



Final Report
University Task Force on Graduate Education Governance
University of Louisiana at Lafayette

2.12.2014

The following final report and recommendations are the result of sustained discussions among a diverse community of scholars committed to strengthening graduate education at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. This document offers the unanimous—unless otherwise noted below—recommendations resulting from a series of weekly discussions that began in September 2013 and considered graduate education at both our University and forty-three benchmarking peer institutions. In preparing this final report, the Task Force also solicited and considered feedback from the University community concerning its preliminary recommendations presented and distributed in December 2013.

Task Force Charge

The Task Force was formally charged with offering recommendations to the Provost & Vice President for Academic Affairs to improve the governance of graduate education at the University, with a particular focus on clarifying the leadership and the role of both the Graduate Council and the Dean of the Graduate School. The official charge read as follows:

To articulate recommendations to the Provost as to graduate education governance at UL Lafayette. In particular, to identify the role of the Graduate Council, and to offer recommendations to improve its ability to represent the graduate faculty and graduate degree programs. Also, to identify the best leadership model for the Graduate School, and to offer recommendations as to the role of this leader. And, ultimately, to identify the goals and mission of the Graduate School. The recommendations of this Task Force will provide a broad context within which policy decisions regarding graduate education can be made.

Task Force Members

Co-chaired by Dr. Bradd Clark, Interim Provost & Vice President for Academic Affairs, and Dr. Mary Farmer-Kaiser, Interim Dean of the Graduate School, the Task Force was purposefully designed to include members of the graduate faculty who have been actively involved in graduate education and who are leaders of the graduate community at the University. The individuals who agreed to serve on the Task Force share, collectively and unanimously, the goal of advancing graduate education and strengthening its governance at our University. The members, and the constituencies represented, include:

Graduate Faculty Representatives

Dr. Henry Chu (CACS, Sciences)
Dr. Jack Damico (CODI, Liberal Arts)
Dr. Christine DeVine (ENGL, Liberal Arts)
Dr. Jim Lee (MCHE, Engineering)
Dr. Andrea Loewy (MUS, Arts)
Mr. Bob Viguerie (MBA, Business)
Dr. Helen Hurst (NURS, Nursing & Allied Health Professions)

Graduate Council Representatives

Dr. Peter Sheppard, Chair (EDCI, Education)
Dr. Scott France (BIOL, Sciences)

Academic Deans Representatives

Dean Jordan Kellman (Liberal Arts)
Dean Mark Zappi (Engineering)

Graduate Student Representative

Matthew Teutsch, GSO President (ENGL, Liberal Arts)

Task Force Recommendations

With the guiding belief that strengthening graduate education and fortifying its governance advances the greater University mission, the Task Force makes the following recommendations to our University community.

1. The Graduate School serves a vital function in the University, and the Task Force recommends that its position and abilities be strengthened.

It is necessary to have an entity within the University to strategically spearhead the effort to strengthen and to expand graduate education and to advocate for the necessary budget, policies, and staff to promote our graduate degree programs, to facilitate a significant growth in graduate enrollment and the number of post-baccalaureate degrees granted, and to guide University-wide efforts to retain our graduate students and to ensure completion of graduate degrees.

During their many discussions, members of the Task Force repeatedly came back to the need to “strengthen” the role of the Graduate School. What we mean by “strengthening” is that the Graduate School should have:

- a substantive role in University decisions that impact graduate education;
- adequate flexibility to address the needs of graduate education quickly and appropriately, given the rapidly-changing landscape of graduate education within our University as well as nationally and internationally; and
- sufficient and predictable funds to assist graduate degree programs in achieving their recruitment, enrollment, retention, and graduation goals.

2. The Graduate School is the University entity responsible for defining and supporting “excellence in graduate education and the research and scholarly activities associated with it.”¹ As such, the Task Force supports its placement in Academic Affairs and recommends that it play a more substantive role in the creation, review, and/or elimination of graduate programs.

- The Dean of the Graduate School should be a member of the Academic Affairs Council and should participate actively in academic planning at the graduate level. In particular, the Task Force recommends that the Dean of the Graduate School serve as the primary liaison between the Academic Affairs Council and the academic colleges in graduate program development, modification, and review.
- The Graduate Council should also play a role in graduate program review. It is thus the recommendation of the Task Force—by a majority vote—that a Graduate Council standing committee be created to serve in an advisory capacity on graduate program review (in cooperation with the University Program Review Committee and the Faculty Senate) and graduate program elimination. (See more on this recommendation below.)
- The Task Force further recommends that the title and the duties of the Dean of the Graduate School be more formally tied to Academic Affairs by changing the title to “Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs & Dean of the Graduate School.” (See more on this recommendation below.)

3. The Dean of the Graduate School plays a critical leadership role at the University by guiding and facilitating communication and cooperation among graduate students, the graduate faculty, graduate programs (and

¹ From the Council of Graduate Schools Organization and Administration of Graduate Education (2004).

graduate coordinators), the Graduate Council, the Deans of the academic colleges, and the University administration. Consequently, the Task Force recommends that the position be strengthened.

- The Task Force offers the following as the formal “job description” for the position of “Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs & Dean of the Graduate School”:

The Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs & Dean of the Graduate School provides leadership for graduate education at the University.

The role of dean is as the principal academic and administrative officer of the Graduate School, which includes being informed about trends and initiatives in graduate education nationally and internationally and offering a strategic plan for graduate education at our University; overseeing recruitment, admissions, academic progress, career and professional development, and the awarding of degrees at the graduate level; allocating and administering state and University support for graduate students; developing graduate curricular policy with the Graduate Council and academic colleges, and implementing that policy; overseeing graduate assessment and benchmarking; working with graduate coordinators, departments, and colleges to develop new graduate programs; participating in the Council of Deans and Deans Group; and increasing the visibility of the University’s graduate programs.

The role of assistant vice president is as an advocate for graduate education in the University mission and positions the dean as a member of the Provost’s academic and administrative staff to represent the interests of graduate education university wide. Duties include participating in Academic Affairs meetings; attending Faculty Senate meetings; participating in new faculty orientation; organizing and participating in graduate program review; and coordinating as appropriate with the Vice President for Research to involve and support graduate students as part of the research mission of the University. The Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs & Dean of the Graduate School reports to the Provost.

- The Task Force offers the following concise description of the role and authority of the Dean of the Graduate School for inclusion in the University Catalog and other University policy documents:

As the principal academic and administrative officer of the Graduate School, the Dean will follow the policies of the Graduate School. Implementation of those policies as well as operational, managerial, and strategic-planning matters requiring attention are left to the discretion of the Dean. When issues in such matters are recurrent, the Dean shall seek the advice and consent of the Graduate Council and individual graduate degree programs and academic colleges as appropriate.

- In keeping with the above statement and also with the spirit of the policies set forth in the current Graduate Bulletin, the Task Force further recommends that the Dean of the Graduate School be given adequate flexibility to address the needs of graduate students and graduate degree programs quickly and appropriately. In particular, we recommend that the Dean have the autonomy to respond quickly on a case-by-case basis to time-sensitive issues that may predate policy or expose policy limitations, especially when considering requests from individual degree programs to waive requirements for admission, appeals, and/or the awarding of assistantships, fellowships, and tuition waivers.

- Given the great need for better communication and cooperation with academic colleges and because the Task Force appreciates that miscommunication or lack of communication has contributed to some long-standing tension, it recommends that the Dean of the Graduate School, in the role of dean, remain a member of the Council of Deans and the Deans Group.
- The Dean of the Graduate School should also remain a member of the Graduate Council. The Task Force thus supports the current practice of the Dean serving as an ex-officio member. It further recommends that the Dean be formally charged with the task of setting the agenda, in consultation with the Chair of the Graduate Council, for Graduate Council meetings.

4. The Graduate Council plays a significant policy-making role in our system of shared governance. Therefore, the Task Force makes the following recommendations to reinforce its place in graduate education governance and to define more clearly its role.

- The Task Force offers the following formal description of the Graduate Council for inclusion in the University Catalog, the Faculty Handbook, and the Graduate Council Handbook:

The Graduate Council, which reports to the Provost & Vice President for Academic Affairs, defines, in consultation with the Dean of the Graduate School, the policies that govern graduate education at the University in compliance with the regulations of the University, the Board of Supervisors for the University of Louisiana System, the Board of Regents, and the State of Louisiana. Specifically, the Council defines minimum criteria relating to admission, retention, and completion of students in degree and non-degree graduate programs; its jurisdiction also extends to policies governing graduate faculty membership and application of college criteria for that membership, revision and/or review of existing graduate programs, graduate degree requirements, graduate courses, and graduate assistantships and fellowships. The Council also advises the Dean of the Graduate School on matters pertaining to graduate education.

- The Task Force unanimously recognizes the need for the Graduate Council to be a larger, more representative body than its current membership of 14 individuals (7 elected members from “areas,” 4 members appointed by the Provost/VPAA, 2 graduate student members, and the Dean of the Graduate School in an ex-officio capacity). With a majority vote, the Task Force recommends the following changes to the membership and selection of the Graduate Council:
 - that the membership of the Graduate Council be increased to 27 members of the graduate faculty, distributed as follows:
 - 2 members elected by the graduate faculty within each academic college with a graduate degree program (total = 14)
 - 1 member of the graduate faculty appointed by the dean of each academic college with a graduate degree program (total = 7)
 - 3 members appointed by the Dean of the Graduate School, in consultation with the Provost & Vice President of Academic Affairs, to provide balance and equity, and who will serve terms of one to two years

- 2 graduate student members who serve one-year terms; one to be the GSO president and the other to be selected by the Dean of the Graduate School
 - the Dean of the Graduate School to serve as an ex-officio member
 - that the membership include, if possible, no more than 1 elected member from the each academic department or school;
 - that elected members and members appointed by deans of the academic colleges serve staggered three-year terms;
 - that the membership of current Graduate Council members whose terms have not yet expired be continued as part of these elected/appointed positions in this new, larger body; and
 - that a strategy for implementation to achieve the desired goal of staggered/rotating elections/appointments be recommended by the Dean of the Graduate School to the current Graduate Council, who would approve, so long as this can be done in a timely manner.
- The Task Force recommends the following with regard to the Graduate Council standing committees: (1) the continuation of the four existing standing committees of the Graduate Council—Appeals, Curriculum, Fellowship, and Graduate Faculty; (2) the change in name of one committee, the Committee on Graduate Faculty, to the Committee on Graduate Faculty Membership; (3) the creation of a Committee on Program Review (see more on this recommendation below); (4) that the membership of these standing committees be restricted to continuing, fulltime faculty who are members of the Graduate Faculty (but not necessarily members of the Graduate Council), (5) that each standing committee include members from each academic college; (6) that members of these standing committees be appointed by the Chair of the Graduate Council, in consultation with the Dean of the Graduate School, for terms of one year; and (7) that members may be reappointed.
- In keeping with its belief that the Graduate Council has a role to play in graduate program review, the Task Force—by a majority vote—recommends the creation of a standing committee on graduate program review. This committee should play an *advisory role* in graduate program review (in cooperation with the University Program Review Committee and the Faculty Senate) or any proposal that considers or may lead to the discontinuation of an existing graduate program. This committee would be charged also with developing University criteria, for approval by the Graduate Council and the Provost & Vice President for Academic Affairs, to prioritize the review of graduate programs.
- Recognizing a need for revision and clarification of the role and authority of the Graduate Council and its Committee on Graduate Faculty Membership with regard to the policy and processes for awarding membership to the Graduate Faculty, the Task Force—by a majority vote—recommends: (1) that the Graduate Faculty membership criteria continue to be established by each college, since there is a great deal of variation among disciplines in the type of work and the recognized peer review process of the work that constitutes sufficient research activity to qualify a faculty member to be a mentor to a graduate student; (2) that there be University guidelines for Graduate Faculty membership established by the Graduate Council, and approved by the Provost & Vice President for Academic Affairs, in order

to ensure overall excellence in the quality of graduate education at our University; and (3) that the Committee on Graduate Faculty Membership provide a review function for applications for membership on the Graduate Faculty. Finally, guided by these larger recommendations, the following revised committee description outlines the Task Force’s additional recommendations with regard to the role of the Committee on Graduate Faculty Membership:

The Committee on Graduate Faculty Membership is responsible for: (1) offering assistance to the Graduate Council in the formation of the University guidelines for appointment to the Graduate Faculty; (2) providing one of its members to serve as an ex-officio member of each College Peer Review Committee (member assigned to be from the affiliated college); (3) review of any Graduate Faculty application when any one of the academic college entities (the College Peer Review, Department Head, and Academic Dean) recommends denial or appointment at a different level than applied for and/or in instances in which the three recommendations are inconsistent or absent; and (4) submission of a recommendation to the Graduate Council on all reviews completed. Although some on the Task Force believe that the committee’s recommendations should be regarded as “final but subject to appeal,” the majority supports the contention that the Graduate Council itself makes the final decision—although still subject to appeal—on the committee’s recommendations for appointment to the Graduate Faculty.

Each college, guided by its own Graduate Faculty membership criteria, provides three independent recommendations: from a College Peer Review, the Department Head, and the Academic Dean. The recommendation for Graduate Faculty membership is based, primarily then, upon the recommendations of these three entities within each academic college. The Committee on Graduate Faculty Membership will review applications and recommendations for appointment to the Graduate Faculty only when any one of these aforementioned academic college entities (1) recommends denial of membership to the Graduate Faculty, (2) recommends appointment at a different level than applied for by the faculty member, and/or (3) are absent or inconsistent in any way.

After the recommendations of the Committee on Graduate Faculty Membership are submitted to the Graduate Council and the faculty member is notified of the decision, the applicant for graduate membership or the academic college may appeal the decision advanced by the Committee on Graduate Faculty Membership. This appeal will be heard by the Graduate Council with appropriate input from all involved parties. The appeal decision by the Graduate Council will be submitted to the Provost & Vice-President of Academic Affairs for final University approval.

When establishing the Graduate Faculty membership criteria for the academic college, the college may formulate the criteria in any manner it chooses as long as the criteria are consistent with the University guidelines recommended by the Graduate Council and approved by the Provost/Vice-President of Academic Affairs. The criteria of any academic college may be more stringent than the University guidelines, but it may not offer a term of appointment that is in conflict with the University guidelines. All college criteria and University guidelines for graduate faculty membership shall be reviewed by the involved entities at least once every five years.

The three academic entities are responsible for submitting their independent recommendations for every application to the Dean of the Graduate School in a timely manner and consistent with

established deadlines. The Dean of the Graduate School and the chairperson of the Committee on Graduate Faculty Membership shall review all of the applications along with the college recommendations and forward applications that require review as specified above to the Committee on Graduate Faculty Membership for review.

- 5. In governing graduate education, a system of shared governance is essential. As its final recommendation, the Task Force therefore offers the following to demonstrate the way in which shared governance should work in graduate education. Here, we define some of the most important shared roles and responsibilities of individual degree programs, colleges and academic deans, the Graduate Council, and the Dean of the Graduate School.**

The Task Force is guided by the belief that shared governance is a process by which faculty, administrators, and, when appropriate, students respectfully share the responsibility of reaching collective decisions on matters involving both the development and the implementation of policies and procedures. Such governance requires that the participants agree upon the roles, responsibilities, and authority of various entities involved. It also requires consistent communication and cooperation between these entities.

Individual Degree Programs

- The graduate faculty, working within their individual academic departments and schools, are responsible for the initiation of new graduate degree programs or concentrations. They are similarly responsible for the initiation of modifications to existing graduate degree programs, especially in terms of curriculum changes, additions, or deletions. Proposed graduate degree programs must be in compliance with the regulations of the University, the Board of Supervisors for the University of Louisiana System, the Board of Regents, and the State of Louisiana.
- Individual degree programs may establish admissions and/or graduation requirements above the minimum University requirements; support (or not) applicants who appeal for admissions or amnesty; support (or not) students who appeal for reinstatement upon becoming ineligible to continue or who request an extension to complete a degree beyond the specified six year for a master's degree or seven years for a doctorate; recommend (or not) the acceptance of transfer credits or credits older than six years to fulfill degree requirements; and/or initiate an appeal to award an assistantship to a student not in regular status.

Colleges and Academic Deans

- New graduate degree programs or concentrations require endorsement by colleges and their academic deans. Similarly, such endorsement is required for changes to existing graduate degree programs, including curriculum changes, additions, or deletions.
- An academic dean appoints a member of the Graduate Faculty to the Graduate Council to represent his or her college; is responsible for creating, and submitting to the Provost & Vice President for Academic Affairs for approval, college criteria for membership on the Graduate Faculty; appoints the College Peer Review Committee to review and recommends action on applications for membership on the Graduate Faculty in his or her college; provides individual recommendations for each application for membership on the Graduate Faculty from a faculty member in his or her college; and provides recommendations on appeals for amnesty.

Graduate Council

- The Graduate Council, in consultation with the Dean of the Graduate School, makes policy governing graduate education for the University as a whole. The Graduate Council may also waive these policies for special situations brought to its attention by an individual degree program, applicant, or student.
- The Task Force recommends that the chairperson of the Graduate Council participate in the Faculty Senate as requested and as appropriate. The Task Force further recommends that the agenda and minutes of the Graduate Council be sent to the executive officer of the Faculty Senate.
- Much of the work of the Graduate Council is done by its standing committees, described briefly here.
 - The Appeals Committee hears appeals for admission or readmission, appeals from students who have been declared “ineligible to continue,” and appeals for amnesty. This committee also hears appeals from individual degree programs to award an assistantship or fellowship to a graduate student not in regular status.
 - The Curriculum Committee ensures that any requested curriculum change, addition, or deletion is in compliance with University requirements. It also approves or denies these proposals. Finally, it ensures that all individual degree programs receive timely notification of receipt, consideration, and outcome of their requests.
 - The Fellowships Committee considers applications for, and awards, the University master’s fellowships.
 - The Committee on Graduate Faculty Membership reviews all applications for membership on the Graduate Faculty for which any one of the academic college entities (the College Peer Review, Department Head, and Academic Dean) has recommended denial or appointment at a different level than applied for by the faculty member.
 - The Program Review Committee provides advice to the Graduate School on the review of existing graduate degree programs and graduate degree program elimination. It also aids Academic Affairs and the Faculty Senate in reviewing those graduate programs that are in line for an annual review.

The Dean of the Graduate School

- The Dean provides leadership in developing strategic planning and the Graduate School mission in concert with Academic Affairs.
- In consultation with the Academic Affairs Council and as the primary liaison between the Academic Affairs Council and the academic colleges, the Dean works with individual degree programs to ensure that proposed new graduate degree programs and/or modifications to existing graduate degree programs meet the policies set forth by the University, the Board of Supervisors for the University of Louisiana System, the Board of Regents, and the State of Louisiana before the proposal is submitted for consideration by the Provost & Vice President of Academic Affairs.
- The Dean also enforces all Board of Regents, System, University, and College policies concerning graduate education; administers the Graduate School budgets and advocates for additional and predictable resources as needed; gives final approval for requests to transfer credits, to use credits older than six years, and to extend time limits for students to complete their degrees; may grant an emergency one-semester appointment to the Graduate Faculty at his or her discretion; manages day-to-day operations of the Graduate School; and has the authority to make timely decisions as is necessary.