Report of the Faculty Senate Graduate School Task Force

Introduction

On Oct 15, the Interim Provost announced that the administration was planning to decentralize graduate education at Saint Louis University. This was further expanded upon at a faculty meeting held Oct 28, which Drs. Alderson, Patankar and President Biondi attended. Interim Provost Patankar provided a formal proposal describing the planned decentralization to the Faculty Senate on Nov 10. At a Faculty Senate meeting on the same day, a Task Force was formed and charged by the Faculty Senate “to review the proposal(s), compile responses to survey (if conducted), and make a recommendation to the EC and the Senate in meeting concerning their respective matters “ (see Appendix A for both the Senate resolution and composition of the Task Force).

Process

The Graduate School Task Force (GSTF), at its initial meeting, decided to request input from all faculty concerning the administration’s plan, which is from here forward referred to as the Graduate Education Restructuring Proposal (GERP). It was decided that input would be solicited from faculty via four mechanisms: talking with individual faculty, communicating with the faculty governing bodies (councils, assemblies), communication via Faculty Senators, and through a web-based survey instrument. The questions posed in the survey that was utilized were arrived at after discussion amongst the GSTF members. It was also decided that GSTF would determine whether graduate education structures were centralized or decentralized at comparable research universities [Carnegie Research University/High classification (RU/H)] and universities that are rated higher at the top level [Carnegie Research University/Very High classification (RU/VH)] both across the nation and in the Midwest: Saint Louis University is classified RU/H. The third approach of the GSTF was to interview administrators who could provide clarification of issues to be identified by the committee. This was done and the interviewees are listed in Appendix B.

Outcomes

The GSTF received some input from some faculty bodies, but due to the limited timeframe of its mission was not able to communicate with all faculty bodies. It also received input from the Graduate Student Association.

A comparison of universities with the same Carnegie Research ranking as Saint Louis University (RU/H) revealed that 86% of identified universities had some type of centralized graduate education structure, and within the Midwest that number was 100%. (See Appendix C for details).

The survey yielded 142 responses, which are provided in some detail in Appendix D. The primary concerns voiced were that costs would be excessive for non-educational expenses, that overall quality of graduate education could suffer without central oversight, that marketing might suffer without a central body overseeing graduate education, and that the reputation of the University would suffer.
Based on the faculty input and extensive internal discussion, the GSTF identified three major areas to address: enhancing the graduate education mission of the University, the academic integrity of graduate programs, and fiscal responsibility.

After assessing all available data, the GSTF now reports as to how the GERP addressed the three major areas of concern:

Does the GERP enhance the graduate education mission of the University?

- increased funding of education mission is positive for program development and expansion
- we lose strong proponent for graduate education at a high level (Dean)
- there is no description of how core assistantships will be preserved
- bad PR for University

Does the GERP protect the academic integrity of graduate programs?

- a Graduate Academic Affairs Council would assume the duties of the Graduate Studies Board and several other committees of the current Graduate School
- no central authority is provided to maintain quality/standards across schools/colleges
- unclear what the affect of allowing deans to control graduate programming will have on continuity of existing programs or development of new programs

Does the GERP demonstrate fiscal responsibility?

- shift of general marketing/admissions/enrollment management to existing office would maximize existing resources
- markedly increases administrative costs by replicating functions of Graduate School at multiple sites across the University
- unclear what the outcomes would be to allow deans to control graduate program budgeting

Conclusions:

1. This Task Force cannot support the reorganization plan as presented by the administration.

2. That while we have identified some areas where change could enhance the graduate educational process, there were still areas where insufficient detail/agreements remained that should be investigated by a committee comprised of faculty, students and administrators.

Approved by:
Unanimous vote of regular members
Unanimous vote of alternate members

Submitted on behalf of the Task Force by:
Mark Voigt, Ph.D. (Chair)
Senator, School of Medicine
Appendix A – Senate Resolution and Membership

FACULTY SENATE SPECIAL MEETING
November 10, 2009

Faculty Senate Task Forces – Graduate School and Office of the Provost Restructuring

1) The Faculty Senate requests from the Administration complete Graduate School and Office of the Provost restructuring proposals that detail the fiscal and administrative impacts on affected units and that provide comparisons with best practices at peer institutions.

2) If the Senate wishes to have task forces formed to review academic reorganization matters, separate task forces will be formed. Each task force will consist of 3 Frost campus senators and 3 Health Science campus senators.

3) Senators interested in serving on either the Graduate School or Provost task forces will be asked to volunteer. Each task force may have no more than one Senator from any constituent group. Task force members may elect their Chair.

4) Mark Knuepfer (FS EC) will join the Graduate School Task Force and Joanne Langan (FS President) will join the Provost Task Force as ex officio members. The EC may approve the addition of advisory members to provide pertinent information to the task forces (Faculty Senate Bylaws, Article VI.5.).

5) The Senate Task Forces shall consult with affected academic units through their governing bodies and through their faculty senators.

6) If the Senate Task Forces choose to conduct an electronic survey for faculty input, Senators will inform their respective academic units of the survey and strongly encourage individual faculty input during a specific time period.

7) The charge to the Task Forces will be to review the proposal(s), compile responses to survey (if conducted), and make a recommendation to the EC and the Senate in meeting concerning their respective matters.

8) The matter of the Graduate School decentralization will be addressed first, then the matter of the reorganization of the Provost office will be addressed subsequently in the same manner. The Graduate School issue is more time-sensitive because of the current budgeting process.

9) The recommendations will be reviewed by the EC and the Senate in meeting, and shared with SLU Faculty and Administration.

Task Force Members
Frost Campus Reps
Terry Kelly (Parks)
Nikki Murdick (CEPS)
Jim Scott (A&S)
Becky Willits (Parks) [Alternate]

Health Sciences Center Reps
Mark Voigt (SOM) [Chair]
Jeff Mayer (SPH)
Donna Duberg (DCHS)
Lee Smith (Nursing) [Alternate]

Ex officio Senate EC Rep
Mark Knuepfer
Appendix B- Administrators interviewed

Dr. Don Brennan, Dean of Graduate School

Dr. Boyd Bradshaw, Associate Provost of Admissions and Enrollment

Stacey Barfield, Assistant Provost of Planning and Budget

Dr. Phil Alderson, Dean and VP of Health Science Center

Dr. Manoj Patankar, Dean and Interim Provost
Appendix C– Results of Carnegie Research University: VH and H analysis

For over three decades, the Carnegie Classification has been the leading framework for describing institutional diversity in U.S. higher education. For our purposes, we divided schools into those with a graduate school dean (red), those with a partial centralization (some centralized control over graduate programs, usually designated as Office of Graduate Studies) (green) and those without any apparent centralization over graduate studies (blue).

![Pie charts showing distribution of Carnegie RU/VH and RU/H categories.]

**Carnegie RU/VH**
- Grad Dean: 58
- Centralized: 15
- Decentralized: 23

**Carnegie RU/H**
- Grad Dean: 72
- Centralized: 12
- Decentralized: 14

**Midwest only**
- Grad Dean: 18
- Centralized: 2
- Decentralized: 2

**RU/VH = Research University/Very High**
**RU/H = Research University/High**

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Appendix D– The survey results

Analysis of the survey input revealed that 58 responders were generally negative towards the GERP, that 43 were generally positive towards it, and 41 were ambivalent or had both positive and negative comments. The primary issues raised by the respondents are shown in the graph below. There, data are shown as the percent of individuals, whose views towards the GERP were generally negative (red), positive (green), or uncertain (blue), that raised the indicated concerns in their responses to the survey. Thus, for example, 85% of negative responders mentioned fiscal-related concerns with the plan, as did 55% of positive responders and 45% of those who were categorized as uncertain.