Graduate Honor System in the National Capital Region

Background
Graduate students in the Virginia Tech National Capital Region represent a significant proportion of the cases investigated and adjudicated through the Graduate Honor System. Nevertheless, graduate students and faculty members in the National Capital Region are not included in the Graduate Honor System. These facts were revealed at a meeting of faculty and students with the Chief Justice of the Graduate Honor System for Virginia Tech. At that meeting, Julia Xu, President of the Graduate Student Assembly in the National Capital Region, was asked to explore interest of graduate students serving in the Graduate Honor System. The National Capital Region Faculty Association appointed a committee to explore opportunities to participate in the Graduate Honor System. Marcie Boucouvalas, Andrea Wittenborn, and David Trauger, Chair, were appointed to serve on this committee.

Approach
The committee reached out to Julia Xu, President of the Graduate Student Assembly in the National Capital Region, and invited her participation in discussions about the Graduate Honor System. An organizational meeting was held, with all committee members attending, to consider various options and approaches for gaining greater representation and participation by students and faculty in the National Capital Region. It was decided that Julia Xu and David Trauger would arrange a discussion of these matters with John Kane, Chief Justice of the Graduate Honor System.

Findings
Julia Xu and David Trauger conducted a teleconference with John Kane, Chief Justice of the Graduate Honor System for Virginia Tech. Chief Justice Kane was enthusiastically supportive of our initiatives to develop a pool of faculty and students to participate in the Graduate Honor System representing the National Capital Region. He confirmed that approximately 30 percent of the cases adjudicated by the GHS originate in the National Capital Region. Currently, 3 of the 9 pending cases are from National Capital Region programs.

Chief Justice Kane would like the assistance of the National Capital Region Faculty Association and Graduate Student Assembly for the Graduate Honor System. He recommended that we recruit 5-10 faculty members (at least one per College would be ideal) and 10-20 graduate students, broadly representing full-time and part-time students from all of the Colleges. These numbers seem reasonable and achievable given the fact that we have over 100 faculty members and more than 1500 graduate students in the National Capital Region. There are 40 faculty members and 140 graduate students currently serving the Graduate Honor System on the Main Campus in Blacksburg.

There are two major functions of faculty and students within the Graduate Honor System: Panelists, who hear and decide the cases; and Investigators, who conduct the interviews and prepare the cases. Greg Lemmond, an official Graduate Honor System trainer for Virginia Tech, is available periodically for the mandatory 1-hour training session in the National Capital Region. Time commitments range from 1-3 hours per case after the training.
Due to logistical and security considerations, Dean DePauw does not favor a separate Graduate Honor System operating in the National Capital Region at this time, according to Chief Justice Kane. However, he thinks that, after we gain some experience with the process, an independent “sister” Graduate Honor System is within the realm of possibility. He ruled out a “shadow” experiment with a real case, because of privacy requirements.

**Recommendations**
The National Capital Region Faculty Association should take the lead in recruiting and coordinating volunteers for the faculty pool. If the three committee members are appointed to serve in first term, we will only need to get someone from the College of Architecture and Urban Studies, College of Business, and College of Engineering. David Trauger volunteered to work the new Graduate Student Assembly President and Marija Telbis-Forster, Director of the Graduate Student Support Office, to seek student participation. After a pool of faculty and graduate student volunteers are identified, a training session should be arranged to learn about the roles and responsibilities for participants in the Graduate Honor System. Committee members recommend that we begin the process, gain some experience, monitor the experience, evaluate the “lessons learned” and then make recommendations for future participation. In the long run, a “sister” program in the National Capital Region may be the best option given the formidable logistical, security, privacy requirements of the Graduate Honor System.

Respectfully submitted,
Marcie Boucouvalas
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