

Senate Council  
November 28, 2016

The Senate Council met in regular session at 3 pm in 103 Main Building on Monday, November 28, 2016. Below is a record of what transpired. All votes were taken via a show of hand unless indicated otherwise.

Senate Council Vice Chair Ernie Bailey called the Senate Council (SC) meeting to order at 3:01 pm. The Vice Chair reported that the health issue preventing the Chair from attending was improving – the comment was met with relief by SC members.

The Vice Chair indicated that Provost Tim Tracy and Interim Graduate School Dean Brian Jackson would arrive around 3:30 pm; he suggested SC discuss their primary concerns, to make the most of the time they had with the Provost and Dean Jackson.

1. Minutes from November 21, 2016 and Announcements

The Vice Chair noted that the minutes were not ready for review. There were no announcements.

SC members discussed Graduate School-related issues of the most concern, as well as aspects of the review of the Graduate School that were not clear. When Guest Brian Jackson, interim dean of the Graduate School arrived, the Vice Chair invited him to sit at the head of the table. The Vice Chair asked Jackson if he was able to share more information about UK's contract with Stamats. Jackson responded that initiation of the contract was fueled by discussions the Provost had with multiple constituencies and was then mentioned to a variety of campus leaders – the University Senate, directors of graduate studies (DGSs), and the academic leadership team. Jackson referred to the umbrella statement and said the report from Stamats would include recommendations for graduate education, going forward. The Vice Chair replied that the umbrella statement was not specific, which was making it difficult for SC members to ascertain what, exactly, Stamats would be doing. Jackson said he preferred to defer that question to the Provost, but to the best of his [Jackson's] knowledge, Stamats' work was as described by the Provost previously. The Vice Chair asked about the Stamats contract and Jackson replied that he had provided it to the Chair, but she likely did not have a chance to share it.

2. Provost Tim Tracy

The Vice Chair suggested that the discussion focus on a hard copy handout that was emailed to a few members of SC prior to the meeting. Point 1 described the overall process as being inclusive of stakeholders for the Graduate School; point 2 described the initial process of collecting input from faculty; point 3 described the role of the consultant to marshal information; point 4 described development of a "Blue Ribbon Panel" composed of 15 – 20 members appointed by the Graduate School, the SC, and the Provost to consider the materials and make a proposal; and points 4 and 5 described the next step as a sharing of the Blue Ribbon Panels' report and information with the University community before coming to a conclusion. Provost Tracy indicated that while he did not have a hand in creating it, it did a good job of capturing details of a conversation he had with the Chair and that it appeared to be right on target.

The Vice Chair explained that the SC held a brief discussion the prior week but did not have a profound understanding of the issues at hand. The various aspects that SC members heard the Provost mention in the past (sunsetting programs, adding courses, outreach to industry, stakeholders, etc., and retaining centralized services or moving to decentralize) seemed to be tangential to a process of "reenvisioning" the Graduate School. There were also questions and concerns about what, specifically, Stamats was intended to do. The Provost explained, generally, the sorts of ideas and philosophies that he hoped would be shared and discussed throughout the review of the Graduate School and of graduate

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education in general. Similar to the past discussions and focus on undergraduate education, the Provost said he wanted to facilitate a campuswide discussion to encompass all aspects of graduate education. If the final result was that all stakeholders believe that graduate education is fine as is, then that is an acceptable outcome. Provost Tracy noted, however, that there were likely to be some things that UK could do better, so the review of graduate education could provide a philosophical framework. Not all disciplines access and utilize the same resources and processes, but within such a framework all units can think about what sort of Graduate School structure would best support their needs. What role can be played to support the best graduate student experience? What can the Graduate School differently or better? To help innovative students and innovative faculty and programs, what could be changed? The Provost clarified also that Stamats was not asked to evaluate programs – their services are intended to provide information on best practices and current practices at other universities across the country.

The Vice Chair noted that different disciplines train students differently and wondered aloud if there was a specific problem or process that was not working. Provost Tracy replied that Susan Carvalho, former interim dean of the Graduate School, conducted a review and one thing that she found was a lot of disparities across disciplines, and even within disciplines and within single departments. Some differences are reasonable and acceptable, but the issue does raise the question of how different some things really are. Another issue pertained to numbers of students graduated – if a program had not graduated any PhD students in more than five years, is there room for improvement there? The Provost referred to average time-to-degree – should any PhD program take eight years for a student to complete? Those were the types of general questions (not specific to any individual department), according to the Provost, that he expected others to dig into and about which he would like guidance and recommendations. In response to a question from the Vice Chair, the Provost replied that there were instances of students who were part time, but he opined that there could also be issues of lack of clear programmatic focus, lack of encouragement to students to complete their studies promptly, and that in some cases it was not possible to dig out the details of why certain things happened.

With respect to point 2, SC members did not believe that faculty input had been collected effectively. The Provost explained that his intent and message had been for deans to share information down to department chairs and to departmental faculty, but acknowledged that what he asked for sometimes did not turn out the way he intended. Many SC members reported being told what their unit contributed to the discussion on graduate education and the Graduate School, but were not given an opportunity to offer their own opinions. Lauersdorf suggested that faculty were underinformed about the impact of the campuswide discussion on graduate education and therefore were not overly forthcoming with thoughts and ideas. Below are additional points/comments.

- The review/discussion should include new strategies and ideas for increased funding. [Provost's comment: he hopes for the same.]
- There should be better and more systematic attempts to survey graduate students about their graduate education experience. [Provost's comment: Carvalho started UK down the path of real graduate education data, but there is still room to improve in terms of quantity collected and what is collected. Recently graduated graduate students are not usually responsive to such surveys.]
- There is no information about the report from the group last year, which was intended to make a recommendation as to whether to retain the Graduate School or do away with it. What was

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their final recommendation? [Provost's comment: there were two reports, but he did not act on either one. There was no clear consensus about keeping or dismantling the Graduate School. Furthermore, he continued to hear comments from faculty about how much they wanted to talk about and focus on graduate education, hence the current activities to promote such a conversation.]

- If there are barriers that prevent faculty in different disciplines from working collaboratively together, those issues should be examined. [Provost's comment: is there some way that UK unintentionally allocates resources that discourages or disincentivizes multidisciplinary collaboration? What would be a meaningful set of resources from the Provost's area that would encourage development of multidisciplinary programs and what would be a meaningful amount? Provost Tracy said it would be helpful to him to know to start pooling resources if there is a specific need.]

Provost Tracy, Jackson, and SC members discussed the possibility of and the logistics required for a survey of all faculty. The Provost asked Jackson to lead the effort for a faculty survey and work with Wood and appropriate DGSs to begin envisioning what the survey would look like.

With respect to item 3 (Stamats, the consultant), the Vice Chair noted that the SC would like to see the contract to better understand what information is being collected and from whom. Dean Jackson responded that he had shared the contract with the Chair of the SC and presumed she had not had a chance to share it with other SC members. However, the points of the contract were represented in the text of point 3. Stamats was not being charged with determining precisely how to accomplish the work but rather was asked to provide an outside view inclusive of information about benchmark programs. The product would not be a plan, but rather, information to be used by the Blue Ribbon Panel.

The Blue Ribbon Panel was described in item 4 and the SC was supportive of the approach and the proposed composition. Likewise, items 5 and 6 described a very open process that should be effective to discuss the information and the deliberation of the Blue Ribbon Panel.

The day's conversation was reassuring to many SC members, particularly the engagement of faculty and working with the Provost. The proposed process appears to be an iterative process with broad strokes used to collect data that will refine another proposal to be discussed in the relatively near future.

When the Provost had to leave, he thanked SC members for the discussion and SC members thanked him for the conversation and information.

SC members, particularly Wood, and Jackson discussed the survey. Wood strongly recommended that the Graduate Council be consulted about what sorts of questions to ask – it would be useful to have a broad-based effort. Grossman suggested that faculty be asked to perform a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) of graduate education. SC members were amenable to Jackson's suggestion that Stamats be informed about the upcoming UK-led survey of faculty, as well as asking Stamats for suggestions about the survey's content. SC members briefly discussed possible questions or types of questions for the survey. When Jackson departed, there was a general understanding that he would seek input from the Graduate Council and then share it with the Chair, who would send it on to the Senate's Research and Graduate Education Committee (SRGEC) for a review. After those activities, the SC would then review the survey questions. Wood cautioned those present that the best survey is a short survey that takes a respondent five minutes or so to complete.

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Grossman reiterated his suggestion for a SWOT analysis but Wood indicated that the narrative results would require categorization of the answers, which would be exceptionally time consuming.

3. Items from the Floor (Time Permitting)

Schroeder commented that although the Senate had approved a revised Teacher-Course Evaluation (TCE) form with different questions and rating scale, faculty in general were not reminded that results from the new TCE could not be compared to the prior TCE because of the changes, especially to the rating scale. The Vice Chair said he would share the request with the Chair, would could in turn discuss it with the Provost.

Schroeder also raised the issue of how the SC and Senate handled program proposals. She was concerned that one senator's concerns, which were not substantive, resulted in a particular proposal being pulled from the Senate agenda at the last minute. Wood commented that she had been involved with that proposal and supported the removal of the proposal from the Senate's agenda because language in the proposal conflicted with Graduate School guidelines for graduate certificates. Schroeder commented that certificates without core courses had been approved in the past so it would be helpful for there to be more consistency with how rules are applied.

There being no further items for discussion, Schroeder **moved** to adjourn and Wood **seconded**. A **vote** was taken and the motion **passed** with none opposed. The meeting was adjourned at 4:54 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Ernie Bailey,  
Senate Council Vice Chair

SC members present: Bailey, Blonder, Brown, Grossman, Lauersdorf, Mills, Porter, Reid, Schroeder, Stekardis, and Wood.

Invited guests present: Brian Jackson and Tim Tracy.

Prepared by Sheila Brothers on Wednesday, November 30, 2016.