Annual Report of the Policy and Programs Committee
Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
Academic Year 2014-15

The Graduate School of Arts and Sciences Policy and Programs Committee comprises the graduate directors of GSAS programs, including representatives from the graduate only departments, representatives from Tisch Library, a student representative from the Graduate Student Council, the Dean of GSAS, the Associate Dean of the GSAS, and the Assistant Dean of the GSAS.

In addition to the two GSAS faculty meetings in 2014-15, which our Policy and Program members attend and conduct business, the Policy and Programs Committee met an additional seven times. Business at hand included curricula and programming issues, course and new program approvals, handbook updates, and graduate school policies. Below are highlights and votes for key issues discussed.

At September meeting, the Dean introduced new communication outlets for graduate students, including a magnet of the year's events, a monthly newsletter, and a refaced GSAS website. He announced the plan to create a new GSAS and School of Engineering website to further attract prospective student and service current graduate students. The committee approved a new combined bachelor’s and master's combined degree program for the Urban & Environmental Policy & Planning department. Current Tufts Juniors from across the Arts, Sciences, and Engineering departments will be eligible to apply to this program. Karen Richardson, Director of Graduate Admissions, introduced the new Graduate Admissions office and the new admissions system, Slate, to graduate directors.

In October, at the GSAS Faculty meeting, faculty engaged in a discussion on the role of the Graduate School in the Arts and Sciences Strategic Plan, and the Dean presented an overview of GSAS activities to be pursued in the 2014-2015 academic year. Strengthening graduate education is at the heart of the A&S plan, and there was general excitement around this priority. Representatives from the registrar’s office introduced the new, online transfer of credit process to faculty, which is scheduled to go live in the 2015-2016 academic year.

At our November meeting, Donna Esposito, Senior Associate Director of the Career Center, presented graduate directors with the resources and opportunities available to graduate students through the Career Center. A representative from the Office of Equal Opportunity presented the Title IX training requirements and logistics to graduate directors, and Evan Simpson, Head of Research and Instruction at Tisch Library, presented the new Open Access Fund for graduate student publishing in open access journals.
The committee voted to change the Master’s program requirements for the English Department, extending the master’s program to two years or 12 graduate seminars and one foreign language proficiency. There will also no longer be a master’s exam requirement, with evaluation instead occurring across the two years in the program. This vote, coupled with the visit by Dawn Terkla, Associate Provost, initiated a conversation about the requirement of all master’s program’s requiring 30 Carnegie Units under the NEASC credit hour requirements. Since the discussion began, the Music, Occupational Therapy, and Mathematics programs all approved changes to make their programs compliant and other programs are close behind.

In December, Associate Dean Sinaia Nathanson introduced the new Graduate Research Excellence at Tufts (GREAT) program for doctoral students. In the pilot year of 2015, students from selected science programs in the Arts & Sciences were eligible to apply for training into areas such as grantsmanship, research statement writing, applying to postdoctoral or academic positions, and other aspects of the research process. Assistant Dean Sarah Herchel introduced the Master’s Enrollment Reward Program (MERP), a new, optional revenue sharing program for departments with master’s programs enrolling more students than in previous years.

At the January meeting, Dean Robert Cook led a committee discussion into the ways graduate programs may optimize their yield of accepted students who intend to enroll. He unveiled several initiatives and resources for departments and admitted students, including the new “Moving to Tufts” website and the Admitted Graduate Student Outreach Program. The discussion looked ahead to the 2016-2017 admissions cycle recruitment, as well, for ways to begin the process towards the end of Spring 2015.

In February, the committee began a discussion of the Graduate Student Handbook, initiated to engage conversation about various complex and ambiguous policies. After substantial discussion about issues such as academic standing, dissertation defense, and attaining multiple degrees while a student at Tufts, a sub-committee was formed to review and suggest changes for the 2015-2016 handbook.

At the March meeting, the committee received updates regarding the admissions process and new programs for the graduate school. This included information about online radio recruitment ads via Pandora, WBUR, and Spotify, the final number of applications for graduate programs, and current graduate program priorities. The committee continued the discussion of NEASC credit hour requirements.

In April, at the GSAS Faculty meeting, Dean Cook presented faculty with GSAS achievements over 2014-2015 – including 730 doctoral applicants and 1,329...
master's applicants for matriculation in Fall 2015, new professional development opportunities, and the new graduate website. Faculty were updated on the credit hour process, after the Educational Policy Committee recommended moving to a credit system where courses are set as either 3, 4, or 5 credits each. Faculty were also encouraged to submit ideas for new certificate programs, with the aim of launching approximately six new certificate programs within the next twelve to eighteen months.

At the May meeting, the committee voted to approve a pilot, joint degree doctoral program between Child Study and Human Development and Economics. The departments anticipate that students will matriculate as early as Fall 2015. The program will be assessed after a period of five years for improvements or ratification. The Graduate Student Handbook subcommittee presented changes to the committee. The committee agreed that further policy discussions should take place during the 2015-2016 academic year, and that all graduate departments must have a graduate student handbook. Graduate programs were also offered the opportunity to take advantage of an extended admissions deadline of July 17 for Tufts Seniors looking to apply to a master’s program. Several future projects, such as department flyers and a focus on diversity among graduate student populations, were also discussed.

Respectively submitted by

Robert Cook
Dean, Graduate School of Arts and Sciences