. The report of the external review of the graduate school said that we need to have a student mistreatment policy. A group of students is working on starting that process. We also need a way for students to evaluate their lab experiences in a way that preserves anonymity. About 6 years ago we reviewed lab experiences on a large scale with a student questionnaire. Students could report their experiences in different labs. When the results were summarized, it was done in categories, not naming labs or students. There were labs with all positive experiences, labs with mixed positive and negative, and labs with all negative experiences. Residency and Fellowship programs struggle with the issue of how to preserve anonymity as well. Some of them accumulate data and have a three-year or five-year report. Dr. Stewart has raised the issue with other deans and with Dr. Imperato.
4. Faculty asked questions. One was for clarification of Masters degrees. Currently we use our Masters option only to give terminal Masters degrees to students who have done sufficient work for a Masters degree but who will not complete a PhD. If we did accept Masters students, the first big chunk of tuition would go to offset our tuition waiver and would not be income for us. The Bridges students (students taking courses in the COM curriculum as a post-bac program) will be granted a Masters degree using our Masters in Physiology. Dean Stewart has been approached about two new Ph.D. programs. One is a PhD in Epidemiology which would be taught by Public Health faculty but granted from the School of Graduate Studies. The other is a Ph.D. in Medical Education. In particular, students are interested in gross anatomy teaching. Dr. Stewart has been approached by Dr. Lee Eisner, by a current student, and by a student at the Graduate Schools fair/jobs fair. There were 100 more posters at this year's Research Day than at the previous year's Research Day. There were about 40 posters from Orthopedics. Dean Stewart has been approached by a Downstate group about possibly publishing the abstracts.

### Presiding Officer's Report:

The slates of nominations for the three program directors and program executive committees were shown and opened for additional nominations from the floor. The slate will be open for nominations until Wednesday, June 5.

There will be two proposed amendments to the By-laws on the ballot in June (attached to these minutes). One is about School of Graduate Studies representation on the Centerwide Executive Committee. The second one is two parts. The first part names the Committee of the Faculty as the group responsible for regularly reviewing the courses (or forming Ad hoc committees to review the courses) that do not fall within a specific program, and the second part names the Program Executive Committees (or ad hoc committees formed by them) responsible for regularly reviewing the courses that fall within their program. The Committee of the Faculty endorses both amendments.

At the most recent Committee of the Faculty meeting, it was decided that the courses will be reviewed every 3 years, both the courses that do not fall within a particular program and those that do. Discussion ensued. The proposed amendment to the by-laws says "regularly" rather than every 3 years, because an amendment to the by-laws requires a 2/3 majority vote, and we may find that a different schedule is better than every 3 years and would have to change that in the by-laws by a 2/3 majority if we found that it needed changing.

### **Update on Course Review:**

The Biochemistry course is being reviewed by an ad hoc committee whose members are Perkins (chair), Kollmar, Gintzler, Rushbrook, Gick, Penington. At our second meeting we invited 3 students (2 NBS, 1 MCB). The students were basically pleased with the course. The NBS students took the first 70% of the course. This policy was implemented when the College of Medicine changed the schedule of their Neuroscience unit to begin in November. The 2 NBS students said that they would have benefited from taking the whole Biochemistry course and suggested that could be accomplished with creative scheduling. The committee strongly suggests the addition of a mini project to the course involving the protein databases available through NCBI. There may be project material available online. There was student enthusiasm for such a project. We also suggest the addition of one or two lectures covering additional structural biology. Other material may have to be trimmed to make room for that. We suggest that a packet of material and/or a suggested reading list be given to students accepted into the graduate school, particularly those whose undergraduate coursework did not adequately cover the prerequisites necessary to be successful in the biochemistry course. Finally, there is concern on the part of the committee about the possibility that several key course faculty could be retiring soon. We suggest that one or two new biochemistry/structural biology faculty be hired in the very near future.

There was some discussion about whether it is appropriate for NBS students to take Biochemistry as a required course and why Biochemistry is required. Why not Molecular and Cellular Biology or a Biochemistry/ Molecular Biology/Cellular Biology combo or indeed even Computational Neuroscience instead. Our approved NBS degree with the state has Biochemistry as a required course. We would have to have a change approved at the SUNY system level and the state level. NBS students do get some molecular and cellular biology in the Molecular and Cellular Neuroscience course. In the recent Committee of the Faculty meeting, we agreed to put a group together to look at these course syllabi and see if NBS students might benefit from taking some modules of the MCB core course: Richard Kollmar,

Stacy Blain, Nick Penington (but he said Peter Bergold would be better), and hopefully Bill Chirico. Bill Chirico agrees. Juan Marcos Alarcon said that September and October are currently light in coursework for NBS students in their first semester, and that would be a time that some MCB modules might fit into the schedule.

Sabina Hrabetova is chairing the Scientific Writing ad hoc review committee. The other members are Bill Chirico and Richard Kollmar. They had their first meeting right before this meeting. They will invite students to their next meeting.

Other courses that need to be reviewed that do not fall under a program are Responsible Conduct in Research, Statistics\*, and Human Immunology. We took names of faculty volunteers for reviewing these courses at our last Assembly. We will get to those reviews in the coming academic year to spread out the reviews and get on a rotating review schedule.

\*Statistics Course: Jay Weedon is no longer willing to teach the course because he is overworked now that Demetri Stefanof, the other statistics person, has left. There was some discussion about who could teach the course. We all agreed that the course is essential to have. Faculty were encouraged to reach out to Dr. Stewart or Dr. Perkins with ideas and possible faculty for that.

Dr. Perkins announced that she has a chart with faculty who are members of the School of Graduate Studies and the program(s) to which they belong. People may vote in the election only in programs of which they are a member. If you want to see which program(s) you are a member of, see her. There are a few faculty who are members of the School of Graduate Studies but not a member of a program. That can be remedied by supplying your CV to the Program Director(s) so that the Program Executive Committee can vote to accept you into the Program. This can be a speedy process.

There are useful files posted on grad school web site:

<https://www.downstate.edu/grad/resources/forms.html>

One of the useful files is the form for signing up to be a thesis adviser. Please use the form. It has a section for co-advisers as well.

At the most recent Committee of the Faculty meeting, we voted to set up a School of Graduate Studies page on the Downstate Faculty Governance web page. Dr. Perkins did that with Aaron Cormier.

<https://www.downstate.edu/faculty-governance/school-of-graduate-studies/index.html>

The question was asked: Should we post minutes of the Committee of the Faculty meetings there? Someone suggested we post minutes of the Faculty Assembly there. Someone else said that if there is ever any sensitive material, it can be left out of the posted minutes. We had a majority vote to post the minutes of both the Assembly meetings and the Committee of the Faculty meetings there, leaving out any sensitive material.

The NBS students recently did a courses review survey which included general feedback as well. They want to know if there is a mechanism by which students can receive credit for peer mentoring or course review committees work? Dean Stewart said that they can currently get teaching credit for peer mentoring, but he does not advise that all teaching hours be peer mentoring hours. Someone commented that some students have difficulty accumulating enough teaching hours, and Dean Stewart said that to be competitive for teaching jobs, they should accumulate more than the 50 required hours

of teaching. One student present suggested that we use graduate students as TAs in graduate school courses (that the student has taken and did well in). Dr. Michelson suggested that we might offer both a Distinction in Service and a Distinction in Teaching at graduation similar to the Distinction in Research that some medical students receive. There was general agreement that this possibility should be explored.

**MCB Report by Dr. Richard Kollmar, MCB Program Director:** Several MCB students defended their thesis this year. We are down to 20 MCB students, which is 10 fewer than when he started as Program Director 6 years ago. However, the quality of the students is very good. All of the new students did very well in their courses. The fewer number of students in the MCB Program is largely due to the declining MCB faculty. Losing Mahmood Hussain, in particular, has had a detrimental effect. We should offer a greater number of advanced courses than we do. We appreciate the Immunology course run by Helen Durkin and Maya Nowakowski. A lot of MCB students use that course as one of their advanced courses. We thanked Dr. Kollmar for his 6 years of service as MCB Program Director.

**BME Report by Dr. John Carter, BME Program Director:** There are 11 BME students. Three will propose in the fall. Two of the three are very aggressive about their work and will likely finish their theses in good time. Two students interested in BME have been accepted this spring. One will enroll as an NBS student and one as an MCB student. Dr. Carter has been working on planning the courses we will need as we split our BME Program from NYU. Dr. Carter spoke about the machine shop. The equipment is old. He asked that people who expect to use the machine shop please contribute a nominal amount into a fund to fund equipment repairs. \$200/year would be sufficient.

**NBS Report by Dr. Juan Marcos Alarcon, NBS Program Director:** There are 25 NBS students. Three defended this academic year. Three more students are expected to defend over the next 4 months. A lot of positive things have been happening in the NBS program. The students have been very active on the new NBS Student Committees (course, grant and career development) and in peer mentoring, which has strengthened the NBS Program PhD training. Dr. Alarcon showed us a slide of the distribution of students across the stages of the PhD work, which showed even distribution across the PhD milestones and showed that the bottleneck at thesis proposal has been relieved. The projected time-to-degree has been reduced to 5.5 years. The improvement has been largely due to early constitution of the thesis committee. He also showed us the new web site for students in the NBS program. So far only students and NBS executive committee members have access to the site. It is password protected. The students have worked very hard on it and have done an excellent job. Dr. Alarcon echoed Drs. Kollmar and Carter in saying that our students are superb and said that we need more faculty involved in courses and mentoring.

There was no new business and the meeting was adjourned.

## Proposed Amendments to the By-laws:

1.

### Proposed NEW wording:

The Presiding Officer and Presiding Officer-Elect of the faculty of the School of Graduate Studies shall serve as voting members of the Centerwide Executive Committee of the Faculty and Professional Staff of the DMC. Representatives of the faculty of the School of Graduate Studies to other bodies within the State University, where these are not otherwise described, shall be appointed by the Committee of the Faculty of the School of Graduate Studies.

### To replace this OLD wording:

Representatives of the Graduate School on the Committee of the Faculty and Professional Staff of the DMC shall be the Presiding Officer, Presiding Officer Elect, Secretary, and two members elected by the Committee of the Faculty of the Graduate School. Representatives of the School of Graduate Studies to other bodies within the State University, where these are not otherwise described, shall be appointed by the Committee of the Faculty of the Graduate School.

### Rationale:

This change to the by-laws will match our by-laws to the current practice of the Centerwide Executive Committee of the Faculty and Professional Staff of the DMC.

## 2. Proposed additions to the by-laws are in bold lettering.

Section A: Committee of the Faculty

Item 4. Functions:

**g. (with re-lettering of following items) The Committee of the Faculty shall review the School of Graduate Studies courses that do not fall under a specific Program on a regular basis and may appoint *ad hoc* subcommittees to fulfill this function. The individual Program Executive Committees are responsible for the review of the courses that fall under their programs (see Item 5ac).**

Item 5. STANDING SUB-COMMITTEES OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE FACULTY

a) EDUCATIONAL POLICY AND CURRICULUM

Functions:

**c) The Executive Committees of the Programs, or *ad hoc* subcommittees they appoint, shall review the courses that fall under their Program on a regular basis.**

### Rationale:

These by-laws additions will fulfill the requirements of our accrediting bodies that faculty review the courses on a regular basis.