Agenda GradCSS Committee Meeting – MINUTES

September 22, 2021

3:00-5:00pm

Virtually via Zoom

Attendance:

Faculty: Raj Katti, Mohamed Ali, Donald Chinn, Wei Cheng, Wes Lloyd, Eyhab Al-Masri, Ankur Teredesai, Paulo Barretto, Martine De Cock, Ka Yee Yeung, Anderson Nascimento

Staff: Curtis Black, Rachel Long

Absent: Juhua Hu, Athirai Irissappane, Josh Tenenberg (sabbatical)

Items:

1. **Motion #1: Approve minutes of last meeting: May 21, 2021**

   Moved: E. Al-Masri

   Seconded: A. Nascimento

   8 yes, 0 no, 2 abstain

2. Hybrid and distance learning courses

The committee chair reminded everyone that it is up to the committee to decide whether we offer only online or in-person courses. We have many instructors who have been trained as iTech Fellows, so they are verified to teach online. The chair also mentioned that if we are marketing ourselves as a Masters/PhD program, offering online classes gives us the opportunity to expand and reach a wider range of students, such as working students. Offering online courses also allows us to increase the cap within these classes. One committee member mentioned that we should be more concrete about what it means when we say we are going to offer online courses. If a course is completely asynchronous, it's hard for instructors to get a feel of how the class is going.

3. PhD Student Support Committee

Last year, we established a committee to take care of the money that was meant to support the Ph.D. students. This committee is going to discuss how to use the money, and will create a

survey where faculty can apply to use this money. Please contact the committee chair if you have any questions or would like more information on this survey.

4. PhD Policies and Handbook

2 main goals: set up policies for the PhD, and recruiting students for the PhD program. There is a new marketing hire, Haneen, who the committee should begin working with in the future to create a marketing/publicity plan.

Wes has been working on a handbook and resent everyone the current revised version (via email). We haven't voted to approve this handbook, and since it is a major goal for us, all committee members are encouraged to look at the handbook before the next meeting

5. NSF proposals to support our PhD program/students

Eyhab Al-Masri reached out to other departments towards the end of Spring, but hasn't received any emails about potential interest/collaborations.

One committee member raised the idea of "thinking outside of the box," such as offering hybrid and online courses to increase student capacity, recording classes, or providing TA's so that we can open more seats per course.

6. Status of current Certificate and future certificates

Currently, there are 33 graduate certificate applications, with 29 being accepted. It seems that there is a market for these certificates.

0 for data science – 7 applicants were found that are interested, but there is still a need for active recruiting.

PhD: 25 applications, 8 have paid their deposits

The committee chair mentioned that we should be wary of "stretching the program too thin", but if anyone is interested in creating a 3rd certificate, they should reach out to him.

A committee member suggested that as we are planning more certificates, we should keep them distinct. When students come to our website, it's confusing since the names are so similar. We need to make it clear how each certificate is different. The committee member also

mentioned that she is going to be serving on a graduate certificate task force and can provide insight from those meetings to this committee.

7. GRE waivers for industry experienced applicants and for pandemic related excuses (with one case to be discussed)

The GRE is a quality gate, but it also discourages students to apply/attend our program. For a PhD applicant, if they have many years (5 years) + some research background and skills (such as, has authored some papers), the committee wants to waive the GRE. It's important to note that this waiver would be for PhD applicants ONLY.

The committee debated whether to keep the GRE requirement, with some stating that although the GRE is a great tool to assess who is ready for a PHD program, but in certain cases it can cause a roadblock for students. Other members questioned that if we waive the GRE for some students, how does this impact our policy moving forward? The graduate advisor mentioned that we've already denied students who were in similar situations (had work experience/research backgrounds) and that the committee might be underestimating how many students who are going to ask for a waiver. One committee member brought forward the idea that we can vote on waiving the GRE requirement on a case-by-case basis due to complications created by the COVID-19 pandemic. The committee chair mentioned that we can reach out to those students who weren't admitted because of this qualification, informing them of this potential update.

> **Motion #2: Waive the GRE requirements on a case-by-case basis in the 2021-22 academic year due to the COVID-19 pandemic**
> **Moved: K. Yeung**
> **Seconded: P.Barretto**
> **10 yes, 0 no, 0 abstain**

9. Graduate committee meetings same day as CSS meeting at 10am