

(Approved December 16, 2009)

BROCK UNIVERSITY GRADUATE COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of October 28, 2009 Sankey Chamber 2:00 pm

Present: K. Arnell, L. Boldt, D. Butz, R. Cheel, R. Dimand, L. Duhaime, F. Fueten, H. Fukš, A. Glazebrook, D. Hayes, J. Helleiner, M. Hennigar, S. Houghten, N. Klentrou, M. Knuttila, M. Pyley, M. Rose (Chair), S. Rothstein (also representing D. Bruce), D. Samson, B. Seeber, S. Sekel, H. Skott-Myhre (also representing J. Leach), C. Ugolini (Recorder), T. Vause, M. Webber

Guests: P. Beard

Regrets: T. Dunk, J. Koustas, J. Leach, G. Pepper, E. Robb, K. Samokhin, V. Woloshyn

Programs not Represented: Biological Sciences, Philosophy, Physics

1. Dean Rose welcomed Pat Beard, Academic Reviews and Planning Coordinator and Murray Knuttila, VP Academic & Provost to Graduate Council and introductions took place.
2. Approval of Agenda - **MOVED** (L. Boldt/D. Hayes) that the Agenda of October 28, 2009 be approved. **CARRIED**
3. Approval of Minutes of September 30, 2009 - **MOVED** (J. Helleiner/R. Dimand) that the Minutes of the meeting of September 30, 2009 be approved. **CARRIED**
4. Business Arising from the Minutes – None
5. Upcoming CGPSS Survey (Canadian Graduate and Professional Student Survey)

P. Beard announced that the next CGPSS survey will be conducted in February/March of 2010, stressing the importance of improving the response rate for the survey. Brock's participation rate in the 2007 survey was only 21% and GPDs are urged to ensure that their faculty and students are made aware of the survey. The purpose of the survey is to gather information about the graduate school experience including satisfaction with programs and services, as well as support and opportunities for research. Once we are provided with a file of the data collected, it must then be interpreted and analyzed.

Dean Rose noted that in the last survey, we came out ahead in the area of student satisfaction with research culture, but slightly below the norm in terms of student's satisfaction with the university's "graduate culture."

It was pointed out that in the last survey, questions were not geared towards course-based programs. While students are not expected to answer questions irrelevant to their programs, it would be better if the instrument were more tailored to the different kinds of students that will be responding.

6. Discussion Items:

- a) Impact of 09/10 Budget Cuts on Graduate Education – J. Helleiner raised the issue of graduate funding cuts, particularly as they have affected international students. There appear to be more students in financial crisis this year than in the past. In the ensuing discussion, it was noted that while some short term solutions have been found within some Faculties with respect to the first term, the second term remains a great worry. The point was made that if funding next year for international students does not change, some programs may choose not to admit international students from constrained backgrounds. It was suggested that the university has an ethical responsibility to support international students that it has accepted into graduate programs. Quite apart from the issue of international students from impoverished backgrounds, it was also argued that our international student support is not competitive with other institutions, which is a serious issue for programs dependent upon international student enrolments. Suggestions included providing clearer details re: funding in the students' admission letters and developing a better sense of how many international students the university might be able to assist extraordinarily. The point was also made, however, that funding difficulties are also experienced by domestic students, some of whom also have great need.

In response Dean Rose outlined the activities that the FGS has undertaken in order to address the problems that have surfaced. It is important to recognize that graduate student support is not intended to cover all living expenses, but to support students who are expected to bring some of their own resources with them. It is true that some international students arrive without sufficient funds, though they would have had to demonstrate a certain level of solvency in order to obtain their visas. The FGS does what it can through fellowships and ensuring that offers include TAs – as well as assisting with bursaries, normally after the first term or for emergencies. A number of additional initiatives have been undertaken by the FGS to see what additional support might be garnered from the larger community, and work will continue to be done over the next month or so to see what can be realized from these efforts.

She distinguished between the current situation (where a number of international students are experiencing shortfalls in financing their first term) and planning for the future (so that this does not happen again). The current situation will need to be addressed through common efforts. However, in the longer term a structural solution or solutions must be found. With the Provost's assistance, and through the budget process, the FGS will attempt to create supplemental support, a fund of some kind, to assist a fixed number of international students with demonstrated need. However central funds can only go so far: there may need to be further help in the form of Program or Faculty contributions (e.g. through research grants), and it is also important to develop more endowment funds yielding scholarships or bursaries for international students. Under the OGFP (Ontario Graduate Fellowship Plan), which the Dean administers, it is possible for donors to obtain matching funds for their donations. Some departments and programs are availing themselves of this opportunity and setting up endowments to support international students for the future.

A question was raised about revisiting the issue of the non-eligibility of graduate students for the Experience Works program.

ACTION: Dean Rose will make this case once again.

- b) Definition of "First Draft" – still under discussion with Associate Deans for Graduate Studies. Please forward comments to Dean Rose for forwarding to Associate Deans for their next meeting.

- c) Accommodation of Graduate Students with Disabilities – Dean Rose pointed out that at the graduate level we are required to accommodate to the equivalent of others in the program, and we do not need to accommodate in such a way that the essential requirements of the program are compromised.

ACTION: Dean Rose will circulate the draft document on Accommodation of Graduate Students with Disabilities that was presented for discussion at COU.

- d) Library User Fees: U of T – It was noted that two institutions have paid for their students to use the U of T Library facilities. The issue has been taken up that U of T is a public resource and funded publicly, and therefore should be accessible. Dean Rose noted that students can still borrow on Interlibrary Loan.

ACTION: Dean Rose will consult with Margaret Grove on this issue.

- e) Graduate Program Handbooks – Programs are asked to review their program handbook and update as necessary, being especially careful to be clear as to specific milestones and the assessment of “progress” during the research phase.

7. Director’s Report

- a) Dean Rose noted that G. Pepper is currently recruiting in Vietnam, and that enrolment reports will be forwarded shortly for use in preparing for the enrolment planning meetings which are being scheduled.
- b) D. Butz inquired as to the identity of the six programs which are receiving recruitment assistance from the FGS this year. Dean Rose noted that this information will be provided upon G. Pepper’s return.

8. GSA Report

On behalf of Ellen Rob, Dean Rose reported that the health and dental plans are activated, and that the GSA is helping with two research events: an off-campus event on November 6 and Mapping the New Knowledges on November 25.

9. Dean’s Report

Detailed hard copies of the Dean’s Report were circulated.

- a) In response to an inquiry regarding timing of the transition to the new review system in Ontario, Dean Rose responded that the Task Force submitted its final report to OCAV in mid October. OCAV decided to disband the Task Force and to make final revisions to the report, consulting members of the Task Force as needed. Universities are being urged to go ahead and build their IQAPs (Internal Quality Assurance Process) by March 15. Cyclical reviews will take place every 8, rather than 7 years, and it has been suggested that the Undergraduate Program be reviewed one year and the Graduate Program the following year.

There are discussions about the location of Brock’s Academic Review Committee, a requirement of the new system. It is felt that it must be located within Senate or report to Senate, as Senate has final academic authority under Brock’s bicameral system.

- b) Dean Rose reminded GPDs to forward names of their program representatives who will be attending Fall Preview Day on November 8.

- c) Mapping the New Knowledges Research Café 1, November 25 - Research for a Changing World: we are still in need of a Social Sciences researcher and graduate student relating to this topic, but otherwise the program is set.
- d) Please review the Integrated Article Thesis section (pg. 3 of the Dean's Report) and send Dean Rose any advice you may have for her to share anonymously with Associate Deans and the Senate Graduate Studies Committee.

10. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 3:30 pm.