



Minutes of the Graduate Board

Thursday, November 29, 2007

3B Conwell Hall, Main Campus

2:30 – 4:30 p.m.

Members Present:

William Aaronson, Beth Bolton, James L. Daniel, Boris Datskovsky, Dimitrios Diamantaras, Edward Flanagan, Thomas Gould, Kathryn Hirsh-Pasek, William Hitchcock, James Korsh, Dan A. Liebermann, A. Marjatta Lyyra, Wes Roehl, Michael Sachs, Jon Suzuki, Paul Swann, Pablo Vila

Ex-Officio Member:

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

Graduate School Staff:

Kathryn Petrich-LaFevre, Director of Graduate Information
Margaret M. Pippet, Assistant Dean
Michael Toner, Research Associate

Approval of the Minutes:

Thomas Gould motioned to approve the minutes of October 24, 2007. Pablo Vila seconded the motion. The motion to approve the minutes was unanimously passed.

Business:

The first item on the agenda was the policy on outside examiners for dissertations. The role of the outside examiner was created with two purposes in mind: (1) to ensure that procedures at the defense follow University policy, and (2) to offer expertise in the discipline from outside the department as a quality control measure. Some examiners are drawn from other departments at Temple, while some are invited to serve who are external to Temple. In the latter case, the Dean of the Graduate School must approve the individual's participation. The Dean sought clarification from the Graduate Board about the role to be played by the outside examiner.

Michael Sachs reported that his department utilizes outside examiners as experts. Dan Liebermann's department views them as new contacts who offer a way to bring research at Temple to light. They are seen as applying positive pressure to ensure that the dissertation is the best it can be. Dr. Liebermann further suggested that outside examiners be provided with an honorarium to enrich the pool of participants. But who would provide the funding? And would only those external to Temple receive the honorarium? James Korsh suggested flexibility be allowed in naming the outside examiner early in the dissertation writing process, while Edward Flanagan noted that the outside examiner should be provided with a month to read the dissertation given the length of some. The Associate Dean questioned if an outside examiner could be drawn from within a student's department, if the individual's work lies within a different area of concentration. The Graduate Board reached the consensus that the outside examiner should offer expertise in a quality control capacity.

The next topic for discussion was the revised policy on postdoctoral fellows. The Dean noted that two changes were made to the policy since it was presented at the October meeting of the Graduate Board.

First, the former document required the use of external monies to fund the postdocs. This was eliminated, thereby allowing any available monies to be used, e.g., 16 account funds or development monies. Second, multi-year appointments are now permitted, provided funding is available. This allows Temple to be more competitive in its recruiting. In addition, words like “typically” and “maybe” were incorporated into the document to increase its flexibility.

The results of the 2006 Survey of Earned Doctorates, which compares statistics about Temple’s research doctorate recipients with those from other doctoral/research universities, were presented next. The Dean asked if our strategic plan should address the discrepancy between Temple’s percentages and those of similar institutions. For example, Temple’s percentages in the fields of physical sciences/mathematics and engineering are significantly lower than those at our peer institutions. Marjatta Lyyra suggested the problem may lie in having had interim deans heading those colleges for so long. Boris Datskovsky noted that faculty in those disciplines have not been hired since 2000 and that the graduate stipends offered by Temple are low. The Dean suggested that perhaps Temple’s strength might lie in the social sciences and humanities, but Dr. Lyyra noted that the sciences cannot be ignored. Dr. Liebermann suggested a balance of the disciplines. Dr. Flanagan questioned if the problem is one of retention or admission. Is it the case that enough good students are not applying or are they not being admitted and/or then enrolling? Data will be provided at the next Board meeting for further discussion.

William Hitchcock noted that while diversity at Temple is a positive factor, the debt levels of our graduates are higher than at similar institutions. Michael Sachs recommended looking at time to degree and what job offers the graduates receive. He further suggested waiving out-of-state tuition to bring in students. The Dean noted that while he has increased the amount of the fellowships, which awardees typically receive in their first and second years, the monies students receive in their third and fourth years are awarded by the departments at the TUGSA minimum, which can be as much as 30% lower than fellowship dollars. Dr. Datskovsky also pointed out that the number of fellowships is small. The Dean asked if money should be pulled from fellowships to increase the pool of money available for completion grant awards. The Graduate Board unequivocally responded in the negative. It was suggested that creative ideas need to be sought to increase the funding level. Dr. Liebermann recommended that further discussion on the topic might be warranted in relation to strategic planning.

In other business, the Associate Dean briefly reviewed the work of the Graduate Board’s four standing committees. The Appeals Committee is expected to meet on December 11 to hear two appeals. The Fellowship Committee was thanked for its work reviewing the applications for Doctoral Dissertation and Terminal Master's Project Completion Grants. The Policy Committee is continuing its work on a strategic plan. And the Program Review Committee has forwarded 17 initiatives to the Academic Affairs Committee of the Board of Trustees for approval.

Adjournment:

The meeting adjourned @ 3:45 p.m.