University Council on Graduate Study  
March 13, 2007  
Minutes  
3:00-5:00 p.m.  
Babcock Room, Cathedral of Learning

Attending: Patricia Beeson (Chair), Pat Card (A&S), Nicole Constable (A&S), Robert Gibbs (PHARM), Amanda Godley (Education), Janelle Greenberg (A&S), Barbara Repasi Heron (Registrar), John Hillier (A&S), John Horn (SOM), Margaret Mahoney (Law), Malcolm McNeil (SHRS), Robert Parker (Engineering), Louis Pingel (Education), Jay Rajgopal (Engineering), Martin Staniland (GSPIA), Martin Weiss (SIS), Michele Colvard (Provost’s Office)

Guest(s): Joseph Adjaye (A&S, Africana Studies), Macrina Lelei (A&S, Africana Studies)

I. Approval of Minutes  
The minutes of the February 13, 2007 meeting were approved unanimously.

II. Program Proposal: Certificate in African Studies  
This certificate program was jointly developed by UCIS and the Department of Africana Studies in the School of Arts and Sciences. The program will be administered through UCIS. The purpose of the certificate is to provide students who have a research interest in Africa with an opportunity to acquire a critical base of knowledge in African Studies. Students in the program are required to complete a series of courses related to their primary area of interest or specialization, and they must demonstrate proficiency in an African or related language. The program will be open to all students currently enrolled in a master’s or doctoral program at the University of Pittsburgh. It will draw on courses and faculty from Arts and Sciences, Education, Law, GSPIA, Social Work, and Public Health.

Joseph Adjaye and Macrina Lelei from the Department of Africana Studies presented a brief overview of the proposed certificate program and then answered questions from UCGS members.

Martin Staniland noted that there is significant demand for this type of program in GSPIA. He said it is the only program of its kind in the region.

A Council member asked why European languages can be used to fulfill the certificate’s language requirement. Dr. Adjaye responded that many historical texts are written in European languages because of broad colonization of the continent.

A Council member asked why there is not a common core of courses for the program. Dr. Adjaye responded that the proposed structure will allow students to concentrate on areas relevant to their own graduate studies. He also noted that the certificate will enhance employment opportunities for students by providing an additional, documented competence.

Joseph Adjaye and Macrina Lelei were excused. During the following discussion, there was some concern about the lack of a core set of courses for the program and the ability of students
to undertake a coherent program of study. It was noted that other area studies certificates are similarly structured. Council members asked that an advisor be designated in UCIS to work with students and their disciplinary advisors to develop appropriate plans of study.

After discussion, the program was approved unanimously with the understanding that the change requested above will be made prior to final approval.

III. Other Business

A. Graduate Student Health Insurance

Vice Provost Beeson informed Council members that the annual negotiations for the graduate student health insurance plan will be happening shortly. With continually rising costs, Dr. Beeson asked the Council for input regarding possible cost-saving measures.

Council members agreed that the current plan is a significant recruiting tool, and the level of healthcare provided through the plan is important for maintaining a healthy graduate student population.

Council members made several suggestions, including increasing wellness programming for graduate students on campus and providing other education to help students make choices regarding doctor’s visits, prescription drugs, etc., that will not drive up costs.

Council members also suggested contacting other schools in the region to try to create a larger pool of graduate students in order to obtain better rates.

B. Graduate Student Stipends

Vice Provost Beeson reviewed graduate student stipend data collected by the AAU in comparison to University of Pittsburgh stipends. Pitt’s cash stipends fall in the mid-range of the AAU Public institutions. When tuition and cash stipends are considered, Pitt falls within the top one-third of AAU Public schools.

C. Purchasing Names from the GRE

Council members were provided with information about purchasing names from the GRE. Council members asked if it would be possible to search the GRE database maintained at the University as a potential recruiting tool. The Provost’s Office will look into this issue.

D. Update on the NRC Assessment of Research Doctorate Programs

Vice Provost Beeson reported that all institution and program questionnaires have been submitted to the NRC, and the faculty questionnaires have closed. The University had an 89% response rate for the faculty questionnaire; the national response rate was 68%.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:40 p.m.