

Minutes of the Graduate Board

Wednesday, September 21, 2005

3B Conwell Hall, Main Campus

2:30 – 4:30 p.m.

Members Present:

Saroj K. Biswas, Elizabeth Bolman, Beth Bolton, Daniel L. Canney, Rajan Chandran, James L. Daniel, Kevin J. Delaney, Dimitrios Diamantaras, Jay Fagan, Judith Litvin, Elizabeth Moran, Roberta A. Newton, Wesley Roehl, Michael Sachs, Jagbir Singh, Donna Snow, Kariamuwelsh

Ex-Officio Member:

Aquiles Iglesias, Dean, Graduate School
Zebulon Kendrick, Associate Dean, Graduate School

Graduate School Staff:

Kathryn Petrich-LaFevre, Senior Editor
Margaret M. Pippet, Assistant Dean
Michael Toner, Research Associate

Approval of the Minutes:

Michael Sachs motioned to approve the minutes of April 21, 2005. Roberta A. Newton seconded the motion. The motion to approve the minutes was unanimously passed.

Business:

Dean Iglesias welcomed both new and returning members to the first meeting of the 2005-2006 academic year. He noted that representation on the Graduate Board cuts across not only the breadth of schools and colleges involved in graduate education at Temple University, but also through the depth of varied personal research interests of the faculty.

Dean Iglesias introduced Michael Toner, a new staff member of the Graduate School. As Research Associate, Michael will be responsible for running data to assist in decision making for the Graduate School, the Graduate Board, and the Associate Deans of the schools and colleges. Attention was then turned to the preliminary data that was being presented to the Graduate Board with respect to average total GRE scores for admitted and enrolled students and the effect of setting a minimum total score. Examples from various colleges were presented. The reason for focusing attention on GRE scores is that rankings are often based on these scores. It was also suggested that raising the cutoff might entice the high-quality students who are admitted to Temple but not enrolling to actually choose Temple. Thus, Dean Iglesias opined that GRE scores should again be on the table for discussion. The intent is to track the data for applications, admissions, and enrollment for each Associate Dean by department. It was requested that the data be refined to include a breakdown by degree (master's vs. doctorate) and by type of score (quantitative GRE vs. verbal GRE). The fear that raising minimum GRE scores would adversely impact such creative programs as those earning the M.F.A. was raised. These programs, however, would continue to be exempt from reporting GRE scores. Dean Iglesias offered that the target should be to exceed the national average for each discipline. Roberta Newton suggested that perhaps too much time is spent trying to salvage low

scorers, who might end up in the appeal process anyway in a few years, instead of recruiting high scorers. She noted that exceptions ought to perhaps be tightened.

The topic of appropriate use of “R” grades was raised. Associate Dean Kendrick noted that several schools and colleges are using the “R” designation instead of the “I.” The “I” is intended for didactic courses for which the student has not completed the coursework. The student then has one calendar year to finish the work. The “R” grade is not limited in time. It is intended to designate registration for ongoing thesis, dissertation, or final project work. Only in the last semester is the grade changed to a letter grade. This policy was first implemented in 2000-2001, but omissions in the written document have occurred over the years. Importantly, the “R” is detrimental for students in that the designation halts financial aid.

Next, the standard exceptions to the GPA requirement were discussed. These include a 3.5 UGPA in the last 2 years of study, which is very rare; a combined GRE score above the 65th percentile; and a GGPA of 3.25 or higher with 9 credit hours of graduate coursework completed, which is most common. The Dean raised his concern that the 3.25 may be too low and noted that the Policy Committee would be asked to visit this issue. A complementary concern was also raised: some students are being told they cannot be accepted based on their undergraduate transcripts, but that they will be admitted after taking nine credits of graduate coursework. Three suggestions were offered:

- A 3.25 GGPA is acceptable provided no grades are below a “B-.”
- The courses taken should be reviewed to ensure that undergraduate courses are not being taken for graduate credit, particularly if the grades earned in those courses are less than stellar.
- A minimum undergraduate GPA might be established and required in addition to the graduate GPA.

Michael Sachs proposed that, when making these sorts of decisions, it is important to know what has happened historically to those admitted under the standard exceptions. Dean Iglesias acknowledged that exceptions are typically requested by specific departments, not across all schools and colleges. He emphasized that he would like the rules in writing from the Graduate Board, as he would then be bound to follow those rules. Jagbir Singh suggested that the Graduate Board should establish the criteria, but that the Dean be permitted to use his discretion. Dean Iglesias expressed his concern at making exception decisions “at the discretion of the Dean.” Donna Snow stated that the language could be less definitive such that an exception “may” be granted, instead of “will” be granted.

Roberta Newton raised the salient question: Will the student who enters a degree program succeed if admission is granted under an exception? She suggested talking to the program(s) that most often utilize exceptions to determine how the bar might be raised. Jay Fagan pointed out that the important thing is to not hurt the student. Discussion turned to the review of graduate programs by the Board of Trustees. The Board’s Academic Affairs Committee is scheduled to meet on Tuesday, September 27. Four programs are slated for discussion and approval:

- The Executive M.A. degree in Criminal Justice, which is an executive degree based on the existing master’s.

- The M.S. in Pharmacodynamics, which was originally designed as an emphasis, but which must be approved by the Board of Trustees because the School of Pharmacy wants it to be transcribed. (Daniel Canney pointed out that a Ph.D. is also included in the proposal.)
- The restructuring of the Ph.D. program in the School of Medicine, which utilizes a common core curriculum for all departments, with the balance of the courses offered by individual departments.
- The M.S. in Physical Therapy, which will be a default degree for the Ph.D. This degree had been eliminated, along with the M.P.T., when the D.P.T. degree was approved.

Next, summer activities were visited. The Dean noted that while faculty generally leave campus at the end of the academic year, the work of the Graduate School goes on. He questioned how to advance these projects during the summer, noting that any program requests need a year before implementation can proceed. It is necessary, therefore, to have the requests presented to the Board of Trustees in time for its September and October meetings annually. It was further noted that the members of the Student Appeals and Policy Committees were responsive to the emails they received during the summer; all members were thanked.

In other business, the Dean advised that a Ph.D. in Biomedical Neurosciences has been proposed. A meeting is planned with the representatives of the various graduate neuroscience programs to coordinate efforts.

As discussion turned to the goals for 2005-2006, Roberta Newton inquired if the annual meeting of the Graduate Faculty held in May was going to be revisited. The Dean voiced his frustration that the Graduate Board works all year long to establish policies that move graduate education forward at Temple, only to have that forward momentum negated when the full faculty meeting rolls around at the end of the academic year. Dean Iglesias noted that 2004-2005 was an interesting year. All deans were asked to propose guidelines for Graduate Faculty for their schools and colleges; all complied. But at the May meeting, the guidelines were voted down by a margin of about 10-1, with the voting membership heavily represented in one college. President Adamany informed the Board of Trustees of the action—and some further action is expected, although Dean Iglesias has not yet been advised. He stated that the system is archaic and simply does not work, given that no major proposal has been passed by the full Graduate Faculty body. Michael Sachs suggested online voting; Donna Snow suggested paper balloting. Roberta Newton noted that it is unfortunate that beneficial policy is held hostage by one or two schools/colleges and suggested revisiting the bylaws. The Dean stated that he would check with the President on what action is to be taken.

Adjournment:

The meeting adjourned @ 4:15 p.m.

The next Graduate Board meeting will be held on the Health Sciences Center Campus, in the Executive Conference Room of the Student Faculty Center, on Thursday, October 20, 2005, @ 2:30 p.m.