

GRADUATE FACULTY MEETING
September 8, 2016 – 4:00 p.m.

MINUTES

Present: Ambro van Hoof, Chair; Actor, Alcorn, Barton, Bean, Blackburn, Bhattacharya, Boehning, Broaddus, Carlin, Cunha, G. Du, Evans, Frost, Gandhi, Garsin, Hittelman, P. Huang, Ibbott, Justice, Killary, Klegerman, Krahe, T. Lin, Ling, Mattox, Moghaddam, Morano, Moreno-Gonzalez, Olson, Ribelayga, Sawakuchi, Schluns, Smith Callahan, Tsvetkov, Uray, van Hoof, Walters, Wendt, J. Wu, C. Yin, Yu, and Zsigmond

Staff: Barnett, Cruz Bruesch, Fern, Gaughan, Martinez, Moore, Spitzenberger, Valladolid, Weinberg

1. Approval of the minutes for the February 19, 2016 meeting

2. Deans Barton and Blackburn, passed the gavel to Dr. Ambro van Hoof and welcomed him as the 2016/17 Faculty President

3. Appreciation Award to Dr. David Johnson

Even though, Dr. Johnson was unable to attend the Faculty Meeting, Dr. van Hoof thanked Dr. Johnson for all of his efforts as Vice President and President of the Graduate Faculty over the past two years.

4. Report from the Deans

Drs. Barton and Blackburn reported:

- Graduate Student Research Day
 - This was the inaugural Graduate Student Research Day and it was extremely well attended and well received. There was an exciting alumni key note speaker, oral and poster presentations, along with an elevator speech competition.
- End of the Year Admissions Report
 - The full end of the year admissions report can be found online, but here are some details:
 - 847 applications total applications were received. Of that, 584 were Ph.D. applications.
 - There was a fair even mix of domestic and international applicants.
 - There are 66 total females and 39 males in our entering class.
 - In addition, 33% of the entering class are from Texas, 28% are from the United States and 39% are not from the United States.
 - The MD/PhD Program only has funding for 5 students, but Development is trying to work on an endowment in order to fund more students.
 - More students accepted our offer of admissions. Which is why our entering class is a bit larger than in previous years.
- Branding and Marketing
 - The Deans' long term goals is to increase rankings, recruiting and the number of fellowships.
 - We now have a new name: As you know this is our name now – The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center UTHealth Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences.
 - Our shortened name will be: MD Anderson UTHealth GSBS!
 - The logo will change and will have MD Anderson's logo first and UTHealth's second.

5. Update from Reshaping the GSBS

Program Metamorphosis Working Group

Drs. Ralf Krahe & Michael Lorenz reported:

- The charges of the group are as follows:
 - Identify and appropriately name five to seven organizational units that encompass the existing scientific disciplines represented by GSBS faculty.
 - Determine the optimal organizational parameters for each unit with regards to leadership, steering committee and administrative support.
 - Develop a timeline and plan to facilitate the transition from the current organizational structure to the new one.
- One main guiding principle that the working group abided by was to “do no harm”.
- The working group consists of 10 faculty, 3 students and 2 staff members.
- The Texas Education Coordinating Board requires that a program graduate 10 PhD students every 5 years and there are a couple current Programs that may not meet this requirement.
- After extensive research the median number of programs from other Top 25 schools was 12.
- The Deans requested that this group identify 5-7 organizational groups.
- The following organizational breakdown is just a recommendation and is not final:
 - Neurosciences
 - Microbiology
 - Immunology
 - Cancer Biology
 - Therapeutics and Translational Biosciences (TTB)
 - Genetics, Epigenetics and Development (GED)
 - Biochemistry, Cellular and Molecular Biology (BCMB)
 - Human Genetics, Genomics, and Quantitative Biology (HGGQB)
 - Medical Physics
- The names above are still being discussed and the Programs will have the opportunity to change the name if they so desire.
- At this point, there is no recommendation on whether GSBS should become a true umbrella program. Many students have a vested interest on what is shown on their diploma. Because of this, there are discussions with the Registrar and UT System about the options that need to occur first before any recommendation is provided.
- All of the Programs listed above may create tracks.
- There were some concerns raised over the merger between Biostatistics, Bioinformatics and Systems Biology and Human and Molecular Genetics.
 - The group recommended that the programs meet to discuss if this merger could be feasible. It’s important not to focus on the name, but on recruitment and the students.
 - If the leadership determines this merger is ultimately not feasible, then the Deans would need to decide on the next steps.
- Everyone’s concerns have been heard and the working group is not finished and additional discussions will be made to address these concerns.
- Also, the Deans are willing to meet with any faculty about any concerns they may have.

Curriculum & Training Working Group

Dr. Khandan Keyomarsi reported:

- The charges of the group are as follows:
 - Develop a system for defining the core competencies of each unit and for identifying courses that meet those core competencies.

- Develop a system for defining the core competencies for additional training foci (therapeutics, translational, etc.) and for identifying the standards that must be met in order to list training foci on student diplomas.
- Survey existing courses to identify areas of strength as well as need and identify courses that should no longer be offered or should be consolidated.
- Identify mechanisms for maintaining academic standards in curriculum, PhD candidacy exams, and dissertations within the new structure.
- Develop a standard PhD candidacy examination that tests expertise, depth of knowledge, and the ability to think critically, regardless of the student's affiliation with any one organizational unit.
- This working group consists of 12 faculty and students, along with 2 GSBS staff.
- At this point, the logistics have not been determined since the group is still developing a system for defining the core competencies, but this will be part of the Working Group's recommendation.
- The Working Group was provided a list of all courses offered at GSBS. Dr. Prahlad Ram analyzed the courses based off how many times they were offered in the past 5 years and the number of enrollees. The list of courses was pared down by removing all Genetic Counseling and Medical Physics courses.
- From there, areas of instruction were identified as: Cancer, Biostatistics, Bioinformatics and Systems Biology, Cell Biology, Immunology and Immunotherapy, Neuroscience, Microbiology and electives.
- Each Program will have a set of core competencies and these will be part of the program core course that is developed. It would be helpful if this course could be divided into modules so that other students from other programs may be able to take certain modules based off their interest and research.
- There were some concerns regarding this proposal and it's important to state that the Programs will determine their core competencies and develop or modify their own curriculum based off the recommendations from this group.

6. Core Course & M.S. Program

Dr. Eric Swindell reported:

- The Foundations of Biomedical Research course is continually being refined. Thank you to all the faculty that have lectured in the course and those that continue to do so. If you have any additional changes to make, please reach out to Dr. Swindell.
- Drs. Eric Swindell and Lindsey Minter are clarifying the expectations for the M.S. Program. The first change they are looking at will be to change the minimum credit hours from 26 to 30 credits. This change should not affect the student's in the program. On average, M.S. students are graduating with as many as 50 credit hours.
- The M.S. Program should be completed in 2-3 years. The current average is 2.7 years.
- Every student should join a lab immediately, but no later than the end of the first fall semester.
- All M.S. program students are under the assumption that they are self-funded. It's the choice and an agreement between the advisor and student if funding will be provided (in part or in full) or not.

7. Mentoring Works!

Dr. William Mattox reported:

- GSBS has created Mentoring Works! based off the National Research Network Training Program formed by Dr. Christine Pfund's.
- There will be four workshops throughout the year, beginning in October.
- If any faculty members are interested in taking the course, please sign-up in the vestibule.

8. Nomination of candidate(s) for 2016/17 Vice President/President-Elect of the Graduate Faculty: Dr. Dihua Yu

The Faculty voted unanimously to elect Dr. Dihua Yu as Graduate Faculty Vice President/President-Elect for 2016/2017.

9. Vote on chairs and new members of 2016/2017 Standing Committees

The Faculty voted unanimously to approve the slate as presented.

10. Old Business

No old business was discussed.

11. New Business:

No new business was discussed.

The following reports were not presented at the meeting but were available on the GSBS website prior to the meeting:

- 1. Report of the Standing Committees**
- 2. Report of the Executive Committee**
- 3. Report of the Graduate Student Association**

MEETING ADJOURNED at approximately 5:00 p.m.

Ambro van Hoof, Ph.D.,
2016-17 President, GSBS Faculty