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Minutes of Meeting: Graduate Council, January 7, 2008

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GRADUATE COUNCIL
MONDAY, JANUARY 7, 2008
9:30 A.M., GH-111

PRESENT: Dean D. Capson (Chair), Mr. L. Ariano, Dr. P. Baxter, Dean S. Crosta, Ms. E. Bellhouse, Dr. N. Charupat, Dean D. Goellnicht, Mr. S. Goshev, Dr. M. Head, Dr. W. Lewchuk, Dr. D. Pawluch, Dr. J. Medcof, Dean C. Richards, Dr. P. Solomon, Mr. J. Trzeciak, Dr. R. Viveros-Aguilera, Dr. P. Walmsley, Mr. S. Way, Dean D. Welch, Mrs. M. Espiritu (Assistant Secretary)

REGRETS: Dr. M. Boda, Dr. R. Cain, Ms. K. Espiritu, Ms. T. Jones, Dr. B. Kaczynski, Mr. J. Scime, Dr. M. Waddington

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I. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of November 8, 2007 were approved on a motion by Dean Goellnicht, seconded by Dr. Medcof.

II. BUSINESS ARISING

Fast-track Approval Procedure

Dean Capson reported that the fast-track approval procedure was discussed at the recent meeting of the Executive Committee of Graduate Council and the following suggestions were made: (1) include Graduate Council in the approval process; (2) revise approval process to better address the resource requirements issues; (3) produce a calendar of deadlines and requirements to guide the proponents on how approvals are obtained; and (4) include—in the list of faculty involved in the proposed program—detailed information regarding the faculty member's commitments to other existing programs (i.e., extent of involvement, whether the faculty member is half-time, etc.).

Information to be included on diploma parchment

Dean Capson explained that the Executive Committee discussed the issue of including the specialty and sub-specialty of a student's degree on the parchment diploma. The committee made the following recommendations:
- Investigate how other universities are addressing the issue
- Conduct an e-mail ballot among chairs/directors to determine if they support the proposal
- Dean Capson to discuss the issue with the Provost and the Faculty Deans

III. GRADUATE SCHOLARSHIP

Dean Capson reviewed the terms of reference for the Ira McDonald (Construction) Ontario Graduate Scholarship in Engineering. The scholarship will be awarded to a student in the engineering graduate program, preferably in the Department of Civil Engineering.

Dean Welch moved, and Dr. Walmsley seconded,

“that Graduate Council approve the Ira McDonald (Construction) Ontario Graduate Scholarship in Engineering, as described in the document.”

The motion was **carried**.

IV. CURRICULUM REVISIONS: REPORT FROM THE FACULTY OF HEALTH SCIENCES EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Medical Sciences: Changes in the comprehensive examination procedure

Dean Richards reviewed the proposed changes in the comprehensive examination procedure for the Ph.D. in Medical Sciences. Dean Richards outlined the proposed changes: (1) the written part of the exam will be in the form of a CIHR-style grant application which will focus on the student’s research area or any field in medical sciences that is of interest to the student; (2) there will be an oral examination based on the proposal; and (3) the committee will consist of the supervisor, one other member of the supervisory committee, and two faculty members from Medical Sciences. According to Dean Richards, the current format has caused various problems in the past and the Ontario Council on Graduate Studies has recommended that the program revise its comprehensive examination procedure. Dean Richards added that a survey was conducted among the Ph.D. students who have completed the existing comprehensive examination format, and there was wide support in favour of the changes.

Dean Richards moved, and Dr. Lewchuk seconded,

“that Graduate Council approve the proposed changes to the comprehensive examination procedure for the Ph.D. in Medical Sciences.”

Dr. Pawluch questioned the “grant-proposal style” of the examination; she wondered whether it meets the requirement for breadth of knowledge, which is typically associated with the comprehensive examination. While she acknowledged the valuable skills that students will acquire from this activity, Dr. Pawluch believes the grant application format is a reasonable substitute for a dissertation proposal rather than the comprehensive examination.

Dean Goellnicht agreed with Dr. Pawluch’s concerns. He read the relevant section in the graduate calendar regarding comprehensive examinations and said the proposed change does not reflect the calendar description of the comprehensive examination process. He said that a traditional comprehensive exam is meant to test a broad knowledge of a discipline or a field within a discipline. Dean Goellnicht also added that the calendar description of this examination should be revised if Graduate Council approves the proposal.

With respect to the observation that other programs have taken this route with their comprehensive examinations, Dr. Pawluch said there should be a discussion concerning the principle of changing the comprehensive requirement in such a fundamental way before Graduate Council approves any further changes. Dr. Pawluch added that McMaster might well decide that a rethinking of the comprehensive examination is necessary to keep the programs competitive, but she did not want to see the University simply drifting in the direction of change without considering the merits of the change.

Dean Richards commented that 50-75% of the students end up achieving positions in the academic or industrial institutions after attaining their doctoral degrees; and this type of examination will assist them in acquiring the grant writing skills needed for this purpose. In addition, Dean Richards said the proposed *Medical Sciences Comprehensive Registration Form*, which will be approved by the supervisory committee, addresses any problems that may arise regarding the student's research topic.

Dean Capson observed that Graduate Council's primary concern is the lack of sufficient "comprehensive" element in the recommendation.

The motion was **defeated** (6 approved, 1 opposed, 8 abstained).

Medical Sciences: Changes to the course requirements

In light of McMaster's decision to remove the University minimum course requirements for the Ph.D. degree, Dean Richards said the Ph.D. Medical Sciences program has proposed to change its course requirements by allowing students to take at least one 700-level half-course. However, if needed, the supervisory committee may require the student to take additional courses. Dean Richards said the new requirement would give students more time to focus on their research. In addition, he said the type of jobs students find after completing the degree is based on their research activity and manuscript production, rather than the number of courses they completed.

Dean Richards moved, and Dr. Solomon seconded,

"that Graduate Council approve the proposed changes to the course requirements for the Ph.D. program in Medical Sciences."

Given the context of the previous discussion regarding the "breadth of knowledge" issue, some members expressed their concern about voting for this motion separately because it seems that the proposed changes to the course requirements are closely related to the revision of the comprehensive examination procedure. After the discussion, it was decided to table this agenda item until the issue concerning the comprehensive examination has been resolved.

Dean Welch moved, and Dean Goellnicht seconded,

"to table the proposed changes to the course requirements for the Ph.D. Medical Sciences program until the comprehensive examination issue has been resolved."

The motion was **carried.**

V. FACULTY OF BUSINESS GRADUATE CURRICULUM RECOMMENDATIONS

Dr. Head reviewed the two curriculum recommendations from the Faculty of Business for Graduate Council information: (1) to allow MBA students to minor in Strategic Business Valuation. The courses required for the minor in Strategic Business Valuation are V700, and two courses from the following list: V701, V702, V703, V704, F724, F712, F721; and (2) to admit "accelerated" MBA students to the Health Services Management specialization provided they have a minimum of one year's work experience in the health care industry at the time of their application. There were no comments from the Council members.

VI. REVIEW OF THE SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES

Dean Capson referred the members to the report on the review of the School of Graduate Studies. Dean Capson explained that the report is a public document and will be discussed at the next meeting of the University Planning Committee. He informed the Council that the University of Western Ontario has also recently conducted a review of its Faculty of Graduate Studies.

Dean Capson reviewed the document and highlighted the following items in the report:

- Revision of the title of the Dean of Graduate Studies to "Associate Vice-President (Academic) and Dean of the School of Graduate Studies": The proposed title will clearly indicate the importance of Graduate Studies to the mission of the University.

- The proposed change in the role and function of the Associate Deans of Graduate Studies: The review committee recommends that the School of Graduate Studies appoints one associate dean who will report to the Dean of Graduate Studies and be accountable for some of the Dean's responsibilities. There was also a recommendation for each Faculty Dean to appoint an associate dean who will be responsible for all matters pertaining to graduate studies. This model is similar to the current function of the Associate Dean for graduate programs in the Faculty of Health Sciences. The report indicated that the proposed structure would ensure a better relationship between the School of Graduate Studies and the Faculties.

- The review committee recommended that the School of Graduate Studies identify its role in administering interdisciplinary programs.

- The review committee's conclusion that there is no clear focus for expansion of graduate enrolment at McMaster: Dean Capson said the Provost has established an academic priorities committee and he expects graduate expansion to be listed as one of the relevant issues for discussion by this committee.

Dean Capson asked the members to share the document with their departments; he also said the Provost would be interested in hearing comments regarding the report. Dean Capson also mentioned that the Ontario Council on Graduate Studies is currently undergoing a review and that there will be substantial changes in terms of how graduate programs are assessed. He invited the members to visit the website of the Ontario Council on Graduate Studies for more information.

There was no other business, and the meeting adjourned at 10:50 a.m.