University Council on Graduate Study  
January 8, 2008  
Minutes  
3:00-5:00 p.m.  
817 CL

Attending: Patricia Beeson (Chair), Ray Burdett (SHRS), J. Patrick Card (A&S), Steve Carr (A&S), Nicole Constable (A&S), Valerie Copeland (Social Work), Robert Devaty (A&S), Judith Erlen (Nursing), Eleanor Feingold (GSPH), Nicole Fowler (SOM), Amanda Godley (Education), Barbara Repasi Heron (Registrar), R. Donald Hoffman (Dental), John Horn (SOM), Margaret Mahoney (Law), Yvonne Mburu (GPSA), David Miller (GSPIA), Louis Pingel (Education), Jayant Rajgopal (Engineering), Evelyn Rawski (A&S), Stephanie Hoogendoorn (Provost’s Office)

Guests: David Clubb (OIS), Howard Degenholtz (GSPH), George Kacenga (OIS), Lindsay Clare Matsumura (Education), Charles Nieman (OIS), Mary Kay Stein (Education), Wess Rohrer (GSPH)

Approval of Minutes  
The minutes of the November 13, 2007 meeting were approved as written.

Program Proposal: Ph.D. Program in Health Services Research and Policy
Researchers in the field of Health Services Research and Policy analyze the cost, access, and quality of health care systems. Individual students can focus their research on policies at the national, state and local level; the management and operation of organizations or public health agencies; or the experience of individual users of health care and public health services. Students completing the proposed program will be prepared for positions in academia, government or the private sector as experts in health services research and policy.

Howard Degenholtz and Wess Rohrer presented an overview of the proposed program and then answered questions from UCGS members.

A council member noted that the proposal included an impressive number of job announcements and then asked if the number of new jobs corresponded to the number of new doctoral graduates in this field. Degenholtz expects a growing number of job opportunities for students with a Ph.D. in the private sector (such as RAND), academia, and governmental agencies. Pittsburgh’s expansive health care system is in an early market. As this market develops, it will require more analysts to review services and costs.

A council member asked why Ph.D. students in the Graduate School of Public Health are not required to take the “core” curriculum. Degenholtz answered that in the proposal the core set of classes refers to a set of entry-level classes that students in the MPH, MHA, and DrPH programs take. Instead of this core, the Ph.D. students are required to take upper-level classes in these same core subjects.

A council member asked about the doctoral program committee. Since the department is small, any faculty who participates in the core Health Services Ph.D. program will serve on
the doctoral committee. The committee, as a whole, will be responsible for admissions, the preliminary exam, and the comprehensive exam. As the department increases in size, faculty members can rotate off the committee and the committee can differentiate between responsibilities.

A council member asked for more detail on how the department would be expanded and what the ideal student-faculty ratio would be in terms of advising students. Faculty members typically advise one to two students at any given time. Dean Burke is committed to growing the Ph.D. program. The department will hire three new faculty members specifically to teach and advise Ph.D. students. Current faculty in the department will continue, for the most part, to focus on advising their MPH students. Also ongoing is a national search for a department chair because the current chair is stepping down to focus on research and advising.

The presenters were excused and members continued their discussion. Council members asked that a few typographical errors be corrected in the proposal.

Council voted unanimously to approve the proposal with a provision that a corrected proposal be submitted to Vice Provost Beeson.

Program Proposal: Ph.D. Program in Learning Sciences and Policy
The proposed program will bring together faculty from three distinct areas: learning sciences in education; content-based educational research; and educational policy and organization change. Students completing this program will be prepared to be research scholars who have the understanding and vision to become leaders in promoting educational change. This proposed program is intended to replace the existing Ph.D. program in Cognitive Studies within the Department of Instructional Learning. The Cognitive Studies program has now suspended all future admissions and will be closed once all active students have finished.

Mary Kay Stein and Lindsay Clare Matsumura presented an overview of the proposed program and then answered questions from UCGS members.

Stein clarified that this program will be housed in the School of Education as opposed to within a specific department. There are five core faculty members in this program plus additional associated faculty members.

Stein stated that there are several Ph.D. programs that study policy and learning sciences. What makes this program unique is that it will prepare researchers to be leaders in educational policy. Stein stated that graduates of this program will be qualified for jobs in non-profit research institutions such as RAND, SRI International, and American Institutes for Research. When asked about the need for new Ph.D. graduates in this field, Stein replied that this program will prepare researchers to address the kinds of policy questions that are currently being asked.

Stein explained that the program draws upon three content areas and that during the first two years in the program students would learn how to integrate all three areas together. Then through advanced seminar courses, students would begin to develop ideas and strengths uniquely relating to one of the three areas.
A council member asked if part-time students would be accepted into the program. Stein responded that they prefer full-time students but will consider part-time students on a case-by-case basis.

Several members of UCGS asked how the three areas will be integrated and if a new area of research would result. Stein responded that faculty from the different areas are working together to pursue joint research opportunities, to develop new courses, and to learn from each other by participating in the Learning Sciences and Policy seminar. Matsumura explained how she is collaborating with another faculty member to develop a course at the intersection of policy and learning.

The presenters were excused and members continued their discussion. Council members asked that the proposal:

1) include the details of the development of the new interdisciplinary study in the rationale section of the proposal
2) elaborate on how faculty members will work together across the three disciplines to develop new courses
3) address how LSAP will successfully facilitate the transition of post-baccalaureate students who have been away from the university setting (presumably working in relevant fields of instruction) into a doctoral program
4) address how the program will integrate students from different academic backgrounds
5) include a few examples of the “leading journals in the field”
6) address how part-time students can complete the milestones of the program and include a statement of how these students will meet the residency requirement stated in Regulations Governing Graduate Study; and
7) clarify that some of the credits detailed in Item C Advanced Seminars/Directed Studies, could be obtained by taking courses

Council voted unanimously to approve the proposal with a provision that a revised proposal addressing their above concerns is submitted to Vice Provost Beeson.

**Presentation from Office of International Programs**

David Clubb, George Kacenga, and Charles Nieman attended to answer questions which had been previously provided by UCGS members about the recruitment of international graduate and professional students.

1) How can departments be selective about international graduate students? Some considerations that programs should review include academics, extracurricular activities, diversity across the world, and a strong undergraduate population. Katz School of Business recently began utilizing the services of Apply Yourself to assist them with recruitment. Please contact them to learn about this service.

2) How can programs/departments/schools conduct group interviews abroad? One solution is to tap into the approximately 900 international alumni that are here at the University of Pittsburgh. With some training, they could interview prospective students when they are in their home countries. Carnegie Mellon University and other large schools use this strategy successfully.

3) How does one evaluate GRE results when English is not student’s the first
Kacenga stated that in his opinion, there is no reason to give any leniency on the GRE because we want students to do as well as domestic students do in the classroom. The GRE measures reasoning skills and the TOEFL measures English proficiency. So we should require strong GRE scores from our applicants.

4) How can departments evaluate degrees?
Some departments do their own evaluation but OIS is available to help departments. OIS completes about 1,400 credential evaluations per year. In the past two years, the process has greatly improved overall. OIS is welcome to assist departments if they need additional services.

5) Could there be a conversion table posted on the OIS web site that shows the equivalence of certain foreign degrees with US degrees?
OIS prefers to use comparables not equivalences. This could be generated if there is feedback from the departments.

6) Could OIS provide a grade-by-grade breakdown in their evaluations of foreign transcripts? That is, as to each grade on the transcript, could OIS provide the “U.S. equivalent?”
OIS hesitates to do a grade-by-grade comparison because this is very tedious. OIS currently evaluates transcripts and provides a general assessment on the academic quality of the transcript. OIS can provide a grade-by-grade evaluation in certain cases. OIS is hesitant to provide a conversion of foreign grade scales to the 4.0 scale because the conversion seems to favor the students and is not a good measure for admissions. OIS prefers to help departments and programs interpret the grade scale.

7) Can you speak about dual degree programs with foreign institutions and admission requirements? UCGS is considering guidelines for such programs.
OIS supports these programs and would help as needed. Each proposed institution and program would need to be evaluated separately.

8) For students enrolled in dual degree programs with foreign institutions, what implications does traveling back and forth between two countries have on the visa process? Are there any concerns for American citizens?
OIS can assist any student enrolled in these programs obtain entry the necessary visas. Domestic students may need entry visas.

9) What are ways that OIS evaluates individual institutions?
OIS looks at the history of the institution, any prior name changes, and unique characteristics of ranks (specific fields) to evaluate institutions. One factor is the capacity for the school to offer graduate education. In order to find out information about international schools, OIS consults EducationUSA which is a global network of more than 450 advising centers supported by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs at the U.S. Department of State.

OIS announced that next year they will be using a People Soft module to speed up the visa processing. They expect this implementation will take days off the current process.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:55 p.m. The next meeting of Council will take place on February 12, 2008.