Minutes of CGSR Meeting #7 on 1/27/2022

The Committee on Graduate Studies and Research (CGSR) held its seventh meeting of AY '21/'22 on January 27, 2022 (Thursday) via Zoom.

Present: D. Korkin (CS, Chair), S. Shell (BBT, Secretary), M. Demetriou (AE), L. Fichera (RBE), D. Medich (PH), Y. Telliel (HUA), J. Tourtellotte (BCB, GS).

Guests: S. Miles (Registrar), K. McAdams (Director of Academic Program Planning).

Prof. Korkin called the meeting to order at 3:02 pm.

1. The minutes of meeting #6 were reviewed and approved.

2. Voting item: ECE course removal petition.
    a. The ECE department petitioned to remove courses ECE 529, ECE 566, ECE 5715, ECE 5905, and ECE 630 from the catalog, as these courses have not been offered in several years and there are no plans to offer them in the future.
    b. The motion was approved with a note to the petitioner to ensure that all references to these courses be removed from the catalog and other relevant documents.

3. Voting item: ME change of course from term to semester length.
    a. The ME department petitioned to change ME 5000 (2 credits, 7 weeks) to ME 500 (3 credits, 14 weeks) for multiple pedagogical reasons.
    b. The motion was approved, and the petitioners were instructed to submit a companion motion to change the degree requirements for the MS and BS/MS degree requirements to reflect this change.

4. Voting item: Petition to remove the requirement for instructor' signatures for double-counted courses on the BS/MS degree course designation form.
    a. The relevant records are present in Workday and there is therefore no reason to require instructors' signatures.
    b. Two friendly amendments were suggested:
        i.   Change the requirement for timing of submission of the form to the term when the student applies for graduation. The current requirement is for the form to be submitted when the student first registers for the double-counted courses, which is not optimal for the student or the registrar.
        ii. Add lines to list courses that are being used exclusively for the MS and not double-counted.
    c. The motion passed with the suggested amendments.

5. Voting item (discussion phase): Motion to allow WPI BS students to pursue an MS degree, with the double-counting option, within 5 years of the BS completion.
    a. This option would provide flexibility for students who would like to pursue an MS but need additional time after their BS to be ready, for example due to health or financial issues.

b. This option is expected to generate an additional revenue stream for WPI by incentivizing students to return to WPI for their MS.

c. There was a question if this would be a consent agenda item or would require discussion by the full faculty. Professor Richman will be consulted for clarification.

d. There was a suggestion to solicit feedback from Dean Camesano.

6. Voting item: Motion to add a graduate course on Ethical Impact and Communication in Robotics and AI Research.

    a. The course was developed as part of an NSF NRT grant and taught twice as a special topics course.

    b. The course will be appropriate for students in several departments and programs.

    c. There was robust discussion about the timeliness and importance of ethics in AI, robotics, and other fields. Topics included:

        i. Should ethics content should be incorporated into disciplinary courses rather than being taught in a stand-alone course?

        ii. Should courses such as the one proposed be cross-listed as disciplinary courses to encourage students to take them and/or make it easier for students to fit them into their studies?

        iii. WPI has an opportunity to be a leader in the area of ethics in CS, which is a hot topic.

        iv. Interested people will plan a meeting to discuss ways to broaden coverage of ethics and integrate it into the curricula of various graduate programs.

    d. There was a question about whether it would be self-plagiarism for students to write content in the course that they would then include in their dissertations, as described in the course proposal. Most committee members felt that this would be acceptable and not constitute self-plagiarism.

    e. The motion passed with a friendly amendment to add language specifying how students in the course will be assessed.

7. Voting item (discussion phase): motion for approval of a transdisciplinary PhD in Development Engineering.

    a. The proposed PhD would include Chemical Engineering, Civil & Environmental Engineering, and Social Science and Policy Studies.

    b. The petitioner must change the name from "transdisciplinary" to "interdisciplinary," as the WPI graduate catalog only permits the latter.

    c. The petitioner will be asked to clarify that a 60-credit PhD is being requested and state which courses will used to fulfill these credits, as well as clarify wording in other areas.

8. Voting item (discussion phase): motion for approval of an interdisciplinary PhD in literatures on Sustainable Cities, AI and ML, through a cross-cultural comparison.

    a. The petitioning student must first be admitted into an existing WPI graduate program before petitioning to develop an interdisciplinary PhD.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:36 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Scarlet Shell
BBT
Secretary