The RIT Graduate Council

Annual Report to Academic Senate
September 2013 – May 2014

Chairman: Joseph Hornak
Council Members: Hans-Peter Bischof, Carol DeFilippo, Hector Flores, Deanna Jacobs, Chris Licata, John McCluskey, Jim Perkins, Andreas Savakis, Marla Schwegpe, Carla Williams, Hrushikesh Sagar, Tom Trabold, Linda Underhill, Don Wilson, Jayanti Venkataraman

Graduate Council Charge from Academic Senate

1. Review the role of the Dean of Graduate Studies in relation to Graduate Council (GC)
2. Assess progress toward making PhD Programs, where appropriate, financially self-sustaining.
3. Continue the ongoing work of the Institute Ethics Committee (IEC) and implement the recommendations made by the IEC.
4. Review and recommend new programs as they are advanced by the colleges.
5. Review policies and, where necessary, propose changes in connection with enhancing RIT’s emerging graduate culture in relation to academic governance.
   • Review minimum number of PhD research credits requirement.
   • Implement a U grade for research related work and update S and R grade policy accordingly.
   • Define advising roles as it applies to graduate students and define consistent terminology (e.g., mentor, grad advisor, thesis advisor, professional advisor, etc.)
   • Complete a Thesis/Dissertation Quality policy.
   • Expand Glossary of Governance Policy (work with ICC towards this effort)
6. Form a Graduate Industry Advisory Board with representatives from each College, MDS, and GIS.
**Activities 2013-2014**

**Organizational Items**

Three new procedures were implemented at the beginning of this year.

1. GC members should send a representative in their place if they are unable to attend a meeting.

2. Minutes of each meeting will be taken and posted on the Office of Graduate Studies website at http://www.rit.edu/academicaffairs/gradstudies/about/graduate-council/.

3. All policy proposals brought before GC will contain 1.) Title, 2.) Statement of Need, 3.) the Current Policy, 4.) the Proposal, and 5.) the Proposed Policy for the RIT Policy Manual. Proposals are first vetted by GC, then they are distributed to Graduate Program Directors for feedback. GC will then discuss the feedback and revises the proposal if necessary. A vote is taken and if the proposal passes, it is presented to Academic Senate.

**Academic Senate Charge Related Items**

1. Review the role of the Dean of Graduate Studies in relation to Graduate Council.
   The role of the Dean of Graduate Studies in relation to GC is specified in the GC Charter. GC members were comfortable with this role and decided changes were unnecessary.

2. Assess progress toward making PhD Programs, where appropriate, financially self-sustaining.
   GC felt this charge was worthy of further discussion. We caution that very few PhD programs are cost neutral. Those that are, tend to be associated with schools with large endowments that are used to support graduate programs for the prestige they bring to a school. We encourage RIT to consider developing a substantial graduate endowment.

3. Continue the ongoing work of the Institute Ethics Committee (IEC) and implement the recommendations made by the IEC.
   This was a puzzling charge as GC could find no information on the Institute Ethics Committee. GC assumed this charge referred to the GC Task Force on Ethics in the Graduate Curricula. GC felt it submitted the report from the Task Force on Ethics in the Graduate Curricula to Academic Senate last year. The report contained numerous recommendations to increase ethics awareness in the graduate curricula. Therefore, no further work was necessary.

4. Review and recommend new programs as they are advanced by the colleges.
   GC reviewed two MS Programs and three Advanced Certificates (AC).
   • MS in Computational Finance (COB and COS)
   • MS in Accounting (COB)
   • AC in User Experience, Design, and Development (CIAS)
   • AC in Communication & Digital Media (COLA)
   • AC Games & Learning (CMS)
   Most new programs presented to GC had difficulties getting approved on their first presentation. We will try to establish guidelines for presentation of new programs to GC.
5. Review policies and, where necessary, propose changes in connection with enhancing RIT’s emerging graduate culture in relation to academic governance.

- Review minimum number of PhD research credits requirement.
  During the semester conversion process, GC decided to increase the number of Research and Thesis credits and decrease the number of Course credits needed for a PhD. After a complaint was lodged by one PhD program, GC changed the numbers to the values calculated by the quarter-to-semester credit hour conversion equation. The PhD program was satisfied with this outcome and dropped its complaint. Therefore, no further work was necessary on this charge.

- Implement a U grade for research related work and update S and R grade policy accordingly.
  GC approved a policy proposal to change the grading scheme for Graduate Research and Thesis which allowed in addition to an R grade, an unsatisfactory (U), and an incomplete (I) grade. This proposal was presented and approved by Academic Senate and now appears in the Policy Manual.

- Define advising roles as it applies to graduate students and define consistent terminology (e.g., mentor, grad advisor, thesis advisor, professional advisor, etc.)
  A GC task force has been working on this. A problem they are seeing is that with RIT’s more centralized advising, many colleges are adopting new advising terminology.

- Complete a Thesis/Dissertation Quality policy.
  A GC task force has been looking into this issue. Although its work is not complete, it has shared a few findings. Thesis standards and quality vary across the graduate programs. Institute-wide thesis standards will be difficult to set due to the diversity of programs. Some universities employ a thesis quality checker to assure that standards are maintained. The office of the Dean of Graduate Studies is willing to take on this responsibility if guidelines be written and resources be made available. In the absence of this, each program should publish a set of thesis guidelines and standards, and make them readily available to students. When present, thesis quality issues need to be addressed. Graduate program directors should take more responsibility in assuring thesis quality in their program. GC and the Dean of Graduate Studies should work with Deans and Program Directors to assure quality.

- Expand Glossary of Governance Policy (work with ICC towards this effort)
  GC believes that the current RIT Policy Manual is in need of a major overhaul. Over time, many small changes have been made to the policy manual to address specific concerns. Changes are made where needed to clarify a policy, making the manual wordy and redundant. Less attention has been given to assuring internal consistency when an addition is made, giving rise to contradictions. The manual is in need of a complete overhaul and reorganization of subject matter. GC examined the possibility of separating graduate and undergraduate policies. Owing to the difficulty of this task, GC recommends investing in a content or document management system to reorganize the manual and create a better index.

6. Form a Graduate Industry Advisory Board with representatives from each College, MDS, and GIS.

GC debated the merits of a Graduate Industry Advisory Board. Although there are advantages of advisory boards at the graduate level, GC felt the diversity of program subjects and career paths for students would make the board difficult to constitute and manage. Therefore, GC recommends against forming such a board.
Other Initiatives and Activities

   GC reviewed the plan, solicited input from Program Directors about the plan, suggested modifications, and endorsed the final version provided resources are made available to support the plan.

2. Reviewed thesis embargo guidelines that were prepared for the library.

3. Passed a policy proposal for reporting the outcome of a summative (comprehensive) exam on a transcript.

4. Passed a policy proposal to allow satisfactory (S) and unsatisfactory (U) grades at the graduate level in certain seminar courses.

5. Passed a policy proposal to allow graduate programs to set higher standards for a student to maintain good academic standing.

6. Approved a proposal to add existing procedures for graduate curriculum approval to the policy manual.

7. Drafted changes in section *D1.0 VI. D. The Graduate Council* for ICC’s effort to revise D1.

Recommendation for 2014-15 Charges

1. Review new graduate programs and advanced certificates

2. Propose new or revised graduate policies as needed

3. Initiate periodic evaluation of graduate programs.

4. Continue efforts on unfinished work.
   a. Graduate Grievance Policy
   b. Graduate Residency
   c. MS on the way to a PhD
   d. MS & PhD Thesis Quality
   e. Graduate Assistant Definitions
   f. Graduate Advisor Terminology
   g. Graduate Education Website - Establish a portal for communicating with program directors
   h. Establish guidelines for proposing programs or certificates to GC.

Respectfully submitted
Joseph Hornak
Chairman of the Graduate Council