

**Summary Minutes of a Meeting of the  
COUNCIL OF THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH  
Held in the Council Chamber, University Hall  
Friday, March 20, 2009, 2:00 pm**

**Attendance**

M Shirvani in the Chair  
M Allen

P Schiavone  
L McGann

**Department Representatives**

N Kav, Agriculture, Food & Nutritional Sci	D Burshtyn, Med Micro & Immunology
G Forth, Anthropology	P Lacy, Medicine
J Greer, Art & Design	A Nahachewsky, Modern Lang & Cultural Studies
B Lemire, Biochemistry	D Gramit, Music
D Ali, Biological Sciences	D Wylie, Centre for Neuroscience
J White, Business MBA	K Moore, Nursing
I Gellatly, Business PhD	P Cheung, Pediatrics
B Hayes, Chemical & Materials Eng	A El-Kadi, Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Sciences
J Takats, Chemistry	S Peterson, Physical Education & Recreation
R Greiner, Computing Science	C Benishin, Physiology
K Weiss, Drama	A Joyce, Psychiatry
S Wilson, Economics	N Galambos, Psychology
F Peters, Educational Policy Studies	A Senthilselvan, Public Health Sciences
C Rinaldi, Educational Psychology	J Volden, Rehabilitation Sciences
J McMullin, Electrical & Computer Eng	N Krogman, Rural Economy
T Zackodnik, English & Film Studies	G Thomas, Secondary Education
Y d'Entremont, Faculté Saint-Jean	W Johnston, Sociology
H Madill, Health Promotion Studies	C Boliek, Speech Pathology & Audiology
F Swyripa, History & Classics	
J Martin, Lab Medicine & Pathology	
M Yahya, Law	
A Samek, Library & Information Studies	
S Rice, Linguistics	
T Hillen, Mathematics and Stat Sciences	
T Schuetz, Mathematics and Stat Sciences	

**Graduate Program Administrators**

S Campbell, Medicine  
G Mathew, Anthropology

**Graduate Student Representatives**

B Whynot, GSA President	J Marleau, Biological Sciences
C Levesque, GSA VP Academic	B Jensen, Earth & Atmospheric Sci
D Manolescu, GSA VP Labour Relations	K Cameron, Educational Psychology
R Shott, Biochemistry	M Shahbakhti, Mechanical Engineering
D MacRitchie, Biological Sciences	S Ahmed, Pharmacy

**Observer**

D Johnson, Associate Dean Graduate Studies (Arts)

**Guests**

C Amrhein, Provost and Vice-President (Academic)  
M Haggarty-France, Senior Administrative Officer, Office of the Provost & VP (Academic)

**1. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

The agenda was approved as amended (Item 3.2 became Item 3.3; new Item 3.2 is Dean's Advisory Committee on Recruitment).

**2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING****a) Approval of the February 13, 2009 summary minutes**

Item 4a: 'the relative grading scale is recommended for graduate-level courses' was amended to 'the relative grading scale is not recommended for graduate-level courses'

The minutes were approved as amended

**b) Matters arising**

None.

**3. REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES****3.1 FGSR Council Policy Review Committee**

*Notice of Motion:* Decisions of Final Oral Examining Committees

Councillors had before them background information and proposed changes on outcomes of final oral examinations.

Discussion included:

- N Kav explained that the FGSR Council Policy Review Committee believes removing 'subject to revisions' does not make it more likely for students' exams to be adjourned. A pass with revisions results in a pass; the supervisor can withhold his/her signature until the thesis revisions are complete.
- Some departments are using the 'Pass' as an internal note to identify outstanding theses to nominate for awards.
- Procedures vary among departments as some use 'Pass subject to revisions' for only major edits, and some for minor.

The motion will be presented at the April 17, 2009 Faculty Council meeting.

**3.2 Dean's Advisory Committee on Recruitment**

The first meeting of the Dean's Advisory Committee on Recruitment was held in mid-March. Areas identified as needing review included how to find the best students, deadlines, processing times, how to evaluate GPA vs experience, and why students are accepted but do not enroll. If councilors have any additional items, please send them to M Allen. The committee will determine areas of focus at the next meeting.

**3.3 Dean's Advisory Committee on Awards**

The Dean's Advisory Committee on Awards has been reviewing recruitment awards to determine if they are as effective as possible.

P Schiavone reminded departments to encourage students to apply for funding provided through international agreements. Of the available 60, only 30 CONACYT scholarships are being used. Council suggested that the full numbers are not being used because one of the conditions is that students must return to Mexico upon completion of their degree program.

The final application deadline for the Nanotechnology/ICT awards is March 30, 2009. There have been 16 applications thus far.

In reviewing the available scholarship budgets, the committee questioned how to improve admission and retention of recruitment scholarship winners. If councilors have any information as to why these students are not accepting admission at the UofA, or ideas on how to improve these awards, they are asked to contact P Schiavone and information will be shared with the Dean's Advisory Committee on Recruitment.

The committee is considering ideas to improve recruitment and retention such as asking departments to guarantee additional funding to the student for recipients of a Provost Doctoral Entrance Award (PDEA). Discussion included:

- The department-contributed money would be equivalent to funding a teaching assistantship. As many foreign students find it difficult to manage a TA early in their programs, the money will be hard to come by.
- Students with only the PDEA are still appreciative of the funding.
- FGSR is trying to maximize the student's situation and help guarantee their success. To do so, the students need funding.
- If the student makes a late decision not to come to the UofA, the PDEA becomes surplus.

Another idea is to increase the numbers of Recruitment Scholarships (PhD Scholarship and FS Chia PhD Scholarship) that currently include payment of tuition by instead providing a Provost Doctoral Entrance Award to cover tuition, thereby freeing up funds in the Recruitment Scholarship budget, which would mean additional awards could be offered.

The Chair suggested Council use the entire May Council meeting to discuss scholarships. The Provost will be invited to attend.

#### **4. INFORMAL BUSINESS**

##### **a) Discussion Topic**

###### **1) Should there be a timeline for candidacy?**

The Policy Review Committee noted that FGSR does not have a candidacy exam deadline, and currently leaves it to the department's discretion. The Committee asks if there should be a universal deadline, or if departments should determine and enforce an internal deadline. Discussion included:

- Supervisors do not always realize the pressure to have the candidacy exam in a reasonable amount of time. Having a deadline may create awareness of the timeline, and also accelerate the creation of the supervisory committee.
- As a best practice, one councilor prompts supervisors by scheduling the exam if they will not do so.
- The candidacy exam is an important milestone for students and determines the capability to proceed to the PhD.

###### **2) Quotas for General Awards**

A councilor questioned the validity of the ratio across departments, as for example, in Sociology (45 students) and Philosophy (17 students) each have three nominations. It was noted that a range of determinants was used, including numbers of students.

The nominations sent to FGSR have been perfect, thanks to departments. The review starts March 23, 2009.

###### **3) FGSR Dean's Selection Committee procedures**

C Amrhein joined Council to discuss the upcoming FGSR Dean Selection process. The goal of the committee is to create the best pool of candidates, and it will be up to the committee to determine an open or closed process. When in doubt, it will be an open process.

Points in favor of a closed process:

- Strong applicants may be more willing to apply within a closed process. If a candidate appears to be searching, it could destabilize his/her home institution or business.
- Five out of the last six UofA selection committees have used a closed process.

Points against a closed process:

- Internal candidates are at a disadvantage in a closed process, as peers know they have applied, and have past history and knowledge of candidate.
- Traditionally, the UofA has used an open process.

C Amrhein noted that the Dean Selection Committee Chair is determined by the Board of Governors policy.

Councilors questioned C Amrhein on the possibility of the UofA removing the international student differential fee. To eliminate the differential fee globally, \$5 million would have to be found from the operating budget. Departments may eliminate the fee locally, and use their budgets to create scholarships or bursaries to cover the differential and application fees. The UofA has tried to help students with the differential fee in the sponsored student programs.

Councilors questioned the Provost regarding Bill 27, which, if passed, would replace funding agencies with a new provincially funded research and innovation system. The UofA is not opposed to the legislation, and has a guarantee that all commitments made by the funding agencies will be met.

##### **b) Question Period**

None.

##### **c) Announcements and Reports by the Chair and Councillors**

###### **1 Chair's Report: Research 900 and payment of application fee**

FGSR will no longer pay the application fee for students applying for Research 900. If councilors have comments, they are asked to contact the Chair.

###### **2 Chair's Show and Tell**

The Chair shared statistics on time spent processing applications for admission. The processing time on average is 46 days. The processing time for an application with a 4.0 GPA is 48 days. Council suggested that the extra time spent on 4.0 GPA applications is used to find funding. Perhaps there needs to be a backstop guarantee for funding, so there is no delay in admission while waiting for national scholarship offers. Funding 4.0 students would be the best use of the scholarship budgets.

Regarding the Vanier Scholarships, the FGSR is creating a Preliminary Assessment form. The form is meant to help identify potential nominees early, and to provide departments with timely feedback from adjudicators. Departments are asked to forward the form to any students they consider potential Vanier nominees. Full 2010 Vanier details have yet to be released from the national committee, but the Chair expects the deadline for all applications to be in Ottawa to be approximately November 1, 2009.

FGSR will be speaking to members of national scholarship adjudication committees to determine what they are looking for in the award applications, and to align the UofA assessments with theirs for the Vanier and the tri-council awards.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 pm.