MINUTES OF THE GRADUATE COMMITTEE

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FRESNO

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March 3, 2020

Members Present: S. Church (Chair), J. Marshall (ex officio), T. Lopez, K. Capehart, D. Lent, N. Wang, S. Tracz, D. Walker. Theresa Taliaferro (observer).

Members Excused: None

The meeting was called to order at 2 p.m. in TA 117 by Chair S. Church.

1. Minutes: MSC to approve the Minutes of February 25, 2020
2. Agenda: MSC to approve agenda
3. Communications and Announcements

* Dean Marshall announced the university has started making plans to deal with potential issues related to the Covid-19 coronavirus. We should look for announcements from the President in coming days.
* The committee will review the Industrial Technology program next time.

1. Temporary alternative language proficiency tests for international applicants

Due to the above-mentioned Covid-19 coronavirus, some countries have closed testing centers for the IELTS and TOEFL tests, which are required for international applicants to our graduate programs. Dr. Sarah Lam, Assistant Vice President of International Affairs, requested that we approve an alternative language proficiency test that can be taken remotely online (specifically, Duolingo’s English Test). The approval would be on a temporary basis. Some other schools have approved that alternative test on a temporary basis amid these extraordinary circumstances. The committee discussed Dr. Lam’s request and voted to approve it.

1. Decision on Program Review for Ed Leadership Doc Program

Following up on our meeting with representatives of the Ed Leadership Doc Program, we discussed the program and our recommendation.

There was broad agreement among the committee for a recommendation to approve the program for conditional continuation. Conditions and the timeline for those conditions were discussed. The committee settled upon and voted to approve the following conditions and timeline.

By May 1, 2020 (so that the committee has enough time to review it before the end of this semester), the program should provide an updated SOAP and, relatedly, an assessment plan that be implemented in Fall 2020.

By the same date, the program should also provide a draft a strategic vision for the program, which the program will already need to draft due to a similar request from the provost.

Next Fall 2020 by October 1, 2020, the program should provide: the updated student and faculty handbooks that they are developing; plans for using the carryforward to improve the curriculum and program; and a detailed student recruitment plan. Such plans might consider how any future significant imbalances between enrollment in the traditional and online program could be addressed.

1. Meet with Representative for MAT Online Program

The committee welcomed Dr. Nancy Akhavan, MAT Program Coordinator, and Dr. Carol Fry Bohlin, Chair of the Department of Curriculum and Instruction in the Kremen School of Education and Human Development.

Chair Church began by summarizing the positives of the program. Students seem to be very highly satisfied; most seem to appreciate the cutting-edge and online components of the degree. The program also already has a focused and comprehensive plan for responding to suggestions raised by the program review process.

The committee then turned to its questions developed during our last meeting.

Dr. Lopez asked about curriculum changes and specifically the planned changes so that all courses are 3 units (rather than some being 4 units), each semester is keep to 6 units (rather than 7 or more), and the program is extended for at least some students from 3 to 4 semesters.

Drs. Akhavan and Fry Bohlin discussed the many advantages of the changes and did not foresee any disadvantages.

In terms of the switch to 3-unit courses and 6-unit semesters: Students with 7 or more units are considered “full time” and pay higher tuition fees, so by limiting the program to 6 units per semester, students will avoid those higher fees. The total cost of the program will actually be lower, even for students who spend 4 semesters in the program, Dr. Akhavan explained. Dr. Akhavan also explained that students in the program are already working and taking the program with only part of their time, regardless of the classification by the university. Dr. Fry Bohlin added that FERP’ing instructors will be able to be more involved in teaching in the program, given that they are limited to only 6 units per semester.

In terms of the extension to 4 semesters: Dr. Akhavan explained that, currently, students who arrive through the CalStateTEACH are able to complete the program in 3 semesters thanks to the elective units they bring in. Other students already need a 4th semester. Extending the program to 4 semesters would help the CalStateTEACH students financially for the reasons discussed above and also help them educationally by spreading out their academic load. The change will also improve the cohesiveness of the students in the program; students who did not arrive through the CalStateTEACH program currently have to take an additional semester relative to their peers, which undermines the cohorted nature of the program.

Related to the conversion of some 4-unit courses into 3-unit courses and the broader curricular changes, Dr. Lent asked if there has been progress on updating individual courses or other aspects of the curriculum. Dr. Akhavan explained they are waiting for the resolution of the review process before embarking on such changes.

Dr. Walker asked if there has been progress on updating the program’s SOAP. Dr. Akhavan again explained they are waiting for the resolution of the review process before embarking on such changes, but she emphasized that she and a dedicated team of faculty are “ready to go” on updating the SOAP, courses, etc.

Dr. Tracz noted that the review team commended the program’s clearly defined expectations for its graduates. She then asked what mechanisms the program has in place to ensure students meet those expectations and assess whether they are meeting them. Dr. Akhavan noted that she has made a concerted effort to assess new items (rather than repeatedly assessing the same items, as had been done in the past), but better coordination will be needed to align syllabi with the SOAP (and/or align an updated SOAP with syllabi) and then assess and reassess on a range of items.

Dr. Wang noted that the review team noted a lack of data on alumni and employers. He then asked whether the program has collected data to track alumni success. Dr. Akhavan explained that people in the program are already employed and may not necessarily change employers or employment, but recognized that finer-grained data collection (such as involvement in new committees or initiatives) could be useful for assessment and recruitment purposes.

Dr. Wang also asked about the challenges of teaching online. Dr. Akhavan offered high praise for the instructional designers at the Center for Faculty Excellence and the technical support for both instructors and students offered by the university.

Dr. Lopez asked if the program had any areas of need. Drs. Akhavan and Fry Bohlin both emphasized that class sizes have grown too large with some 40 students and there is a need to expand to two cohorts with class sizes of some 20 to 25 students in order to maintain/improve the quality of the program. They recognized they did not want too few students in a cohort as they do not want to fill a class with too many students from other Fresno State programs, but the latter students provide a buffer, and their current cohort size is large enough to support two cohorts without diminishing the quality of students.

After the representatives for the MAT online program had left, the committee discussed their recommendation for the program. There was broad agreement among the committee that the program was one of quality and promise. The committee voted to approve that recommendation.

1. MSC adjourned at 3 p.m.
2. The next scheduled meeting of the University Graduate Committee is Tuesday, March 10, 2020, at 2:00 p.m. in TA 117.

* Business and announcements
* Discuss Industrial Tech Program Review