GRADUATE COUNCIL MEETING  
April 7, 2005  
3:00pm, MU Board Room

Present: Pehrsson (co-chair), Steel (co-chair), Ciuffetti, Filtz, Francis, Koenig, Pedersen, Rettig, Rockey, Strickroth, Tadepalli, Unsworth, Waldschmidt

Absent: Bond, Brown, Selker

Guests: Kathryn Higley, José Reyes

I. Approval of Minutes

The minutes from March 17, 2005, were approved as written.

II. Test of a Distance Delivered Doctoral Program

José Reyes and Kathryn Higley (Department of Nuclear Engineering and Radiation Health Physics) introduced a proposal for a test case for a distance delivered PhD program. The proposal as presented in advance of the meeting was summarized as follows.

The Department of Nuclear Engineering and Radiation Health Physics in the College of Engineering is seeking Graduate Council approval of its off-campus site approval process to conduct a test sampling of its distance delivered doctoral program for up to 3 candidates. The off-campus site approval process, in conjunction with department requirements on student qualifications, graded coursework and research, is designed to provide a residency experience that meets, and in some cases exceeds, that for on-campus students. The NE/RHP distance delivered PhD program is specifically designed for professionals unable to spend at least three terms of full-time graduate academic work on campus.

The residence requirements for students enrolled in a distance delivered NE/RHP PhD program will be met by:

1. Completing a minimum of 36 graduate OSU credits, and
2. Either spending at least 3 terms of full-time graduate work on campus, or the successful implementation of the NE/RHP off-campus site approval process and department requirements for student qualifications, graded coursework and research.

Off-Campus Site Approval

The Department of Nuclear Engineering and Radiation Health Physics will use appropriate means to assure that:

1. The student’s agency or firm contains appropriate research facilities at the student’s place of employment. (Research and library access facilities).
2. All department requirements for distance delivered PhD programs are met.
3. That a preceptor has been selected based on academic and professional achievement.
This will require an agreement with the student’s agency/firm, may include a stipend, and would require status as adjunct faculty within NE/RHP.

4. Intensive on-campus meetings in Corvallis – such as regular graduate committee presentations, candidacy exams, and research presentations - would be scheduled.

(Footnote to item 3: A preceptor is an expert or a specialist in the field of study who both gives practical experience and training to a student and monitors, as an extension of the Department, the progress and activity of the student on-site. Preceptors will be provided with training and support for their roles in the program.)

**NE/RHP Requirements for Distance Delivered PhD Programs**

**A. Student Qualifications**

Students considered for acceptance into our NE/RHP distance delivered doctoral program must meet the following criteria:

1. They must meet all screening criteria for on-campus candidates.
2. They must be working professionals in the technical field of health physics, nuclear engineering, or a closely related discipline such as medical physics.
3. They must have a minimum of 5 years in the position related to the degree.
4. Their firm or agency must concur in writing with their request to participate in the program.

**B. Graded Coursework**

Students in the NE/RHP distance delivered PhD program will take coursework using the following delivery method, where required:

1. Didactic: Via E-Learning with concentrated regional meetings
2. Coursework will be provided/supported both via internet and interactive video.
3. Laboratory course experience: Either on-campus or at their site (using facilities of the agency/firm by agreement).
4. Preceptor: Same

**C. Research**

Research for the PhD dissertation would:

1. Meet all academic criteria for on-campus students
   a. Students would have to pass the PhD qualifying exams which are offered on-campus
   b. Students would have to pass the PhD candidacy exam where they make an oral presentation of their proposed research
   c. Students would have to pass the final defense.
   d. All of these exams would be held at OSU on-campus.
2. Be limited to dissertation/research topic which are related to the student’s current field of work and have a thematic match to the expertise of their OSU faculty advisor.
3. Require electronic access to research materials be available
4. Require that a OSU library liaison be identified
5. Require a preceptor: Same as above
6. Require a Faculty Advisor:
   a. Available via comtech – scheduled/unscheduled
   b. Scheduled face-to-face meetings on Campus
7. Require approval based on their potential contribution to the field.

D. Residency

Satisfied in accordance with the NE/RHP off-campus site approval process as approved by the Graduate Council.

Lynda Ciuffetti (Science) asked whether the students in this program would comply with the continuous registration requirement. Bruce Rettig (Graduate School) noted that the students could apply for leave of absence when they are not using university resources. When the students work with OSU faculty or use technology resources such as distance access to electronic journals or other publications, they would be required to register for a minimum of three credits. Reyes observed that the OSU library distance resources are very good and include journals helpful to students in Nuclear Engineering and Radiation Health Physics.

Sally Francis (Graduate School) asked for more information about the preceptor. Reyes and Higley explained that this was a local technical advisor—someone supports OSU Nuclear Engineering faculty. OSU faculty members would serve as major professors and other members of the student’s advisory committee. The preceptor would be oriented to “OSU culture,” including departmental and university requirements during the site visit.

In response to questions about costs, Reyes noted that costs of the site visit would come from revenue collected from the student. Higley added that OSU would not have to pay a stipend or pay for research expenses since the student’s employer would provide these.

Francis asked whether approval of a site for one student would mean approval for another student. Higley explained that the approval process is both site and student specific. If another student applied from the same site, another site visit would be required. Likewise, if a student changed locations, the student would be considered to have withdrawn from the program. If that student wished to resume study at another location, the entire screening and site visit process would be needed.

Reyes noted that many of the questions posed by Council members appeared to interpret their proposal to be a request for a change in the residency requirement. He said that the request was for a limited test to determine whether the proposed educational experience is consistent with both general OSU expectations and expectations of his department.

Francis asked whether the proposed educational experience should be a professional doctorate rather than a PhD. What is a PhD? Can the experience be provided at a distant location? Reyes said that the prospective students wish to gain the full PhD experience including becoming qualified to be independent researchers.
Ciuffetti asked whether the focus of discussion could shift from its value for faculty to its value for students. In particular, she was concerned about potential conflicts of interest. If the student receives signals that the work should contribute to the needs of the company or agency providing the resources for the site, the research may not meet the standards for scholarly, independent research. Reyes responded that Nuclear Engineering was ranked highly in the recent U.S. News and World Report ranking and that the department would not want to jeopardize the respect that it has earned for itself and the university. Brent Steel (Liberal Arts) noted that being located in Corvallis does not eliminate conflicts of interest. He is aware of current OSU graduate students whose research is monitored closely by agencies and firms sponsoring the research.

Prasad Tadepalli (Engineering) asked whether the student would be free to publish the work openly. Reyes said that this would be a requirement. The student would be required to submit the thesis to the library and to the national repositories just like any other OSU dissertation.

Elaine Pedersen (Health and Human Sciences) asked whether, since this was to be a test, someone was working on an appropriate experimental design to assess whether the test was a success. Steel agreed that experimental design is essential to calling this a true test.

Pedersen noted that distance education is a rapidly expanding enterprise. If there is a need for distance delivered doctoral programs such as the one being proposed by Nuclear Engineering, and if OSU does not address the need, we should anticipate someone else doing so.

Steel explained that he has much experience teaching courses similar to those offered by Nuclear Engineering. His questions are whether the proposal needs to more clearly specify (1) the role of the various involved parties and (2) strategies for avoiding conflicts of interest. Ciuffetti agrees that conflicts of interest, which might arise when a student’s employer is paying for the doctoral education, is important. Related issues are those of intellectual property: Are there limits on a student’s right to publish and to secure patents? She continues to have concerns about assessment of the process.

Pehrsson believes that the faculty who are engaged are ethical and passionate about their degree program, including this proposed approach. They should be able to succeed. Perhaps a partnership with the Graduate Council would be a way to assess the success of the program and identify questions that need to be resolved as they arise. She does not advocate delaying the test.

Ciuffetti asked whether the approval process for this proposal should include others besides the Graduate Council. Steel suggested that having Council members seek advice from their colleges would be helpful. Francis said that, if the proposal is intended to identify alternative sites, it might need approval from OUS. She is aware of processes for delivering a program to a new site in Oregon, but does not have guidance about delivery outside the state.

Pehrsson asked whether this is a proposal for delivering a degree to a new site or a proposal for allowing dissertation research to be conducted off site. Other council members believed that it was a proposal for conducting research away from Corvallis by a student who completes courses delivered through distance technology.

Hal Koenig (Business) suggested involvement in seminars by using new and emerging audio/video technology. Steel asked whether, given rapid strides in communication capabilities
using interactive audio and video, requiring the use of such technology would alleviate concerns some Council members have. Ciuffetti argued that other issues are involved. One missing factor is the sense of community that is generated when a student interacts with other students and faculty. PhD education is a time of professional growth and adjustment to a life as a scholar.

Koenig asked whether Reyes or Higley should be given a set of questions related to concerns raised by Council members.

Francis noted that the employer may be paying the student’s tuition bill. How does this affect the intellectual property right? Is this clarified in the agreement reached between the student, the employer and OSU? Is the student at risk? What is the student’s right to publish? Who is allowed to patent technology? Who looks out for OSU? Francis suggested that advice from legal counsel would be helpful on these issues.

III. Category I Proposal to Eliminate Graduate Degrees in Plant Physiology

The Council continued its discussion of the proposal to eliminate the graduate degree programs in plant physiology. Some Council members had talked with Barbara Bond (Forestry) and others had read the following summary of correspondence between Dale Pehrsson (Education) and Bond on this issue.

Summary of discussion and follow up with Barbara Bond

Two years ago Barbara wrote a memorandum to deans of Ag, Forestry and Science and also the grad school (Sally Francis) advising them that the university was seriously "leaking" instructors in plant phys and it was starting to have a serious impact on programs (See earlier memo from Barbara Bond).

Sally asked Barbara to chair a committee to investigate. The committee met over about 6 months and then submitted a report to Sally and other deans (Barbara can send you the full report if you'd like to see it). In brief, the report recommended:

- abolishment of the Plant Physiology interdisciplinary program (reasons are given in the report), and
- development of a faculty of plant biology that would develop a new approach to collaborative teaching plant physiology courses. (The report proposes development of a "modular" approach to teaching courses to maximize contributions of current faculty).

Sally then asked Barbara (about a year ago) to work with Charles Boyer to pursue these two recommendations:

- The Category I proposal that the Grad Council discussed at their last meeting was one outcome
- The other recommendation (establishment of a Plant Biology faculty and a new, collaborative approach to offering courses) is still unresolved. Faculty and admin were busy and unable to devote much time to this, and at the same time a group of
Department Heads from Hort, Botany, Crop Sci, and For Sci organized to develop a new graduate program in Plant Science. (Dan Arp of Botany and Plant Pathology is leading this effort) Their plan is designed to meet many the same needs Barbara identified originally, although there are some differences in approach. For example, Plant Science strategy (as currently formulated) would create an entirely new graduate program; it calls for new graduate degrees in Plant Science that would replace graduate programs involving the plant sciences that currently reside in departments.

Barbara is not involved in this new effort but supports the idea of graduate programs that are completely interdepartmental, although it is a very ambitious strategy that will probably take quite a bit of time to develop and implement.

- A simple bottom line: the Plant Phys grad program has only graduated a handful of students in its 15 or more years of existence (I was one of them), and more than 75% of the courses required by the program are no longer taught. It is no longer honest or realistic for OSU to maintain the program.

Barbara regrets very much that she will miss the next Council meeting. She recommends voting in favor of the Category I proposal to eliminate the Interdisciplinary Program in Plant Physiology. She also recommends that the Council consider issuing a public statement of concern about the status of graduate courses in plant biology at OSU.

Dan Rockey (Veterinary Medicine) noted that discussions are taking place about a redesign of Molecular and Cellular Biology (MCB) with specializations within the degree umbrella. Will efforts to improve course availability through the MCB redesign address some concerns? Ciuffetti said that MCB covers issues other than plant physiology and that important parts of plant physiology fall outside MCB. She concurred with the need to raise concern about plant physiology courses, but recommended that the Council approve the Category I proposal.

The Council unanimously approved the Category I proposal to eliminate plant physiology.

A proposal was made to create a group of Council members consisting of Bond, Ciuffetti, Selker and Unsworth to draft a statement of concern about the loss of critical courses. The statement will be brought to the full Council for discussion. Upon approval, the statement will be distributed to the academic deans with plant science programs and to the Provost. Pehrsson agreed to communicate this request to Bond, Selker and Unsworth.

IV. Other Business

Koenig asked for advice on writing the Statistics Graduate Program Review Report. He said that Statistics faculty members teach many service courses (courses designed primarily to meet the needs of students majoring in degrees other than Statistics). Many students who take these courses ask Statistics faculty to serve as minor professors. The large number of commitments as minor professor is a heavy work commitment with little formal recognition for the faculty member or the department. In addition, faculty members advise several Statistics graduate students. They provide large amounts of statistical consulting services, much of it without compensation or formal recognition. Should the review report include a recommendation that Statistics faculty decline some of the requests for consulting advice and service as minor
professors so that the faculty can spend more time on scholarly inquiry and their own research programs?

Council members agreed that the issue was an appropriate one to discuss. The review committee should feel free to provide any recommendations that may lead to improvement in the graduate education of Statistics students and to enhancement of the faculty members’ research programs.