Report: Graduate Student Well-Being Committee

Date of Meetings: 11/30/2022; 1/18/2023

Members: Michael Brown, Caitlyn Campbell, Carolyn Cutrona, Ajay Nair

The Graduate Student Well-Being Committee has met twice. At our first meeting, we identified a set of reports on issues that affect graduate student well-being that we will read for ideas about how to improve resources for ISU graduate students. At our second meeting, we began the process of defining our role and identifying issues that could realistically be addressed through the Graduate Council.

Key readings:

*Supporting Graduate Student Mental Health and Well-Being; Evidence-Informed Recommendations for the Graduate Community (2021).* A Report by the Council of Graduate Schools and the Jed Foundation.

*Mental Health and Wellness among Graduate Students at Virginia Tech; Report of Findings and Recommendations (2019-2020).* Graduate Mental Health Working Group, Virginia Tech University.

*Supporting Graduate Student Well-Being Through Covid-19 and Beyond (2021).* Report on the NSF RAPID Grant. Presentation to ISU Graduate Council, Sept. 15, 2021 and other research summaries.

Our discussion on 1/18/23 was preliminary. The following issues were discussed, but have not been prioritized.

1. The need for current data on graduate student stressors and needs was discussed. We talked about the need to publicize and emphasize the importance of graduate-student participation in the next Campus Climate Survey, which we believe is scheduled for 2024. Participation by graduate students was less than 30% when the survey was last administered in 2017, which led to limits on the release of findings, to protect confidentiality.
2. A need for additional training on best practices in the relationship between the major professor and graduate students was identified. Currently, new members of the Graduate Faculty receive mandatory training in graduate-student mentoring (about 30 minutes). We discussed the possibility of panels on best practices to be offered regularly by highly effective faculty mentors.
3. Encourage DOGES to organize a social hour (coffee, snacks, etc.) once a semester to reach out to students and build relationships.
4. Many students are not aware of resources that are available to them in the domains of wellness and mental health. We discussed developing a toolkit for graduate advisors and DOGEs. For example, many students are not aware that the Student Counseling Service will make referrals to community mental health providers and graduate student insurance will cover some or all mental health treatment.
5. Graduate students need more information on the rules that apply during a Medical Leave of Absence. For example, are they allowed to continue to consult with their major professor?
6. A need for financial education among graduate students was discussed.
7. The issue of food insecurity among graduate students was identified.