

Departmental Committee Meeting Minutes

Friday 10/29/21

- **Introductions of new faculty and staff – Loboda**

Erik Duncan – Faculty Specialist for Sergii Skakun

Paul May – Post Doc for Ralph Dubayah

Zhen Song – Assistant Res Professor for Matt Hansen

- **Accept previous meeting minutes and approval of agenda**

Accepted

- **Recent Developments and Chair's Update – Loboda**

Prince Georges County has extended the indoor mask date into December. It was originally set to expire next week, but it has been extended and the University will match the requirements.

- Sergii: travel for Thanksgiving. Will the university be doing anything about what we should do regarding students traveling for Thanksgiving?
 - o Tatiana: We will push this up the chain, since we have not heard anything concerning this topic.

CITI Training Certification. Anyone who intends to submit a proposal needs to have completed the training by January 1. This requirement has been enacted by the University due to the audit findings. If you have not completed the training by January 1 and submitted your certification form, then you will be unable to submit a proposal until it is completed.

- o Vivre will resend the information about completing the training.
- o Julie: I have been doing CITI Training since grad school, so I am available for questions or assistance with the process. I recommend an afternoon to watch the videos and reading the content.

Nanjing Normal University discussion is continuing. Hopefully we will be able to start advertising for a new cohort and see them for their second year in 2023. We will talk separately about the discussions with the MS GIS and GEOINT programs. All courses in China will be taught online due to continued travel restrictions.

BSOS has agreed to provide us funding for two positions for the administration team. An outreach person to assist with outward presentation of the department, engage with donors and the outside community, and will partially serve as Tatiana's assistant. We have also received support for post-award management for the junior research faculty members. Tatiana will meet with the research faculty concerned for how this position should be structured. Support for 3 years and eventually supported by the department in the future. Both positions will be considered a trial run to see if they will be valuable.

Save for Guilford Woods Movement – the president sent out an email yesterday that he is going to continue the promise for graduate housing, but going to pivot from cutting down Guilford woods to do so. Thank you to the members of the department.

ESSIC Negotiation – We have negotiated with ESSIC to ensure that our PIs receive effort credit under the GEOG PIs rather than an ESSIC PI.

Open Enrollment is open until November 12, 2021. During this time period you have the opportunity to adjust your healthcare benefits. If you do not make a change, the benefits will remain the same as the previous year. You need to login in annually to update healthcare and childcare flexible spending accounts.

- **Associate Chair Issues – Hurtt**

Teaching Assistants: we need to reduce our full time TA pool from 15 to 10. Rachel is working on our guidance. Maintaining TAs in technical courses and reducing TAs in introductory courses that do not have discussions. Those courses affected may need to adjust their examination techniques to a format that has faster grading mechanism.

- Julie: Annotated Reading Services and E-grading. A lot of time is spent grading for the TAs, so if there could be some type of software we purchased to assist TA time.
- Matt: Distribution of Winter and Summer term courses.
 - o Tatiana: We went to the model to increase seats in the semesters. We have lost about 200,000 in revenue. The courses we increased are no longer full. Those courses are no longer full. The demand is no longer there.
- Kathleen: Review to see if the labs conflict so students are currently unable to take 400 level courses this semester and had to choose one. Review of scheduling
 - o Tatiana: We need to bring Byron into these meetings to ensure that particular courses.
 - o Rachel: Byron sends out a survey in the spring and that is when this information can be provided to him.
- Sergii: Senior GEOG majors would like to earn credit to TA and would reduce costs for us. This could be done for the Gen Ed courses.
 - o Amanda: First experience is for credit and then if they would like to continue they receive hourly pay. GVPT has a more formal process for undergrad TAs with a \$500 stipend for the semester.
- Amanda: I will be reviewing courses to see if GenEd requirements could be met by some of our existing courses, such as GEOG 170 could also have the designation of Scholarship and Practice.
 - o Julie: GEOG 332 is open for majors because it doesn't have a GenEd requirement.
 - Amanda: We have some courses that could have majors only sections
- Julie: Undergrad TAs when under the internship first term could shadow a graduate student.
 - o Amanda: GVPT has recruitment in the spring and then a summer training to allow undergrads to learn and shadow graduate students.
- Tatiana: BSOS is hoping to regain seats for our technical courses through the new SoDa concentration that will have a geography track. Possibly reducing seats. However, we are not seeing a lot of advertising from BSOS.

Decline in Major numbers: we have been following up on that to see how it has affected class sizes. We have found that our total seats filled is relatively flat compared to the decline in our majors. There is a decline in seats filled for majors and technical courses proportional to the decline in majors, but we have seen an increase in our gen ed and I-series courses. Further work will be done to determine why this is happening and the correlation.

- We do have a new concentration that we are launching. Social Data Science program at the college level that we have a track within.

University is undergoing some strategic planning. I participated in the Research and Discovery committee. The phase has just closed on committee work and recommendations have been sent to the University leadership. The University is planning some Town Halls to communicate the results from the planning. Within the research theme there were several initiatives that were favorable to geographical sciences. The president does have challenges related to climate interest and there has been interest to further options for climate change research.

COP26 starts on Sunday. We have several people from the department involved. We are leading in the University with 4-5 faculty participating.

- **Undergraduate Director Issues – Hall**

- Major and Minor Advertising
 - i. latest version of the Undergraduate Informational Video: <https://youtu.be/YXvpHunk544>
 - ii. There will be more videos coming
 - iii. First Look Fair we advertising for the new CEOS track and minors in the department. We do have additional fliers if anyone would like some.
 - iv. We are advertising on the Diamondback website this week.
- Learning Outcomes Report (provided in the email)
 - i. Currently has been reviewed by BSOS and has moved on to the Provost office.
 - ii. Ask that in the teaching meetings in the spring that the courses are incorporating our programmatic outcomes. Geospatial Data Science concentration is doing very well in the curriculum map.
- Badging (<https://badging.umd.edu/index.html>)
 - i. Your major only tells part of the story. Students can earn these badges outside of their major to signal to employers that they have a specific skillset. We don't really know what the outcome will be yet. It hasn't been advertised to our students yet. Some of the higher ups are very excited about it. We will be leading it for BSOS. There is a digital tech credential badge. For us if a student takes 1 of 3 courses and writes a reflection then they can earn the badge. It is part of CoLab in the greater DC area. Supposedly there will be companies that will recognize the badges.
- Careers and Networking Event
 - i. We had a virtual fair due to covid. We had 9 organizations attend to network for students. Employers think it went well. We had quite a few alumni who came back as employers. In the advising office are keeping a running list of employers to invite. Please send Amanda contact information if you are aware of an employer that would like to participate.

- **Graduate Director Academic Issues – De Floriani**

Wuhan and BNU Event: Wuhan students were gathered to present information and BNU students participated via virtual link. 15 of our graduate students also participated in the round table to present their research being done at the university. It was very well attended and a great recruitment event for future students to apply to our graduate program.

Julie - GRE Issue: There are universities that are no longer requiring the GRE to apply to their graduate programs.

- Matt: The DEI committee is going to take a crack at justifying this to the University senate.
- Tatiana: Do we have faculty who think the GRE is necessary?
 - o Matt: I think they are, but Hannah mentioned that even making it optional will discourage students to apply due to expected bias of not submitting one.
 - o Laixiang: I think it is important to see if they are qualified
 - o George: Is there anyone who thinks it is not necessary?
 - Hannah: I have collected the research and will present it at the next meeting. It is considered to provide disadvantage for particular groups.
 - o Allison: In geology they have eliminated the GRE for their department. What supplemental essays they have requested in place of the GRE.
 - o George: what is the most useful indicator? Maybe rehaul the application process.
 - o Julie: We are one of the few top 10 programs that still requires the GRE

Sinead: Graduate Advertising. Could we put it on twitter or social media?

- Leila: we are working on a lighter flier to be able to share on social media. She is not on social media, but if faculty would like to do it then she is happy to push for it.

Ralph: Can we test a Research Assistant in additional ways to see if they are a good fit? While we are debating getting rid of the GRE and also need to push for the language requirement. He thinks this discriminates against a large community.

- Matt: He agrees 100% I have research faculty that have worked here for years and cannot pass the TOEFL.
- Leila: In Computer Science they lose a lot of students due to our TOEFL requirements and seek out other universities.
- Tatiana: The requirement is set university wide and so we need to think through what we want to request as our preferred policy.
- Sergii: Issue with the student VISA process looking at the TOEFL score.
- Matt: If you come in through H1-B visa they don't look at the TOEFL score. If other schools have more lax thresholds then we are being anti-competitive
- Kathleen: We went in and specified on the sub tests for the TOEFL scores. This is in the grad handbook for TA requirements and we might want to adjust that if we want to change language requirements.
 - o Tatiana: Language requirements can be lax for a Research Assistants, but for Teaching Assistants there needs to be a threshold to avoid confusion to undergraduate students.
 - o Rachel: There are university requirements for TAs to pass the English exam from the English Institute. Which is why we put in the speaking score requirements (at the recommendation of the institute) to make sure they pass. Rachel can reach out to the UMEI to see what the exam is like and consequences of hiring.
- Ralph: There is a discrimination to students from disparaged countries in the cost to take the exams and we should have a department fund to meet needs-based funding.
- Tatiana: I am supportive of modifying the language requirement, but we do not want this to impact our teaching component.

Matt: I think it should be held to the next cycle. Are there studies in the difference for Domestic and International students?

Hannah: the GRE was waived for certain countries applicants at our university due to COVID. Other universities waived it completely.

Tatiana: Hannah will send out the information on Monday regarding the science behind dropping the GRE. Allow ONE WEEK to review information and submit a vote through Qualtrics.

Ralph: I want to call the motion.

Julie & Kathleen: Their competitor universities for their fields have dropped the GRE.

Chris: Straw man vote now to determine who want it at all

Unofficial Preliminary Vote: Are we going to drop the GRE this year? (44)

Yay: 16

Nay: 14

Abstain: everyone else abstain

Open to Removing GRE at a future Date (44)

Yes: 30

No: 1

We will not remove GRE requirements this year, but willing to provide a waiver on a case by case basis. This will have to include the advisor they plan to work with. This option will need to be advertised.

- Ralph: We need a clear statement about how the graduate director will consider these waivers.
- Tatiana: The graduate committee should come up with a policy for the department to vote on for the full removal of the GRE.

ACTION: Develop a policy regarding removal of GRE to present at next Departmental Committee Meeting – **Graduate Committee**

- **Research Director Issues – Wang**

Currently quite a few promotion cases under review.

- Procedural administrative changes to PTK promotion procedures to meet campus requirements for the case materials. Also, a clarification to state that the committee members need to be at or above the rank sought.

- **Research Faculty Committee – Sahajpal**

No Updates this time

- **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee – Hansen**

- One meeting to set an agenda for the semester. Hannah is working on the GRE issue. Kristin compiled some training modules on recruiting. Allison through URGE and getting the upstream actions. Website information and updates (who would be the contact person for this?)

- We also had issue recently with hiring ads and where to post position announcements. Make sure we are meeting the outreach requirements. Dr. Kim Nickerson has a new hire that comes from marketing that Matt will meet with and learn more about the advertising efforts.
- Leila: Conversation with Jean McGloin and Kim Nickerson about recruiting students. We have a more singular method for recruitment compared to the college. They made a comment about us asking the graduate students to contact us. This process of having a sponsor is separate to other colleges.

- **Computer Task Force – Kommareddy**

The committee meeting was held recently to discuss the new comp ops charges. Our team has reduced, but our computing environment has grown significantly. We need additional staff members to support this, but we don't have the funds for this. Our only course of action is to make up for this through the charge of comp ops.

- Comp Ops charges for managing websites
- Comp Ops charges for managing cloud environments

Matt: we have broadened and increased our computing options and robustness, but we haven't had in commiserate effort on IT (actually a decrease with Jenny leaving).

Tatiana: what is the model for this support. We put a lot of one-time funding opportunities to build the HPC, growing the offerings, without coming up with a sustainable framework. Now when we're coming up to a refresh we have used up the one-time influx. We need to revisit the comp ops plan. We need to budget that as part of the structure to meet the advanced services.

Anil: We had HPC comp ops plan for the last 3 years. We have discussed about it many times in the department meeting previously. DAS never got approval from campus, due to various reasons, either all faculty who are using HPC does not have enough funds to pay for the comp ops or there are no funds set aside for comp ops. Either way it has never gone further than approval from Computer Task Force meeting. Now we are asked to redo it.

Vivre: DRIF return is delayed 2 years.

Matt: we should push it up. For those PIs that bring in a lot of money that we should put in a discussion with Dean Ball to say that we need more support based on the external review.

Louis: University is pushing compliance down on us, but they are not providing funding support.

Anil: the issue of google drive cap is being pushed down from the university, but there is no plan to let us know the pricing so that we can understand the costs.

Ralph: We are having a lot of trouble and need to approach the university about no solutions being provided.

Sinead: We are a heavy data-based department and are suddenly running into issues where we can't access our data or download it.

Matt: would be good to have a white page of the major issues we are having as a result of DivIT policy implementations that we can discuss with the Dean. A summary form and a per PI case. The university is threatening the sustainability of our department.

Chris: we need to put together a coherent presentation to make sure he understands. Ask OACS head to come attend.

Tatiana: Matt could you take the charge of putting together that coherent presentation. There has also been a large push onto the administration team, as well for compliance. This would be a good retreat topic. It needs to go up to the university level and we need a strategy.

Jonathan Resop is on the Senate IT Council and willing to pass on anything. The senate is meeting monthly.

ACTION: Prepare a coherent presentation about IT issues facing Department – **Hansen**

- Any Other Business
- ~~Closed door session all Tenure Track and Tenured Faculty~~
This will be scheduled for another date.

Departmental Committee Meeting 10/29/2021 – Attendance

Vivre Bell (Host)
Tatiana Loboda (Co-Host)
Shannon Corrigan (Minutes)
Ralph Dubayah
Matt Hansen
George Hurtt
Shunlin Liang
Kathleen Stewart
Leila De Floriani
Chris Justice
Laixiang Sun
Ritvik Sahajpal
Amanda Hoffman Hall
Anil Kommareddy
Meredith Gore
Sergii Skakun
Dongdong Wang
Allison Baer
Svetlana Turubanova
Jack Ma
Zhen Song
Louis Giglio
Julie Silva
Erin Jacobs

Kuishuang Feng
Kristen Bergery
Rachel Berndtson
Giovanni Baiocchi
Rejanne Le Bivic
Hannah Kerner
Ruibo Han
Taylor Oshan
Dong Tony Chen
Byron Marroquin
Sinead Farrell
Sasha Tyukavina
Jack O'Bannon
Jonathan Resop
Kimberly Kepler
Maria Zubkova
Yiqun Xie
Michael Adegbenro
John Keniston
Laura Duncanson