Master of Engineering Committee Minutes
April 9, 2003- 8:00am – 9:00am
240 Carpenter Hall


Absent: Bing Cady, David Grubb, Jim Jenkins

The meeting was called to order at 8:05am.

Meeting Summation:
Beginning Fall 2003 the term is "Graduate Teaching Specialists." Student petitions discussed. Three MEC scholarships accepted. New deposits guidelines being explored.

Approval of March 12, 2003 Minutes:
Jim Bartsch requested that the MEC review the March, 2003 minutes. Motion to approve, seconded. Approved.

Graduate Teaching Specialist Update:
Mike Hayes:
We got the new job description approved and we have smoothed it out with the Graduate School. Through the rest of the Spring 2003 term our M.Eng. TAs will remain as Teaching Assistants, but beginning in Fall 2003 we will use the term Graduate Teaching Specialist (GTS).

Mark Eisner:
What should we put in the offer letters for next year?

Mike Hayes:
Call them “Graduate Teaching Specialists.” If anything changes during the academic year, their appointment letter should be changed – if they move from a Grader to a TA, they should receive a revised offer letter.

Claude Cohen:
Offer letters for next year have already been sent out with offers referencing part time Teaching Assistantship.

Mike Hayes:
Whatever is in the offer letter will remain as the “working title” within the University system, but their official title will be Graduate Teaching Specialist.

James Bartsch:
Offer letters should substitute “Graduate Teaching Specialists” for titles like “part time TAs or M.Eng TAs.”
Mark Eisner:
We have undergraduates who fill in as TAs.

Mike Hayes:
The undergraduates are monitored by COLTS.

Student Petition:
Claude Cohen:
This student is a senior, and his GPA fluctuates. Last semester he did fairly well in Engineering oriented classes. Ken Ackley is supportive of his application. Overall GPA of ~2.52, last semester was above that in courses that are more applied. Letter of Recommendation from Ken Ackley included.

Mark Eisner:
I am familiar with the grade profile for two of his Fall 2002 courses -- a B in OR452 is a low grade and a C in 350 is a low grade.

John Belina:
Do you want to admit him as a provisional candidate?

Claude Cohen:
Yes. In the core ChemE courses he got a C or C-, not very strong in fundamental concepts, but he’s good at intuitive engineering concepts.

Larry Cathles:
Is he applying himself?

Claude Cohen:
Yes, according to Ken.

Mark Eisner:
Does he have a sufficient foundation to proceed?

Claude Cohen:
He still needs to take some fundamental courses in the M.Eng. program. I feel that he’s going to have a tough time in these courses. A student of this caliber would have a difficult time. We are willing to accept him as a provisional with a B average in his courses overall. I know that any course below C- is not accepted as a grade. Is there a requirement for graduation?

John Belina:
2.5 is the minimum for graduation of the courses that count toward the degree.

Claude Cohen:
If he makes the 2.5, but not the 3.0, who decides?

John Belina: 
The department, the field.

Larry Newman: 
Concerned with the quality of the student.

John Belina: 
The provisional brings it to Bs or better.

Larry Newman: 
If he doesn’t acquire Bs or better, I would hope he isn’t allowed to continue.

Mark Eisner: 
It would be interesting to know how students do after they petition to join the M Eng. Program

John Belina: 
In ~15 years we found about 2 students who didn’t meet their provisional requirements. If students can take courses in areas they are good at, then they can concentrate and do well. I didn’t see many or any that were below ~2.5.

Claude Cohen: 
Our past experience is mixed. Some students flourished, and some students stayed borderline all the way through.

Larry Cathles: 
It’s hard to judge the sincerity of commitment in these cases. I have no problem; I think that’s what this program’s for.

Matt Miller: 
At the end, under new business could I get feedback on this, and related, issues. I would like to know the guidelines on the cases that are brought to the Committee. I’m basing a lot on core courses, but also letters of recommendation.

Motion was made to approve, seconded. Approved. One abstained.

Other Business:
Mark Otis: 
Three of the top four nominees for the MEC full tuition awards have accepted.

Mike Hayes: 
I have been given a new project regarding acceptance deposits for graduate students. Please warn your Field Coordinators I will be in touch with them soon -- they may need to dig up some info.
Mark Eisner:
    We instituted a $100 deposit because of no-shows.

Graeme Bailey:
    We instituted it a $100 deposit 1 1/2 years ago because of no-shows and it seems to work.

John Belina:
    Ten years ago we instituted a $100 deposit and additional if they want to defer.

Mark Eisner:
    $100 for OR.

Larry Cathles:
    Would you talk about the guarantee for foreign students?

Mike Hayes:
    International students must certify their funding with a Declaration and Certification of Finance form and financial documents. For 2003-04 the minimum amount required to certify for the M.Eng. program is $39,247. In order for their visa documents to be issued, the students must prove that they can support themselves for the duration of the program.

Mark Eisner:
    We have had a few students who are unable to get visas because of lack of financial aid. They have certified finances, and visa officers are turning them down in China. We are losing students with extraordinary qualifications.

Larry Cathles:
    After the student arrives in this country, we can put them on any project we want, correct?

Mike Hayes:
    At the Research Forum, NSF reported that they are requiring US citizenship for many of their projects.

Matt Miller:
    I’m wondering about minimum GPA below what would be allowed?

James Bartsch:
    2.7-2.5 is petitionable. We have accepted students below 2.5, but that’s rare.

Graeme Bailey:
2.2 is the minimum.

Mark Otis:
Cornell undergraduates must have an average of 2.7 or higher. Their GPA for their three most recent terms must not be below 2.5.

Matt Miller:
2.2s and 2.3s happen sometimes?

Graeme Bailey:
There must be a good reason why their GPA is that low.

Mark Eisner:
I tell students if they don’t have the requisite level grade point, I’ll have to carry the petition forward and I’d like to endorse it. I start meetings with students early on – hold an open session for juniors. That can motivate them to get serious.

Matt Miller:
There’s a common perception in MAE that if you have a 2.7, you’re in and there’s no admission process.

Mark Eisner:
I made it clear in our department that if a student had a 3.3 GPA they can be assured admission, but below that there’s no guarantee.

Graeme Bailey:
Few below 3.0, I’ve had discussions with those students. Most turn things around.

Mark Eisner:
If you admit students with a below par GPA, a lot of your time and energy will be devoted to those students. If the student can get a Letter of Recommendation that says the student can handle the M.Eng. program and the faculty member is willing to supervise the student in their project, that overrules anything else!

Matt Miller:
The Letters of Recommendation that I receive from my colleagues carry a lot of weight for me.

The last MEC meeting will occur during finals week. Do we want to move the meeting ahead a week? -- The general decision was to keep the meeting on May 14th.

A motion was made to adjourn; seconded. Meeting adjourned at 8:40am.