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Minutes of Meeting: Graduate Council, March 15, 2004

Medy Espiritu Mrs.
McMaster University School of Graduate Studies, espiritu@mcmaster.ca

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GRADUATE COUNCIL
Monday, March 15, 2004, 9:30 a.m.
Council Chambers, Gilmour Hall 111

PRESENT: Dean F.L. Hall (Chair), Mr. L. Ariano, Dean V. Baba, Mr. R. Bashir, Mr. M. Bliemel, Dean D. Capson, Dr. J. Clark, Dean L. Finsten, Dr. M. Gauvreau, Dr. M. George, Mr. B. Li, Dr. S. Porter, Mr. J. Scime (Secretary), Dr. M. Stein, Dr. G. Steiner, Dr. C. Swartz, Dr. W. Sword, Dr. W. Taylor, Dr. D. Thompson, Dr. J. Xu, Mrs. M. Espiritu (Recording Secretary)

REGRETS: Dr. N. Agarwal, Dr. D. Clark, Dr. C. Cuneo, Dean S. Elliott, Dr. A. Herring, Dean N. Rahimieh, Dr. E. Werstiuk, Dr. C. Wilson, Dr. J. Wilson, Dr. C. Woodward

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Dean Hall welcomed Mr. Louis Ariano, the new University Registrar, and Mr. Bing Li, the new president of the GSA. He requested everyone to introduce themselves for the benefit of the two newcomers.

I. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of January 19, 2004 were approved on a motion by Dean Baba, seconded by Dean Finsten.

II. BUSINESS ARISING

There was no business arising from the minutes.

III. DEAN'S REPORT

Dean Hall reported the status of OCGS appraisals for the new programs as well as those programs that were up for periodic appraisals. The appraisal for the M.A. and Ph.D. for Classics was deferred to April 2004. The consultants who will review the Biochemistry M.Sc. and Ph.D. programs will arrive in early May 2004. The two consultants for Religious Studies arrived in late February 2004. OCGS have identified the two consultants for the M.A. in Globalization. Dean Hall has not heard anything yet from OCGS about the Masters in Rehabilitation Science. The Master of Engineering in Public Policy was submitted to OCGS in November 2003 and the Master of Engineering Entrepreneurship and Innovation was submitted in January 2004. OCGS delayed the processing of the UNENE Masters program due to some uncertainty concerning the participation of the University of Toronto. In the end, only three universities participated in the UNENE Master's program proposal: McMaster, Western, and Waterloo.

IV. AUDITING OF COURSES

Dean Hall referred to the proposal prepared by Dean Baba and Mr. Bliemel pertaining to auditing of courses. Dean Hall said the proposal did not receive a favourable response at the meeting of the Executive Committee of Graduate Council.

Dean Hall stated that one of the Executive Committee's concerns was the addition of an 'INC' notation on the transcript, if the student did not complete the conditions of the course. The Executive Committee thought that any form of notation should not appear on the transcript and suggested removing the audited course from the student's record as well. Mr. Bliemel commented that the purpose of the 'INC' notation is for the instructor to be able to gauge the extent of the student's participation in the course. Dr. Swartz commented that the proposal did not specify whether full time graduate students are required to pay additional fees to audit a course. Mr. Bliemel replied that currently McMaster permits full time graduate students to take as many courses as they need without paying additional course fees. Mr. Bliemel assumed this practice also applies to full time students when they audit courses.

Mr. Ariano noted that the proposed audit policy requires students to get permission from the instructor before they can audit the course. Mr. Ariano explained that it is not possible to register the courses for audit through the Solar Self-Registration System -- the audited courses have to be added manually on the student's record. Mr. Scime was concerned about the process involved in removing the audited course from the student's record if the course was not completed. Will the instructor be required to submit a memo/document to SGS to permit the deletion of the audited course from the student's record?

Dr. Thompson does not favour adding a notation on the transcript if a student audits a course because in his opinion, the "Audit" notation holds no meaning or significance. Dr. Sword suggested issuing a certificate of attendance, after a student completed the course.

The Council conducted a straw vote concerning the issue of putting an 'Audit' notation on the transcript. Result of the straw vote: 10 in favour, 6 opposed.

Given this outcome, Dean Hall requested Mr. Scime to look into the practical issues that had been raised.

V. EXTERNAL EXAMINERS FOR PhD DEFENCES

Dean Hall referred to the following recommendations of the Ad Hoc committee, which were presented at the March 1st meeting of the Executive Committee of Graduate Council: (1) to require the external examiner to participate in the defence. If travel to McMaster is not financially feasible, the external examiner will participate in the defence through video or teleconferencing; (2) to reduce the number of 'internal externals' from two to one; (3) the external examiner continue to have a veto over whether a thesis is defensible.; (4) two negative votes mean that the candidate does not pass at the first sitting of the defence, and the defence will need to be reconvened The decision at any reconvened defence will be by simple majority.

The Executive Committee of Graduate Council suggested at its March 1st meeting to convey the recommendations of the Ad Hoc committee to department chairs for comments. The comments from departments were compiled and circulated to the Graduate Council members. Most of the comments were not favourable: (1) departments do not have the funds to pay for the additional travel cost (beyond the $500 SGS contribution) if the external examiner is required to attend the defence; (2) might jeopardize the scheduling of defences if there is a limited number of

videoconference facilities at McMaster and at the external examiner's university; (3) the cost involved for the use of a videoconference facility might impose financial burden on departments; (4) certain students might find videoconferencing distracting.

After some discussion, the Council conducted a straw vote for each of the four recommendations.

Recommendation 1: *To require the external examiner to participate in the defence. If travel to McMaster is not financially feasible, the external examiner will participate in the defence through video or teleconferencing*. Result of the straw vote: 2 in favour, 11 opposed, 3 abstentions.

Recommendation 2: *To reduce the internal external from two to one* (assuming that the external examiner is present at the defence).

One member commented that the external examiner generally asks the most relevant questions at the defence. If the external examiner is not present at the defence, the supervisory committee will decide the result of the defence (3 to 1) which in some cases could result in diluted defences.

Result of the straw vote for Recommendation 2: 10 in favour, 6 opposed

Recommendation 3: *That the external examiner continue to have a veto over whether a thesis is defensible*. Result of the straw vote: 14 in favour, 2 abstentions

Recommendation 4: *Two negative votes mean that the candidate does not pass at the first sitting of the defence, and the defence will need to be reconvened. The decision at any reconvened defence will be by simple majority*. Result of the straw vote: 14 in favour, 2 abstentions

Since the Council did not approve Recommendation 1, the members thought that the Ad Hoc committee could no longer continue working on the recommendations.

Dean Baba moved, and Dr. Gauvreau seconded,

"that Graduate Council disband the Ad Hoc committee and thank the members for their efforts in formulating the recommendations."

The motion was **carried** unanimously.

VI. NEW COURSE DESIGNATION FOR STUDENTS TAKING COURSES FOR A DIPLOMA OR FOR POST-DEGREE CREDIT

Mr. Scime presented the proposal to create two new course designations, 'DIP' for diploma courses and 'CC' for certificate courses. Mr. Scime explained that currently students who are enrolled in a diploma or certificate program have no option but to use the 'EC' course designation. However, the regulation attached to EC – a designation that permits a student to drop a course if a failing grade is received and remove the course from the student's record --

allows inappropriate flexibility. This flexibility is not intended for those students who are in the diploma or certificate program as there is no option for dropping a course in these two programs. Furthermore, the creation of two new course designations would be valuable since it is currently becoming more complicated to keep track of degree and diploma programs due to the growing trend of students registering in more than one program at a time (e.g. Advanced Neonatal, Health Services and Policy Research).

Dean Capson suggested using the acronym 'CRT' or 'CER' for certificate courses instead of 'CC'.

Dr. Thompson moved, and Dr. Sword seconded,

"**that Graduate Council approve the two new course designations, 'DIP' for diploma courses and 'CRT' or 'CER' for certificate courses."**

The motion was **carried** unanimously.

VII. GRADUATE ENROLMENT TARGETS

Dean Hall referred to the document pertaining to a draft proposal from MTCU for a further Enrolment Target Agreement (ETA) for admissions in Fall 2004. The draft ETA calls for information on graduate student enrolment targets in the following disciplines: Natural Sciences, Life Sciences including Medicine, Social Sciences, Humanities, and Engineering. The document did not include any information about graduate funding. Dean Hall asked the members for their opinions and comments concerning the issue.

Dean Hall referred to a second document, which has the information on graduate enrolment growth at McMaster. Dean Hall commented that the bulk of the graduate enrolment growth occurred in Science and Engineering because of the availability of research funds in those two faculties. In response to Dean Baba, Dean Hall explained that the enrolment corridor for McMaster is defined by BIUs. McMaster has been above its enrolment corridor for nearly a decade now, and that is why it has not received any additional BIU income lately. McMaster does not get BIUs for visa students. Engineering, for example, has a large number of visa students, who do not contribute to the BIU counting. Dr. Swartz suggested conducting a projection exercise for all faculties with the aim of eventually transferring the responsibility to individual departments. The plan is to prepare the initial projections that will be given to the departments; in turn, the departments will continue working on these projections. After some discussion, the Council agreed that Dean Hall's three-year projection of graduate enrolment targets should reflect the recent past.

There was no other business. The meeting adjourned at 11:00 a.m.