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2-8-2008

Minutes of Meeting: Graduate Council, February 8, 2008

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Espiritu, Medy Mrs., "Minutes of Meeting: Graduate Council, February 8, 2008" (2008). *SGS Graduate Committees: Agenda & Minutes.* Paper 22.
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GRADUATE COUNCIL
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 2008
1:30 P.M., GILMOUR HALL 111

PRESENT: Dean D. Capson (Chair), Dr. P. Baxter, Ms. E. Bellhouse, Dr. K. Bennett, Dr. R. Cain, Dr. N. Charupat, Dean D. Goellnicht, Mr. S. Goshev, Dr. P. Guo, Dr. W. Lewchuk, Dr. T. Marlin, Dr. F. McNeill, Dr. J. Medcof, Dr. D. Pawluch, Dean C. Richards, Mr. J. Scime (Secretary), Dr. M. Waddington, Dr. P. Walmsley, Mr. S. Way, Dean D. Welch, Dr. D. Wright, Mrs. M. Espiritu (Assistant Secretary)

BY INVITATION: Dr. J. Nodwell, Dr. M. Stampfli

REGRETS: Dr. M. Hamed, Mr. J. Trzeciak

I. MINUTES

Graduate Council approved the minutes of the meeting of January 7, 2008 on a motion by Dean Richards, seconded by Dean Welch.

II. BUSINESS ARISING

Ph.D. Medical Sciences program: Changes in the comprehensive examination procedure

Dean Capson recalled that at its January 7 meeting, Graduate Council did not approve the proposed changes to the comprehensive examination procedure for the Ph.D. program in Medical Sciences. He explained that the Council was concerned over the lack of "comprehensive" element(s) in the recommendation. At the same meeting, the Council decided to table the proposed changes to the course requirements for the Medical Sciences Ph.D. program until the comprehensive examination issue is addressed.

Dean Richards moved, and Dean Welch seconded,

"that the two agenda items: (1) change in comprehensive examination procedure, and (2) change in the course requirements for the Ph.D. Medical Sciences program now be considered."

The motion was **carried**.

Dean Richards reviewed the revised document and explained that the strengths of the Medical Sciences program are its multidisciplinary and transnational research. He explained that the program is composed of faculty members from various departments such as Medicine, Pathology and Molecular Medicine, Psychiatry and Behavioural Neuroscience, Oncology, Obstetrics and Gynecology, Pediatrics, Radiology, Anesthesia, and Surgery. Dean Richards said the change is necessary to streamline the program and prepare the students as independent scientists through a research-intensive environment. Dean Richards then discussed the key elements of the written component: (a) significance of the proposal; (b) originality; (c) innovation shown in approaching the research problem; and (d) appropriateness of the research plan. Dean Richards explained that

the proposal is almost identical to the comprehensive examination procedure in the Neuroscience program. He further said that Biology's comprehensive examination is also based on grant proposals.

Dean Richards moved, and Dr. Medcof seconded,

"that Graduate Council approve the proposed changes to the comprehensive examination procedure for the Ph.D. Medical Sciences program, as described in the document."

Dean Richards then introduced Dr. M. Stampfli (Assistant Dean of Medical Sciences), who was invited to respond to questions.

One member asked if the student's topic for the comprehensive examination is somewhat connected to the supervisor's research. Dr. Stampfli acknowledged that the supervisor provides some input but the student's topic cannot be lifted in part or in whole from any of the supervisor's grant or grant applications. Dean Richards explained that the supervisory committee (not the supervisor) is involved in the selection of the examination committee members. He pointed out that the registration form clearly indicates that the student selects the topic. Dean Richards added that a member of the supervisory committee (not the supervisor) will act as the coordinator of the examination and advisor to the student.

Dr. Pawluch said she acknowledges the usefulness of the procedure; however, she is still concerned about calling the examination "comprehensive." She suggested discussing the issue at future meetings of Graduate Council. Dr. Wright commented that the conflict emerged from trying to call the process "comprehensive examination"—he said that perhaps it would be best to set the requirements for the comprehensive examination. He also wondered if the comprehensive examination should be required for all Ph.D. programs at McMaster. Dr. Waddington commented that last year Graduate Council approved the proposal to remove the minimum course requirements for the Ph.D. programs. He wondered whether the current discussion regarding comprehensive examination is meant to benefit professors or students. Dr. Stampfli responded that the proposed changes for Medical Sciences are in the interest of the students. He said the program conducted a survey among the Ph.D. students who have completed the existing comprehensive examination format, and there was wide support in favour of the changes. Dean Welch commented that, in his opinion, there is a need for comprehensive examination for Ph.D. programs and it is necessary to develop a set of requirements for the procedure. He said the revised document presented by Dean Richards for the changes to the comprehensive examination has addressed the concerns of Graduate Council. Dr. Medcof suggested approving the proposed changes for Medical Sciences and holding discussions of the issue at future Graduate Council meetings.

The motion was **carried**.

Ph.D. Medical Sciences program: Change in course requirements

Dean Richards reviewed the proposed change requiring students to take at least one 700-level course. Dean Richards explained that students entering the program at the Master's level are required to complete two half courses for their Master's degree and three half courses in total, if they transfer from the Master's to the Ph.D. program. He said additional courses may be

required if deemed necessary by the supervisory committee or by the student. Dean Richards commented that the reduction of course requirements would give students more time to focus on their research.

Dean Richards moved, and Dr. Pawluch seconded,

"that Graduate Council approve the proposed change to the course requirements for the Ph.D. Medical Sciences program, as described in the document."

The motion was **carried**.

III. GRADUATE SCHOLARSHIPS

Mr. Scime discussed the following graduate scholarships for approval:

1) The Sammon Munroe Ontario Graduate Scholarship
2) The Nick DiPietro Ontario Graduate Scholarship

Dean Welch moved, and Dr. Wright seconded,

"that Graduate Council approve the Sammon Munroe Ontario Graduate Scholarship and the Nick Di Pietro Ontario Graduate Scholarship, as described in the document."

The motion was **carried**.

IV. CLOSURE OF THE M.A. PROGRAM IN DIGITAL SOCIETY

Dean Capson explained that the M.A. program in Digital Society was a tri-faculty proposal that has gone through the internal approvals process and received approval from Ontario Council on Graduate Studies in 2006. He said the closure is due to resource issues associated with starting the program. In addition, Dean Capson said that there have never been any students enrolled in the program and OCGS approval expires in September 2008 if the program does not enroll any students. Dean Capson further said the Deans in Engineering, Humanities, and Social Sciences support the program's closure. Dr. Wright added that the Dean of Humanities views the new M.A. in Communication and New Media as a de facto replacement.

Dean Welch moved, and Dean Goellnicht seconded,

"that Graduate Council approve the closure of the M.A. program in Digital Society."

The motion was **carried**.

There was no other business and the meeting adjourned at 2:45 p.m.