

## **QEP Committee Meeting Minutes**

**Friday, March 3, 2023**

**3:15 p.m.**

Members Present: Piers Rawling (Chair), Philosophy; Casey Dozier, Career Center; Stephen Tripodi, Social Work; Ashley Bush, Business; Beth Hodges, Research; Maxine Jones, History; Jorge Galeano Cabral, Engineering; Cindy Chapa, Communication; Latika Young, Undergraduate Studies; Dawn Carr, Sociology; Cathy Levenson, Biomedical Sciences.

Members Excused: Toby Park-Gaghan, Education Policy; Gale Etschmaier, Libraries; Justin Kennemur, Chemistry and Biochemistry; Athanasios Vouzas, Biological Science; Jayne Standley, Music; Jorge Piekarewicz, Physics; Michelle Rambo-Roddenberry, Engineering; Jim Whyte, Nursing; Mark Riley, Graduate School.

Staff Present: Sara Hamon, Provost's Office; Galiya Tabulda, Provost's Office; Monoka Venters, Provost's Office; Leslie Richardson, Center for Teaching and Advancement; Tim Logan, Arts and Sciences; James Beck, Graduate School; James Hunt, Institutional Research.

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The Chair convened the meeting and indicated the items that comprised the agenda: a discussion on preliminary survey data, input from the focus groups, and a discussion on potential initiatives. James Hunt began by presenting the quantitative data from the student survey on improving doctoral education. He informed the committee on where they could locate the reports, that the preliminary data is overall descriptive statistics, not by broad disciplines, and that 53% of the students sent the survey responded. Over half of the students are still completing required doctoral coursework or at the "preliminary or qualifying examination completed or underway" stage of their degree. The next largest demographic was the writing dissertation stage at 22%.

Chair Rawling expressed his interest in seeing the data broken down by college, and James Hunt said this was possible and that the data varies by college to a great degree. Chair Rawling commented that the results show current doctoral students are satisfied, but the survey did not include students who left without finishing. Monoka Venters shared that FSU tried a decade ago to contact students who left but none would agree to be interviewed.

James Hunt highlighted survey items that deserved some attention. Adequate funding for travel to conferences is lacking in some cases. Some students who have teaching assistantships feel as though they are not receiving adequate compensation and that the teaching load is negatively affecting their time to completion. Students feel like training for teaching responsibilities only occurs in the first year without a follow up. Note: Departments are required to provide ongoing supervision, and some meet weekly with Tas (e.g., Chemistry). Some departments require a class before TAs can serve as instruct of record (e.g., Philosophy and Social Work). Half of survey respondents had problems with childcare. Sara Hamon commented that FSU Childcare has new federal grant funding for reimbursing childcare costs incurred by FSU students using FSU Childcare and other off-campus providers. Other issues that are challenging for survey respondents include financial constraints, health insurance, summer funding, summer course availability, housing concerns, time management and work-life balance. Sara Hamon said that open-ended responses included many requests for more actionable faculty feedback on progress toward program milestones. Regarding time management, Tim Logan expressed that the self-directed nature of working on dissertations is challenging for students, and James Beck said that it ties into not being able to

select topic. Some responses to the survey asked for time management seminars. One idea might be to create a time-management badge to equip students with requisite skills. Other requests from the survey were for seminars on writing and statistical analysis. James Hunt said that the survey showed that students have difficulty with statistical analysis but are confident in their writing abilities. The Center for the Advancement of Teaching (CAT) held a focus group about writing in the disciplines earlier that day. Students are concerned about writing in the disciplines, and it seems like more progress could come from a course. CAT would be willing to work on designing a course and offer it in the summer. At least 38% of students surveyed had issues with writing and there is an interesting difference between the sciences and humanities as humanities requires more writing. Conference funding was a big issue for the focus group at CAT. One suggestion was to write funding for conferences into grant funding, yet many departments do not have funding for grants.

Committee members asked questions about the survey. There was a question about whether working full-time might be having an impact. The survey did not ask about full-time work specifically. Another question was about whether the survey asked about the ability to pay bills. The survey did not ask about the ability to pay bills, just financials in general. The committee could look at student loan debt as data for federal state loans is also available.

Sara Hamon presented the qualitative data from the survey's free response portions and spoke about the focus groups. A sub-set of students (11%) were dissatisfied with academic advising; of those students, 41% wanted better quality advising and mentoring with training, 35% wanted more access/availability of advisors, and 12% wanted more clear info (some of whom said that they did not have access to a graduate handbook or the handbook was not clear). A sub-set of students (10%) were dissatisfied with their relationship with their major professor; of those students, 44% wanted more access to or more frequent communication, 42% wanted a mentor with better coaching and helping skills, and 8% described an unproductive working relationship or environment. Chair Rawling informed members that all incoming students are assigned an advisor but not matched to advisor with research interests in common. A sub-set of students (13%) were dissatisfied with the annual review process; of those students, 40% never received a written annual review, 10% wanted a more regular cycle of review, 7% said there was an incomplete review process (no final written evaluation or only a self-evaluation component), and 38% wanted more actionable feedback beyond checking boxes (some students wanted more information on how to meet expectations; some expressed interest in a standard evaluation form).

Sara Hamon also presented themes from six focus groups conducted as part of the QEP. The annual review process came up a lot in the focus groups. The GradPhile program for biology automates the review process and provides a place to store it for future access. Teaching load and summer coursework were brought up often in the focus groups, along with the lack of technology tools for advising. Chair Rawling said GradPhile could be the answer to many of the issues the committee is trying to resolve. One issue is that there is no automated degree audit function at the graduate level. The Chair thought the adaptive part of GradPhile could potentially provide a solution. Participants across the focus groups asked for better coordination of advising – i.e., coordinated decentralization of advising. There needs to be somebody to coordinate the chaos and sort out the complicated issues. Tim Logan thought that person could be housed at graduate school. James Beck said there is only one person at graduate school currently coordinating advising issues, and Tim Logan said they should add positions. Students in the focus groups also would like a semester of funding without TA/graduate assistant responsibilities. The Chair said that they could work over summer, and Tim Logan said a break from teaching to work on projects is what they want. Chair Rawling also said modern languages require doctoral students to teach two courses every semester. Participants in focus groups also brought up stipends, health insurance, and childcare. Policies that are a hindrance to doctoral students and may need to be reexamined: health insurance, continuous

enrollment, limits on outside employment, and teaching loads. Also, doctoral students require access to housing near campus that is not geared toward undergraduates in cost, amenities, and layout.

The Chair thanked everyone for attending, asked if there were any more questions, told members the documents provided during the meeting are on the Teams site, informed the committee that the next meeting would be in two weeks in the Westcott 201 conference room, and upon motion of the Chair, the Committee adjourned at 4:23 p.m.

Handouts: Qualitative Analysis Narrative, Doctoral Student Survey Preliminary Report, and Agenda.