MINUTES
UNIVERSITY GRADUATE COMMITTEE
November 18, 2009

Members Present: Steve Barger (Psychology), Cindy Browder (Chemistry), Catherine Petersen (sub Library), Gretchen McAllister (Teaching and Learning), Y. Evie Garcia (Ex-Officio-Graduate College), Michelle Harris (Sociology), Tom Kolb (Forestry), Chris Lockwood (Business Administration), Sherri McCarthy (sub; Educational Psychology), Ramona Mellott (Ex-Officio-Graduate Dean), Lindsey Passenger (Graduate Student/GSO), Karen Plager-Chair (Nursing), Nandor Sieben (Mathematics and Statistics), Anna Sosa (Communication Sciences and Disorders), Jim Wilce (Anthropology), Paul Umhoefer (Earth Sciences and Environmental Sustainability), Niranjan Venkatraman (Engineering), Nicole Walker (English), Meghan Warren (Physical Therapy), Julie Hedges Brown (Music), Bruce Fox (MA in Administration), Steve Hempleman (Biological Sciences), Alan Lew (Geography, Planning and Recreation), Lori Poloni-Staudinger (Politics and International Affairs), Richard Rogers (Applied Communication), Jennifer Kurth (Educational Specialties), Ishmael Munene (Educational Leadership), Cecilia Ojeda (Modern Languages).

Members Absent: Patrick Deegan (Ex-Officio-Extended Campuses), Luis Fernandez (Criminology and Criminal Justice), Susan Deeds (History), Marcus Ford (Sustainable Communities). No representative identified from Physics and Astronomy.

Guests: Lisa Williams (AIO), Nancy Johnson (Earth Sciences and Environmental Sustainability), Jim Sell (Geography, Planning and Recreation).

Graduate College: Thomas Carpenter, Melissa Riggs (sub for Victoria Endres).

1. The meeting was called to order at 3:00 pm by Karen Plager.

2. Minutes from the October 21, 2009 meeting were approved with modification to the section on members present and their affiliations.

3. Curriculum Change—Social and Behavioral Sciences


Steve Barger reported that the certificate was initiated with grant funding several years ago by faculty members who have now left NAU. The department was unsuccessful in efforts to find another unit to take over the program administration. The program did not have large enrollment and was available only on the Flagstaff campus.

A motion was made, seconded, and approved to delete the certificate program. It was suggested that this proposal be considered a model for future plan deletions as it included an accounting of currently enrolled students and steps the department is taking to assist remaining students to complete program requirements.


This discussion was deferred until the PL514 course recommended for approval below was discussed and approved. Alan Lew and Jim Sell presented the new certificate as intended for working professionals needing a skill update and recent bachelor’s recipients who desire advanced skills before entering the workforce. The existing, comparable GIS certificate has been highly successful, drawing twice the number of graduate students as undergraduates, and approximately half the graduate students go on for a master’s degree. GP&R now offers enough coursework for a certificate in planning. The department is not
aware of any other graduate or undergraduate online certificate or degree program in urban and regional planning in the U.S., and there is a solid market. The PL514 course discussed below would be an elective in this program.

It was established that these certificate hours can roll into a master’s degree. This is potentially true for the M ADMN online program as well, and the certificate could serve as an elective block.

A motion to approve the certificate program and add the PL514 course to the curricula for it was made, seconded, and approved.

**Master of Administration—Community Planning Emphasis. Plan Change.**

The Master of Administration is designed for mid-career professionals who desire a comprehensive understanding of administration. Admission to the degree program requires a minimum of 5 years of professional work experience. The new emphasis will create the only community and city planning online degree in the country. The proposed degree has gone through the steering committee and suggested changes are included.

The GIS certificate will be completely online by next fall, and the planning and GIS areas overlap substantially, plus all courses are offered in the same department. The community planning emphasis deals more heavily with land use planning and management and the GIS emphasis is more technology-oriented.

A motion to approve was made, seconded, and approved.

**PL 514. Planning Sustainable Communities. New Course.**

This class will be offered as an elective in the Master of Administration–Community Planning emphasis and the MS Applied Geospatial Sciences degree. Jim Sell taught the class as PL 599 in a classroom seminar format in Fall 2009, and it will be taught online in Spring 2010. The class will also meet the needs for sustainability initiatives and curriculum in general at NAU. The class teaches historical concepts of environmental sustainability and progresses to sustainability on the household and community level.

Discussion points included the class’s listing on the M ADMN certificate program, the Review Committee’s recommendation to strengthen learning outcomes, and a suggestion to enhance the international component.

A motion to approve was made, seconded, and approved.

**Master of Arts in Applied Sociology. Plan Change.**

Michelle Harris reported that, through an oversight in her department, a number of new courses were approved but the plan change was never submitted to UGC. The plan change proposal is a “clean-up job” to bring the program into compliance. All courses were previously submitted and approved.

A motion to approve was made, seconded, and approved.

4. **Curriculum Change—College of Engineering, Forestry and Natural Science.**

Nancy Johnson presented for Scott Anderson who teaches at this hour. The Quaternary Sciences Program has become part of the Center for Sustainable Environments, and the QS designation is being changed to a ENV designation. The new course is a repackaging of a course Anderson has taught many times, bringing it to a new level and offering it to both undergraduate and graduate students. Evie Garcia has already reviewed and requested changes which were incorporated.

Discussion centered on the difference between the 550 and 450 level. Graduate students will have two presentations, a harder exam, an expanded reading list, and more abstracts on the readings.

A motion to approve was made, seconded, and approved.

5. Consent Agenda
   CIS 540. Web Technology and Development. Delete Course.
   SOC 504H. Gender Construction—Honors. Delete Course.
   SOC 560. Aging Policy. Delete Course.

A motion to approve the consent agenda was made, seconded, and approved. No discussion.

6. Policy Committee Issue: Options and pros/cons regarding 24-hr formal coursework requirement.

The Policy Committee created a three-page, five-column document on options and pros/cons for this policy, which Evie Garcia condensed to a one-page, two-column document. Three options were proposed:
   1. leave the policy as is,
   2. leave the policy as is and grant exemptions as needed, or
   3. alter the policy

There was extended discussion regarding the policy as it impacted specific programs. The natural sciences are strongly research-intensive, the humanities are strongly course-intensive, and all programs are concerned that independent studies not make up too strong a percentage of credits. It was suggested that the committee examine and redefine “coursework.” The committee also debated the use of 697, 699, and 685 credits and formal versus informal coursework.

Cindy Browder suggested that UGC redefine “thesis” as formal. The 24 hours would consist of 18 hours of formal coursework and six hours of thesis credit. Tom Carpenter pointed out that existing language is already sufficient to this interpretation. The discussion consensus was that the policy committee should develop a clarified statement to this effect, perhaps including course numbers, a listing of what is included and excluded, whether letter grades are required for all formal coursework, and a maximum number or ratio of thesis hours. UGC will discuss; then the wording will go to chairs, Faculty Senate, and other campus groups to consider the broad impact. The process should finish early next semester in time to change the language in next year’s catalog.

7. Dean Remarks.
Dean Mellott recently sent an e-mail regarding graduate teaching assistant evaluations. She reminded committee members that ABOR requires that there be some means of assessment for every course taught, every semester. This is not a new policy. An evaluation form is provided in the GTA handbook.

8. GSO Report.

Dean Mellott mentioned the GSO strategic plan meeting last week and provided a heads-up that GSO is working toward independence from ASNAU and plans to initiate a Graduate Research Fair, probably in March.

Lindsey Passenger reported that GSO is awarding $3,200 in travel funds to 21 students this fall. GSO will be working to make the travel fund application criteria more specific for the spring semester.

9. Good of the Order.

Karen Plager raised a discussion topic on the size of graduate classes: the President’s website mentions a policy of eight+ students or the class is cancelled. Some understood this to be a two-year policy due to the recession that will expire. Others felt the President’s website presented this as a permanent new policy. The implication is that the administration will be reviewing programs and courses, and some will be threatened on this basis.

Dean Mellott mentioned that the Provost announced the policy last spring. She does make exceptions if provided with a solid rationale statement. Bruce Fox mentioned the difference between minimums on courses and minimums on cohorts.

The consensus in the ensuing discussion was that if the policy is considered permanent, the administration needs to come to UGC and advocate for it. NAU has a commitment to its graduate students to make it possible to graduate within the announced and marketed time frame. Graduate programs and staff need to know the policy beyond two years in order to plan wisely. It is important for UGC to ask for information to clarify this policy. Dean Mellott will invite the Provost to a future UGC meeting to discuss the issue.

The next UGC meeting is January 20, 2010.

10. The meeting was adjourned at 4:33 pm.