

MINUTES
The Graduate Council
January 17, 2007
Johnson Hall Conference Room

Members Present: Yvonne Braun, Li-Shan Chou, Marian Friestad (ex officio), Mark Johnson, Lori Kruckenber, Ron Mitchell, Brook Muller, Harry Price, John Russial, Corbett Upton

Members Absent: David Chard, Michael Hames-Garcia, Huaxin Lin, Richard Linton (ex officio), Wayne Mikkelson, Mark Watson, Ellen Herman

Graduate School Staff in Attendance: Kassy Fisher

Ron Mitchell (Council Vice-Chair) called the meeting to order at 3:40 p.m. The minutes from November 15, 2006 were approved as distributed.

Announcements

Marian Friestad reported that a request from Provost Linda Brady's office has been made regarding a call for student (graduate student and undergraduate) nominees to serve on the Vice President for Student Affairs Search Committee. The request has been widely distributed, but Dean Friestad encouraged members to respond as soon as possible if they would like to make a nomination. Beverly Stilwell, bstilwel@uoregon.edu is the Provost's Office contact.

Committee Reports

Mark Johnson, who is participating in the CAS Dean search, reported that the Search Committee is a 10-person group led by Jim Bean (LCB). Dr. Johnson told the Council that a job description has gone out and a large number of nominations and some applications have been received. The deadline is February 5. Off-campus interviews will be held in Portland next. The new Dean is expected to start in fall 2007. Dr. Johnson also said that a "challenge document" is being issued to the more serious contenders.

Old Business

- Addition of International English Language Testing System (IELTS) as acceptable for UO admissions decisions

Dean Friestad began the discussion with the reminder that the IELTS is being used as an alternative to TOEFL at many schools now that ETS changes to TOEFL testing have resulted in limited access to the test worldwide. Mark Johnson expressed reservations about not being able to discern what the numbers actually mean, there was discussion about the handout that both compares IELTS and TOEFL scores. It was decided that the Councils needs to hear from someone who can share with the group what the tests mean as far as realistic ability. A representative from the American English Institute is available to attend the February meeting.

Ron Mitchell encouraged the group to vote on whether or not the IELTS should be accepted, noting that minimum scores and its relation to TOEFL could be discussed afterward. Harry Price made a motion to accept the IELTS, seconded by Li-Shan Chou. A unanimous vote (9 members) in favor of accepting the test was made.

The question of whether or not our TOEFL/IELTS minimum scores should be parallel was next put forward by Dr. Mitchell. It was noted that a larger sample than the 61 graduate students detailed on the outcomes handout would be useful. The group discussed the relevance of the actual score, that students with low scores can be successful, that the TOEFL test is just a preliminary look at ability, and that some students are trained specifically to take the exam. Kassy Fisher read from the TOEFL speaking test's narrative rubric so that the group could draw a comparison, and it was suggested that a more concrete comparison of IELTS and TOEFL scores be provided at the next meeting. Mark Johnson moved that UO minimum scores for TOEFL and IELTS should be equivalent. This was seconded by Brook Muller and a vote in favor of this was unanimous.

- Changes in the minimum TOEFL (and IELTS) Score for UO admission

A question was posed as to how many students would be excluded if the minimum TOEFL score was raised to 540 or 550. Ms. Fisher shared that just 4 of the 19 students admitted in 2004 with low scores had scores lower than 550. Dean Friestad the two departments with the largest number of students in this category for more detail about their experiences.

It was noted that knowing departmental minimum standards, especially those less than 575 would be useful. The Graduate School will provide those for the next meeting. It was also requested that those departments with especially low requirements be invited to comment on the potential raising of the UO graduate applicant minimum. Questions were posed about different minimums for master's and doctoral students and what would happen to the minimum score for exemption from further testing if the minimum is raised.

Dr. Mitchell suggested the discussion be continued at next meeting.

Dean's Updates

- Accreditation Process

Dean Friestad told the group that the Graduate School document shared previously with the Council is now in its final stages. Dean Friestad would like a few Council members to be available to meet with the accreditation team when they come to campus. She will e-mail the dates of the visit to the Council. There was brief discussion about the accreditation document and its usefulness to both the accreditation body and the University, in particular the Provost.

- NRC

Dean Friestad asked those who received NRC faculty questionnaires to please complete and return them as soon as possible. Those who have not submitted their responses by February 15 will not be eligible to rate other universities and their programs in April/May. She also noted that departmental questionnaires had been distributed, along with student questionnaires in 3 departments on an experimental basis.

- Changes in GRE Testing

Dean Friestad shared that ETS has decided that GRE tests will take place on set dates and at time-zone phased times. This will reduce the number of seats available at UO by half and because the tests at UO will take place late in the day on Saturdays, staffing costs at the testing center will increase. Dean Friestad pointed out that the change will have similar implications nationwide and could affect university admissions in fall 2008. She also noted that, due to this change, OSU will no longer serve as a GRE testing site.

Other

Dean Friestad also noted that the December 26 earthquake in southwestern Taiwan may affect Asian applicants and asked Council members to encourage leniency with applicants whose access to the internet and other forms of telecommunication is still limited. She offered to send this reminder to all departments.

The Council adjourned at 4:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Harry Price, Secretary