

GAAC: Graduate Academic Advisory Committee of the UAF Faculty Senate

2012-04-27 Meeting Minutes & Year-End Summary Report

Voting Members: Orion Lawlor, Susan Renes, Lara Horstmann, Elisabeth Nadin, Chung-Sang Ng

Non-Voting: Laura Bender, Larry Duffy, Lillian Misel

For the 2011-2012 academic year, GAAC examined over 50 course and program change forms, often working with the submitting departments to address issues and resubmit paperwork. We used a Google Doc to keep track of status, notes, objections, and voting, which worked well. We will continue to work over the summer with a few post-deadline changes, and we expect to see resubmissions of a number of 1-credit construction management courses in Civil Engineering. More generally, GAAC's job is to enforce faculty senate policy and maintain UAF's institutional standards, but it is easy for this to devolve to following checklists of syllabus minutia. There is a fine line between maintaining rigor, and allowing instructors the freedom to design their courses.

GAAC spends a lot of time on these curriculum issues, but there are also a number of larger graduate policy issues we should address. These include:

- We could encourage good mentoring either via positive feedback, like a “GAAC Outstanding Graduate Mentor Award”; or negative feedback, via a “GAAC Badge of Shame in Graduate Student Neglect”. Nominations could be available online.
- Time and deadline management is important both for students and faculty. One approach some departments use is to have committees update the graduation timeline at every meeting; other departments are very hands-off, which has highly mixed results. Setting up a Google Calendar listing all graduate school deadlines would be useful both for students and faculty, at least those in the Google ecosystem.
- Running a training session for new graduate student mentors could improve things: the graduate staff would be willing to set this up. There's already an admin training session once per year, but people need to know about the session, and attend it.
- In addition to formal policy, a best practices document might help explain the responsibilities of graduate students and graduate mentors. In CS we have [10 steps to an MS degree](#); [SFOS](#), [SoE](#) and some other departments have similar documents. It might be useful for every department to have a document like this. A guide written by students might be more useful, covering apartments, parking, etc.
- It'd be useful to re-check the graduate thesis format handbook. Students need to learn how to use reference management tools like Endnote effectively, for example.
- TA/RA minimum salaries, and minimum fellowship levels, have not been updated in approximately five years. Some departments set higher levels, others effectively set lower levels by paying students for less than 20 hours per week.
- Graduate students have lots of issues about healthcare, child care, etc.
- GAAC should carefully analyze the results of the the graduate student exit survey.
- Transferability of credit for graduate students is a recurring issue. More UA graduate courses are moving to electronic delivery to provide access statewide, which GAAC should monitor.