

Graduate College Faculty meeting
February 28, 2011 3:30 pm
Memorial Lounge, Waterman Building

The Spring, 2011 Graduate Faculty meeting was called to order at 3:30 by Dean Domenico Grasso.

The minutes from the Fall, 2010 meeting had not been posted on the Graduate Faculty website and were not approved.

Dean Grasso noted that the President and Provost would be joining the meeting shortly. He announced that for the first time ever, the Graduate College would be holding its own Commencement ceremony. In addition to hooding, diplomas will be handed out. All students will be hooded. The Commencement speaker is Dr. Peggy Williams, former UVM graduate student and former president of Ithaca College. The date is Saturday, May 21st.

Dean Grasso turned the meeting over to President Fogel and Provost Knodell.

Provost Knodell updated the faculty on TRI – the steering committees are formed and actively working on short, medium, and long-term goals and metrics for performance, and they will be presented to the Joint Liaison Oversight Committee soon. She invited the graduate faculty to be part of this as well. The metrics will be taken to the Board of Trustees in May.

She also noted that the FY 12 budget process is well underway. All deans and VP's are being asked to consider how they would address either a 1.5% reduction or a 3% reduction to their base budgets. Budget committee is currently looking to close the budget gap with cuts to expenses. The proposals will be discussed with the Faculty Senate.

Judy Van Houten of the Biology Department asked about the survey that had gone around relating to suggestions for budget cuts or revenue enhancement and if any good ideas had come out of that. Provost Knodell noted that they did receive good suggestions and they were working on a summary of the suggestions now. There were graduate college activities (professional master's degrees, online master's degrees) that will be on the list. Her belief is that UVM is "at capacity" with undergraduate students but not at capacity with graduate students. Dean Grasso agreed with her. President Fogel commented that there were many good and sensible suggestions and thought that another round might be useful but that it might come from programs or units rather than individuals. He also commented on how proud he is of the university faculty and the research and creative work that is being done across campus. On the graduate side, we have known we need and want a minimum of 20% of the student population to be graduate students (currently 17%). The big challenge will be addressed in the next fundraising campaign. We need much better and more competitive support for graduate students. We should make strong efforts to raise philanthropic funds for graduate education and research. He also wants to build on the faculty excellence. We'll need engagement from the deans and faculty. The BOT reaction to the faculty presentations was a very good sign.

For the May, 2011 BOT meeting, Provost Knodell noted that they were considering a presentation pairing a faculty member and a graduate or undergrad student discussing the research they are doing together.

Lisa Aultman-Hall of the School of Engineering mentioned that the faculty advisors of the TRC had met that morning to discuss how the next round of USDOT funds would be dispersed and she noted that they have decided to incorporate the Spires of Excellence into the signature projects. She wanted to know how UVM senior management are planning to incorporate the Spires into other UVM areas of interest, and how faculty members could feel comfortable if their work was not in a Spire. President Fogel said that a disappointment of his was that there was not a good proposal from the Environmental group but that in a competitive process it didn't rise to the top. We did feel good that there are environmental elements to all three. Provost Knodell noted that both Environment and Health by themselves are very large topical areas and the Spires give more definition in the ways we want to distinct within those broad rubrics. Also noted that FAHC has shown an interest in getting involved in the Spires and they can be a great resource.

Chris Koliba, CDAE, said that he now looks at UVM through a new lense – that of a father of a 16 year old, looking at colleges. US News and World Report said that UVM comes out pretty well, ranked as an “A+ school for B students.” But I'd like to ask you about the identity of our institution. Are we regional, national? President Fogel's belief is that UVM has to build distinction as a research university in order to maintain our enterprise as a heavily intensive undergraduate institution. It's not sustainable otherwise. We can't do this as a regional university because our region is losing potential students very rapidly. We have to draw from our undergraduates on a national and international reputation which comes with scholarly distinction. We aren't Middlebury or Williams because that revenue model and small S/F ratio won't work for us. We need to build distinction and first-rate graduate programs. We do need to have multiple identities. What I like about US News is that we were listed as a top up and coming institute.

Unknown – How do you and Jane and Dom see graduate programs in the Humanities? In 1979 there were five people on the German/Russian faculty and now there are three. We do excellent work with undergraduates, but what is the future of graduate education in programs like this? President Fogel: I have been frustrated by this for years – there are many ways to do cross-cutting programs in small departments but I have not been able to get the faculty to buy into this. I've been met with resistance. It's hard to run a graduate program with such a small group of people, as fine as they are.

Wolfgang Meider: I find it difficult to believe that a department like Political Science does not have a master's degree. In terms of identity, if we are a university of distinction, programs of that size should have a masters. In terms of identity, are we working for a university or for the College of Arts and Sciences. President Fogel: I do worry about CAS even though there are some PhD programs. It is hard to start new programs right now, however, unless they are revenue generating programs. It is strange to me to have a faculty not interested in engagement with the whole university, sharing ideas and being a good university citizen.

Rae Nishi, Neuroscience, said we will have budget issues and I know you will hear about our lack of competitiveness with graduate stipends. The primary solution, we think, is fundraising. But we are concerned with our ability to support them. You mentioned a million of two for graduate education and research, but that will not be enough. We need bridge money as well. Fogel: What is the gap per student, in your opinion? Nishi: Our stipends are 23K/yr but we cover the fees, about 2K per year. Average stipends for our program are about 26K. Fogel: I thought the gap would be more like 5k, with a million dollars you could raise all the stipends by 5K. Unknown: I've lost two great students to Dartmouth this year. Fogel: So the gap is higher, but a million or two really would help a great deal. Our thought experiment is a 500M campaign, it won't be easy but the research says we can do it. But we have to do a lot of things right. The biggest goal is support for students, and then support for faculty. That is 300M of the 500M. I am optimistic we can raise the stipends. I do have some concerns

about how we fund students because we don't differentiate by discipline. Our English stipends are better than those at the University of Georgia. We overpay in English and underpay in other disciplines.

Lisa Aultman-Hall: I don't want the record to show that the underpayment in engineering is 5K, it's more like 10-12K nationally.

President Fogel: we know that we need better stipend levels to get the best students.

Nishi: Two quick comments: our faculty is prepared to help with the fundraising and we would like to see our grad programs grow. We are worried that we might need to cut back because national funding is harder and harder to get. We just had a lot of publicity about one faculty member but really they had a horrible time getting funding.

Fogel: We know that the faculty are ready to help.

Unknown, COM: One thing that is concerning is the loss of earmark funding, especially for core facilities. President Fogel: we are concerned about the loss of earmarks as well. We thought they were good earmarks, no Golden Fleece awards. We were very transparent with them.

Unknown: What is the university doing to move the online masters programs forward? How will we balance that with the research capacity? Dean Grasso: This doesn't mean there will be any diversion from research. They can be run with extant or adjunct faculty. We do not want to diminish research because of online professional programs. Provost Knodell: we have to evaluate online programs but we are not choosing a priori to use the CE model. We are looking into third-party vendors and potential degrees for online offering. At this point, there are different levels of interest from deans but I think there will be revenue sharing to make it more attractive.

Dean Grasso: We are about out of time, so I'd like to thank the president and provost for attending today. I do want to announce that Jim Vigoreaux has NEAGEP fellowship funds for underrepresented groups. He has enough funding for five fellowships.

Grasso was asked if the BOT EPIR committee was informed of the NRC rankings and the answer was that they did not learn about the specifics. He discussed some of the slides that were shown to the BOT EPIR, including the "Rising above the gathering storm" and the follow up that shows that things are getting worse. Much of this is contingent on the research enterprise nationally and that investment in graduate education is one of the key areas. Finally, Universities are now ranked globally and UVM ranked in the mid-200s out of 500 global competitors. Snapshot of grad education: 600 grad faculty members, 53 masters, 22 doctorates (two professional), 1500 grad students and 400 medical students. 17% of population are undergrads, 1/3 of grad students are doctoral. Many top universities are over 50% grad students.

Meeting adjourned at approximately 4:05.

D. Harvey