MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE GRADUATE COUNCIL OF THE GRADUATE
SCHOOL OF ARTS & SCIENCES

April 25, 2017 at 4:00 p.m.

Graduate Council Chair William F. Tate, Dean of the Graduate School, called the meeting to order 4:02 p.m. in the
Umrah Lounge. Approximately 52 graduate students and faculty members attended.

I. Welcome and Introductions

Dean Tate welcomed the graduate council to the meeting.

II. Consideration/Approval of the Minutes

The Graduate Council reviewed and approved the minutes of its February 8, 2017 meeting as it was presented.

III. Dean’s Report

Dean Tate opened his report by discussing admissions data. Dean Tate reported that both domestic, under-represented
minorities and international applicants decreased in the past cycle. Dean Tate indicated that domestic graduate school
applications generally follow the economy, and decrease as the economy improves. Feedback from applicants regarding
the application process was positive.

Dean Tate stated that two opportunities for restructuring student teaching experiences have been developed. Reactions and
feedback have been provided for the mentored teaching strategy proposed by the Graduate School. Dean Tate
emphasized that additional suggestions or strategies by members or programs can still be sent. Admitted cohorts will use
current standards for how we deal with teaching.

IV. Report of Graduate Student Senate’s Strategic Action Plan

Graduate Student Senate (GSS) Co-Presidents Toshi Miyatsu, a PhD student in Psychology and Brain Sciences, and
Donny Gerke, PhD student in Social Work, presented the 2017 GSS Strategic Action Plan. The Strategic Action Plan
reflects the accomplishments of each sub-committee (11) of the GSS along with specific short term and long term goals
and recommendations. The off-campus housing committee has provided a new resource website that maps the
neighborhoods around WashU with ratings for walkability, affordability, safety, transit and grocery accessibility. It
features links to available apartments and housing in the neighborhood you select. The website is:

www.wustlgsshousingmap.com

Major themes of the report include:

1) Lack of information about graduate student resources.
2) Need to promote inclusiveness of diverse grad student population. GSS encourages the Graduate School to
   prioritize recruitment and retentions of diverse faculty, designation as sanctuary campus, creation of family
   friendly work and study space, enhanced communication of resources for international students
3) Need for respect and value by administration. We recognize the efforts and resources provided this year.
   Especially with the new awards to celebrate graduate student accomplishments.
4) Need to address quality of life issues. This includes timely and affordable access to healthcare, including
dental and mental health.
5) Need for enhanced professional development resources and opportunities. Especially for students who plan to
work outside of academia.
6) Need for continued transparency and collaboration with Graduate School. Coordination with Lieberman
   Center has been helpful. We acknowledge that the Graduate School has acted on previous concerns, such as a
bias reporting system and awards. We request that the Graduate School provide written responses with their
plans to support the graduate student community.

Both Donny and Toshi highlighted the excellent support that the Graduate School has provided in the past year and
reflected their gratitude and thank for the actions that the Graduate School has taken to address student needs and
concerns.
V. Consideration/approval of the list of candidates for advanced degrees, May 2017

Dean Tate presented the candidates for advanced degrees. The candidates were sent to the Council prior to the meeting to review. The Graduate Council reviewed and approved the candidates for advanced degrees as it was presented.

VI. Action to approve new graduate courses

Assistant Dean Pat Howard of the Graduate School Registrar presented the additional course offerings. The list of new graduate courses was sent to members of the Graduate Council prior to the meeting.

VII. Masters Proposal Physics

The new Masters degree in Physics was provided to the Council prior to the meeting. The Graduate Council approved the degree program as it was presented. This information will be sent to the provost for final review and approval.

VIII. Next Generation PhD training in Humanities

Professor Jean Allman presented the Next Generation PhD training in Humanities. It is a national initiative to support graduate student training to improve, enrich and diversify training for jobs that students are seeking, especially those outside of academia.

Topics of the initiative include collaboration across domains and training in communication in a variety of media, to a variety of audiences. Currently, 10 Humanities departments offer PhD’s and training is almost exclusively focused on tenure track outcome. The goal of this initiative is to consider these skills and competencies in WUSTL graduate training.

This initiative plant to focus on collaboration across departments and supporting faculty and students in translating skills and adapting language to connect with platforms outside of academia. For example, teaching may translate to project management skills. Another aim is to follow the example led by Princeton and recruit and collect stories from graduates from WUSTL that have been successful in non-academic positions. The goal is to enhance the graduate student experience by forming a more connected graduate student community. Professor Allman recognized that there will be challenges with buy-in to this this new approach to graduate training which may involve redefining how graduate student success is defined.

A student council member, Anna- Rebecca Nowicki, asked if international opportunities are included in this initiative. Professor Allman clarified that current aims are to focus nationally, with the possibility to expand in the future.

IX. Career development for graduate students

Thi Nguyen, the Associate Dean of Career Services and Programming, presented career and professional development opportunities for students. Ms. Nguyen indicated that she is working to create specific webpages focusing on resources and events which will be presented in the fall meeting. A big question is what careers will be focused on. Graduate student career goals are diverse, but it is to support students in developing their skills and competencies for diverse career opportunities. She is aiming to use a diverse set of strategies such as peer-groups, panels and podcasts (i.e. Strategies for Scientists). Programs and Departments can reach out to Ms. Nguyen to get support in this area.

X. Executive Committee Chair

Professor Renee Cunningham-Williams, Social Sciences and Chair of the Executive Committee presented an overview of the work of the Graduate Council Executive Committee, which was made up of four faculty and four graduate students. The primary goal of the Executive Committee was to understand issues faced by WUSTL graduate students and offer recommendations and suggestions.

For the 2016-2017 academic year, the Executive Committee met quarterly and focused on issues related to mental health. The Committee learned that the top five issues for which students seek mental health services include anxiety, adjustment, depression, family of origin and relationship issues. Just over 1/3 (39%) of graduate and professional students completed a health survey and reported anxiety as their top issue (13%) followed by depression (11%). These students also reported feeling extremely overwhelmed and exhausted.

The Executive Committee developed recommendations related to student health/mental health, cost of care, available resources, peer to peer support and faculty-student relations. Many suggestions were related to increasing the number of
healthcare options, decreasing cost and making WUSTL resources tailored for graduate students. Other suggestions included developing a list of student rights, mentoring students in “soft-skills” to be successful and the importance of self-care. These recommendations were summarized in a memo which will be finalized and sent to key WUSTL stakeholders by May 1, 2017. Graduate Council members can submit further suggestions for the memo to Dean Macrander or Professor Cunningham-Williams. Professor Cunningham-Williams recommended that next year’s Graduate Council and Executive Committee follow up with those stakeholders.

A council member mentioned that a mental health office offers a folder with information on what to do in a variety of scenarios. This may be useful to help bridge the gap between graduate and undergraduate students. This could be provided to faculty and graduate student TA’s.

GSS Co-President, Donny Gerke, acknowledged the efforts and importance of this initiative, reinforcing that this is a prominent issue discussed by graduate students and a frequent topic at the GSS.

A council member asked about the timeline for realizing some of these goals. Professor Renee Cunningham-Williams responded that since the Executive Committee is only a one-year term, the goal of this year’s group was to identify concerns and make some recommendations. She clarified that she feels this is a true need of the student body and should be addressed.

XI. Adjournment
Dean Tate reminded the GC that hooding ceremony is May 18, 2017.
Dean Tate adjourned the meeting at 4:55 p.m.

XII. Presentation of the Dean’s Awards for Teaching Excellence

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Hoyt Drazen, Rehabilitation and Participation Science, Occupational Therapy
Recording Secretary to the Graduate Council 2016-17