

COLLEGE OF LETTERS AND SCIENCE FACULTY SENATE MEETING
3:30 p.m., Monday, 12 November 2007
165 Bascom Hall

1. Announcements and Questions.

Dean Sandefur called the meeting to order at 3:35p.m. He shared his perspective on the State Budget, calling it the best budget in a few biennia because no cuts were taken; however, reductions from previous years must still be addressed, and L&S must continue to budget carefully.

The dean noted that April 2005 revisions to the L&S baccalaureate degree requirements went into effect for students admitted after May 21, 2007. The L&S Curriculum Committee, charged with overseeing implementation of “BABS07” changes, will submit a report at the next Senate meeting. In the meantime, L&S Student Academic Affairs reports that the implementation has gone smoothly and no emergency modifications have been called for. Furthermore, a “reasonable” number of continuing students have opted into the new requirements, which suggests that students for whom the change is advantageous are responding to the invitation and using a new degree-level DARS “what if” feature to make their decisions. SAA staff report that “faculty and departments are doing a great job getting the word out”. There were no questions in response to this announcement.

Dean Sandefur announced the report by the L&S Equity and Diversity Committee chaired by Steve Stern had been issued and was being discussed in a number of venues. It will be discussed by the chairs and can be found on the L&S website (www.ls.wisc.edu) under “News and Reports”. If the Senate wishes, this report may be the focus of a future L&S Senate discussion.

Dean Sandefur thanked members who are participating in the UW-Madison Reaccreditation Project. He reported that teams have been convened to focus on six key questions, and they will be working over the next several months to develop a set of strategic priorities in these areas for the university. He noted that this work is very important to the college, and L&S faculty should have a strong voice in guiding the future of the university.

No other items were brought before the Senate for discussion.

2. A motion to approve the minutes of the L&S Senate meeting held 23 April 2007 was approved.
3. Report of the College of Letters and Science Graduate Student Stipend Committee (March 1, 2007).

Professor John Wright (Chemistry) and Dean Martin Cadwallader (Graduate School) presented the committee’s report for discussion. The report found that in

a survey of peers, UW-Madison is no longer competitive with peer institutions in relation to graduate student stipends. The committee mandate was to propose solutions to this problem. The report cited several reasons for the imbalance, including a state budget model that accounts for graduate students' tuition as income, but which, due to tuition remission, creates a budget shortfall; disparities in investments made in graduate student stipends; increases in other research costs (retention and startup packages, changes in federal funding formulas); and fewer fellowships available, and low TA salaries, which make it difficult to offer attractive funding packages to attract the very best students.

The committee proposes that the college, WARF, the state, the Alumni, and the Foundation might work together to solve this problem. However, getting participation from these groups may be difficult and may require presenting the problem in terms that convey its importance and suggest ways to get involved. L&S cannot solve the problem alone; it involves the entire university and not just one entity. The committee made several recommendations:

- a. Short-term: Create an initiative for graduate fellowships, and create structures that make support for these fellowships attractive to donors and financially viable (e.g., waive – not remit – tuition). Ensure that Chancellor and the UW-Foundation recognize the importance of fellowships and graduate student stipends because it makes the institution competitive.
- b. Long-term: Raise all stipends to market value. Strengthen the commitment of the UW and state to deepen support for graduate students. Communicate better with the public about the contribution of graduate students to the university's mission, and emphasize that the university is competing for the best students and must pay for them to come here.

Dean Cadwallader provided an update on actions resulting from the work of the committee. The report has been used to explain the importance of graduate students to the WARF board, and to communicate with the Regents and board. These groups understand the relationship between graduate students with respect to research and to undergraduate education. Various activities are planned, including:

- Talking with the UW Foundation to make fellowships part of their development effort, and working with schools and colleges to find and utilize the wide range of donor opportunities.
- Developing Wisconsin Distinguished Graduate Fellowships
- Deploy fellowships strategically, to meet varying needs across divisions, to develop multi-year packages, etc.

Several other questions arise, such as whether some divisions need more assistance than others in garnering graduate student support, whether some faculty recruitment funds should be redirected to enhance graduate student support (since the quality of graduate students may affect whether potential faculty find the

program attractive), adjusting non-resident tuition or streamlining progress into “resident” status, and efforts to reduce time-to-degree without diluting program rigor.

Discussion: the summary below attempts to categorize comments made in discussion of the Graduate Student Stipend Committee report without oversimplifying them.

- “Tuition is a revenue, not a cost.” Budget has to be balanced and if tuition isn’t charged, the costs that have to be paid are salaries, buildings, health insurance, etc. The tuition number is used to bring the budget in line with the costs but budget assumes that the money will be collected. The university must develop a budget strategy that doesn’t count revenue money it doesn’t have and does not intend to collect. Unfunded students are a revenue source and on other campuses, departments get a certain number of tuition waivers as a part of the whole department budget.
- “Tuition is both a cost (expense to department) and a revenue (expense supposed to be paid by student).” This is hard to explain to the Regents, System, and legislature, and it raises considerations of whether or not undergraduates “subsidize” graduate tuition.
- Although some stakeholders fear that undergraduates subsidize graduate tuition, it may be more likely that low undergraduate tuition correlates with low salaries. It is not generally known how graduate students relate to the undergraduate experience, or that the most common “small course experience” for undergraduates is in language courses taught by graduate students. In addition, the large course lecture experience is a good experience for graduate students who need to obtain experience teaching. People may complain that focus on graduate students and on research distracts from undergraduate education, in fact, graduate students enhance undergraduate education (here and as they move into faculty positions elsewhere). L&S has been working to develop a statement that explains why support for graduate students is important to use when talking to donors in raising grad student support.
- “We need to tell a better story about the university.” The University could be viewed as an entrepreneurial institution which has various branches, each of which works together. A chemistry professor can be seen as selling ideas to funding agencies – but what “idea” do we sell with respect to graduate education?
- Can fellowships and guarantees be distributed more equitably? Longer fellowships might be created, but there would be fewer of them; departments can try to put together longer support packages offered as guarantees (but doing so calls for careful planning). Across L&S, departments vary a great deal between those that offer guarantees; the TA budget is based on need and there are limits

to how many TAs can be regularly supported. As a result, small departments make shorter guarantees, but this is a challenge. L&S is looking to the Grad School to see if there are ways to maximize risk across the college; however, it is very difficult to reallocate TA's given the specialized areas in which they must teach.

- Fellowship offers are attached to the candidate and not to the department, so if top scholars decline, a department may receive no fellowships. This would be different if the fellowships committee were to reallocate awards to "one of four best." The possibility of ranked list was also suggested with a line drawn which they cannot go below.
- The Physical Sciences Division may have (or may assert) more flexibility in making awards; similar flexibility may benefit the other divisions. However, it was noted that these differences have persisted for ten years, and that other differences exist (e.g., the Biological sciences have used "fellowship" money for recruitment). All divisions need not use the same model, but should be free to experiment to find the best model for the area.
- Senators discussed the "hit rate" for fellowships (currently 65% across campus with variation between divisions), and debated the merits of only accepting students who merit funding. Members noted that unfunded students may wish to test or prove themselves, and so may be justified in paying their own way.
- Members concluded that the discussion was useful, since it allowed them to compare notes, share examples of the various categories of this problem, and highlight the challenge of developing a range of packages in contexts that reflect the whole of the university. If L&S were to come up with a plan it would be a model for the rest of the campus, thus leadership is critical and it needs to be a grass roots effort.

The meeting adjourned at 4:55 p.m.

Submitted by:

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