Graduate Academic Council
2009 – 2010

Minutes of the Council meeting of February 2, 2010
Approved by the Council on March 1, 2010.

In attendance: J. Baronner (staff), J. Bartow (staff), F. Bolton (staff), S. Chittur,
S. Commuri, N. Fahrenkopf, C. Fox, T. Groves, J. Kimball, L. Kranich
(Chair), H. Miller, M. Pryse, K. Reinhold

Unable to attend: L. Fuller

1. The minutes from 11/9/09 were unanimously approved.

2. Dean’s report – M. Pryse

2009 Graduate Student Support Review Panel Final Report

Dean Pryse walked GAC through the report. A discussion followed.

The Dean asked the Council to consider how the University might respond to the
information about quality in the report. What do we do with the fact that some programs
have scored very well, while others have scored below the campus average? A question
was raised concerning the diversity of programs that the sub-panels reviewed. The dean
explained that panelists reviewed programs across the disciplines and professional
schools, with the exception that they could not review their own program or any program
with which they carry joint faculty status. Another Council member that was part of the
review panel mentioned how historical trends may have contributed to performance—in
other words, at issue was not simply a program’s achievement but also their use of
resources, and programs with fewer resources for a number of years may have been less
likely to perform well in the GSS review.

Regarding ‘10–11 allocations, Dean Pryse mentioned there would be no additional cuts
over last year and that the Provost has added about $750,000 to the base pool over ‘09–
‘10. However, not all of this money can be used for investment; about $250,000 is needed
to cover the increasing cost of continuing students as we have raised stipends over the last
couple of years. In addition, in any given year, particular programs will cost more (or
less) depending on how many of their continuing students will require out-of-state tuition,
and the number of new-to-program openings for any particular program will always be
affected by how many students have graduated, left the program, or been moved to grant
funding. That said, we do not at present, and have not for several years, had a sufficient
GSS budget to support all of our graduate programs to the extent we would need to do in
order to ensure continued quality.

The Dean suggested that perhaps the GSS review may provide the basis for discussions of
improvement in doctoral programs. It was stressed that there was a working partnership
with the departments during this process where deans received data and other documents,
thereby creating the opportunity to use the GSS Review to support conversations between
programs and their deans.
The Chair questioned why GAC has received only the summary report. He mentioned that GAC is charged with reviewing program assessments. Also, every department undergoes a review every seven years, and UAC and GAC are responsible for reviewing these assessments. Along with that responsibility is the need for confidentiality and non-discussion outside of GAC meetings.

Dean Pryse mentioned the process was not a reward or punish scenario. A member pointed out the “scrap and build” comment on page 15, but the Dean stressed that no program is being scrapped. She did urge the Council to continue discussing the report and stressed that this is an opportunity to voice concerns that the University does not have sufficient funds to support Graduate programs. The Dean also urged the Council to call the campus’s attention to the fact that sufficient graduate program funding needs to be placed on the table for the Strategic Planning process.

A Council member mentioned there is insufficient funding for the graduate programs. Even Buffalo and other SUNY University Centers appear to be better funded than SUNY-Albany.

After the Dean left the meeting, the discussion continued.

A question was raised concerning the credibility of the results when the panel members themselves criticized the validity of the data. (See “B. The Data Used in Connection With the Evaluations,” under Reflections on the GSS Review Process.)

A member stressed that the level of diligence required to review all input connected with the IRPE data and Faculty Scholarly Productivity rankings by Academic Analytics is no small undertaking. Nevertheless, if GAC is to study the matter further, we need access to detailed data.

The Chair mentioned that GOV had originally recommended that GAC should receive the individual panel assessments along with the background data but subsequently modified this and recommended that we be given the individual panel assessments only. It is the Provost’s decision whether to release this information to GAC. However, GAC has the responsibility to review program assessments and recommend changes. Although it was acknowledged that reviewing all program assessments could take a long time, perhaps there will be items that are immediately apparent.

A member mentioned that we are not competitive with our stipends, and that has a negative trickle down effect.

A member mentioned that strategic investments in some programs might be a consideration for the Strategic Planning Committee.

3. Chair’s report – L. Kranich

At the November 16, 2009 Senate meeting, the President reported that the Board of Trustees met to discuss SUNY Flex legislation. This legislation would allow campuses to
charge differential tuition and would reform procurement and land-use practices, among other things. The Chancellor’s and the President’s offices are encouraging support of the legislation.

The Senate Chair requested that proposals for new programs be submitted by March in order to allow sufficient time for completion this spring. Jon Bartow informed the Council that he knows of only one new program that may arrive at GAC’s doorstep.

The Governance Council (GOV) had been asked to review the language in Senate Bill 0809-09, “Clarifying Amendment on ‘Graduate Courses’,” to remove any ambiguities. At its meeting on November 11, 2009, GOV agreed that no changes were necessary.

GOV met on November 17, 2009 to discuss the request by GAC to review the individual panel/program assessments from the 2009 Graduate Student Support Review, as stipulated in the Senate Charter. Their recommendation in support of GAC’s request was forwarded to GAC members on November 19, 2009.

At the Executive Committee meeting on November 30, 2009, SEC members discussed the GSS review and the request by GAC for the individual panel assessments. The discussion will be continued at the next SEC meeting. It was also noted that GAC has not been reviewing assessment reports from the Council on Academic Assessment, as required in Senate Charter article X.4.5.1. This matter will be discussed under “New Business.” The GAC Chair has been granted access to the wiki site to view the reports and determine what is necessary for compliance.

At the December 14, 2009 Senate meeting, it was reported that GOV met again on December 12, 2009 and clarified its recommendation that GAC should receive the individual GSS panel reports but not necessarily the raw data on which they are based. Also at the meeting, Senate Bill 0910-02, “Advanced Graduate Certificate in Professional Science Management,” was approved and forwarded to the President for his signature.

Nothing pertaining to GAC business was discussed at the January 25, 2010 Executive Committee meeting.

The Chair acknowledged Dean Pryse’s decision to step down as the Graduate Dean. On behalf of the Council, he thanked the Dean for her contributions and hard work.

UAlbany Advocacy Day is Monday, February 8th and a rally is being held at the Concourse Plaza from 5:00-7:00 PM.

4. New Business

The Chair noted that, whereas the Senate Charter stipulates GAC is to “consider assessment reports pertaining to graduate programs including those from the Council on Academic Assessment” (Section X.4.5.1), GAC has not been receiving such reports. By way of background, each Department is scheduled to undergo an assessment every seven
years. Such reviews consist of several components: a self-study, an on-site evaluation by external reviewers, a departmental response to the external reviewer report, and a CAA summary report. The immediate question is what information contained in each assessment should be provided to GAC and how far back in time? It was noted that before CAA was created, both GAC and UAC shared the work of program evaluation. It was agreed that for now the 2-3 page summary reports by CAA would be sufficient for GAC to carry out its charge.

Since the Chair of CEPP (Committee on Educational Policy and Procedures) could not attend today’s meeting, Jon Bartow provided a report. CEPP held a meeting on December 10, 2009 where three items were discussed: (1) a graduate level course syllabus policy, (2) a review of the types of graduate certificates, and (3) a policy for course grade changes (primarily, Incompletes). Regarding the latter, Jon noted that there is a procedure at the Undergraduate level but not at the Graduate level. Discussion of each of these matters is ongoing.

A member stressed that at the very minimum a description of each course and/or syllabus should be available on-line.

Jon mentioned that the other two committees, Committee on Admissions and Academic Standing and Committee on Curriculum and Instruction, have not yet met. CC&I plans to meet on February 18th.

END OF GAC 2/2/2010 MINUTES

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