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Minutes of Meeting, Graduate Council, September 25, 2012

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GRADUATE COUNCIL
SEPTEMBER 25, 2012, 9:30 A.M.
GH-111

PRESENT: Dr. A. Sekuler (Chair), Dr. N. Agarwal, Mrs. S. Baschiera (Secretary), Dr. P. Bennett, Dr. A. Campos, Dr. T. Chamberlain, Dr. D. Goellnicht, Mrs. B. Gordon, Dr. P. Graefe, Dr. A. Guarné, Dr. R. Hackett, Dr. C. Hayward, Dr. M. Heath, Dr. T. Hoare, Dr. A. Holloway, Dr. M. Horn, Ms. Y. Hunter, Dr. B. Ibhawoh, Dr. V. Igneski, Dr. M. Lawford, Ms. V. Lewis, Dr. J. McDermid, Dr. B. Milliken, Dr. S. Porter, Dr. T. Porter, Dr. H. Sheardown, Dr. C. Sinding, Dr. W. Wiesner, Dr. P. Zylla, Mrs. M. Espiritu (Assistant Secretary)

BY INVITATION: Dr. S. Denburg, Ms. Laura Harrington

REGRETS: Dr. P. Baxter, Dr. S. Fast, Mr. P. Self

I. Minutes of meeting

After the introduction, the minutes of the following meetings were approved on a motion by Dr. Chamberlain, seconded by Dr. McDermid: January 31, 2012; February 28, 2012; April 24, 2012; May 29, 2012; and June 26, 2012 (with minor corrections).

II. Business arising

There was no business arising from the minutes of the meetings mentioned above.

III. Report from the Associate Vice-President and Dean of Graduate Studies

Dr. Sekuler reported on the following activities:

- Dr. Sekuler thanked Dr. Peter Graefe, Dr. Allison Holloway, and Dr. Martin Horn for agreeing to be members of the McMaster Quality Assurance Committee. The committee reviews the examiners' reports arising from the undergraduate and graduate program cyclical reviews and submits a final assessment document to Undergraduate Council or Graduate Council.

- The Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP) reviewer site visits have been completed for the Biochemistry, Neuroscience and MBA programs. The McMaster Quality Assurance Committee will meet in October 2012 to review the examiners' report for each program.

- The Chemistry, Communications Management, eHealth, and Electrical & Computer Engineering programs are scheduled for the IQAP cyclical review. The examiners' visits for these programs will be scheduled some time in February-April 2013.

- The Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities approved the following programs: Master of Health Science Education (to commence September 2012); Collaborative Astrobiology program (to commence January 2013); and the Master of Finance (to commence next year).

- Dr. Sekuler plans to meet with departments whose graduate programs have been reviewed through the IQAP process to address issues/concerns that departments/programs may have encountered during the process.

- The Postdoctoral Fellows Appreciation Week (September 17-21, 2012) concluded with a number of successful events.

- The dates for the *Graduate Students Recognition Award* reception and the USRA poster session will be announced soon.

- A number of graduate space allocations are still available at McMaster, primarily at the Ph.D. level. Dr. Sekuler plans to meet with the Faculty Deans concerning this matter.

- McMaster's Strategic Mandate Agreement document will be submitted to the Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities at the end of September. The mandate agreement will outline McMaster's direction for the next several years in terms of its undergraduate and graduate enrolment targets. President Deane will provide more information about this issue in future.

- There were four recipients of the Banting Postdoctoral fellowships and ten recipients of the Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarships from McMaster this year.

IV. Report from the Associate Deans of Graduate Studies

Dr. Hayward reported that the research study on graduate programs and faculty evaluations is ongoing. She explained that the process whereby graduate students were asked to evaluate their programs and supervisors using evaluation tools provided by the research group will end this month. She said some students who participated in the process have emailed the research group raising some concerns in terms of confidentiality. Dr. Hayward hopes to have more information about the study at the next Graduate Council meeting. Dr. Sheardown reported that 150 students attended the NSERC scholarship workshop held on September 19, 2012. Dr. Sheardown said the presentation materials for the workshop are now posted on the School of Graduate Studies website for those who were unable to attend.

Dr. Agarwal reported that the orientation session for the new students in the MBA program was held several weeks ago. An evaluation of the orientation was conducted among the participants afterwards. New students in the Business Ph.D. program had their orientation along with students in other graduate programs at the September 5th *Graduate Students Day*. Dr. Agarwal said the approval process for the Master of Finance program has been completed

and he is now in discussion with Dr. Chamberlain regarding improvement strategies for the program. Dr. Ibhawoh reported that the French Ph.D. program is now in operation and student interest in the program has so far been impressive. Dr. Ibhawoh further said that the Faculty of Humanities is planning to introduce new graduate programs in the future. Dr. Porter reported that Dr. Chris Sinding has taken the initiative to develop more cross-departmental collaborations on the mentoring of students applying for scholarships by organizing two collaborative sessions for this purpose. The Faculty of Social Sciences will aim to build on this initiative.

V. Report from the Assistant Dean, Graduate Student Life and Research Training

In the absence of Mr. Self, Dr. Sekuler reported that the following workshops were held from April 2012 onwards: Improv workshops at Theatre Aquarius; thesis completion workshops; workshops in collaboration with MITACS and the City of Hamilton; and the McMaster Indigenous Studies Program. The *Graduate Student Day* and the *School of Graduate Studies' Welcome Event* held on September 5, 2012 were quite successful.

VI. Report from the Associate Registrar and Graduate Secretary

Ms. Baschiera reported that the nominations for two valedictorians for the 2012 Fall convocation are now open. The deadline to submit nominations is October 15, 2012. Ms. Baschiera added that the Faculty of Engineering will have a morning session for the Fall convocation this year.

VII. 2012-2013 Scholarships Committee of Graduate Council

Dr. Sekuler reviewed the membership list of the 2012-2013 Scholarships Committee of Graduate Council.

Dr. Hayward moved, and Dr. Sheardown seconded,

"that Graduate Council approve the 2012-2013 Scholarships Committee of Graduate Council membership list, as described in the document."

In response to a question, Dr. Goellnicht explained that it has been standard practice not to provide an alternate member from the Faculty of Business for this committee because MBA students are not eligible for scholarships and there are only a small number of students enrolled in the Business Ph.D. program. Dr. Sekuler said she will allow the Faculty of Business to provide an alternate member if it is the Faculty's preference to have one.

The motion was **carried**.

VIII. Report from the Faculty of Business Graduate Curriculum and Policy Committee

Dr. Agarwal explained that the Faculty of Business Graduate Curriculum and Policy Committee approved the proposed changes to the MBA student academic assessment process on September 17, 2012. Subsequently, the proposal was approved by the Faculty of Business on September 20, 2012. Dr. Agarwal explained that in the new process, students with an average grade below B- from courses taken to date will be assessed automatically by the Graduate Admissions and Study Committee to determine readmission. He said that in the current procedure, students' grades in the MBA program have to be converted to ensure eligibility to enrol in joint programs (i.e., Health Services Management, etc.) at McMaster. The new system will eliminate any grading issues with joint programs.

Dr. Agarwal moved, and Dr. Chamberlain seconded,

"that Graduate Council approve the proposed changes to the MBA student academic assessment process, as outlined in the document."

The motion was **carried**.

IX. Divinity College proposals – for Graduate Council information

Dr. Zylla discussed the following changes to the Master of Divinity and Master of Theological Studies programs offered by the Divinity College: (1) the total number of credit hours for the Master of Divinity was reduced from 90 to 81; and (2) the total number of credit hours for the Master of Theological Studies was reduced from 60 to 54. The proposals seek to align the Master of Divinity and Master of Theological Studies with similar programs offered at other colleges and universities in Canada. There was one correction on page 2 of the document: under *Master of Divinity (Current Curriculum), Biblical Studies*, one biblical theory course was not listed.

X. Graduate Certificate in Community Engagement

Dr. Sekuler recalled that Graduate Council received in the past a recommendation to develop a non-credit Graduate Certificate in Leadership and Community Engagement. At that time, Graduate Council did not approve the proposal, but rather provided comments and suggestions as to whether the proposed certificate would benefit students. With President Deane's *Forward with Integrity* letter identifying community engagement as one of McMaster's priority areas of development and Dr. Sekuler's recent discussions with faculty members and graduate students, Dr. Sekuler explained that it would be timely to refine the original certificate document and submit to Graduate Council once again for approval. Dr. Sekuler invited volunteers from the Council who may be interested in reviewing the document.

Dr. Sekuler then introduced Dr. Susan Denburg, Strategic Advisor to the President and leader of the *Forward with Integrity* Advisory Group and the four task forces (student experience, community engagement, research, and internationalization). Dr. Denburg explained that the role of the Advisory Group is to review the reports of the four task forces and establish recommendations based on the priorities outlined in the *Forward with Integrity* letter. One aspect raised by all of the task forces in their reports was flexibility; they recommend that McMaster's policies, methods and procedures should be flexible and simplified in order for the University to move forward.

In terms of community engagement, Dr. Denburg said this area will be aligned with the academic mission of McMaster to ensure that its faculty, staff and students are aware of the value of commitment to the community and the importance of excellent research and service within the community. A member commented that there are faculty members who are not enthusiastic in encouraging community involvement among their students because of time constraints in terms of their studies (e.g., research, lab work, seminars, workshops, etc.). Dr. Denburg explained that there is a proposal to provide incentives to faculty members, staff, and students when community engagement is integrated into their academic programs. She added that incentives provided by the University to students involved in community engagement activities (e.g., transcript notation, certificate, etc.) function as additional credentials, especially for students pursuing other career opportunities (e.g., those who may not end up in academia).

Dr. Denburg discussed McMaster's commitment to a research oriented and student centred approach. She said one way to promote this approach is to create funding for proposals of projects that address the priorities outlined in the *Forward with Integrity* document. Financial sources for these projects, she said, will come from the President's Fund. In discussing student experience, Dr. Denburg stated that the task force on student experience has recommended the creation of a learning portfolio for students. The portfolio will outline each student's learning goals as they advance their education at McMaster. Dr. Denburg said a committee composed of faculty members was assembled to determine the parameters and critical components for developing the portfolio.

XI. Ontario Graduate Scholarship (OGS) – Update

Dr. Sekuler updated Graduate Council concerning the recent changes to the structure of the Ontario Graduate Scholarship (OGS) program. Beginning with the 2013-2014 scholarship competition, Graduate Studies offices at Ontario universities will be in charge of administering the OGS program. Each university in Ontario will receive a minimum of five OGS awards annually. The remaining awards will be distributed according to each university's total number of full-time domestic graduate students. The competition will be processed internally and universities are expected to establish selection committees and guidelines for application and selection.

The School of Graduate Studies is currently conducting an analysis of how the allocation can be distributed across faculties. The School of Graduate Studies will also hold open house events to solicit suggestions from faculties/departments concerning the best procedures to follow in administering the scholarship program. Dr. Sekuler will also meet with the Faculty Deans to discuss what approach other Ontario universities are considering regarding the issue.

As a result of the changes to the OGS structure, it is anticipated that the scholarships committee of Graduate Council will expand by the addition of sub-committees for each discipline.

In response to a question, Dr. Sekuler explained that the total number of years a student can hold the scholarship has increased: Master's students can hold the scholarship for a maximum of two years and doctoral students for a maximum of four years, subject to a lifetime maximum of six years per student. In response to another query, Dr. Sekuler said the scholarship value of $15,000 annually has not changed—the Ontario government provides $10,000 and the university provides $5,000.

For the 2013-2014 academic year, McMaster received a total allocation of 200 scholarships, which is similar to last year's allocation. Dr. Sekuler explained that if there is no increase in enrolment of domestic graduate students, McMaster will lose its funding to other Ontario universities that have larger programs (e.g., University of Toronto). Dr. Sekuler said McMaster still has remaining graduate space allocations to be filled, and the University needs to decide its course of action in terms of graduate student funding. Dr. Sekuler said that in the future, the government is also planning to transfer the administration of tri-agency scholarships at the Master's level to universities.

There was no other business and the meeting adjourned at 11:05 a.m.