UNIVERSITY OF
South Carolina
The Graduate School

Graduate Directors Meeting

September 26, 2024

The Graduate Director's Meeting was held on Thursday, September 26, 2024, at 3:00 pm in Close-Hipp 583.

Present: Kathryn Luchok, Murray Mitchell, Dale Moore, Angelina Sylvain, Ann Vail

Those attending via Teams Call: Brandon Applegate, Khalid Ballouli, Beth Barnes, Angela Baum, Anne Bezuidenhout, Michael Bizimis, Christine Blake, Alexandre Bonafos, Heather Bonilha, Ai Brian, Lana Burgess, Kenneth Campbell, Hanif Chaudhry, Brian Chen, Libby Cross, Elizabeth Crouch, Rhonda DiNovo, Robin Dawson, Kirstin Dow, Peter Duffy, Carla Flink, Sarah Gassman, Josh Grace, Andrew Graciano, Brian Habing, Shana Harrington, Linda Hazlett, Andrea Henderson, Andreas Heyden, Neset Hikmet, David Hitchcock, Ehsan Jabbarzadeh, Satish Jayachandran, Eli Jelly-Shapiro, Danny Jenkins, Bret Kloos, Daniel Kilpatrick, Amy Lehman, Lyda McCartin, Fang Meng, Jim Mensch, Melinda Merrell, Stephanie Milling, Robert Moren, David Mott, Nabil Natafgi, Jennifer O'Neill, Joohyung Park, Patrice Penny, Douglas Pittman, Dwayne Porter, David Reisman, Dimitris Rizos, David Rocheleau, Kristen Seay, Cory Schnell, Matthias Schindler, Stephen Shapiro, Tarek Shazly, Brett Sherman, Sheri Silfies, Christy Smith, Susan Steck, Jil Stewart, Scott Taylor, Myriam Torres, Toni Torres-McGhee, Marco Valtorta, Dewei Wang, Guoan Wang, Hong Wang Terrance Weik, Matthew Wilson, Catherine Wiskes, Sheryl Wiskur, Nikki Wooten, Mark Yancey

Dean Ann Vail presided over the meeting and called the meeting to order.

<u>Opening Remarks –Dean Vail</u>

- The Systems Optimization Task Force is being led by Angelina Sylvain, Vice Dean and Tom Vrana, Executive Director of Enterprise Application.   The Task Force members are:
    - Sam Beals – Graduate Student Services Manager in Information and Communication
    - Lisa Carter – CRM Manager & Systems Development Analyst in Nursing
    - Julia Hodge, Director or Recruitment and Engagement in Education
    - Bob Brookshire – Graduate Director, Department of Integrated Information Tec
    - Danny Jenkins – Associate Dean and Director of Graduate Studies in the School of Music
    - Elizabeth Orehovec, Assistant Vice President and Executive Director of Undergraduate Admissions

<u>Enrollment</u>

- Fall 2024 – Total students – 8,316
    - 4,040 Master's students
    - 2,449 Doctoral students
    - 1,824 Professional students
    - 564 Fall applications to date
- Fall 2023 – Total students – 8,109
    - 3,854 Master's students
    - 2,449 Doctoral students
    - 1,811 Professional students

<u>Graduate Expo 2024 – Dean Vail</u>

- Thank all of you for your support of the Graduate Expo
- 417 students and 35 exhibitors participated
- Strong feedback that this was a successful event

USC Graduate Students Newsletter launched in early September. The Division of Communications and Marketing will lead the effort and collaborate with The Graduate School and other offices with relevant graduate student programming.

Systems Optimization Task Force Update - Angelina Sylvain

The task force is working toward identifying an optimal system for managing application and enrollment progression. Angelina shared key insights into challenges faced by the graduate programs when processing enrollment management, including manual processes, communication gaps, and system inefficiencies. Below is a breakdown of the discussions, action items, and exercises conducted during the meeting.

Current State of Systems and Initial Reviews

- **System Identification and Interviews**: The task force has identified several systems for initial review, conducting demos to assess aspects such as application management, communication management, and enrollment tracking. Additionally, interviews with 18 stakeholders across various institutional units have been completed.
- **Feedback Collection**: Graduate directors and stakeholders are invited to set up meetings if they had not been interviewed and would like to be. A program administrator-wide meeting is also planned to further assess system needs and gather more data (scheduled **October 15**).
- **System Mapping**: A detailed system map was presented, showing how current systems operate at different stages and the disconnection between them. Manual processes, including data transfer and application review, were identified as major pain points.
-

Stakeholder Exercises and Findings

Exercise 1: Ideal Enrollment Management System

- **Designing the Perfect System**: Graduate directors participated in an exercise to design their ideal enrollment management system. This exercise focused on key features, student experiences, and necessary tools to improve current workflows.
- **Key Issues Highlighted**:
  - **Slow Systems**: Several directors reported that systems were slow and often took excessive time to load or complete basic tasks.
  - **Customization**: Directors mentioned a lack of customizable features, especially in the layout of applicant data columns.
  - **Manual Processes**: Many processes, including reviewing applications and tracking enrollment progression, are done manually, causing delays and errors.

- **Magic Wand Scenarios**: Directors described their ideal system as one that:
    - Centralizes information in one space, across the student life cycle.
    - Provides customizable, user-friendly interfaces.
    - Offers automated communication tools.
    - Generates a worklist targeting records in need of their attention.
    - Improves real-time data access.

Exercise 2: Enrollment Progression Tracking and Gaps

- **Identifying Critical Gaps**: Directors discussed how they currently track enrollment progression, including using internal databases, paper copies, and Excel spreadsheets. There was a consensus on the need for:
    - **Early Alert Systems**: The ability to flag students who might be falling behind on key milestones.
    - **Centralized Tracking**: A single space for tracking cohort and program information, rather than scattered records.
- **Common Pain Points**:
    - Manual updates to applicant lists and progression milestones.
    - Slow system response when viewing or updating records.
    - Challenges in tracking which students had submitted all required documents or responded to offers of admission.

Meeting was Adjourned at 4:15 pm

Next Meeting: October 31, 2024, 3:00 – 5:00, Close-Hipp 584

Minutes by Cherrie Markey