

SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES
FACULTY ASSEMBLY MEETING MINUTES
April 20, 2006

- I. The meeting was called to order at 4:00 PM by Dr. Gretchen Caughman.
- II. The minutes of the April 21, 2005 Graduate Faculty Assembly meeting were considered and approved as amended by Dr. Wendy Bollag.
- III. Overview and Update – Department of Biostatistics
Dr. Varghese George, Chair of the Department, provided a brief update on the structure and activities of the Department of Biostatistics. Departmental faculty members include Drs. Jim Dias, Jennifer Waller, and Hongyan Xu and Maribeth Johnson. Dr. Stephen Looney will be joining the department June 1st, and Dr. Siuli Mukhopadhyay will start September 1st. In addition, there are several faculty in other departments who hold joint appointments in the Department of Biostatistics.

Biostatistics is the field of statistics related to biology, medicine and public health. Its intent is to better understand the factors that affect human health through the use of statistical methods. Dr. George's goal is for biostatistics to become a major, integrated part of MCG. This goal will be achieved by implementing a high caliber teaching program in biostatistics, conducting original research to develop and evaluate biostatistical methodologies, and collaborating with investigators on biomedical research that requires biostatistics support.

The new masters program in biostatistics will begin in fall 2006 with six high-caliber students already admitted to the program, and the possibility of two more. Within the next 2-3 years, plans are to start a masters program in Clinical & Translational Research and a Doctoral program in Biostatistics.

Biostatistics courses are offered for various teaching programs across campus and many of the courses are taken by residents, fellows, and junior faculty. Department faculty members are actively involved in mentoring graduate students.

The faculty supports the research mission of MCG by conducting methodological research and collaborative research in biostatistics. The current focus for methodological research is in two specific areas: Statistical Genetics/Genetic Epidemiology and Clinical Trials. The department provides collaborative research support throughout all phases of internal and external grant proposal preparations and funded research by serving as co-investigators. The faculty has extensive experience with

analysis of observational studies, clinical trials, laboratory experiments, genetic data and NIH, NSF, and private foundation grants.

There is a Biostatistics Consulting Center within the department. It provides statistical advice and analysis to both internal and external researchers on a fee-for-service basis. You may contact the center at www.mcg.edu/research/biostat/bcc.html or by phoning 706/721-3786. The best time to contact is when you are starting to formulate research questions, hypothesis, and ideas.

The long-term goal for the Department is to become a nationally and internationally recognized department with strengths and competency in graduate training, collaborative research, and methodological research.

- IV. State of School Address – Dr. Gretchen B. Caughman, Dean
Dr. Caughman began the State of the School address with a summary of the history of the School of Graduate Studies. She stated that it is over 40 years old and that the first graduate degree was a MS degree in Medical Illustration awarded through the School of Medicine. In 1963, the first PhD degree was authorized and the first students were enrolled that fall. Today, the SGS offers PhD, MS, MSN, and MN degrees as well as two new degrees, the Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) and the Master of Public Health (MPH) in Informatics. New majors include the Neuroscience PhD, Biostatistics MS, and Clinical Nurse Leader MSN. She noted that the School of Graduate Studies relies on all faculty in all schools and that SGS promotes interaction of all faculty focused on graduate training.

Dr. Caughman stated that today the SGS has 276 students, 117 which are new and 196 faculty members, 14 which are new. We now have the highest number of PhD students (103) ever enrolled at MCG.

Graduate student retention for FY 05 compared favorably to national rates for graduate programs, but low compared to other MCG programs. For masters students the retention rate was 64.7%, and for doctoral students it was 88.5%. There was a 100% pass rate on professional certification exams. For FY 05 there were 59 graduates including 14 PhD, 15 MS, 4 MHE, 2 MSN, 24 MN.

Additional SGS programs are the International Graduate Exchange Trainee Program, which offers a 3-yr dissertation research phase at MCG for PhD students enrolled in one of two Chinese universities with which MCG has a formal agreement. Dr. William Dynan is IGET Program Director. The STAR program is a 10-week summer undergraduate student research program with Dr. Patricia Cameron as Director. This year there were over 150 applicants for 26 places in summer 2006 STAR program.

Dr. Caughman noted that the governing body of the School of Graduate Studies, the Graduate Council, is an elected body with representatives from each of the other school. And, this year, the Dept. of Biostatistics, as the only academic unit housed primarily in the SGS, will have an elected representative. Dr. Caughman also took the opportunity to thank the outgoing Graduate Council representatives. She said that this year the Council reviewed and recommended approval of 3 new degree programs and curricula, 14 new graduate faculty appointments, and 5 new courses in existing programs. Also, partial travel support was authorized for 56 graduate students to present their work at regional and national meetings. The Council sponsored the 22nd Graduate Research Day with the help of Drs. Mike Brands, Anne Dorrance, and Wendy Bollag. This year there were 101 presentations and 20 awards in 15 categories.

Some of the programmatic and school-wide goals Dr. Caughman noted were:

- Continue to align graduate programs with institutional strengths and direction
- Obtain accreditation for new programs as appropriate
- Enhance/sustain our ability to attract appropriate numbers of well qualified, diverse applicants
- Enhance communication and collaboration among schools and programs
- Strengthen relations with SGS alumni

Some of the Challenges:

- Appropriate recognition of faculty's efforts toward graduate teaching
- Student retention and graduation
- Research funding climate

Dr. Caughman closed by thanking all the graduate faculty for their efforts in accomplishing the mission of the School of Graduate Studies, which is to provide a rich intellectual, academic and research environment for educating students to become leaders in the discovery and dissemination of knowledge, and in its application to human health and disease.

V. Faculty Recognition and Awards

The 2006 School of Graduate Studies Faculty Awards were presented to the following faculty:

Distinguished Teacher Award was presented to Dr. James Borke, who was introduced by Dr. Jill Lewis and Dr. Regina Messer.

Distinguished Service Award was presented to Dr. Lin Mei. This award was introduced and, in Dr. Mei's absence, was accepted by Dr. Xingming Shi.

Distinguished Research Award was presented to Dr. Ruth Caldwell, who was introduced by Dr. Azza El-Remessy.

VI. Other Business

In other business, Dr. Caughman reminded everyone of the General Faculty Assembly meeting scheduled for April 27 at 4:00 PM.

VII. Adjournment

The Graduate Faculty Assembly Meeting was adjourned at 5:15 PM.