

Minutes of CGSR Meeting #11 on 3/4/2021

The Committee on Graduate Studies and Research (CGSR) held its 11th meeting of 2020-21 on March 4, 2021 (Thursday) via Zoom.

Present: T. Camesano (Dean of Graduate Studies), M. Demetriou (AE), L. Fichera (RBE), S. Johnson (FBS), J. Petitto (BCB, GS), M. Rolle (BME, Chair), S. Shell (BBT), B. Vernescu (Vice Provost Research)

Guests: A. Harnisch (Assistant Vice Provost for Research), K. McAdams (Director Academic Programs), S. Miles (Registrar), M. Terrio (Executive Director of Graduate Recruitment and Admissions)

Prof. Rolle called the meeting to order at 1:00 PM.

1. The minutes of meeting #10 were revised and approved.
2. A motion to remove the credit conversion policy whereby undergraduates get more credit for graduate courses and graduates get less credit for undergraduate courses was presented and discussed (S. Miles). Credit hour definitions are based on educational time on task. By using two definitions for credit hours, our current policy inadvertently suggests that our undergraduate system is closer to a quarter system, which is in fact different from the graduate courses on the semester system. In addition, the conversion is a manual process and has implications for summer tuition (undergraduates pay more for a graduate course) and overloading. Graduate students who take undergraduate courses are also impacted. To better inform decision making (whether to change credit conversion policy, or change / address credit definitions consistently in the course catalogs and to accrediting agencies) we need to better understand the impact on students and WPI accreditation. S. Miles will come back to the committee with additional data based on sampling degree audits for undergraduate and graduate students pursuing different majors.
3. A new process for reviewing elevated risk international activities was discussed (A. Harnisch, B.Vernescu). Similar processes are being adopted by other research universities. The process identifies activities with specific countries that may have elevated risk as well as outlines a two-stage review procedure, to replace the current ad-hoc approach. The process does not apply to project centers or travel. Discussion focused around time limits, applicability to government-sponsored PhD students, and its role as a process to mitigate risk rather than a policy.
4. COG asked CGSR to consider the role of TRT faculty on CGSR and whether any changes to committee membership or other considerations need to be addressed. No changes were identified. Faculty (TTT and TRT) with interest and experience in CGSR issues (research and teaching/advising graduate students) could be nominated for the CGSR ballot.
5. B. Vernescu provided an update on the research working group's input to the strategic plan. The team consists of the leads for the 4 cross-cutting research communities (Smart World, Materials Reimagined, BioPoint, and Global Initiatives), the Deans, and representatives from the Research

Development Council. Data related to key metrics (such as impact and funding) is being gathered for each area, and the group is identifying initiatives in each of the 3 spheres of the plan (core, emerging, visionary). The group is also exploring initiatives to support research. Discussion focused on the need for PhD students (who need a 4-5 year commitment for support) and post-docs, personnel support to develop preliminary data, and additional investment in current programs that support graduate student training and facilities.

Meeting adjourned at 2:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon Johnson
FBS
Secretary