

Summary of a Meeting of the
COUNCIL OF THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
Held in the Council Chamber, University Hall
Wednesday, March 21, 2012, 2:00 pm

AttendanceEx officio

M Shirvani, Dean & Chair	R Poliquin, Vice-Dean
J Harrington, Assoc Dean	
I Johnson, Assoc Dean	L Rose, FGSR Council Secretary
P Melançon, Assoc Dean	R Polzehn, Outreach Director

Department Representatives

Walter Dixon, AFNS	R Brown, Law
A Palmer, Anthropology	M Mackey, Library & Info Studies
S Harris, Art & Design	T Hillen, Math & Stat Science
D Stuart, Biochemistry	S Mitra, Mechanical Eng
T Raivio, Biological Sciences	S Hughes, Medical Genetics
H McDermid, Biological Sciences	D Burshtyn, Med Micro & Immunology
A Wilman, Biomedical Engineering	G Epp, Modern Languages and Cultural Studies
	C Andersen, Native Studies
D Cooper, Business PhD	A Molzahn, Nursing
T Simmen, Cell Biology	A Shaw, Oncology
K Cadien, Chem & Mat Engineering	E Posse de Chaves, Pharmacology
M McDermott, Chemistry	A Schmitter, Philosophy
A Weiler, Chemistry	B Hunter, Philosophy
I Sywenky, Comparative Literature	S Petersen, PhysEd & Rec
J Sander, Comp Sci	L Kline, Physiology
R Shannon, Drama	L Thorlakson, Poli Sci
K Weiss, Drama	C Dickson, Psychology
T Ono, East Asian Studies	G Jhangri, Public Health Sci
V Brencic Economics	J Volden, Rehabilitation Sci
D Chovanec, Ed Pol Sci	G Armstrong, Renewable Resources
G Buck, Educational Psychology	J Rude, Rural Economy
Y Tsui, Electrical and Computer Engineering	
J Considine, English and Film Studies	G Thomas, Secondary Education
Y d'Entremont, Faculte Saint-Jean	K Hughes, Sociology
R McQueen, Human Ecology	N Evans, Sociology
M Engle, Humanities Computing Program	

Graduate Program Administrator Representatives

J Forslund, AFNS	A Giles, Med Micro & Immunology
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Graduate Student Representatives

R Coulthard, GSA President	J Meston, Ed Policy Studies
N Yousefi, GSA VP Academic	A Schlacht, Cell Biology
T Korassa, GSA VP Labour Relations	T Onuczko, Secondary Education
A Abdelmoneim, Pharm Sci	J Stolar, Renewable Resources
B Berahman, Chem and Mat Eng	

Ex officio

A Schmude, Office of the Registrar	G Kendal, Registrar
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Guests/Observers

J Anderson, FGSR	P Labointe, Dentistry
T Krukoff, FoMD	R Dunch, East Asian Studies
E Schoeck, GSA	L Prochner, Elementary Education
L Harder, Arts	S Hamilton, English and Film Studies
Ernie Inales, SLIS	S Rice, Linguistics
L Philios, Anthropology	D Evans, Med Micro and Immunology
C Gajewski, Art and Design	D Cairns, Music
C Holmes, Biochemistry	K Moore, Nursing
M Caldwell, Biological Sciences	N Evans, Sociology
J Harrison, Chemistry	L Gotell, Women's Studies

1 APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

The agenda was approved.

2 APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

- a) February 29, 2012 Minutes
The minutes were approved.

3 GRADUATE PROJECTS - INFORMATION

M. Shirvani explained that although graduate student applications and registrations have increased significantly over the past 5 years, the success rates of UoFA Graduate Students on external scholarship competitions has gone down. He noted that the Provost has agreed that increased graduate student applications and registrations combined with the need to improve completion rates and student performance in external competitions requires changes in how departments administer graduate education. To encourage these changes, the Provost has established funds to support medium and long-term graduate projects in 4-6 departments annually. Departments are asked to submit proposals for consideration by the Provost. Possible outcomes include

- 1) The recruitment of more scholarship-quality domestic students, and winning more federal (ie. Tri-Council) scholarships.
- 2) The recruitment of more top-quality study-permit students who hold international scholarships (i.e. CSS PhD) or prestigious sponsorships (i.e. Science without Borders).
- 3) The recruitment of more top students from the top Canadian and international institutions.
- 4) Reducing the number of students who stop registering without having received a degree.
- 5) Reducing completion times.

Short-term Projects

M. Shirvani suggested some short-term activities that could be achieved between now and December 2012 if departments chose to do so:

- identification of prospective domestic students
- start nomination process for awards earlier by developing preliminary nomination lists in June
- employ professional editors or senior graduate students for reviews of scholarship applications
- recruit potential winners of external scholarships
- encourage more sponsored students to apply
- register more sponsored students

Medium- and Long-term Projects

M. Shirvani explained that up to \$250,000 is available to each of 4-6 departments from central funding for the duration of the projects. . He noted that the funding could be used for staffing, student funding, etc. that would support the outcomes for the selected Graduate Education Projects.

Participants must:

- A. Be prepared to look at, and modify, its graduate operations and policies, wherever relevant; and
- B. Accept the particular goals that it is undertaking, with specific targets.
- C. Share information and data.
- D. Streamline graduate processes wherever necessary, from recruitment to admissions to scholarship applications to monitoring student progress to convocation.
- E. Monitor progress on the goals.

M. Shirvani explained that suggestions for alternate goals/activities are welcome. He noted that explicit details about how the goals would be accomplished must be included in the proposals. Proposals may be submitted by individual departments or as shared projects between departments.

Next Steps:

- Call for proposals to be sent to Departments
- Departments develop proposals that outline how the goals will be accomplished
- FGSR will provide input on submissions
- Proposals sent to Provost for consideration
- Provost selects 4-6 proposals
- Departments are notified of results before the end of June

Provost C. Amrhein reported that the provincial government has clarified the funding plan. He noted that the 2% allocation to the UofA operating budget leaves a 2-3% gap in costs and revenue pressures due to the negative impact of global financial markets. The state of the University budget will be addressed at the State of the University scheduled for March 22.

C. Amrhein commented that last year the Faculty of Medicine invested in departments who committed to making recruitment and administrative changes to improve the Faculty's results in CIHR competitions. He noted that the groups that participated in the project demonstrated significant improvements in their CIHR results and those that didn't achieved results that were below the national standard.

He noted that currently, UofA applications are not competitive in national competitions. The project funding has been established in order to address this. He noted that the funds will come from the existing university budget.

C. Amrhein explained that departments are free to restructure degree programs where needed. For example, if a department no longer has the capacity to maintain a program at the PhD level, then it would be acceptable for the program to be submitted for closure. The UofA has successfully negotiated with Alberta AET for several reallocations of FLEs required for programs, where appropriate.

He noted that the UofA has a small number of high-dollar, cost-recovery programs compared to other postsecondary institutions in Canada. For example, professional development classes at the UofA are offered for zero fees to participants.

The following questions were raised:

Q. Is the purpose of the funded projects to develop best practices for the rest of the university or just to assist specific departments?

A. To develop best practices.

Q. What kind of outcomes can other departments gain?

A. As above.

Q. Why not challenge departments to put practice in place and then reward success with dollars?

A. To be successful departments need funds to get started. In the model offered, the reward would be increased funds and/or continuation in the project.

Q. When do applications need to be submitted?

A. Draft proposals by May 1st.

Q. How is it reasonable to allow only 6 weeks, to apply for funds that won't be offered for 18 months?

A. Participation is strictly voluntary. The funds will be available on April 1st. These are continuing, existing, operating dollars. It is anticipated that some results from changes implemented would be evident in 18 months.

It was reiterated that it will not be an involved application process. The application process will be managed by the Dean of Graduate Studies. FGSR will report back to the Provost on applications received.

4. SEMI-MONTHLY PAYROLL AND GRADUATE STUDENTS - INFORMATION

W. Patterson explained that effective July 1, 2012, the UofA will be moving to a semi-monthly pay cycle for NASA employees, graduate students, excluded students and postdoctoral fellows.

Payments for assistantships and scholarships will be affected. He provided background information which led to the changes in payroll.

W. Patterson demonstrated how the automatic tuition fee deduction process will work on the semi-monthly pay cycle. He noted that only students who will be receiving payments in July will be eligible for the optional one-time cash advance.

See the March 21, 2012 FGSR Council Package for details regarding the change to the pay cycle and its impact. Details are also available on the semi-monthly pay website at www.se2.ualberta.ca. A semi-monthly payroll calculator is also available on the Tools & Resources page of the semi-monthly pay website.

The following questions were raised:

Q. Are there tax implications for the 70% cash advance?

A. Tax benefits are assessed on 1% of the money borrowed. As such, the tax implications are negligible.

Q. Many graduate students are paid until the end of August. Can they still borrow the cash advance in July?

A. Exceptions may be made. In many cases, students will choose not to take the advance as they will have to pay it back in August.

T. Korassa stated that similar questions were raised by the GSA and are being addressed.

A town hall on this subject will be held for graduate students next week.

Students were notified of the change in pay cycle via email on February 10, 2012. A follow-up message will be sent.

5. NOTICE OF MOTION: GRADUATE PROGRAM MANUAL REVISIONS

Due to time constraints, discussion of the revisions to the Graduate Program Manual was deferred until the next meeting.

The motion will be voted on at the May meeting of this Council.

6. REPORT OF THE GRADUATE STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION

R. Coultard summarized the report of the GSA which had been pre-circulated with the Council Package for this meeting.

M. Shirvani thanked the outgoing GSA Executive for their work and welcomed the new officials to the FGSR Council.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 pm.