

# Fenn College Graduate Affairs Committee Meeting Minutes

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October 20, 2009  
12:00 M  
ME Conference Room

Present: Hanz Richter (ME), Daniel Simon (ECE), Ken Keys (IME), Mark Tumeo (CVE), Deborah Brown (admissions)  
Absent: Joanne Belovich (CHE), Orhan Talu (non-voting, DRE)

## 1 Petitions

1. The particulars of student petitions are omitted from these minutes to protect the students' private information.

## 2 Graduate Admission Policies

Deborah Brown, the current CSU graduate admissions director attended the meeting to clarify the procedures followed by the Graduate College regarding automatic admissions. She explained that President Berkman had issued a directive stating that the Graduate College would make an admission decision if the departments failed to return review-ready applications within 5 days. Programs with a thesis option or which need a match between student and advisor before admission can be granted were excluded from this directive. Several GAC members pointed out that the statement is ambiguous, since many programs have a thesis option and a non-thesis option. Dr. Richter suggested that the eventual thesis or non-thesis status of a student is not know at the time of application, and that every new applicant should be regarded as a thesis student for the purposes of applying the directive, so that the departments retained the prerogative to admit or deny a student. Dr. Keys also pointed out that faculty is not available during the Summer to review applications, making the 5-day requirement impossible to meet. Dr. Simon mentioned that an applicant had been directly admitted by the Graduate College, however the application was never received in the Electrical and Computer Engineering Department. Ms. Brown maintained the position of the Graduate College and suggested that personnel from the Dean's office were employed through the summer and could therefore handle the application review process.

Soon after the meeting, the GAC chair received an email from Ms. Brown stating that the exclusion policy applies only to programs where a thesis is mandatory or where a match must be made between student and advisor.

### 3 Grade Code Changes for Thesis and Dissertation

The GAC members present at the meeting did not seek a vote to impose the new grading code (see September 8, 2009 minutes) across the college. Instead, it was decided that the new code would be of optional use and that the Fenn College faculty would be informed about the existence of the code at the next meeting. Later, Dr. Richter called Janet Stimple (University Registrar) to request the creation of the code, to find that, coincidentally, a similar code (M code with the addition of NS) was being created as an independent action.

### 4 DRE Plan of Study Form Updates

New wording for the section pertaining 899 and 895 requirements was approved as follows:

For the purposes of meeting minimum requirements, the plan of study must observe the following:

1. The sum of credits in 895 and 899 must be at least 30. The contribution of 899 to this sum must be of at least 20 credits.

2. Students are not permitted to take 899 before passing the candidacy exam.

A maximum of 8 credits of 895 taken in the semester when the candidacy exam is passed are converted to 899 by petition, provided the exam is passed on or before the 8th week of the semester.

No changes regarding 899 and 895 will be made effective until certain policies (see next section) which will generate additional changes are settled.

### 5 Policies on Independent/Directed Studies

A discussion was started on the legitimacy of directed study credits for the purposes of meeting coursework requirements of the doctoral program. It was generally agreed that directed studies which consisted in the student sitting in a regular class, submitting assignments and taking exams was an acceptable substitution for coursework, provided the class is of 700-level and the instructor certifies the student's full participation. A petition would still be necessary for the directed studies to be counted towards the degree.

Dr. Talu later questioned the appropriateness of the above policy when used to substitute not only graduate electives, but core courses.

Another common arrangement for directed studies occurs outside the framework of a regular class. In this case, the advisor prepares a set of tasks that the student must perform independently during the semester, including readings, problem solving, computer programming and laboratory work. Drs. Simon and Richter have expressly agreed with this mechanism as a valid way to earn credit in lieu of elective coursework, provided the advisor certifies the activities in a petition.

Since the topic remain contentious, the GAC chair decided to continue the discussion at the next meeting.

### 6 Rules on Credit Banking: 4+1 vs. other Graduate Students

Dr. Tumeo explained the rules on "credit banking" for non-4+1 graduate students: Undergraduates may take up to 9 credit hours of graduate coursework as advance credit for eventual graduate studies. These hours do not count towards course or total credit requirements of the undergraduate program, they are simply "banked". On a separate policy, 4+1 students take certain prescribed courses which count for both their undergraduate and graduate degree programs. The issue brought up by Dr. Tumeo concerns credit banking by 4+1 students. Apparently, the university administration is banning 4+1 students from banking graduate credit, despite the fact that these credits are not being double-counted. A financial implication of credit banking is that 4+1 students would be paying undergraduate tuition for graduate courses. Dr. Tumeo agreed to write a statement reflecting the opinion of the GAC on this issue.