Graduate Council Minutes  
November 19, 2014  
Chancellors Room, Davies Center

Members Present:  Wick (Chair), Amdahl (Secretary), Amann, Fessler, Havholm, Kudrna, Leaman, Long, Manning, Nied, Pearson, Pederson, Politiz, Scukanec, Sias, Tusing, VanWormer, Vaughan, Young
Guests:  Becky Drout, Tessa Perchinsky, Audrey Richardson

The meeting was called to order by Dean Michael Wick at 3:01 p.m.

1. Announcements:
   - Christina Skasa is the winner of our 2014-15 Distinguished Master’s Thesis Competition. Christina graduated from the MA-English Writing program in December 2013. Congratulations to Christina, and her thesis adviser, Dr. Stephanie Turner. Christina has agreed to return to campus next spring to do a presentation of her thesis. All will be invited to a celebration in her honor.
   - Clarification to dispel any rumors: Education is NOT discontinuing or closing their graduate programs. They are transitioning to a newly envisioned Teacher Education graduate program and remodeling the MST-Reading degree program to be more accessible (online).
   - Scukanec has requested that a new fund be established through the University’s Foundation for donors to support graduate education on this campus. We will keep you posted on the progress of this fund.

2. Online Degree Audits for Graduate Students:
   - Wick introduced the three staff members from the Registrar's Office who have been busy developing the new online graduate student degree audits—Drout, Perchinsky, and Richardson.
   - Not hearing any complaints from the graduate degree program directors, we are moving forward with the online degree audits. All who have been involved have been very receptive and excited about this change.
   - Up to this point the process has been that a student works with their adviser to submit a proposed degree plan on paper after they had completed about 15 credits. Nancy checks each proposed plan to verify that it meets all program and University requirements, and degree review also checks each individual plan upon graduation. If changes are needed from the approved paper plan, the student must submit a program change request—all manual process.
   - At the undergraduate level, an electronic degree audit system checks for program and University graduation requirements. The graduate students will now have this same capability.
   - The Registrar’s Office has an online DRAFT degree plan for all graduate programs except the MEPD and a few other education programs that are currently being revised. The degree audit includes the specific course and graduation requirements for each program, as well as the minimum University requirements for a master’s degree. Wick expressed, “This is an exciting and overdue improvement for our graduate students!”
   - By implementing a new automated degree plan, we will have processing issues that need to be addressed. We will continue to require hard paper degree plans and changes until all concerns are addressed. Such as:
     - We will need a more formal process with better communication channel for sharing curricular changes within graduate programs, so those who need to know about changes have time to update the degree audit. It was recommended that once a department wishes to make a change to their degree requirements that they will forward their request for change to Graduate Studies. If graduate dean supports, the suggested change(s) will be distributed to all graduate program directors and the appropriate college dean. If no concerns with the changes being recommended within 30 days of announcement, the change will be forwarded to the Registrar and be implemented [Secretarial note: Unless it is a change that requires further action, per our Bylaws]. The undergrad degree audit follows the requirements within the catalog of the academic year the student was accepted to program. Graduate programs will need to specify if the changes made will be retroactive or just moving forward.
     - With an automated degree audit, there should be no reason to continue to require a paper degree plan except for those programs that do not have an approved automated degree audit available.
- How should we handle individual student substitutions and/or waivers of degree program requirements, and what approvals are necessary at graduate level? It was agreed that we could either model the undergraduate waiver/substitution form or we could revise the existing Graduate Program Change form. The approvals required will be the student’s program adviser, program director (often the same as adviser), and graduate dean. We would like to have this form available as an e-form, not a paper form.

- Is it important to continue the use of PAC’s (Personal Advising Code) for graduate students now that degree requirements will be coded on their degree audits? Currently, PAC’s are currently required of all graduate students until they have a degree plan on file with the Registrar’s Office, except for those in the MBA program. After discussion, it was recommended that we discontinue the usage of PAC’s for all graduate students and see how it goes. If we have problems, we can re-evaluate. This will eliminate one step in the registration process for students. However, it was suggested that students in programs with more flexibility of elective coursework may need to be advised more carefully.

  • The new automated degree audit system will go into effect as soon as we are fully prepared. The draft degree audits are now available to students and advisers in the programs that have been approved. Please evaluate a few sample audits and contact Becky Drout in Degree Review if you have any questions or concerns.
  • The Registrar’s Office will collect the list of updates that were discovered during the process of building the program requirements into the degree audits, verify with each program that all updates were accurate, and share these documented updates with Graduate Studies.
  • Dean Wick congratulated those involved with making this degree audit project possible.

3. Review of Current Enrollment Graduation Requirement

  • Currently, a graduate student must be enrolled at UWEC the semester s/he graduates. We have been asked to reconsider this requirement.
  • Support to eliminate this requirement: Students sometimes enroll in all of their required thesis or research paper credits, but underestimate the completion time. Therefore, they end up having to enroll in additional credits that do not count toward graduation. There is not necessarily a direct connection between when students are enrolled for thesis credits and when faculty/students do the work for the paper.
  • Support to continue this requirement: Most UW campuses require enrollment in student’s final term. In addition, some require a continuous enrollment fee each term and/or a graduation fee. We do not require either a continuous enrollment fee or a graduation fee, yet a student continues to have access to University resources for up to three years after they last enrolled (up to graduation). The student is utilizing University resources the semester they apply to graduate, so they should be expected to be enrolled.
  • The thesis is a full-time equivalent course, and students are eligible for financial aid whenever they are enrolled in at least one thesis credit (XXXX799).
  • We will continue to enforce the current enrollment requirement the semester of graduation. If you discover a student with financial hardship, please contact Dean Wick.

4. The minutes of May 14, 2014, were approved as written.

The meeting adjourned at 4:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Nancy J. Amdahl
Secretary to the Graduate Council
November 24, 2014

*Copies of the handouts distributed at GC meetings may be obtained from the Office of Graduate Studies.*