

April Minutes

Graduate Committee Meeting

Virtual Meeting

April 4th, 2025

10:00am-11:30am

1. Call to Order
   1. In attendance: Sean Cote, Natasha Feinberg, Joan Walsh, Kalina Brabeck, Laura Stambaugh, Sheila Flemming, Leonardo Pinheiro, Brandon Hawk, Leslie Schuster, Jenlyn Furey, Aswood Bousseau, Debra L. Servello
2. Vote on Minutes
   1. March 2025 Minutes: Unanimous yes
3. Report of the Chair
   1. 3 proposals have come in in the last 2 days, which we will be reviewing in May.
   2. Sean went through the website on Monday, everything looks updated. He will add February and March minutes.
   3. Sean must submit an annual report which will be a part of the information that will be sent prior to May’s meeting. Val asked that all annual reports get reviewed by the committee.
4. Guest: Provost (discussion of graduate dean position)
   1. 3 organizational structures
      1. Centralized system
      2. Hybrid system - What function should be in the departments, and what support systems do they need? (hybrid system)
      3. Decentralized system – where we are at now (everything happens in the departments)
   2. Difficult to have a traditional dean in graduate school without having coordination among faculty in programs
   3. What are the challenges?
      1. Admissions
      2. Marketing
      3. Communication with students and among departments
   4. What would it look like to have a Dean of graduate studies?
      1. When Leslie was dean there was a great amount of support. Currently the provost office is acting as interim dean, but they have too much on their plate.
      2. Being the connection among the deans, consistency of practice and process, support across the college for all the schools and departments.
      3. A point-person for all questions regarding graduate programs.
      4. Needs to be a powerful voice in order to be impactful.
      5. Former dean did not receive collaboration from other deans when she was in the position. There was little recognition from the college and insufficient resources.
   5. What would need to happen to give the dean the power/presence to be effective
      1. Needs to be support from the provost office – they need to back up the Dean
      2. Some kind of pre-work or pre-information so that everyone understands what the position is. What is expected of the individual entering the position and others.
      3. Making it a full time position elevates its importance
      4. Graduate studies are often forgotten/overlooked. Provost can make sure that other programs are aware of grad studies
      5. Laura noted that in her dept there were applications sitting in assistant dean’s office for 6 months. There was no one to matriculate a student & she went elsewhere. There is no person to go to when we have problems.
      6. Grad programs at RIC are very different. Each department has their own systems and processes so a hybrid format would work well. It would still be helpful to have a centralized resource for certain things.
      7. Need more support for resources for grad students (GA positions, scholarships, programs that increase sense of belonging/community at RIC)
      8. Changing to provost model proves that change is possible and beneficial. The culture will follow.
      9. Current deans focused on undergraduate students. This dean would focus on graduate students
      10. Maybe the graduate dean should have some say in courses – if they run, etc
   6. What would give this position substance? What would allow the dean to influence the graduate program in a positive way? Why would they need a PhD?
      1. They need to have been a graduate student to know the struggles of that experience. They should have a doctorate to understand the amount of research that takes and the experience of applying for conferences.
      2. Part of revising, reviewing curriculum; we need someone who understands the academic environment. This goes beyond administrative tasks.
      3. We have doctoral programs at RIC
      4. That position would have a great impact on research that benefits the school
   7. Where do we want the dean to drive us?
      1. There are a lot of existing problems that need fixing before we can think big picture
      2. Provost wants to think less from a place of defecit and look into the future so there’s a clear message to the incoming person
5. Open Discussion
   1. Sean will re-send email to Provost detailing suggestions for the graduate dean.
   2. It sounds like Provost hasn’t heard anything that has been previously reported. Concerned about her communicating this to the next provost.
   3. The Provost should help define the mission and vision of the Dean position, it shouldn’t be a responsibility of faculty members/chairs to decide that.
   4. Creating a vision for grad studies should be one of the responsibilities of the new dean.
   5. The DNA of the school is very focused on liberal arts and undergrad programs.
   6. Sean needs 2 volunteers to join the executive committee for next year: meets every 3rd Friday of the month to go over proposals that are brought to graduate committee. Members need to be voted in. Send Sean an email if interested.
6. Adjournment: 11:09am

Zoom:

https://ri-college.zoom.us/j/4778949721?pwd=VGRONUwyczZSTGxnakttazhDL3NHdz09&omn=86399194677