Master of Engineering Committee Meeting Minutes  
December 11, 2002   8:00 – 9:00am  
240 Carpenter Hall

Attendees: Graeme Bailey, John Belina, Claude Cohen, Scott Coldren, Mark Eisner, Mike Hayes, Fred Kulhawy, Michel Louge, Larry Newman, Mark Otis, Dawn Warren

Guests: Cathy Long

Absent: Jim Bartsch, Bing Cady, Larry Cathles, David Grubb, Jim Jenkins, Bruce Kusse

John Belina called the meeting to order at 8:07am.

Approval of December 4, 2002 Minutes:
John Belina:
• Please review the December 4, 2002 MEC minutes for amendments/corrections.

No corrections were requested. Approved.

TA Stipend and Tuition Remission Issue:
Cathy Long:
• The College of Engineering (COE) has received permission from the Graduate School to remain in noncompliance with their TA appointment policy for S’03.
• I apologize for neglecting to consider the timeline for allocating 2003-04 funds.
• The CoE doesn’t think we should pay tuition remission to our M.Eng. TAs. Does the MEC agree with the College’s stance? The attending MEC members indicated their concurrence.
• The College has two options:

  Option 1: The COE will work through the chain of command at the Graduate School to come to some resolution. Mike Hayes has worked with Sarah Hale to confirm our noncompliance for S’03. Cathy attempted to get Sarah’s permission to remain in noncompliance for 2003-04 AY, but Sarah said no; or

  Option 2: The COE will work with Dean Power to exhaust all options for treating our M.Eng. TAs as graduate students in the appointment process (using the Graduate Student appointment procedures and policies). We want the Graduate School to recognize that M.Eng. TAs are a very different type of assistantship. Mike Hayes noted that several of the Professional Masters Programs are also in noncompliance with the Graduate School’s TA policy.
• The M.Eng. Program currently has over 220 TAs who receive a stipend but no tuition remission. If we were to adhere to the Graduate School policy, the cost to the College would be over $3 million.

Mike Hayes:
• The Graduate School’s TA policy currently states that the percentage of appointment should carry with it an equivalent percentage tuition remission. Our M.Eng. students receive a 50% TA appointment which means we should be giving them a 50% tuition remission award.

Cathy Long:
• The Graduate School’s resolution is to use COLTS. The COE feels that the COLTS option would require an inordinate amount of work and an additional person would be required for this process – it doesn’t make sense with Workforce Planning cuts looming.
• We are trying to find a way to appoint students through Payroll as an exempt-type of employee with no approval required through COLTS. Payroll has already told us that an exempt appointment through their office is out of the question (because of benefits). We are now attempting to work with the Student Employment System to create an exempt-type appointment that wouldn’t require COLTS.

John Belina:
• ECE runs an undergraduate tutorial program that pays students as tutors, and they were able to convert it to a semester-long appointment that didn’t require the use of COLTS. Susie Grover has more information on this process.

Cathy Long:
• Proceed as usual for the 2003-04 admissions process – assume we won’t award tuition remission. The worse case scenario will be to appoint them on an hourly basis through COLTS.

Mark Eisner:
• Cathy, do you know the rationale for this rule -- why is there a lock step relationship between stipend and tuition awards?

Cathy Long:
• I assume that as an institution, the Graduate School is saying, “if you are a graduate assistant at this institution, you receive a package,” – it is viewed as a recruitment/retention tool.

Mark Eisner:
• The M.Eng. students aren’t doing the same level of work as a MS/PhD TA.

Cathy Long:
• Maybe one option could be to call the M.Eng. TAs something different.
Mark Eisner:
  • We could refer to the MS/PhD TAs as Teaching Associates and the M.Eng. TAs would remain as Teaching Assistants.

Michel Louge:
  • TA training had the same type of problem -- Sunny didn’t even know there was a difference in our M.Eng. program. She was very receptive to our arguments and hopefully there is still good will.

Cathy Long:
  • Sarah has copied Sunny on our correspondence and that is the next step.

Michel Louge:
  • On another note, some of our TAs don’t return in time for TA training (training that is essential for the safe use of the lab equipment). MAE is struggling with how to get students back early. Our department has spoken with Sarah Hale about this, and her comment was that the TAs aren’t supposed to be returning early.

John Belina:
  • Their appointment starts earlier than classes begin – that’s an inconsistency.

Claude Cohen:
  • From the point of view of the student, is there a disadvantage if the money is divided (between stipend and tuition award) -- does it make a difference?

Mark Eisner:
  • If a student is given tuition relief, they pay no taxes, but they pay taxes with a stipend.

Cathy Long:
  • If someone is required to work, they need to pay taxes.

Larry Newman:
  • Are we working with others who have the same type of problems?

Mike Hayes:
  • The Business School pays their TAs through COLTS.

Cathy Long:
  • Our discussions with the Graduate School have communicated our concerns regarding cost, the negative impact on our ability to support students and faculty in instruction (because we would have to cut our TAs), our enrollment will fall because our M.Eng. students accept admission into the program
knowing they will receive a TA stipend, and there would be a corresponding drop in revenue if enrollment declines.

John Belina:
- The number of TAs determines how many students can be accommodated in a course – students won’t be able to take the courses they want/need for graduation.

Mark Eisner:
- Undergraduates will also be affected. We have a very delicately balanced system in place.

Cathy Long:
- Proceeding as is may cause some additional administrative work, but the goal is not to have that happen.

The MEC members encouraged Cathy to continue her dealings with the Graduate School with their full support.

Financial Return:
Michel Louge:
- We have already voted on the substance of this motion. The word-smithed motion was distributed. The motion read:

“In any academic year, the financial return of Master of Engineering (MEng) funds to individual College, Schools, or Departments should be proportional to the average number of MEng students enrolled in those individual Schools or Departments during that academic year, excluding students while on “early-admit” status. The return per eligible student should be uniform across the College and between 33% and 40% of “tuition minus administrative fees” for that academic year, per student. The definition of the term “tuition minus administrative fees” is that in force during the academic year 2001-02. If the Dean of Engineering adopts a return smaller than 40% of “tuition minus administrative fees”, then a phase-in plan should be negotiated with each School or Department that would experience a possible shortfall.”

John Belina:
- We are voting on approval of the final word-smithed version of the motion. The MEC voted unanimously to approve it.
- Now it goes to Dean Fuchs and then to the Directors and Chairs.

Graeme Bailey:
- Who will be responsible for negotiating the overall percentages?
Michel Louge:
  • We haven’t addressed that issue. In principle, we mentioned that the Directors and Chairs would be involved. If the Dean accepts the idea, it really comes down to a single number. If that number is too low for certain fields, it comes down to a phase in plan. We can only recommend it. The department Chairs are on board.

Graeme Bailey:
  • What is the break even number?

Michel Louge:
  • 35% based on last year’s numbers.

Graeme Bailey:
  • That could be our recommendation.

Michel Louge:
  • Maybe we could have 2 or 3 people from the MEC participate in the negotiations.

Michel Louge, Graeme Bailey, Mark Eisner and John Belina volunteered to meet with Cathy Long and possibly the Dean.

Graeme Bailey:
  • Someone from a department with fewer students should be included.

John Belina:
  • We will plan to hold a meeting in mid to late January – probably before the February MEC meeting.

Michel Louge:
  • I will request a meeting with Cathy in early January.

Petitions:
  John Belina:
  • This is a special case. Eric Lippart’s record isn’t as high as we would usually admit, but he has had serious medical problems. Eric returned after missing almost an entire semester, he put together a reasonable schedule, and he received a 2.7. He will graduate in January ‘03. He has a recommendation from one of the professors teaching a junior course and now one of the graduate courses Eric is taking, and his performance is satisfactory. The Curriculum Committee unanimously approved this petition. If Eric is admitted, he will be used in a biomedical design course this spring. Based on his extenuating circumstances, ECE is asking the MEC to give him a chance to do the M.Eng.
Mark Eisner:
- How do you feel about his preparation? Does he have the academic background to do the work he’s trying to do with some degree of integrity?

John Belina:
- The courses are more like the S’02 courses. They aren’t really theory-based courses so much as they are classically oriented classes.

Mark Eisner:
- Is it possible that you could require him to do a 3-semester program with a requirement to improve on the basics so he can do a better job on his project next spring? I would require a 3-semester program contingent on getting a 2.7 in his first semester with the understanding that he could begin the project after having recouped the situation that resulted from his illness.

John Belina:
- I normally would, but I have two exceptions in this case. The faculty he will work with feel he is prepared. The second exception is that the sequencing would create problems for S’04. ECE will go to a scheme where we teach more of our graduate courses every other year.

Larry Newman:
- Is there a requirement for what his academic average must be to graduate from the program?

John Belina:
- ECE’s requirement for good standing is based on the MEC rules – 3.0. The Graduate School requires a 2.5 to graduate.

Larry Newman:
- If he receives a 2.5 at the end of his Masters, is that the type of student you want to graduate?

John Belina:
- ECE is looking at 3.4 and above for admission into the M.Eng. program. We are not assuming he will be graduating down at the 3.0 level. Based on his performance last semester (which consisted of the most typical courses) he was at a 3.0 or above level.

Larry Newman:
- Can we put a restriction stating that in order to receive his degree he would need to receive a 3.0 average or above?

Graeme Bailey:
- I use provisional.
Mark Eisner:
  • I’m surprised by the Curriculum Committee’s support of this student.

John Belina:
  • A lot of the faculty know him and are surprised that his transcript reflects poorly on his ability. The Provisional Admit would make perfect sense.
  • All in favor of the petition for Eric Lippart on a Provisional Admit with 3.0 and Bs or better on technical courses -- 1 abstain, 6 approve.

Mark Eisner:
  • Are you comfortable with the Financial Aid Committee not being assigned until the February MEC meeting?

John Belina:
  • We should ask for volunteers via e-mail to serve on the Financial Aid Committee for this spring. We usually try to hold the first meeting before mid-February. A separate e-mail reminder should be sent for both the Financial Aid Committee volunteers as well as volunteers for the Financial Returns Committee.

ORGSPE will send an e-mail reminder to the MEC members asking for volunteers.

A motion was made and seconded to adjourn the meeting at 8:50am.