

**Graduate Council Meeting Minutes
February 12, 2014**

Present: T. Albrecht, J. Alm, B. Deskin, F. Falaky, H. Flora, H. Frost, M. MacPherson, B. Mitchell, M. Mislove, G. Morris, G. Oldham, S. Overstreet, A. Robison, E. Svendsen,

Absent: H. Ashbaugh, S. Grayson, F. Rabito

The meeting was called to order at 8:35 AM by Brian Mitchell, Associate Provost for Graduate Studies and Research and Acting Chair of the Graduate Council.

November meeting minutes were approved via email in November.

1. Joyce Fred – Office of Insurance and Risk Management

The Office of Insurance and Risk Management (OIRM) manages 160 insurance policies across the university. OIRM anticipates seeing an increase in the number of undergraduates using the student health care plan because families are feeling a financial impact with the healthcare options offered by their employers.

The “Student Health Center” costs are predominantly pharmaceuticals and paying back the health center for services. These costs help support the SHC and its services.

The University employee plan premiums went up 22% this previous year; OIRM anticipates an increase of 25-40% for the student plan for next year. Tulane’s student utilization rate is just under 80%, so OIRM anticipates the increase being on the lower end of the scale. A committee is being formed right now to explore student plan options; OIRM seeks more student committee members. Currently the student plan covers 100% of needs; it is possible there may be a discount if the student plan had a co-pay type of plan (an 80/20 plan). Right now there is not an available market for a high-low plan for the student healthcare like the faculty/staff plan.

M. MacPherson asked if it was possible for graduate students enroll on the faculty/staff healthcare plan. J. Fred answered that OIRM researched this during the 2012 search, and the two groups cannot be merged; there are conflicting renewal dates, as well legal issues because there is no employer/employee relationship between the university and graduate students.

The GC asked what - with 25-40% premium increased predicted for the next year - is the forecast for upcoming years; i.e., is that yearly increase predicted to continue? J. Fred answered that this is a difficult question to answer, as the Affordable Healthcare Act causes changes in policies and pricing daily.

G. Oldham asked if OIRM has interest in creating an incentive program that will recruit more undergraduate and graduate students to the plan. The reasoning being that rates are based on level of participation; therefore it would decrease costs to have more students on the plan. J. Fred commented that so far, the people who have joined the university plan are not high-risk, high-utilization users. Incentive plans may actually bring in more high-risk users to the plan.

2. Kristy Magner – Office of International Students and Scholars

Graduate students comprise 85% of the international student population at Tulane. The Office of International Students and Scholars (OISS) begins the process of adaptation prior to the international students' arrival at Tulane. Prior to Kristy's arrival, all J1 students and scholars were required to have insurance coverage. These students went through a different waiver process to ensure they were complying with federal immigration requirements. OISS did an extensive peer review, and found that the majority of our peers require all F1 and J1 visa-holders to follow the same waiver process; Tulane is in the process of changing their process to match our peers. This new process will ensure that all international students will have appropriate amount and kinds of coverage.

The Graduate Council requested a brief explanation of visa types. K. Magner responded that F1 visas are for degree-seeking students, and J1 is a much broader category encompassing visiting scholars, international students who are degree-seeking or exchange students. There are over 12 categories for J1 visa-holders. Funding opportunities, exchange students - all of these can impact the classification. The majority of our graduate students are F1.

Tulane has approximately 850 international students. International students have greater healthcare needs than domestic students; this may include mental health needs due to the stress of transitioning to a new country, new degree program, and new culture. International students can use insurance from their home country; these tend to be government plans, though in the past it may have been travel insurance.

M. MacPherson commented that for international students or domestic graduate students doing fieldwork, the Tulane student healthcare plan may not provide optimum insurance coverage when visiting their home countries or traveling abroad.

3. MS in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology

A new two-year MS degree program in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology was proposed from the School of Medicine. G. Morris moved approval; H. Flora seconded.

G. Morris explained that this degree is designed for students interested in a career in research. The first year is coursework, and the second year is lab work and research for their thesis. This degree intends to train students to be lab managers and possibly identify students for the PhD program. Each basic science department, excluding one, has a MS program. The Graduate Council can anticipate the approval of one more MS program.

All in favor; no opposed; no abstentions. The program was approved.

4. PhD Review Committee

The PhD Review Committee will visit March 10th-11th. Our next meeting will be March 10th at 9 AM in LBC-Stibbs so that the Graduate Council may meet with them and ask questions. There will be a continental breakfast.

Information about the team is available on Box.com. Ashley will send an updated itinerary and agenda soon. B. Mitchell encouraged the Graduate Council to review the self-studies for the participating departments. The April meeting will be focused on the Review Committees report.

M. Mislove asked for clarification on the purpose of the review process. B. Mitchell commented that the reports are given to the department chairs, Dean, and the Provost. The departments are only able to correct factual errors. Ideally, we'd want to hear that the programs are healthy and on-track. If the reviewers were to give substantive negative feedback, the Graduate Council will need to think carefully about their recommendation to the Provost, and the Provost may choose to take further action based on their recommendations.

5. Acalog – Update

A. Robison is working to edit courses to create a 2014-15 graduate catalog. OGPS does not have adequate course descriptions for each department. A spreadsheet will be sent to the departments so they may update course descriptions and titles. The purpose of the catalog is to provide graduate students with accurate information during registration, and to comply with SACS requirements.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:48 AM.