USA Graduate Council Meeting Minutes
10/28/21 @ 3 PM
Zoom

Members Present: Elizabeth Adams, Eric Loomis, Mark Taylor, Gwendolyn Pennywell, Debra Chapman, James Stefurak, Robert Cloutier, Leigh Minchew, Ben Lee, Blair Saale, Ryon McDermott, Timothy Sherman, Joyce Pittman, Alexandria Green, Todd Andel, Delwar Hossain, Harold Pardue, DeAnna Cobb, Lorene Flanders, Norma Jean Tanner, Kelly Osterbind, LaSonya Toney

Absent: Marie Migaud, Kevin West

Guests: Ashley Gibson, Angie O'Neal, Heather Nix

Agenda and materials distributed prior to the meeting.

1. **Previous meeting minutes** motioned, seconded, approved.

2. **Dean's Report** (Harold Pardue)-An overview of the Graduate School budget was presented. Main sources of funding are the USA Foundation (for Graduate Assistant stipends), Grants, Faculty Start Up funding, and Costing Sharing on grants. Graduate Assistant stipends should be uniform, unless they are covered by a grant, which allows more flexibility in stipend amounts. Strategies to increase GA funding include appointing fewer GA's to provide a bigger stipend for each. Contracts can include GA stipends. A proposal to was made to survey GA stipends similar to the faculty stipend survey already conducted. A subcommittee will be formed to assess ways and means to increase GA funding.

3. **Webadmit/Slate** (Eric Loomis)-The advantage to Webadmit is that their EMP performs recruitment services for the Graduate School programs. Other institutions usually have their Enrollment Services perform this function. If a move to Slate happens, we lose this service. Robert Cloutier has worked with Slate at a prior institution and noted that Webadmit is easier to use. Cons to Webadmit is that Admissions already uses Slate and the student applications must move through both systems and end in Banner, leading to delays in processing applicants. Norma Jean Tanner reiterated that delays in processing students thorough Webadmit and Slate is cumbersome and recruiting through Enrollment Services could be explored. Also moving to Slate would simplify matters for student applicants. Allied Health and Nursing are separate from the Webadmit contract under discussion and will remain on their admissions system regardless. Our Webadmit contract ends 12/22. Eric Loomis stated that recruitment marketing for our graduate programs must be in place if we do move to Slate. Robert Cloutier remarked that faculty involved with Webadmit should be made aware of this change well in advance, as well as the benefits of moving to Slate. Harold Pardue suggested the Graduate Council make the final decision at the Spring meeting.

4. **Graduate Assistant 0.25 FTE appointment** (Harold Pardue)-Ultimately the Graduate School's goal is to offer all Graduate Assistants' health insurance coverage, however, at this time funding is not available. We have been able to offer some GA's health insurance with a new classification of GA's. One way to offer more flexibility to students who may only need a part time GA position is to offer 0.25 FTE positions. The Graduate Council moved, seconded, and approved the proposed 0.25 FTE policy as written in the Graduate Assistant Policy and Procedure document, which was revised and disseminated prior to the meeting.

5. **Graduate Faculty Member Requirements** (Delwar Hossain)-Proposed to eliminate the Associate Graduate Faculty membership. As a research focused institution this would increase the productivity in research and publications among faculty. Several members from various programs pointed out that Associate membership is crucial in forming thesis and dissertation committees and that some senior graduate faculty may not be as heavily into publishing as they have been in the past, but certainly possess the knowledge of and expertise in their field.

6. **Graduate Assistant policy regarding outside work** (Ryan McDermott)-Teaching (teacher of record) is an invaluable experience for Graduate Assistants who will be going into academics. Our current GA policy will not allow GA's to hold their assistantships (example: research assistantship) and teach courses at the same time. Harold Pardue explained that teaching a course counts as .25 FTE and 20 hours (as a graduate assistant) is .50 FTE. $3,200.00 is the cost to provide health insurance for a GA, which would be required for over .50 FTE employment. Could a GTA and GA be divided enough to work within the current requirements? The current GA policy has been updated to clearly state that GA's may hold employment outside of the University of South Alabama, unless they are covered by a grant which some grants forbid. Harold Pardue further posited that if teaching was added to the curriculum it could be part of the assistantship. Harold Pardue to discuss with Provost the possibility of increasing stipend hours to 26 hours per week to cover teaching responsibilities for graduate assistants. This will also be moved to the subcommittee agenda.

7. **Graduate Director/Coordinator Handbook** (Harold Pardue)-Should we formulate a handbook for new graduate directors and coordinators? Cons mentioned by Eric Looms is the constant need for updating. Job descriptions could be included in the faculty handbook however. Rob Cloutier stated that a Best Practices handbook may be a better fit for this need. Wide salary ranges and possible gender bias was mentioned.

8. **New Business?** None

9. **Meeting adjourned.**