

**Jan. 5, 2017**

**Minutes PhD Committee meeting**

Report from PhD funding subcommittee (Daniel and Vanessa)

- Meeting scheduled with Resat to discuss funding options further
- Reached out to Kate Killipack and Sarah Guthri and will follow up

Report from 2<sup>nd</sup> year graduate student, Emily Willard:

- 2<sup>nd</sup>-year students met and wanted to clarify a few things regarding the letter
  - All students agreed with content of letter, but not the tone
- Voiced concerns regarding the governance and transparency of program:
  - What are the channels for expressing student concerns?
    - Students question usefulness of QPRs. e.g. Who reads them? Is this just bureaucratic? Is there a process for responding to concerns voiced?
  - Governance: Students also unclear on how decisions are made regarding PhD program.

Discussion followed between faculty and student in response to presentation:

- Acknowledgement among committee members that we should find ways to be more transparent regarding governance of the program.
  - Note: program structure information is in student handbook but needs to be made available to students in other ways.
- Possibilities for communication between faculty and students: alternatives to letter writing?
  - Students have suggested an anonymous survey could be useful. This would reflect individual views and experiences in the program.
  - Nominating a student representative, particularly if the committee is discussing a large change that will affect all students.
  - Focus group was not effective because students didn't feel comfortable sharing openly
  - Culture of exchange: frank but responsible
  - Importance of communicating to students that faculty care about solving challenges of the program; also that we are invested in the program in various ways (time, etc).
- The issue of funding has been a top priority—subcommittee working to permanently endow the PhD program
  - Students should notify Sonja or John if they find TAs in other departments.
  - Students recognize funding challenges are common to all PhD programs, but think these issues are particularly acute in the Jackson School given the accelerated timeline of the program.

- The PhD committee has seriously discussed the question of timeline.
- Students concerned that taking four years to graduate is seen as a failure. Want some form of institutional recognition that a four-year timeline won't be held against them.
- International students would like to know whether their third year of guaranteed/promised funding could be moved to the fourth year.
- [Emily left meeting]
  - Recognition that there are two problems: communication and structural.
  - Doesn't look like we can continue to offer three year packages anymore. We can't promise more than we have.

#### Admissions this year:

- Goal is to admit a class of 3 next year. Offers of admission to 6 people, then see what kind of money we have and send financial offers.
- Issue that the program is coming up for 5th year review—optics issue.
- Communications component: dispelling misinformation
- Healthy sized cohort was important to getting the program off the ground. Fears of promising funding packages we can't deliver. This year is an opportunity to course correct.
- We will schedule a second meeting to discuss this.

#### Credit Waivers

- During a previous meeting, we put off decision for Elena Bell who wants credit waivers for translation courses.
- She needs more coursework and translation courses should not count.
- Vote that her credit waivers will not count. 5 no votes, 2 abstentions

#### Daniel Bessner's request about PVS seminar

- Requests that there be different assignments for Masters vs PhD students
- Can the class be integrated more directly with preliminary exam requirements (e.g. writing a literature)
- Can the syllabus be changed by individual instructors?

#### Discussion:

- Initial decision to standardize syllabi by group of faculty committee teaching the course.
- Each course should have a set of skills/knowledge base that should come from each class.
  - Skills: reading a book, thinking broadly is important for PhD students, even if not directly relevant to their research
- Unanimous vote that Daniel Bessner and Stephen Meyers can alter their syllabi however they choose for their PVS and LRG courses this year

- Discussion of the role that the PhD Committee vs. the field seminar committees play in shaping the core PhD courses.
- Three possible types of instructor autonomy: determining readings, rubrics (weekly themes, templates), skills
- PhD Committee should only set the broadest guidelines (general themes and skills)
- Content to be determined by instructor.
- Field seminar committees decide rubrics.
- Unanimous vote that any instructor can change content but must consult field seminar committee before changing weekly rubrics and assignments. The PhD Committee will suggest general themes and skills.

Meeting adjourned.