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ANNOUNCEMENTS
Graduate Research Excellence At Tufts (GREAT)
Bob Cook, Dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences

DEAN COOK: I’d like to call this meeting to order. Welcome, everybody. We’re seeing the benefits of global warming; it’s a nice day and we don’t need coats. We have a short agenda, which probably means we’ll use the whole time. I’ll start with announcements; the first is to talk about a GREAT boot camp we are running this summer.

MS HAJMIRAGHA: In 2015, we created a sibling program to our annual teaching program, GREAT. Last year, we went on hiatus to rethink it, and we’re thrilled to announce it’s again running with a new and unique twist that will be beneficial to students. We will be advertising to students soon. The theme is Data Analytics. We will be bringing faculty and practitioners to Tufts to talk about math and statistics fundamentals. We want to bring Python and other coding tools into student research. This will be expansive across disciplines and is for all doctoral students. These tools can be used outside traditional STEM fields in the arts and humanities. This year, the program is only for doctoral students because we are piloting it, but we hope to open it up to master’s students in the future. Any questions? No. GREAT, my favorite acronym. Keep an eye out for the advertisements going out soon.

DEAN COOK: We are also running GIFT this summer and those announcements have gone out. The only other thing for next summer, we are offering GIFT at the international level, for students in Hong Kong and at Beijing Normal to participate. Maybe it will happen in August to fit better with their academic calendars.

NEW BUSINESS
Vote on New GIS Certificate Program
Bob Cook, Dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, and Barbara Parmenter, Senior Lecturer and Student Affairs Coordinator

DEAN COOK: There are two parts to today’s meeting. First is P&P part where we have to vote on several new programs. We are actively trying to renovate, update, and advance the graduate school portfolio, so we have a large number of changes and we’ll talk about two today. First is new GIS certificate. Barbara will say more about it.

PROF PARMENTER: This is thanks to a lot of Patrick’s work. We’ve got a great GIS curriculum this year. We imagine this is as a graduate student GIS program. A lot of students are already taking enough GIS courses to get a certificate and it could be extra valuable as they go forward in their careers. It’s just for graduate students at Tufts. We hope it will be the basis for a larger certificate program at some point. Any questions?

PROF ELLMORE: How many courses do students need to take for the certificate?

PROF PARMENTER: They take an introductory GIS and an advanced GIS course, then a statistics course, and they can do a thesis or a capstone, so four total.
PROF BEDELL: It sounds great. Is it folded into the master’s or do they take additional credits?

PROF PARMENTER: It’s just for current students; it’s not an outside certificate program at present.

PROF BEDELL: Do they take additional courses or is it folded in?

PROF PARMENTER: Folded in.

PROF BEDELL: Will it become an outside certificate at some time?

PROF PARMENTER: Maybe, yes.

DEAN COOK: Is there a motion to approve this program? All in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? The motion carries. Thank you.

Now we have a new post-bac program in Math, which Kim will talk about.

Vote on New Math Post-Baccalaureate Program
Bob Cook, Dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, and Kim Ruane, Graduate Director for the Department of Mathematics

PROF RUANE: This is a new post-bac program in math for students who aren’t ready to enter into our master’s program yet. We get a lot of applications from students who aren’t qualified yet or didn’t take math as an undergrad, and this will help them learn what they need to start a master’s degree.

UNKNOWN SPEAKER: How does the pricing work for Tufts and non-Tufts students?

PROF RUANE: That is above my pay grade. If they take the courses and enter into the master’s, it will count toward their master’s.

UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Is it marketed toward working professionals?

PROF RUANE: Yes, those are the most people who contact me. At least of those who contact me, companies want them to have these credentials. We may offer courses in the evening if this thing explodes. We have to test the waters.

PROF DEVOTO: This is a new program, not new math.

PROF RUANE: I guess we could add new math to it.

UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Do students pay by the course? What if they stop and don’t get the certificate?
PROF RUANE: They pay by the course.

UNKNOWN SPEAKER: I assume it’s kept in archive so that they could resume…

PROF RUANE: It would be on their transcript.

PROF POTT: Why is this called a post-bac and not a certificate program?

PROF RUANE: I’m not sure of the difference. That’s the way we came up with it. It’s for students who didn’t get take math during their bachelor’s and or they didn’t take the right courses as an undergrad. Our own computer science department had a model I liked best.

PROF PENNINGTON: I move to vote to approve.

DEAN COOK: All those in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? This passes two new programs. The great thing is that by being able to act quickly students who apply for the math master’s degree are invited to take part in this program this upcoming year.

DEAN COOK: Now we have a report from Martha Pott and the Executive Committee who are trying to tighten up our academic standing issues.

**Executive Committee Update, by Martha Pott**

*Martha Pott, Chair of the Executive Committee for GSAS*

PROF POTT: Thanks to Angela for figuring this out. We are good at noticing students who are slipping. The committee urges you to look at the handbook, pages 5-8 for the requirements of the good academic standing requirements and the appeals process to make yourselves aware.

On February 13th, a new review process was sent out. We worked with faculty to develop a method for checking and noticing students’ academic standing and developing a plan when a student isn’t in good standing. Briefly, there’s a new method to review transcripts. You’ll receive a special query in SIS that will allow you to look at transcripts in your department and notice if a student has more than one incomplete; students may carry along to the end just one incomplete, but more than one incomplete is a problem. Notice when a student has a B- or below; they don’t get credit for a grade below a B-. And notice grades of “withdraw;” there is no policy on withdraw that I could find, but it’s a flag if they have withdrawals. The fourth thing to look at is if a student is out of time to get the degree – the deadline is five years for master’s programs and seven years for a doctorate. After those years, the student is out of time to get the degree and they have to apply for an extension.

I also want to say that many times students apply for the wrong leave type; we can urge them to take a leave rather than the continue program if they are not progressing. We would like to develop a simple plan to check transcripts to make sure students are in good academic standing, and if not, to meet with the student or advisor to get them back to good standing. They have to
fill out a form and meet the requirements to convert the incomplete to a grade before six weeks pass. Also, when you make a plan, check on it; you could have a meeting at your graduate department meetings to review the previous semester’s work. If students are not in good academic standing, they should be looked at, and at the next meeting review if they still aren’t good then the Executive Committee will look at it. Students may be withdrawn, talked to, or counseled. We are not standardizing it but tell us what works for you.

You’ll receive review plans by next Monday. If you can’t do it by the deadline then send us an email and say that you are working on it. The Executive Committee will review plans and come to a logical standardized procedure.

PROF RUANE: How do you get to the query?

PROF POTT: When you go into your SIS account, there should be a line for…

PROF ROGERS: Go to the staff section.

PROF POTT: We can send out steps, but we aren’t ready yet.

PROF BEDELL: I was gone last year, so we used to call Sarah or Sinaia when we had an issue. Who is the contact now, or do we go to you?

DEAN COOK: Go to the Executive Committee. We are getting out of the academic standing business.

PROF POTT: The Executive Committee ought to be doing this. The dean’s office is for students to appeal to if they are out of time so we can’t have the same organization doing both reviews. Send it to me and Angela.

PROF BEDELL: Who do they appeal to?

DEAN COOK: They appeal to Sarah.

UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Will the GSAS policies override the department policies?

PROF POTT: The handbook is the standard, but departments may have more strict standards. We know there are a lot of individual differences and they will remain.

PROF PARMENTER: We are putting in NG as an equivalent to I; maybe we can add that to the handbook.

PROF POTT: There is no option for NG; it’s for undergrads, not grads. We have to look into it. I think the goal here is that the students’ progress is moving along, and they have a plan if it’s not.

PROF PARMENTER: Maybe we shouldn’t be giving that grade then.
PROF POTT: Probably not. We’ll talk about at an Executive Committee meeting. Thank you.

DEAN COOK: We are trying to make sure students are making progress through their degrees. It’s good common sense to make sure they are successful. The goal is the same: to make sure students get mentoring and attention from us and it’s good that the Executive Committee is taking this over. There is also responsibility with the departments.

**Graduate Assessment Update**

**Bob Cook, Dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences**

DEAN COOK: Sarah has the flu so I’ll talk about this. Assessment is a bad word so we aren’t going to say it anymore. We want to have a culture of continual improvement to evaluate our own programs and our performance. We are slower at the graduate level to implement this. The first thing we are going to do is come up with concrete objectives for all our degrees. We are in possession of a document with all objectives. That was a surprise to me and to many of our graduate directors. We don’t know where they came from. We are going to try to update them this academic year and post them online by this summer. Sarah will reach out to you with these. Some problems are that they are too vague, some are identical across programs – which is impossible because they should be different – or that there are too many. We use SMART objective technology; they should be specific, measurable, achievable; realistic, and time-relatable. We will talk with CELT and in our office and help you try to edit those so by end of academic year we have objectives for every degree listed.

PROF PENNINGTON: If we have really specific objectives on the website, isn’t there a possibility that students will sue us, because they don’t know the material at the end of the program? I’m wondering about the legal ramifications of overly specific objectives.

PROF ROGERS: We started a training in P&P between course and program objectives. We can continue to do that if people want support in that. If students are in your program, it’s worth being transparent about promises of the program. They should know if they are on track with the learning objectives and if not, offer them support. If you look at all your students over time and aggregate data, we learn where the program needs to get better. No one is perfect. I’ve never heard of anyone suing an arts or humanities program for failing to meet the objectives, but there have been suits against programs for overpromising. This is a more coherent approach and it looks at equity and students have the right to make this progress.

PROF PENNINGTON: Or do we kick out students if they are not making progress so they can’t sue us?

PROF ROGERS: The objectives are meant to be transparent and offer clear language for faculty and students and what constitutes learning and progress and to give feedback. In our program, we don’t boot out students, we offer more intensive programing.
PROF AMMONS: If a student doesn’t meet objectives, we offer support, but if students can’t do it, we ask them to leave. We have standards we hold to.

PROF BEDELL: I don’t know if you’re serious or not about kicking out students; can you elaborate on that?

PROF PENNINGTON: I’m thinking about the unintended consequences. We want the best and good things, but if we make changes, what if we have students who are litigious, and if we get more litigious students, what’s the impact on how we respond to that? We are all acting in good faith, but do we kick out students if they don’t meet the objectives? What are the unintended consequences?

PROF BEDELL: We are beefing up the process and objectives for students to know what we expect of them and what they will learn. I’m less concerned about a litigious society if we can monitor academic standing better and I think we are addressing the issues.

PROF POTT: I think more to the point is that when we go through it, it will help with admissions. We are looking at applications against a set of standards and we know what we want students to accomplish when they finish here. We can see if this will be someone who can meet those standards, and that’s a good thing.

PROF PARMENTER: I fully support assessment, but I’m also sympathetic to the fear of litigious students. I think it may be helpful to have lawyers come talk to us about best practices.

PROF BEDELL: I think that’s a great idea given the comments about litigious students. Are these objectives yes or no or rated on a continuum? They may not be 100% achieved and looking forward to future conversations.

PROF RUANE: Didn’t we have a presentation about this and we made a big deal about the difference between objectives and requirements?

DEAN COOK: These are learning objectives.

PROF RUANE: The departments must have a threshold that if you don’t meet these requirements then you are out of the program.

DEAN COOK: We are professing what we teach them and what they are learning.

PROF ROGERS: Objectives support the requirements; this is an articulation of that.

PROF METCALF: I’m looking forward to learning more. In economics, we are teaching them to think like economists. To pin it down in specific objectives, it will be hard to do that. We want them to know various principles, but that’s trivial. We want this to have a real value added, and I’m interested to see the objectives that are sent to us.
DEAN COOK: You do know how to train an economist.

UNKNOWN SPEAKER: As an artist, I’m maybe more amorphous in this area. What is the driving philosophical logic? Is this coming from an accreditation perspective or are students confused? I’m wondering what is the meta logic that is driving this so I know how to do it.

DEAN COOK: It’s driven by accreditation issues, by NEASC, but the main reason we do it is because we should do it. We can’t have goals without objectives. I know at the SMFA students need to know a variety of techniques so that they are interdisciplinary – that’s an objective you have.

PROF HITCHNER: I served as commissioner for NEASC for six years. It does originate on a national level. We are answering what we are delivering for what we do. They want some way for us to say what we are offering for tuition to our programs. It’s done everywhere in the country. NEASC is not interested in closely monitoring it; the process is a personal and departmental responsibility. I never heard of a case where people had problems with litigiousness. If someone had a problem with assessment, they could write to us and say, “They weren’t doing their job.” Stating the process works in our favor. Ask yourself and think about what matters in this process for you. In NEASC, the best schools defined it by thinking about it on their own terms and the more they did that, the more successful they were. There is a lot of autonomy in this and we are investing in it by thinking through what’s important for us to deliver.

DEAN COOK: We want to be as efficient as possible.

**Preview of Forthcoming New Degree Programs**

**Bob Cook, Dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, and Ellen Murphy, Director of Program Development**

DEAN COOK: We need to develop a portfolio for the 21st century. We had not revised the curriculum for a long time. Starting in 2017, we added new programs in Diversity and Inclusion Leadership; Digital Tools and Premodern Studies; combination degrees in philosophy and math; the 4+1. And we rebranded some old programs, like the biology master’s which is now the Open Choice Program (that went from a handful of applicants to 51 this year). Economics applications went up 100% this year. We created a new UEP degree, which brought in 15 new applications. We now have 90 new applications that we would not have received a year ago. Economics and Public Policy is a new, joint program with Fletcher; that got 120 applicants this year. This is the third largest Ph.D. applicant pool we have had. 10% of all applications came from programs we didn’t have 18 months ago.

We are creating a lot of new programs. A big help has been Ellen Murphy, who is in charge of getting together groups of people and departments to create new programs. We are going to have a P&P meeting in March where you will get a complete list of this, and another meeting on April 4th to vote on them, and then they go to the Trustees in May so we can roll them out next year. Education also presents a new masters program with wider breadth and flexible options.
PROF HAMMER: It’s sort of an old master’s degree.

DEAN COOK: Don’t say that, it’s new. It’ll be on the agenda. We are creating a Master of Science in Data Analytics. That’s been a joint effort of a working group. I want to talk about our Master of Science/Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies, a new UEP Sustainability degree, and some new combined degrees with NESCAC schools. We would like Tufts to become the graduate school of NESCAC because they do not all have graduate schools, like Bowdoin, Williams, Bates, and Hamilton. We are talking to Connecticut College right now.

For Data Analytics, there are four basic levels: a new 200-level course in Conceptual Foundations of Information and Data, which will be offered fall 2019. Jeff Zabel will be teaching it, and Marie Claire and others are working on designing it. Other courses are Statistical Analysis, Data Description, and Data Model and Prediction. Then there are two discipline-specific competencies where students get data and theory. We are also going to have a couple of professional competencies. Companies want the soft skills we teach, like writing, working in teams, and oral presentations. And then they do an experiential capstone. If you’re interested in it, let me know what courses you may have that we missed or if you want to be involved. We want it to be a successful interdisciplinary program that can combine all our efforts across departments. Ellen, do you want to say anything?

MS MURPHY: This interdisciplinary program is going to complement what we have in undergrad and the IDOC. It’s going to allow students to complete a program that would otherwise be too niche to offer. We are looking for creative thinkers and self-starters. We hope it will be the closest competitor Gallatin School at NYU. Enrollments have increased: in 2015 there were 29 students and in 2016, 48. We have 140 enrolled students in our interdisciplinary program. These programs are growing nationally. As for sustainability, research finds that more businesses are making sustainability part of their strategic initiatives. There has been a 300% increase since 2011. The number of institutions offering it has grown 29%, and of those, 70% are private institutions.

GSAS Updates, by Dean Robert Cook
Bob Cook, Dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences

DEAN COOK: The interdisciplinary program has a lot of potential. The future of work is rapidly changing and what students will do in their careers will be different than what we do. We want to give them the flexibility to change jobs and careers and put together programs that they are interested in and will be valuable to them.

Admissions has been a great of success and that’s had a lot to do with Roxanna Woudstra. Everything I’ve learned in four years is on this one chart. This year, we had 2,700 applications opened – applications started. 2,200 were completed and submitted to us. 25% or so never hit submit. This year we had a record number opened, and we will have the largest pool since the recession in 2012; it’s the fifth straight year of increases. The number of international students has not gone down – that is not true across the nation. We want to assure them they have support
here. From NESCAC schools, we got 79 this year. We have a courtesy waiver for NESCAC schools and we do more outreach to their counselors. It is the second most diverse pool, also.

This summer, Jackie Dejean created VERSE for underrepresented students. This was going to be for Tufts students plus students from historically black colleges, but the word got out about it and we got 45 applications for 6 slots. We are hoping that this will be a pipeline to our grad programs going forward. We are looking through 2,100 applications, and we’ll take half. We want to offer as many enrollments as we can to qualified students. We are facing fiscal obstacles and increasing our enrollment would be great. 40% will accept and 60% will decline. We are trying to do things like giving out a relocation assistance award to students outside New England who are full time master’s students; they would get $1,250 to relocate to Tufts. We are hoping to shift some of the numbers to come from out of the region. It’s hard between financial aid and the fear of the cost of living in Boston, and we are trying to address the latter directly. About 11% who say they are coming don’t come by September. We are trying to limit that. We are offering a mentoring program for international students to ease their transition. We want students to make it to the finish and addressing the academic standing issue will help get admitted students to the end if they are indeed qualified.

This is the number of applications going back to 2007. This year, the Ph.D. applicants broke the record from 2012 – it’s the largest Ph.D. applicant pool ever to Tufts. The trend indicates that our reputation is good. The Economics and Public Policy program with Fletcher got 120 applicants alone, so that helped, but other pools were large and strong this year. M.S. and M.A. numbers are holding steady. I was wrong: the M.S. did not exceed M.A. this year. M.A.T. has been steady for the last couple of years, too. Applications are up, we have strong pools, and we need to do the right things to admit students we need to succeed.

We need feedback. I’ve asked to have a second round for admissions this fall. In late May or early June, local advertisements will go out to get more fall applications. Some programs will be full, some not. Faculty will be away, and I need your input on how to make admissions flow smoothly. I’m not expecting hundreds of applications, but dozens. If you have a designated person in each department that would help. We are also doing new advertising for the October 15th deadline for spring admissions. The OT deadline will move from January to October, too.

PROF POTT: I’ve been asked about the relocation reimbursement. They get it after they show up, right? How do they prove that they’ve moved from outside New England?

DEAN COOK: Yes, and we will be sending an email a week after they are admitted saying, “It looks like you’re out of state; can you confirm you want this stipend and where you live?”

PROF POTT: We may be giving people money whose permanent address is out of state, but who are living and working in Boston.

PROF RUANE: The later deadline is good for degree programs. I’m asked a lot about math in the fall, so now I can emphasize it then. Students aren’t thinking about it in the middle of the year.
DEAN COOK: We will give you details about the April 4th meeting. This meeting is adjourned.

MEETING ADJOURNED

Respectfully Submitted,

Erin Sullivan
Secretary of the Faculty for Arts, Sciences & Engineering

Minutes taken by Lindsay Riordan
Administrative Assistant to the Secretary of the Faculty for Arts, Sciences & Engineering