

Graduate Council 2023-2024

Oct 5, 2023

Members present: Robin Warne, Nwamaka Anaza, Khaled Ahmed, Scott Collins, Kelly Benden, Heidi Bacon, Lisa Brooten, Hale Yilmaz, Benjamin Richardson, Iraklis Anagnostopoulos, Andrew C Wilber, Liliana Lefticariu, Tomas Velasco, Myla Burton, Liliana Lefticariu, Jennifer Spreng, Ahmad Fakhoury, Ayodeji (Ayo) Oyekunle, Benjamin Richardson, Chris Wienke, Courtney Simpkins, Hale Yilmaz, Courtney Simpkins, Mandeep Redhu, Matthew Young, Rhonda Kowalchuk, Rolando Gonzalez, M Cecil Smith, Karen Jones

Executive-Officio: Austin Lane, Sheryl A. Tucker, Costas Tsatsoulis, Julianne Wallace, Julie Dunston

Guests: Elaine Jurkowski, Jennifer Horton, Michelle Kibby

Meeting started at 8:00 AM

Consideration of the minutes of the previous meeting:

- Postponed

Remarks from the Chancellor: Austin Lane

Data-Driven Decisions

- Lane emphasized the significance of data in making informed decisions. He highlighted how, in previous years, they had lacked substantial data to support their actions but praised the current ability to use data to guide actions.

Student Enrollment

- Lane discussed the development of a comprehensive enrollment management plan. This plan aimed to address the challenge of declining enrollments, with a focus on both undergraduate and graduate student numbers.
- He reported an overall Fall 2023 enrollment of 11,359 is a 2.3% increase in enrollment from Fall 2022 of 11,107 (252 additional students).
- Additionally, he mentioned that they enrolled an additional 100 students after the tenth class day, which could have raised the enrollment to over 11,400 students.
- New First Time in College student enrollment is 1,621, which is an increase of 103 (6.8%) from Fall 2022 of 1518
- Transfer student enrollment is increased 10.8% from 1072 in Fall 2022 to 1188 students in Fall 2023
- Saluki Step Ahead Transfer Initiative experienced a 121% increase from 58 in Fall 2022 to 128 students in Fall 2023
- New Graduate and Professional student enrollment increased 11.8% from 973 in Fall 2022 to 1,088 in Fall 2023
- Overall Undergraduate students from the Southern Illinois region increased 7.2% from 702 in Fall 2022 to 754 in Fall 2023
- New First Time in College students from the Southern Illinois region increased 7.7% from 286 in Fall 2022 to 308 in Fall 2023

- He also mentioned strategic initiatives to attract transfer students, which included partnerships with community colleges and collaborations with out-of-state institutions.

Online Education

- Fully online students increased 9.2% from 1,949 in Fall 2022 to 2,128 in Fall 2023.
- He explained their plans to expand online programs in partnership with academic institutions and mentioned specific programs that would be launched.

Diversity and International Students

- International student enrollment increased 6.5% from 801 in Fall 2022 to 853 students in Fall 2023.
- Increase in the diversity of our student population:
 - Two or More races students increased by 11%
 - American Indian/Alaska Native students increased by 7.7%
 - International students increased by 6.5%
 - Hispanic students increased by 5.6%
 - Black/African American students increased by 2.2%
 - Asian students increased by 0.4%

Retention and Future Recruitment

- Lane highlighted their focus on improving student retention rates, comparing it to their past recruitment efforts.
- He announced ambitious goals for future recruitment, aiming to reach 15,000 students by 2030.

Tuition Increases and Employee Compensation

- Lane explained that tuition increases were made possible due to tuition revenues and state appropriations. These increases, in turn, facilitated a 2% pay raise for employees.
- He mentioned that this raise was part of collective bargaining agreements and would be reflected in employees' paychecks.

Faculty Salary Equity Study

- Lane discussed an upcoming faculty salary equity study, explaining that it aimed to address salary disparities among faculty members. He mentioned the scope and objectives of the study.

National Rankings

- Lane emphasized the importance of national university rankings. He presented a rubric used for ranking universities and highlighted areas such as graduation rates, peer assessment, and accurate data reporting that affected their ranking.

Remarks from Associate Provost: Julianne Wallace on behalf of Provost: Sheryl A. Tucker

Retention Metrics for Graduate Programs:

- Tucker highlighted the importance of tracking "time to degree" in graduate programs as a key retention metric.
- Suggested that programs should examine their time to degree reports to assess the effectiveness of policy changes and curriculum adjustments.

- Emphasized that 100% retention in graduate education is not necessarily ideal, as it may indicate misalignment between students and programs.
- Advocated for early identification of students who are not a good fit and helping them find alternative programs.

Maritime Title Policy:

- Tucker mentioned the 2017 resolution on a maritime title policy. However, she mentioned the absence of documentation related to this policy on the faculty Senate side.
- Suggested that the policy be revisited and potentially updated to address concerns.
- She believed that the policy was generally in good shape but suggested some minor tweaks to address concerns that had arisen.
- Indicated that the Graduate Council and Faculty Senate would be involved in this process.
- Noted the need for clarity regarding whether titles are honorary or require nomination and board approval.

Graduate Faculty Status:

- Jones mentioned that there is a category for Emeritus within the granting of graduate faculty status, and this process involves program input.
- Highlighted the need to align this process with the policy under discussion to avoid duplicity.
- Acknowledged the similarity between those seeking graduate faculty status and those seeking continued involvement in the institution.

Salary Raises and Equity Study:

- Mentioned that raises for Collective Bargaining Agreements (CBAs) are scheduled to take effect in October, with retroactive payment to be on the November pay.
- Discussed the request for proposals (RFP) for a salary equity study, stating that a draft RFP has been reviewed.

Remarks from Vice-Chancellor for Research/Dean of the Graduate School: Costas Tsatsoulis

Graduate School Enrollment:

- As of last week, the Graduate School received more than 1,000 applications.
- Out of these applications, 310 students were admitted, and it's noteworthy that 260 of the admitted students were international.
- A clear call to expedite the processing of these applications was made to ensure a swift response to prospective students.

International Student Enrollment for Fall '23:

- The enrollment rate for admitted international students for the upcoming Fall 2023 semester is a concern.
- Only 38% of the admitted international students have confirmed their enrollment.
- This is significantly lower than the typical enrollment rate, which usually ranges from 55% to 60%.
- The possible reason discussed was the delay in issuing I-20 forms, which are necessary for student visas.

Summer Enrollment:

- Notably, there has been a threefold increase in the number of applicants for the summer term.
- However, there was a minor error in the figures mentioned during the meeting.
- Despite this increase, there is room for improvement in the enrollment process, as 233 students enrolled out of 733 offers, resulting in a 31.8% enrollment rate.
- The suggestion is to streamline and expedite the admission process to increase the yield.

Initiatives and Recruitment Efforts:

- There are ongoing efforts to launch an accelerated master's program across the university.
- The discussion also touched on the possibility of introducing a course-only option for master's degrees, which is not common currently.
- Collaborative initiatives, such as organizing a graduate fair with other universities, were mentioned to promote graduate programs.
- Special focus is placed on international recruitment, with plans to visit embassies in Washington, D.C., to attract students from countries like Vietnam, Sri Lanka, South America, and China.
- Concerns were raised about a decline in applications from China, with efforts being made to address this decline.

Efforts to Improve Student Retention:

- Retaining doctoral students is a challenge, with a notable attrition rate.
- It was highlighted that 10% of doctoral students are lost in the first year, and this increases to 40% by year six.
- A survey is being developed to gather insights into why students leave the program, including factors like academics, finances, and personal reasons.
- Plans are being made for a "Finish Your Degree" initiative, particularly for online programs, to encourage students who didn't complete their degrees to return.

Analysis of Yield:

- A survey was conducted to understand the reasons behind the decisions of students who were admitted but didn't enroll.
- Of the respondents, 61% indicated they wanted to defer their admission, while 9% said they would be attending.
- Importantly, more than half of the non-enrolled students considered the university as their first choice, indicating potential interest for the future.
- Surprisingly, the survey results showed limited emphasis on financial aid as a decisive factor.

Questions and Discussion:

- The discussion raised the idea of bringing prospective graduate students to the campus for visits.
- While the focus will likely be on doctoral students, it was emphasized that departmental visits and interactions with faculty and current students are crucial.
The goal is to create a welcoming atmosphere and possibly provide offers during these visits to increase enrollment.
- Ahmed discussed the need to recruit more students from other universities for their excellent master's program in computer science. He mentioned their efforts to advertise the program extensively within the department and labs but sought guidance on expanding recruitment efforts beyond their institution.

- Smith raised the possibility of providing deans and directors with a list of dropped-out master's students for follow-up. He wanted to explore ways to encourage these students to return to complete their degrees and whether such a list would be made available.
- Burton asked about the focus of campus visits for graduate students. She highlighted that as a graduate student, the priority was often to meet with faculty members and interact with current graduate students rather than just touring the campus. She also inquired about how to encourage departments to take a more active role in facilitating these interactions during campus visits.

Remarks from Associate Dean and director of the Graduate School Karen Jones

TA Allocation:

- An ad hoc committee made recommendations for the allocation of funds for Teaching Assistants (TAs).
- TA allocations for the next year have been calculated and provided to deans after 10-day enrollment counts.
- Deans will use these allocations to make decisions at the unit level and possibly for recruitment.

Fellowship Recognition Ceremony:

- A recognition ceremony for students who received fellowships will be held on the ninth. The ceremony is open to everyone, including faculty.

Website Feature:

- A new feature on the graduate school website allows the posting of information about student thesis, dissertation, or final work defenses.
- This information will be displayed on the front page to celebrate student accomplishments and promote awareness across campus.

Monthly Meetings with Directors of Graduate Studies:

- Monthly meetings are scheduled with directors of graduate studies to discuss the needs and support for students.
- The next meeting will be on November 15th.

Graduate Fair:

- A graduate fair is planned for April 5th in the Student Center art gallery.
- It will be promoted internally and externally to attract potential graduate students.
- Programs are encouraged to get a table and represent their offerings at the fair.

Remarks from Associate Dean of Library Jennifer Horton on behalf of the Dean of Library, John Palace

New Humanities Librarian:

- A new humanities librarian will start in January, adding a specialist in various subjects.

Banned Books Week:

- The library celebrated Banned Books Week, concluding with a talk on the McCoy collection (First Amendment books) in Special Collections.

Movable Bookshelves Issue:

- The basement has movable bookshelves with electronic sensors, which have started malfunctioning.
- As a precaution, access to these bookshelves will be restricted to staff only while the issue is investigated.
- Users will need to request books from the library catalog, and library staff will retrieve and make them available for pickup.
- Access to the stacks will be temporarily limited, mainly affecting older books published before 1996.

Remarks from council chair Scott Collins

Acknowledgment:

- Thanks everyone for their work on behalf of Grad Council amidst various ongoing activities.
- Committee Updates:
- Committees, including chairs and members, are actively engaged in various matters.
- Urges committee members to respond to chairs promptly as several resolutions are in progress, requiring input from respective groups.

Minutes Format:

- Shared minutes via email, open to feedback on the format to guide student preparation. The current format version is improved compared to previous versions.

Remarks from GPSC: Myla Burton

GPSC Grant and Travel Awards

- Burton highlighted the impact of budget constraints and DEE funding cuts on graduate students' ability to pursue professional development and attend conferences.
- Budget constraints and DEE funding cuts affect graduate students' access to professional development opportunities and conference attendance.
- GPSC (Graduate and Professional Student Council) offers various grants and travel awards to support graduate students in covering conference travel expenses, conference fees, and other professional development costs.
- These resources are available for a wide range of expenses, including software purchases and licensing tests.
- Burton encouraged attendees to inform graduate students about these available resources, which can be applied for through the [GPSC website](#).
- Tsatsoulis added that the Graduate School also provides \$500 for students presenting at conferences.

Exception Process for Non-Instructional Expenditure

- Tucker mentioned the existence of an exception process for non-instructional expenditure, allowing for the allocation of funds for specific needs, such as graduate students attending conferences.
- An exception process is in place to allocate funds for non-instructional expenditure, including graduate students' conference attendance.
- Funds primarily support instructional costs, faculty startup expenses, and other commitments.

- Requests for exceptions can be made through this process to address specific financial needs.

Discussion:

- Participants discussed the allocation of funds and emphasized the importance of supporting graduate students in various ways, including conference attendance and professional development.
- Tsatsoulis explained the source of funds, generated from application fees for graduate applications, and their commitment to supporting graduate students as much as possible.
- There are also student resources at the graduate school website from [here](#).

Remarks from Council Vice-Chair: Tomas Velasco

Coordination of Academy Grievance Appeal

- Velasco serves as the device chair of the council and is responsible for coordinating all academic grievance appeals.
- An appeal was filed by a graduate student during the summer, which was subsequently put on hold.
- Recently, the student reactivated the appeal, necessitating further action.
- To proceed with the appeal, two committees need to be formed - the Student Appeals Committee and the Student Grievance Committee.
- Both committees will consist of members from the Graduate Council.
- The Student Appeals Committee is the initial committee tasked with determining whether a hearing should be granted for the appeal.
- An email was sent out to solicit volunteers for these committees. Specifically, two professors and one student are needed for the Student Appeals Committee.
- As of now, one professor and one student have volunteered for the committee.
- Velasco still requires one more professor to volunteer for the Student Appeals Committee.

Remarks from the Dean's Council Cecil Smith

Enrollment Increase

- Smith acknowledged and celebrated the notable increase in enrollment across the university, considering it an exciting development.

Safety Training for Faculty and Staff

- A recent incident at the School of Education highlighted the need for safety training for faculty and staff.
- An emergency situation occurred when a student experienced a cardiac event, leading to valuable lessons on preparedness.
- The incident exposed certain shortcomings in handling emergency situations.
- Smith emphasized the importance of comprehensive training for various emergency scenarios on campus, extending beyond active shooter situations.

Remarks from Faculty Senate and Senator Elaine Jurkowski

RFP Process for Salary Compression

- President Dr. Bethany Raider has been collaborating with the Chancellor's Office to define the Request for Proposal (RFP) process for addressing salary compression.
- A designated representative will partner with Provost Tucker on a listening tour to identify issues for the academic affairs strategic plan.
- Focus groups involving various stakeholders will contribute to the planning process.

US World News Report Ranking

- The ad hoc committee for US World News Report ranking is working on strategies to integrate data for both the ranking and the academic strategic plan.
- Subcommittees within the committee have been formed for a more targeted approach.

Faculty Welfare Committee Initiatives

- The Faculty Welfare Committee is collaborating on rewriting the consensual relationships policy, specifically focusing on supervisory and evaluative relationships.
- This initiative involves cooperation with the university's general counsel.

Faculty Senate Operating Papers

- The Faculty Senate is making efforts to finalize operating papers for units that have not completed theirs.
- The Governance Committee is providing support and encouragement to facilitate this process.

Remarks from the standing committee reports and our committee information:

Remarks from new programs committee Heidi Bacon

Master of Science and PhD in Multi-disciplinary Biomedical and Biological Sciences

- The committee recently reviewed a Request for Program Modification (RME) for a Master of Science and a PhD in multi-disciplinary biomedical and biological sciences.
- The committee provided feedback and expressed concerns about potential confusion related to the program's name.
- They are awaiting resolution for these concerns.

Doctor of Education in Teacher Leadership

- The committee has initiated a review of an RME for a concentration Doctor of Education in teacher leadership within the School of Education.
- Committee members are providing feedback for consideration.
- The goal is to discuss the feedback and potentially present a resolution at the next meeting.

Remarks from Educational Policies Committee: Andrew Wilber

Resolutions Overview:

- A total of 6 resolutions were discussed in the last meeting.
- Four resolutions received consensus approval, indicating broad agreement among the participants, while two resolutions are still pending further discussion.

Dual Lingo Score Increase:

- One of the resolutions under consideration involved increasing the dual lingo score requirement from 105 to 115.
- Concerns were raised regarding how this change might impact student enrollment.
- To address these concerns, Karen and her team conducted an evaluation of admitted international students. The evaluation revealed that out of the 22 computer science students with verified dual lingo scores, only 3 had scores below 115. In contrast, the 5 engineering students all met or exceeded the proposed score of 115.
- The question at hand was whether there were still concerns about raising the dual lingo score. This change aimed to bring it in line with the existing acceptable levels for the IE LTS (International English Language Testing System) and TOFLE (Test of English as a Foreign Language) requirements, which are currently set at 80 and 6.5, respectively.

Additional English PTA Test:

- Another resolution discussed was the inclusion of an additional English PTA (Proficiency Test for Admission) as an acceptable acceptance test for international students.
- There appeared to be no significant concerns raised about this proposal, and it was slated for inclusion in the resolution.

Second Master's Degree Option:

- The meeting participants also considered a resolution related to allowing students to pursue a second master's degree, provided it is different from their first master's degree.
- A point of contention was the definition of "different" in this context. To provide clarity, it was suggested that the resolution could specify that a student can earn a second master's degree if the coursework or credits for the second degree are distinct from those of the first degree.
- There was a desire to ensure that students have the opportunity to obtain a degree from the institution, regardless of whether they already possess a similar degree from another institution or their home country.

Grievance Committee and Process:

- The meeting addressed the need to establish a clear and comprehensive grievance process. This process would outline the roles of the two committees involved and provide a schematic diagram illustrating how the grievance process should flow.
- The discussion also touched on requirements for participation and how the overall process should function. It was acknowledged that this was a complex issue that required careful consideration.

Operating Paper for Graduate Council:

- Wilber mentioned the impending release of an operating paper for the Graduate Council. This document is likely to contain important guidelines and procedures relevant to the council's operations.

AI Policies and Procedures:

- The meeting participants were awaiting a system-wide decision regarding policies and procedures related to artificial intelligence (AI). This indicated that discussions regarding AI governance were ongoing at a higher level.

Remarks from research committee and chair Liliana will.

Research Instrumentation Program

- The committee convened in September to assess applications for the Research Instrumentation Program managed by the Vice Chancellor for Research's office.

Recommendations

- The committee reviewed the applications and provided recommendations based on their evaluations.

Suggestions for Discussion

- In addition to recommendations, the committee is compiling a list of suggestions to be discussed with the Vice Chancellor soon.

Remarks from program review committee, chair Iraklis Anagnostopoulos

Program Review Status:

- Anagnostopoulos discussed the status of program reviews. Some programs are in the process of being reviewed.
- The APAP (Academic Program Assessment Plan) has gathered the necessary materials and will submit them to the subcommittee for discussion and approval.
- A question arose regarding who should approve the reviewers for these programs, whether it should be the subcommittee alone or the entire graduate council.

Reviewer Approval for Programs:

- Collins mentioned that there is no specific guidance in the operating paper regarding this matter.
- It is assumed that since program reviews are conducted at the committee level, the members participating in the committee should select the reviewers.

Timeline for Program Reviews:

- Iraklis mentioned that based on discussions and the calendar, program reviews should be completed by October 15th.
- He anticipates presenting the progress on these reviews in the next meeting.

Request for Proposals for TA Funds:

- Iraklis's subcommittee was tasked with preparing the request for proposals for the allocation of TA (Teaching Assistant) funds.
- Feedback was received from the executive committee, including a request for clarification on a few points.
- Iraklis shared a PDF document outlining the process for faculty to submit proposals for utilizing the TA funds.

Reapplication Policy for TA Funds:

- One key point discussed was the reapplication policy. If a faculty member receives an award, they must wait one year before reapplying.
- However, if a proposal is not funded, there is no restriction on reapplying in the following academic year.

Inclusion of Single Semester Projects:

- The subcommittee decided not to exclude courses or faculty with single semester projects, especially those taught only in the fall or spring.
- Standard duration is set at one year, but single semester projects require more effort to demonstrate efficient utilization of TA within the shorter timeframe.

Required Components for Proposals:

- The proposal must include information about participation and any previous support received to demonstrate progress from previous support.