University Council on Graduate Study
October 10, 2006
Minutes
4:00-5:00 p.m.
817 CL

Attending: Patricia Beeson (Chair), Nicole Constable (A&S), Eleanor Feingold (GSPH), Carl Fertman (Education), Robert Gibbs (PHARM), Barbara Repasi Heron (Registrar), Janelle Greenberg (A&S), John Horn (SOM), Gary Koeske (SSW), Robert Parker (SOE), Louis Pingel (Education), Anne Robertson (SOE), Leslie Schulman (GPSA), Mae Smethurst (A&S), Martin Staniland (GSPIA), Martin Weiss (SIS), Michele Colvard (Provost’s Office)

Guest(s): Anthony Silvestre (GSPH)

I. Approval of Minutes
The minutes of the September 12, 2006 meeting were approved unanimously.

II. Program Proposal: GSPH proposal to establish a Certificate in Recruitment/Retention in Public Health Research and Service Programs
This program will provide students with the knowledge and training necessary to carry out a wide range of successful recruitment programs. The recent focus on health disparities by the NIH and other government agencies requires practitioners skilled in recruiting targeted populations for study. This certificate program will provide students with the training and skills necessary to do effective recruitment and retention, including knowledge of relevant social marketing and community organization literature, health literacy, focus group methods, research ethics, creating and maintaining community advisory boards, recruitment strategies like direct mail and internet recruitment, publication design, and public relations.

Dr. Anthony Silvestre attended the meeting to present the proposal and answers questions from Council members. He explained that successful recruitment requires special skills combining knowledge from social work, business (marketing and PR), and psychology, as well as ethics training. Very few practitioners have specific training in recruitment, and this would be one of the first programs in the country to offer a credential in this area.

A council member asked how students will get hands-on experience if they choose not to do the optional practicum. Dr. Silvestre responded that all students will design a research plan during the program. He also expects that most students will come to the program with some experience in the field.

A council member asked about the demand for the program. Dr. Silvestre responded that he and others in the department often get calls from practicing researchers at a point when they are having issues with their projects. Based on the regularity of the requests for help received by faculty, Dr. Silvestre believes there will be demand for the program.

Dr. Silvestre was dismissed from the meeting. There was no discussion among council members. The program was approved unanimously.
III. Discussion

A. Update on health insurance for funded graduate students

Dr. Beeson provided the Council with an update on health insurance for funded graduate students. For 2006-2007, premiums for health insurance increased by nearly 22%. The University is committed to maintaining the type of plan currently in place for funded students. Beginning this fall, a committee will be looking at the overall picture of health insurance for students to determine if there are ways to control the continually large increases in premiums while maintaining the levels of coverage offered in the current plan. This will include looking at graduate student usage of student health services in addition to insurance-covered services to determine where overlaps occur.

A council member asked whether fewer students with families are opting to use the university’s plan due to increased costs for covering families. This will be an issue the committee will review.

Council members stated that the health insurance coverage currently provided has been a very good recruiting tool for graduate students.

The committee will convene this fall in order to have time work prior to deadlines for renegotiating the costs of the plan in the spring.

B. Information requested for December 12th UCGS meeting and presentation by David Clubb, Director of the Office of International Programs

Council members were asked to provide input into the types of issues they would like OIS to address at the December 12th meeting. The issues mentioned include:

- International recruiting, including updates on legal issues that impact graduate student recruiting such as obtaining visas;
- Centralized resources available for recruiting graduate students to the city of Pittsburgh, including housing information and other “getting settled” resources;
- Application deadlines (why are they set when they are?);
- Processes for transcript review and student registration;
- Information on best practices in recruiting international graduate students; and
- Information on summer internships for international graduate students.

The Provost’s Office will contact David Clubb and request that he address these issues at the December 12th meeting.

C. Update on assessment at the University of Pittsburgh

This item was put on hold while the Council of Deans begins discussions on the assessment of student learning at the University of Pittsburgh. An update will be made at a future meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:45 p.m. The next meeting of Council will take place on November 14, 2006.