

November 15, 2012

An Open Letter to the Emory Chapter of the AAUP and all LGS Faculty

According to the Faculty Governance Document, which was submitted by the Committee on Faculty Governance in August 1994 and approved by the Graduate Faculty in May 1995, the Executive Council (EC) of the Laney Graduate School (LGS) is elected by the members of the Graduate Faculty to make decisions pertaining to graduate programs and curriculum. This same document makes clear that the LGS Dean is ultimately responsible for administering graduate programs. Given that these domains are “closely intertwined,” the Faculty Governance Document charges the EC and the LGS Dean to “jointly decide” matters in four broad areas:

- Approval of new programs and courses;
- Maintaining, revising, and implementing common standards of quality for instruction and student research in the Laney Graduate School;
- Evaluating priorities in allocating stipend and tuition budget funds;
- Program development and planning for the Laney Graduate School over multiple years

We take these roles and responsibilities very seriously.

On September 10, 2012, Dean Robin Forman of Emory College met with the EC to describe the changes that were planned for the College, including the closing of the Division of Educational Studies, which currently offers both masters and a PhD program. He also informed the EC that he and LGS Dean Lisa Tedesco had jointly decided to suspend admissions to the graduate programs in Spanish, Economics, and the Institute of Liberal Arts. This was the first time that these changes were discussed with the EC, and they were presented as a *fait accompli*.

The decision to cut graduate programs in Educational Studies and suspend admissions to the three additional graduate programs would seem to clearly fall within the purview of “program development and planning . . . over multiple years”—the 4th area listed above in which matters should be decided “jointly” by the EC and the LGS Dean.

As representatives of the Graduate Faculty, the EC should have had the opportunity to voice their concerns to Dean Forman and Dean Tedesco prior to their making any recommendations to the Provost. The EC would have considered the impact of such program closure and suspension on students, and on other programs in all affected Departments and Schools, providing different yet valuable perspectives that would have informed (and potentially modified) decisions made by the Deans. The EC should have also had the opportunity to provide a written response directly to the Provost in the event of disagreement with the Dean.

The EC was circumvented during the recent decision making process. We ask that Deans Forman and Tedesco inform the EC in writing why this was the case. We understand that Deans Forman and Tedesco did have faculty input into the decision provided by the ad-hoc Finance Committee, and we respect the Dean’s right to administer graduate programs. Yet the members of the EC, not the Finance Committee, are the duly elected representatives of the Graduate Faculty who are responsible for overseeing the graduate curriculum, and therefore the failure to consult with the EC before making these decisions represents a clear breakdown in the system of Graduate Faculty governance.

In the spirit of learning from the past and moving forward, the EC is planning a review of the Faculty Governance Document adopted in 1995 in an effort to define:

- The roles, responsibilities, and powers of the EC,
- the mechanisms for review of programs, and
- the process that should be formalized and adhered to should the suspension or closure of a graduate program be necessary in the future.

We will seek input from the Deans, Program Directors, Directors of Graduate Studies, and all Graduate Faculty during this process. Final adoption of any changes to this document will be submitted for approval to all Faculty of the LGS.

The members of the EC sympathize with the many faculty members and students who strongly object to the recent decisions to cut and suspend admissions to these graduate programs. At the same time, we recognize the difficult choices that Deans Forman and Tedesco face in trying to best utilize limited College and LGS resources in creating undergraduate and graduate programs of genuine distinction. The EC also recognizes that the Deans of each of the Schools of the University have authority over their own budgets, and that it cannot force the Deans to spend resources that they do not have. The members of the EC want to assure all faculty and students, regardless of how they feel about these changes, that their elected representatives on the EC will be working both to clarify the lines of responsibility between faculty and administrators and to strengthen the role of faculty governance in the Laney Graduate School.

Sincerely,

The LGS Executive Council

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