**Minutes from Graduate College Council (GCC) meeting on May 15, 2023**

Meeting called to order 3:32 PM

Agenda order modified to accommodate Dean Rossi’s schedule. Approved by vote.

Minutes approved.

Paul Laux, Delight Morehead, Ryan Zurakowski, Heather Justison, Lou Rossi, Bill Repetto, Deb Jaisi, Margaret Werth, Nigel Caplan, Jesus Botello, Andrew Teplyako, Emily Davis, Shannon Robson, Adam Kamras, Danilo Yanich, Elise Corbin, Jeff Buler, Thanduanlung Kamei, Michael Michaud, Myae Han, Samuel Lee, Rebecca Davis, Rebecca Pompon, Suprawee Tepsuporn, Laura Desimone, David Burris, Jia Song, Jacqueline Washington, Kelli Kerbawy, LaRuth McAfee, Caroline Williams, Francis Kwansa, Mokshay Madiman, Siyan Wang, Cindy Rechsteiner, Mary Martin, Joseph Fox, Gregory Kane, Maria Anne Purciello, Samantha Akridge

Ramona Neunuebel

Minutes of April meeting approved with small correction.

Paul Laux: Some members will be transitioning off the council. Please check with your college about progress on voting in new members. Usually would like to have a transition meeting between old/new council. No June meeting. Too close to appointment of new members. New council meeting in Sept. Old group will continue until up and running. Also make sure the chairperson in each college is thinking about a new executive committee member if you are transitioning off the committee. We need experienced council members on the executive committee. New director needed. Paul is term limited.

**Dean Lou Rossi Report:**

**Admissions:**

Lou: Larger incoming graduate class than last fall. Greater interest in international students, Higher melt rate with international students due to self-pay. Class will be smaller on the doctoral side and larger on the masters side. Yield going down for PhD students even though enhanced conditions on the ground for them. Overall admissions are doing better than last year. Efforts to attract students from URM groups are encouraging.

**Housing:**

Student Life and Real Estate Office have secured some housing options for graduate students. About 50-70 beds. Rentals and previously used isolation units used during the pandemic, university housing for grad students with dependent children. Will communicate with eligible students starting next week with arrangements finalized in July.

**Discussion of minimum stipend packages:**

Representation of minimum stipends compared to peer and detractor institutions. In 3 years’ time, need to be at $27k 9 month stipend to be competitive (12 month equivalent $36K vs 2023 NSF GSRF is $37k). Losing students to institutions with higher compensation lines. Changes need to happen to make the stipend increases work. We have a minimum 3% increase last year and need to keep raising our minimum to be competitive. We gave our counteroffer program a $3k bump, be we need to get our stipends to an equal value to our peer institutions. Goal: 2025 should be a min stipend of $27k (9 month) to be competitive. The other facet is to support our grad students during the summer. About 75% have a commitment for 12 months support and we are working on that.

We value our masters’ programs, and in some cases we are too generous relative to our peers. If students work, they should be paid a fair stipend regardless of what program they are enrolled in. The question is about tuition and tuition scholarships. What we have:

1. Self-paying masters. The norm and students pay tuition. Generally, not on contract, but can be, i.e., a job on campus in their field.
2. Terminal masters degrees (e.g. MFA). Degrees that are accepted as highest in the field. Faculty are tenured with this degree.
3. Research-based masters. Tend to be funded on grants or other support. 40% of tuition is offloaded to grants.
4. Highly regarded masters programs. They are either partially or fully supported by foundations, alumni and friends.
5. Masters students in departments that do not have doctoral programs. Do we need to give them tuition and scholarship? We should consider a funding model where students receive the stipend only or where scholarships are for selective students. Not looking into this to hard now because the program may be the only access those faculty have to grad students.
6. Subsidized masters programs. Students are receiving stipends and full tuition scholarships paid for out of the base budget. These are the ones that if we reduce or eliminate receiving both simultaneously, we free up the base budget. These are the funds that can go towards stipend increases.

How does the Grad College step into this? First, moving our stipends to where they need to be. We are moving our minimum to $2045??? For nine months or $30,267. We realize that means the number of the competitive awards may be smaller in future years. For now, we will take it from reserves. Second,

Current steps:

1. Effective Sept 1. 2023, the stipend for Grad Scholar Award Fellowship, Doctoral Fellowship for Excellence and the Interdisciplinary Frontier Grad and posdoc program will move from the university min to $24,500 (9 mos) and $32,667 (12 mos). As a result, the number of these competitive awards may be smaller in future years. For now, the funds will come out of reserves.
2. We cannot support a department that doesn’t make progress on eliminating internally funded full tuition scholarships to their masters’ students.
3. We are looking at strategies across the board to have doctoral students on contract for 12 months instead of 9. For next fall you will see action probably on both these fronts.
4. Under discussion, greater tuition off-loads to grants (currently 40%) that would then provide revenue for stronger stipends. This is for the longer term; need to wait for new VP for research to come in to consider a greater tuition offload onto grants to provide revenue for stronger stipends.

Discussion:

**Andrew Teplyako:** What is the status of discussions to increase tuition offload to grants?

**Lou:** It is under discussion with the interim VP for research. They are trying to do benchmarking of offload amounts; however it is not always public facing at a lot of institutions. Institutions do not public facing information at peer institutions and some indicate just post that it is not more than 100%. Our negotiated amount is 40% university-wide. Right now the 40% goes right back to the colleges and each college does something different with it. We would have to work on that and it would take a lot of conversation to that and make a university wide policy.

**Rebecca Davis:** How do you see this new policy interfacing with university’s diversity recruitment goals? In the History dept., more that 20% of our admitted MA is our yield of Mas over the last 10 years have been students of color, the majority of which are African American. About 8% of incoming PhD students are of color, and in fact our funded MA has been feeder into our PhD program. Several students who come in as MA students would not have been able to do a MA if not funded because they are first-gen coming from families that were not able to provide support. Concern is with this change will lose a lot of ground in the major strides our department has made in terms of diversity. In general, a lot of our funded students are non-traditional students coming from places where they really need support to attend graduate school. We are really concerned how this policy change would affect diversity in our department.

**Lou:** I applaud your efforts in improving diversity. The Grad Scholars Program is the way to scholarship these students, but of course we cannot do it for whole programs at a time. I agree with the importance of providing opportunities, I just don’t think you can do it at the program level by making the entire program free.

**Paul:** To clarify, with the Grad Scholars would they be able to get their tuition cover then or just receive a stipend.

**Lou:** Both would remain intact. Now with what you are saying, makes me wonder if we should be expanding Grad Scholars more, but that is another conversation.

**Paul:** To clarify, the changes represent a policy you are making in terms of wholesale funding of programs, not a policy about funding particular students for particular reasons.

**Lou:** Correct

**Jeff Buler:** Concern is both increasing stipends by 8% per year over the next 3 years and increasing tuition burden on grants will make us less competitive for grants with sponsors because in our discipline, our stipends are already relatively high compared to peer institutions and our discipline. We are already hearing pushback from sponsors that our students are too expensive. So we are worried that we might entice graduate students to come here, but we won’t have grant money to support enticement because sponsors won’t award us if our students are too expensive.

**Lou:** I hear you and understand where you are coming from. This will have to be a more in depth conversation. Grad students all over are getting more expensive, not just UD. No matter what we do, we have to do it strategically and deliberately. There is no question they will not come her if they will be paid more elsewhere. Question is how to cover it and where we want to go with it. The flip side is having lower quality students.

**Jeff:** We feel that there is heterogeneity in what the standard might be for pay scales in different disciplines and for permanent positions, but also in graduate stipends. In our discipline, we are actually in the average across 15 institutions with the average around 24.5K for 12-month students including a tuition waiver. So, we are concerned that pushing the minimum up is homogenizing what the stipends across all disciplines where it will push us out of our ability to compete for grants. We do not have trouble recruiting students where we are at… we already are sort of above the average in our discipline and do not have the problem of students not wanting to come here because we are not paying them enough… they comment we pay a lot.

**Laura Desimone:** From the grad college perspective, are there tradeoffs between 9+3 month contract vs. 12-month contracts?

**Lou:** English, for example is a traditional 9-month program… i.e., TA and summer on your own. Would you rather be paid a lesser 12-month contract or a larger 9-month contract because you don’t have to look for a job… and is having a smaller 12-month contract provide security because you don’t have to look for a job… I don’t know what the answer is.

**Laura:** We are going to fund our students for 12-months, but sometimes they switch their internships in the summer, and we have to deal with the purpose codes. So we are debating whether to create a 12-month contract and then have to switch vs. just that they know they are to get funding for 12-months, but in doing so, we give them a 9-month contract then a 3-month. Does the Grad College care one way or the other?

**Lou:** That is a question for Mary Martin

**Carolyn Williams:** From student perspective, the student caucus has discussed the proposed changes and support student stipend increases. The vacation policy is not clear; 12-month contracts have rules on vacation policy, but it is not clear for 9-month contracts… 9+3 contracts need clarification for vacation and sick time. Comment to Dr. Jeff Buler’s points on stipend: It is struggle at the current stipend amount and I’ve been frugal. Costs are only going up…at a stipend of $36k there is more hope for having a rainy-day fund. Just providing perspective.

**Lou:** Caroline, you took the words out of my mouth. Also, the problem with the 9+3 would be that some rules are written for 12-month contracts so it would be on my end to perceive a way to get around some of those rights that come with a 12-month contract.

**William Repetto**: echo concerns re: 9+3 contracts as a work around for 12-mos.

**Council diversity equity and inclusion committee:**

**Paul**: DEI committee created on the books and not fully staffed for first 2 years and did not have a meeting. I asked Lindsay Naylor of the College of Ocean and Environment if she would revitalize the committee. She gathered a group of people and proposed a different direction structurally. Prior, Emily Davis recommended working groups, which are less formal than committees and can be spun up to do a job when necessary… I first thought this would mean decommissioning the DEI committee. The executive committee thought we could spin up the new working group to do things the DEI committee were not able to do. We can leave that structure in place for now. If the new group makes progress and makes good on proposals, then we would have the evidence that we don’t need a standing committee. Don’t need to take action at this point. Here is a short video from Lindsey.

**Video:** Lindsey- not playable.

**Synopsis**: The group would like to call themselves the CARES working group. Create Accessible Realities for Accessible Study. Core membership is currently from COE (Lindsey), CAS (Stan Lee), CANR (Leah Palm-Forester), CEHD (PhD student Ray Pratt), Grad College (Larousse McAffe). Will welcome new members. Charge: create and present items to GCC to be specific to grad education and eliminate systemic barriers to accessing success on campus. Potential proposals for fall: hybridizing grad college offerings; i.e., less formal offerings to allow for non-Newark campus inclusion; examining units’ reliance on the GRE; restructuring of fees such as graduated fees based on family income criteria.

**Report of Student Life Committee:**

**Ryan Z.** Mentoring/Research Supervision at UD. Most of the students at UD have good mentorship relationships with their primary mentors. About16% say they would not choose the same advisor, and a similar number would not choose UD. Further, a similar number have several significant areas where they are very dissatisfied with portions of the program, particularly, clear communication or understanding the clear path to graduation. We also collected a lot of anecdotal data by talking to people in student-facing positions such as program graduate advisors at the program level or in the College of Engineering. Jill Higginson was the person in charge of that. Greg Doppler and others in graduate student life are hearing a large number of serious complaints. The problem is that there are clearly unacceptable behaviors on the part of advisors, but such behaviors are not clearly forbidden. Some of the reported behaviors include exploitive behaviors requiring students to wash cars, tutor children, cook dinners; abusive behaviors include shouting at students, berating them in public, enforcing rites of passage that border on hazing rituals; questionable behaviors including moving the goal posts requiring ever-increasing amounts of work to graduate, advisors setting unreasonable work expectations, denying reasonable leave requests. These latter behaviors are labeled questionable because in each individual case data must be looked into.

In common with all behaviors, there are not any UD policies being violated when advisors behave this way. Campus policies tend to focus more on criminal things like sexual misconduct or violent behaviors. Problem – effective reporting and mitigation of the above problems does not exist.

* Students come to student-facing individuals with such problems
* When asked if want to officially report or start a procedure, students nearly always decline
  + Perceived power differential
  + High potential for long-term cost of reporting
  + If they lose a mentor, they might lose funding and there is no clear promised way to be picked up elsewhere
  + Potential to hurt long-term career by dealing with the fallout
  + Lack of clear written standards (and the students understand this) that behaviors are wrong and against the rules
  + No clear reporting pathway with hope of remediation of the problem
  + Students choose to stick it out and can suffer a couple of more years to graduate
* Mentorship training is increasingly available, though most faculty have not completed it

Recommendations from the committee:

* Accessible mentorship training for both faculty and graduate students should be expanded and implemented, e.g., trainer training, UD mentoring workshops, culturally aware mentorship workshop (Siemer Group).
* Each unit program college in the university should develop a clear written policy concerning standards and expectations for mentorship and research supervision of graduate students. The policy should be posted in an accessible manner on the internet.
  + The COE is currently developing a graduate student Bill of Rights, which can serve as a model for these documents.
  + We envision a tiered system with general requirements posted at the university level; at the program level include specific requirements about the types of jobs grad students do in that department.
* Mentorship should be a criterion by which faculty are evaluated.
  + In annual reviews and for promotion and tenure
* Programs should explicitly assign more than one mentor to each graduate student and encourage more formal involvement of other thesis committee members.
  + Addresses the fact that no one mentor can meet all the needs of a student.
  + Have multiple eyes on. If many faculty have eyes on the situation, the student has both more protection and better and broader mentorship behavior.
* A reporting process where people feel protected when they made such a report and the person involved would have the authority to enforce changes in the involved relationship.

We recommend having an Ombudsman office with a centralized site for reporting and that the person reporting to would have the authority to protect students from retaliation and enforce compliance with written policies. Thus, imperative to get written policies in place.

* Current report usually has no authority over the faculty mentors, i.e., no enforcement
* Department chairs or others reported to lack conflict resolution training
* Students recognize that department chairs have certain conflict of interests in that the long-term relationship with faculty members is competing with a short-term relationship with the students.

Suggest use of Ethics Point as a central repository for recording and tracking concerns. Proposal 1. The GCC recommends that UD promote and enhance the functioning of Ethics Point as a system for receiving, processing, and responding to graduate student issues regarding their relationships with faculty members (especially advisors and committee chairpersons).

2.The Graduate College Council recommends that Faculty Senate and the Provost require Departments to consider changes to their P&T documents (or to the faculty handbook, whichever is more appropriate) to include consideration of the quality of graduate advising and mentorship as one of the criteria to be considered for promotion and tenure for all faculty members with graduate student related aspects to their work activities. Documents should include a plan for assessing graduate student mentorship.

The whole policy was sent out for people to read.

Discussion:

**Paul:** What Ryan presented is a year’s worth of investigation boiled down here. The report was circulated last month with the idea it would come to a vote this month. The Student Life Committee would like a vote for the report to be formally sent to the Dean and to the Chair of the Faculty Senate with the statement that this report reflects the sense of the Graduate College Council.

**Siyan Wang:** I forwarded the document to my colleagues in the Economics Dept. Having more than one mentor for each graduate student would greatly increase workload. Are we going to reduce the job expectations for other categories like teaching, surveys, research? …or are we just going to increase workload for the faculty? Second question, how do we evaluate mentoring? If we put it in as part of annual evaluation and especially relevant to promotion and tenure, we know in teaching, course evaluations are biased…so if we ask students about mentoring, they are likely to be biased as well. Peer evaluation is not likely to work because it is not a classroom environment. If mentoring is added as an additional rubric, what is the additional benefit to the faculty? It may negatively affect P&T as some may not take as many grad students.

**Ryan:** If you serve on a dissertation committee, that already cares a time commitment. In our department, committee members are required to meet with students one-on-one at least once a year and required to attend at least 3 additional presentations of data preparing for the dissertation defense. It would just be a focus on letting the students know who people they are officially can talk to about research and career goals, i.e., their committee. If committee roles are fundamentally different in your department, that is something that I hadn’t considered about reporting. In terms of evaluation of mentoring, I think an effective way would be to have a mentorship plan for students, and add a question on what you have accomplished in mentoring. That line can be under service or teaching. So, in my mind, I don’t see having more than one mentor for each graduate student as dramatically increasing workload.

Nigel Caplan: I think these policies are relevant to master’s students… can we extend them to masters students as they make up the majority of graduate students?

**Ryan:** I had not known the policy excluded master’s students…if there is something in the language that does exclude them, please let me know so I can make edits.

**Nigel:** The language speaks to research students…a lot of master’s programs are not research programs.

**Caroline Williams**: The student caucus reviewed the document as well and are in support and thank the Student Life Committee and Ryan. For point number 5, we want to make sure students believe there will be consequence and accountability for abusive behavior by mentors. When we feel supported, we feel more productive. Should not be seen as a burden.

**David Burris:** What do you foresee as being the problem with exit interviews? They may help mitigate the power differential because of graduating and help people brave enough to spill the tea, but if you are going to be in the same field, there still is a potential for power differential. Maybe you would get a lot of silence. I am a little skeptical about the multiple mentorship idea. Good mentorships form organically, not by assigning mentors.

**Ryan:** In many cases, the advisor picks the students. It is a matchmaking type of scenario that doesn’t always work out. Students are often so engaged in their work that it is difficult to have interaction that is external to those of their committee members. We do get useful feedback from committee members with defenses and proposals, but largely being external we do not have a lot of interaction. Even if the invitations are there, we don’t use it just because there’s not often the time or the motivation to use it…perhaps most students really don’t see the need and maybe that is the issue. Having someone there and maybe some students feel like they don’t have anybody else to go to. With our students, we tried doing this thing with Empower. We’ve trained our students to take care of this other aspect of mentoring that the faculty advisor cannot do. Maybe it is worth thinking about, not necessarily like a parallel mentor, like another faculty member who fits some other aspects of mentoring like this Empower thing in mind.

**Danilo Yanich:** In the Biden school, folks pick us to be their mentor and it works well. I agree with you that I can’t get around my head that washing cars, baby sitting, etc. somehow because it is not written down, it is not disallowed. I can’t understand the need for the info, but I see this more as protection for those in this tail end…this is not all the other folks who are having an ok time. Regardless with what other faculty are seeing, I’m seeing more work. We have the responsibility, so these folks do not have these hassles.

**GCC Vote on Student Life Committee Report**

**Paul:** What we are voting up or down is on whether to send this report. The motion is the Grad Council is authorizing the statement from the Student Life Committee on mentoring and research supervision to be sent to the dean of the college and the president of the faculty senate.

* 21 votes in favor, 2 votes against, 2 abstentions

**Family Friendly Policies Working Groups**

Working group on funding minimum stipend, financial issues and housing.

**Joseph Fox:** Letter to Lou and Lou shared with the other Deans – While we have some hardworking student members, this letter was from the faculty members of the working group (Maria, Mark, Lisa Harshe, and Joanne). In our letter, we advocate for raising the min stipend and/or alleviating student fees of graduate students. This letter is driven by cost-of-living increases and not by other factors such as UD’s competitiveness in recruiting graduate students. As reported earlier in the year, our grad students are earning much less than they did 5 years ago with a group of people earning less than the living wage for the area. We wrote to advocate for raising the minimum stand and/or alleviating student fees for our grad students. Data accounting for inflations shows our students are earning much less than they did only recently. Housing costs have gone up significantly, in part, caused by increases in enrollment. Newark has been especially bad with the cost of rental units increasing by 43% since 2018. We are concerned by reports that our grad students struggle with basic food, housing, transportation, and medical needs. We are concerned about how these struggles effect the accessibility of graduate education at our university across the socioeconomic spectrum. We communicated we recognize addressing the problem would impact the rate at which we can hire and the number of graduate students that can be funded, however, we concluded that all mechanisms for addressing the problem should be considered. Members of the committee agree that the university should prioritize supporting our current students and their most basic needs. We therefore support an adjustment to graduate stipend/fees.

Working group family-friendly policies.

**Emily Davis:** UD doesn’t have family policy office, etc. We don’t have any subsidized childcare specifically for graduate or undergraduate parents and have many opportunities for growth.

Accomplishments:

* Now have a resource web page. Items included are links for:
  + Vaccinations required for children to be in school
  + Accredited childcare centers
  + What state benefits might you be eligible for
  + Many students are now under the poverty line and may be eligible for state grants to cover childcare
  + RA position dedicated continuing to coordinate resources for grad students with dependents.
* Map of lactation spaces. There are 5 total. According to the Office of Institutional Equity, 5 is very low compared to our competitors.
* Consultant brought in by Catherine Grimes to make a Trail Guide for graduate student parents. Report came back.
  + Report is geared toward lab-based programs, i.e., a graduate student in a lab taking leave
  + Report not geared to grad students on TAs, fellowships or other situations. Needs to be made relevant to graduate students across multiple fields.
* Maternity leave increased from 6 weeks to 8 weeks.
* Identified a clear need for faculty training on student polices. Faculty will need training and clear instructions about UD policies to ensure that they support their students appropriately comply with UD policies.
* Grant submission to fund childcare. We need consistency in applying for these types of grants and such efforts should be institutionalized rather than rely on a group of faculty volunteering their time together. We suggest that Office of Equity and Inclusion, with the support from the Grad College and student life maintain it. Getting $500k/year would go a long way in building the infrastructure and could leverage other funding to match. This would be the way to build capacity for childcare, which is a huge access issue.

New leadership and membership needed for this working group.

Faculty graduate students relations working group.

* Recommendations will be coming to you at the first fall meeting

**GCC Vote on Ombudsman**

The issue of having an ombudsman has been express by various faculty groups over a number of years.

**Paul**: Ombudsman Resolution: For reasons expressed by various faculty groups over a period of years, the GCC supports the establishment of the Office of an Ombudsperson at UD and directs this expression of support be conveyed to the Dean of the Graduate College and the President of the Faculty Senate.

Vote: 16 for, 0 against, 0 abstaining. Not a quorum due to the time. Will pass on that the vote reflects attendance at the time.

**GCC Vote on family leave time**

**Paul:** Lou expressed increasing the family leave policy from 6 to 8 weeks is important and reflects budget priorities of his office. The change in policy would affect approximately 10 people/year and the expense easily covered by the Grad College. While the Dean can implement the change as a policy matter, there was a request from the GCC to support him on the change.

**Resolution:** The GCC supports the Dean’s recently announced policy changes that enhance family leave provision for graduate students.

Vote: 18 for, 0 against, 0 abstaining. Not a quorum due to the time. Will pass it on noting the vote reflects attendance at the time.

**New Business:**

**Caroline Williams:**

* Propose that some type of formality for student voices to be earlier on in the agenda. Today had a heavy schedule, so in the future it would be good to have consistency and somewhere in the rules.
* Student caucus decided on 2 new co-chairs for next year, James Corman and Samantha last name?

Meeting adjourned 5:12 pm until fall.