



University of Pittsburgh

Office of the Provost
Graduate Studies

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University Council on Graduate Study Minutes

Tuesday, June 16, 2020

3:00-5:00 p.m.

Zoom: <https://pitt.zoom.us/j/91195138317>

Members Attending

Paul Bové (A&S – Humanities), Jessica Burke (GSPH), Vivian Curran (Law), Sandie Engberg (Nursing), Kelley Fitzgerald (SHRS), Dennis Galletta (Katz), Katie Greeno (Social Work), Holger Hock (Arts and Sciences), Prashant Krishnamurthy (School of Computing & Information), Jung-Kun Lee (Engineering), Amanda Leifson (GPSG), Patti Mathay (University Registrar's Office), Sam Poloyac (Pharmacy), Jay Rajgopal (Engineering), Ashley Shafer (GPSG – Education), Nathan Urban (Chair), Jennifer Walker (Office of the Provost, Staff), Christine Wankiiri-Hale (Dental Medicine)

Guests

Joseph Alter (UCIS), Michael Rizzi (GSPIA), Jae-Jae Spoon (UCIS), and John Stoner (UCIS)

The minutes from the May 2020 meeting were unanimously approved.

Proposals

Proposal to establish 6 graduate certificates within the University Center for International Studies:

- Mediterranean Studies
- Advanced Mediterranean Studies
- Transatlantic Studies
- Advanced Transatlantic Studies
- Transnational Asia
- Advanced Transnational Asia

The creation of these certificates is meant to be an opportunity for doctoral and master's graduate students to come together. The standard certificate will require 15 credits. Each certificate will also have an Advanced version that require language competency and will require 18 credits. These certificates are only open to Pitt students. Students will not be permitted to receive both levels of the certificate (i.e. Mediterranean Studies and Advanced Mediterranean Studies).

A motion was made and seconded to recommend to the Provost that the proposal be approved pending the programs are named with the word Advanced incorporated into the name as opposed to requesting an advanced certificate type. Members voted unanimously in favor.

Presentations

GSPIA – Formalizing the interaction with Seoul National University

Seoul National University (SNU) requesting formal agreement so that they can advertise them as such. Proposal does not go beyond policy. The agreement allows students to apply to each respective program and bring with them 6 credits from their home institution. This does not go beyond the current policy in Regulations Governing Graduate Study. In most cases SNU students will study for one year, then come to Pitt to complete a master's in GSPIA. It is possible that a Pitt student could go to SNU to complete a master's, but it is much less likely.

This proposal does not change the requirements of any of the involved Pitt GSPIA master's programs and therefore does not need formal approval. However, given the partnership with another institution, UCGS Chair Nathan Urban, asked that council review the proposal. Council found that the proposal satisfies the requirement of review.

Student Affairs Subcommittee

Dr. Jessica Burke served as the Student Affairs Subcommittee. The committee was charged with identifying major gaps in the postdoc guidelines and make recommendations regarding which group/committee should have the primary role for oversight of the university-wide policies on postdoctoral fellows. Post doc focus (see report) – should have a universal statement of support for our post-doc. Do more qualitative work (survey and focus groups) with post-doc to identify needs.

Previous surveys of Pitt postdocs have highlighted the following areas of concern

- Retirement matching – postdocs pay nearly same fringe rate as staff but do not receive matched retirement benefits – need to provide clarity about the benefits to scholars vs associates.
- Childcare – be clear up front about the lack of childcare at the very least.
- Classification of postdocs (PDA, PDS) -- is there a way to consider them all employees/do they have to remain separate?

Fundamental Recommendations

- Improve the universal statement of principle about the university's commitment to postdoc development regardless of whether they are appointed as Postdoctoral Associate (PDA) or Postdoctoral Scholar (PDS).
- Create a climate where postdocs feel that their needs and concerns are being recognized and attended to.
- Include postdocs in the planning process, engage with postdocs as partners.
- Engage in additional benchmarking beyond this committee (e.g. focus groups with postdocs).

The postdoc guidelines need to be updated to provide clear communication of expectations and guidelines

- Establish clear grievance guidelines. There either needs to be a universal process or every school needs to specify a clear path because currently there are differences by school.

- Include an anti-retaliation clause in the guidelines.
- Specify how long a Postdoc should be in their position at Pitt.
- Revise document so that it is gender neutral.

The committee recommends two options: Expand UCGS or create a Provost Advisory Board for Postdocs *(Note: New SVCO for health sciences should be involved in this decision because so many postdocs are in the health sciences.)*

- Expand UCGS to include postdocs
 - PRO
 - UCGS already exists.
 - Is a committee with influence – historically able to influence policy.
 - Beneficial for graduates and postdocs to be exposed to each other. i.e. mentoring – the substantive issues do intersect.
 - CON
 - Because postdocs are predominately health sciences this would skew the makeup of UCGS committee.
 - UCGS would need to grow significantly to represent postdocs.
 - UCGS oversees new programs, etc., which is separate from the issues of most postdocs.
 - If you want to focus on postdocs, then you need a committee that focuses on postdocs -- imbalance in representation.
- Create a Provost Advisory Board for postdocs *(The charge of the committee and the frequency for meetings would need to be clearly articulated. Could be that there is intensive work early on and then less frequent meetings. Could function as a standing advisory board for postdoc training that reviews and assures adherence to policy.)*
 - PRO
 - Avoid the complications associated with expanding UCGS.
 - Dedicated focus on postdoctoral trainees.
 - CON
 - Would be starting from scratch – would need to ensure that committee members are able to influence policy.
 - Need to articulate how this fits into the Provost space.

A motion was made and seconded to advance the above report to the Provost. Members voted unanimously in favor.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:15 PM.