

Minutes of the April 5, 2010, Graduate College Faculty Meeting Monday, 4:00 - 5:00 pm, Memorial Lounge, Waterman Building

VP/Dean Domenico Grasso called the meeting to order at 4:05pm. His first order of business was to change the agenda order so that he could provide the dean's report first. He welcomed the President and Provost, and also welcomed new Graduate College Associate Dean Cynthia Forehand.

Professor Fletcher asked about the minutes from the previous meeting, and stated that he would like to see the entire transcript of the minutes. VP/Dean Grasso noted that while the tape of the meeting exists, it has not been transcribed. Fletcher volunteered to transcribe them, and VP/Dean Grasso said that Fletcher could transcribe them if he wished to do so.

Grasso continued his report, noting that the Graduate College Executive Committee was working on several initiatives, including a review of the criteria for graduate college membership; the Bio-sciences umbrella program; and graduate student senate issues and policy, particularly in reference to an LSU report written by President Fogel during his tenure as graduate college dean of LSU.

Grasso cited several statistics relating to improvements in research awards, disclosures, patents, and licensing agreements. He also discussed the increase in graduate student numbers from last year to this year. Finally, he discussed the 500K cut to the VP/Research and Graduate College budget.

President Fogel then addressed the faculty, noting that the report he had written while at LSU was an effort to create consistent and equitable administration of graduate assistantship programs. It set salary floors, maximum work times, and ensured that the students were considered employees of LSU.

President Fogel then addressed the university budget. He noted that the budget was in reasonably good shape and that the OVPR/GC budget cut was part of a graduated belt-tightening. Overall, the budget situation is favorable and UVM will not have to touch reserves, and there will be some programmatic investments. UVM did lower the tuition increase from 6% to 4.8%. There is an enormous increase in student aid (from 50+M to 70+M). Not a sustainable situation but he is heartened that the university was able to support our students in their time of need.

Provost Knodell took the floor and noted her agreement with President Fogel's budget assessment. She provided an update to the TRI process: The external committee has met, the final review committee has met and reviewed the external committee's reports. She and VP/Dean Grasso had met with all eight working groups and asked them to reflect and comment on the reviews. They also met with the RSGE committee of the Faculty Senate, the Council of Deans, and the Faculty Senate Executive Council (all advisory only.) President Fogel, Provost Knodell and VP/Dean Grasso will meet Friday, April 8th with the final review council and an announcement will be made shortly thereafter.

Provost Knodell was asked if the senate resolution was considered and she said it was. Another graduate college faculty member suggested that the more the TRI groups network with other faculty, the better. Provost Knodell offered to share the minutes from all meetings if that was of interest to the faculty. Another member noted that certain proposals didn't do well – would they be reshaped? President Fogel replied that yes, that's the goal in that all eight of the proposed TRI's could be strong research areas at UVM and he'd like to see those areas continue to be looked at.

Professor Fletcher raised the issue of the resolutions in the faculty senate, and noted that the intent of the ad hoc committee was to look at not just the TRI process as it happened but why TRI was started in the first place. There are questions of how the eight topic areas were defined, and OSP data was never considered. He noted his ongoing concern that there is a lack of data to support the process as well as the need for this in the first place.

Professor Lisa Aultman-Hall noted her concern about the cuts to the Graduate College budget. Provost Knodell discussed the structural deficit and need to reduce the base budget. In order to balance the budget, she could not hold anyone harmless. Professor David Dummit noted that the Graduate College had actually received at least 1.7M in base fund increases over the last five-six years. Provost Knodell was asked how the Grad College cut “stacked up” against other unit cuts. Provost Knodell replied that it wasn’t factored out that way – the 4M in needed budget change was accomplished by additional revenue and base cuts, but they were not across the board cuts.

A member asked if there was a budget line for TRI, and the answer from President Fogel was no. TRI allocations will come from resources already allocated to units. He did note that the resources requested by the working groups were quite modest, usually in the form of a limited number of faculty positions. Provost Knodell stated that the Provost’s Office did have a discretionary pool of funds for some limited and targeted strategic investments in TRI. She also noted that it was vitally important that the university not compromise the outstanding undergraduate experience at UVM.

Professor Fletcher asked if the Grad College cut was permanent and the answer was yes – it was a base cut. VP/Dean Grasso was asked if he could share the specifics of the cut and he did:

- 202K in salary and fringe of an unfilled graduate college senior staff position
- 150K in assistantships
- 148K in position and base cuts to areas within the VP/Research office (such as the Office of Technology Commercialization, formerly Tech Transfer.)

There was general discussion of the Office of Technology Commercialization and income and expense from patents and licensing. VP/Dean Grasso noted that these operations usually aren’t effective as an income/expense operation unless there is a large-impact “hit” like Gatorade. UVM must maintain the office to keep the university in good standing under the Bayh-Dole Act. UVM spends about 160K per year on patents, and each one costs about 20K. There are lots of good possibilities in the pipeline.

VP/Dean Grasso was asked how he will address the issue of GTA/GRA allocations, and the question was answered by incoming GC Associate Dean Forehand, who noted that she was looking forward to work on that and many other issues relating to graduate students when she starts in July.

There was a general discussion on grants and appropriate graduate student work relating to grants and dissertation-writing.

Professor Nishi noted that our current stipends are not competitive enough to bring in the best students. VP/Dean Grasso agreed and noted that Professor Forehand would be working on this.

Professor Fletcher said that the Grad College should look at tuition and the way grad students are funded, including how they transition from GTA’s to GRA’s. VP/Dean Grasso agreed that this should be reviewed. Professor Forehand noted that she had been concerned about GTA’s and GRA’s for twenty years and was looking forward to addressing these issues. The system is flawed and won’t be fixed overnight.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:10pm.

Recorded by D. Harvey