The Graduate Council was called to order by Chair Lansman on June 11 at 2:15 p.m. A quorum was not present.

The minutes of April 9, 2008 were approved (via email).

Chair’s Report – Jeff Lansman
None

Vice Chair’s Report – Elizabeth Watkins
The Academic Council opposed the plan for the President to have the authority to reduce faculty salaries.

Graduate Day in Sacramento, originally scheduled for 5/27/09, was cancelled. The consensus was that in the current political and economic climate, presentations of UC graduate student research projects before members of the legislature would not have been well received.

WASC: UCSF does not have WASC approval for the automatic offering of Master’s level degrees.

A subject to be carried over for next year is Self Supporting Programs (SSP).
--A SSP will be defined as a program that meets a new and currently unmet need for which there is no state support.
--We might want to include a statement that financial aid should be part of the review process for SSP.
--Faculty in SSP should be appointed by a normal campus procedure—via academic affairs, for example—rather than the alternative.
--Currently, the difference between academic programs or professional programs is unclear.

Dean’s Report – Patricia Calarco
None
Graduate Students Association Report – John Fecondo
None

Postdoctoral Scholars Association Report – Christine DesJarlais
None

Postdoctoral Scholars Association Report – Laurie Stepanek, PSA Representative
The Postdoctoral Scholars Association held elections recently and Chad Otoshai will be the new president; a full slate of officers have been elected and installed.

Over the last year the PSA spent about $15K. Initially, money was raised by asking departments for funds, but that pool of money is almost depleted. The next group of Officers will have to generate a fundraising plan.

PSA cosponsored a talk featuring Judi Haybower of Genentech on how to advance your careers.

The Practice of Science talk speaker was Jeffery Schwartz from UCLA and Henry Stack from Lawrence/Berkeley. Eighty-five people attended the talk; all talks will be placed on the website so that any interested party may review them. The next talk will take place on June 22 and feature Urban Kordes, Ph.D.

New Business

Review of the Tetrad program
The Program has not been reviewed in ten years, but this review was largely positive including mention of how well the Program had adapted to its move to Mission Bay. The consolidation of people at Mission Bay is expected to benefit the Program; previously people were dispersed at various locations.

Some tension is evident in the Program; specifically, some developmental biologists appear to want to branch off away from the Tetrad Program; this may prove to be a positive development. The Program is encouraged to make a decision about this as soon as possible.

The review panel interviewed students, and the consensus is that the students are pleased with the Program. One noteworthy concern is that student interest in Macromolecules has suffered because it is being taught concurrently with the more demanding Biological Regulatory Mechanisms in the spring quarter. Returning Macromolecules to the fall quarter would likely address this concern.

The organization of a course in Genetics and Development is currently rooted in an organisms-by-organism approach (bacteria, yeast, worms, flies, mice). This organization risks emphasizing specific methods over universal principles and discounting fundamental evolutionary relationships underlying molecular genetic mechanisms. In the post-genomic era, it may be far better to use concepts as the major organizing principles for the course. As an added benefit, instructors are likely to find it liberating to teach subjects outside of their immediate area of research.

Students spoke of the positive environment that characterizes the Program but also voiced concern about the limits of inadequate health insurance coverage. They also spoke of the relative geographic isolation of Mission Bay and security concerns related to that isolation, particularly at night and on weekends.

There appears to be an insufficient number of foreign students in the Program and this is something that needs to be addressed. There is a large pool of international students whose presence would enhance the Program, but the ability to recruit and enroll them is handicapped by insufficient funds; out-of-state
fees and the inability of the Program to support non-US citizens on NIH training grants underscore the problem.

The time to degree is 6.6 years! This elongated time to degree is perhaps the most serious criticism of the Program. Contributing to the lengthy time to degree is the desire on the part of students and faculty to publish in the most prestigious journals; this often requires the accumulation of data that cannot be quickly gathered. Similarly, continuing to do experimental work in the hopes of novel findings can also unreasonably extend the degree timeline; truly novel findings are, by definition, limited in number; students and faculty must recognize this and not allow endless pursuits to go unmediated. More frequent meetings between students and thesis committee members would also help contract the time to degree.

Diversity in the Program is good, but success in this area appears to be resting on the efforts of one faculty and a small number (two) of students. The Program needs to be mindful of this and be more aggressive in outreach to diverse populations.

Old Business
None.

Chair Lansman adjourned the meeting at 4:00 p.m.

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