Introduction

The members of the 2014-15 Faculty Committee on Graduate Education, Continuing Education, and Special Programs (hereafter "the Committee") were Jo Ann Ewalt (MPA program director and Political Science), Anne Gutshall (Teacher Education, secretary), Jon Hakkila (Physics and Astronomy, chair), William Russell (English), and Erik Sotka (Biology and Marine Biology). Most of the committee’s organizational activities were arranged by Cassandra Foster (Graduate School).

Ex-Officio members of the Committee were Amy McCandless (Dean of the Graduate School), Brian McGee (Interim Provost), and Alice Hamilton (Director of the Center for Continuing Education and Professional Development). Regular guests included Lynne Ford (Associate Vice President for the Academic Experience), Cathy Boyd (Registrar), Franklin Czwazka (Registrar’s Office), Robyn Olejniczak (Graduate School), Godfrey Gibbison (Dean of the North Campus, which became the School of Professional Studies during the academic year), Nancy Muller (Director of the Lowcountry Graduate Center), Karin Roof (Director of Academic Assessment and Strategic Planning), and Dave Owens (Associate Dean of the Graduate School). It should be pointed out that the non-faculty participants on the Committee often outnumber faculty participants.

Committee Philosophy: CofC Graduate Education is at a Crossroads

The College began the year amidst pressures from the General Assembly, the Board of Trustees, and the Charleston Chamber of Commerce to expand graduate offerings in the Lowcountry. These pressures, along with last year’s short-lived option to merge the College of Charleston with the Medical University of South Carolina, led to last year’s faculty forums on graduate education where faculty indicated support for targeted expansion of graduate programs, including some doctoral programs. The hire of President Glenn McConnell, who had spoken in favor of graduate program expansion at the College, produced immediate efforts to solidify the entity of the University of Charleston, South Carolina at the College of Charleston as a doctoral-granting institution. While the College has been deciding how to further develop its graduate programs, Clemson and the University of South Carolina have been expanding their own graduate programs into the Low Country (Clemson has indicated a desire to collaborate). Additionally, the Low Country Graduate Center (LGC) has been involved in an aggressive campaign to add new graduate programs. The Committee began the year hopeful of the opportunities that these changes
might provide and that faculty and administration would infuse new vision and 
insight into the development and support of the College’s graduate programs. The 
Committee is committed to supporting this expansion from within the College of 
Charleston.

Approved New Programs and Certificates

The committee approved the following new graduate programs, certificates, and 
courses during the 2014-15 academic year:

1. A new MFA in Creative Writing with two specializations (fiction or poetry) 
   and two emphases (studio or arts management), along with new courses.
2. Revision of the MAT in Special Education to greatly expand Special Education 
   offerings.
3. New Biology genomics courses.
4. New Mathematics courses in statistics plus an innovative graduate teaching 
   seminar.
5. Changes to the Computer Science, Environmental Studies, Communications, 
   and the MBA programs.

Several of these programs and courses are creative and timely. The Creative Writing 
MFA takes advantage of Charleston’s unique reputation as a creative writing haven, 
and the Mathematics graduate teaching seminar provides a mechanism by which to 
train graduate students in techniques of mathematics education.

Continuing Education Programs

As indicated in last year’s report, the Committee’s charge with regard to Continuing 
Education programs at the North Campus changed several ago, when the Committee 
recommended and a Senate resolution was passed calling for the Committee to 
review but not approve graduate continuing education proposals from the North 
Campus. The justification was that these proposals for non-degree programs needed 
a rapid turnaround in order to be offered and advertised. The North Campus has 
been opposed to any changes to this policy, while faculty on the Committee have 
simultaneously become increasingly concerned about it. Problems with this policy 
were brought to the Committee’s attention for the second year in a row; this time 
because the North Campus (officially renamed the School of Professional Studies or 
SPS during the 2014-15 academic year) offers a large number of courses that are 
often created without faculty input, are generally taught by instructors hired at the 
discretion of Continuing Education Director Alice Hamilton and SPS Dean Godfrey 
Gibbeson (since the School has difficulty hiring faculty to teach these courses), and 
are assessed and reviewed by what is seen as an opaque process. The Committee 
met twice with Interim Provost McGee about this issue, and it was agreed that 
further discussion was needed with the SPS Dean and the Continuing Education 
Program Director. However, no representatives from the SPS attended any 
Committee meetings following a preliminary September meeting, and the
Continuing Education Program Director even failed to appear at the January meeting at which she had asked to present a summary of Continuing Education Programs. When she did finally present at the February meeting, the Committee was not entirely satisfied with the explanations given concerning instruction and assessment, and was also perplexed to learn that the SPS offers “canned” courses (pre-recorded online courses offered by a third-party vendor) at a higher cost than that charged at competing institutions (e.g. Clemson and USC), banking on the College’s reputation in order to charge the higher fees: Committee members felt that the SPS is taking advantage of the main campus’ reputation while spurning faculty input on the operations of courses that might negatively impact that reputation. The Committee and the SPS representatives agreed to improve interactions in the future, with two Continuing Education presentations scheduled at the North Campus for the 2015-16 academic year. The Committee came up with two optional solutions that might improve future relations with the SPS: 1) the creation of a separate committee of faculty, staff, and administrators to oversee the Continuing Education course offerings, or 2) an expansion of the future Committee makeup to include a subcommittee for this purpose. These plans were presented at the last Faculty Senate Meeting, at which Interim Provost McGee indicated that the Committee should use the 2015-16 academic year to develop a long-term solution to the problem, given that the SPS Dean is willing to make changes.

The Lowcountry Graduate Center

The Committee found the aggressive program development process of the Lowcountry Graduate Center (LGC) to be a source of friction during the 2015-16 year, especially since this process at times seems to place the North Campus in direct competition with the Graduate School on the main campus.

The Legislature created the LGC in the 1990s because local businesses saw a need then to increase the number of post-baccalaureate degrees produced in the Lowcountry. The LCG is a jointly managed by the College of Charleston, the Medical University of South Carolina, and the Citadel (provosts at the three institutions approve new courses and programs offered there) although CofC has assumed the role of fiscal agent and manages the LGC at the CofC North Campus. The Committee is concerned by what it sees as a potential conflict of interest between the North Campus and the LGC: LGC Director Nancy Muller answers to a board that is governed outside of the College, but also serves as Associate Dean of the North Campus. The LGC is housed at the North Campus (The College of Charleston serves as the fiscal agent for the LGC) under the management of Dean Gibbeson.

According to the FAM, CofC courses, including those involved in programs run out of the North Campus, are required to go through the formal faculty review process (e.g. through this Committee). However, since LGC and the North Campus funding relies on rapidly building a clientele through enrollments in order to offset operating costs, LGC management has found it easier to bypass the time-consuming and
rigorous faculty review process. Several times during the 2014-15 academic year the LGC administration aggressively sought to create and develop new graduate programs and certificates rather than letting those programs develop naturally in the LGC host institutions. This approach of bypassing internal approval structures was met with opposition by several Committee members and CofC administrators, who in an August meeting reminded LGC administration that inter-college programs are governed by Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) signed by the participating institutions, and that these MOUs protect the institutions and ensure the quality of the courses. LGC administration suggested that this constraint could be bypassed by creating a generic MOU that, after having been signed once, would allow new LGC programs and courses to be added without bothering home institutions with details. As a result (as well as for other pertinent reasons), Hakkila and a variety of faculty committee chairs and administrators wrote a memo to the Interim Provost requesting that a process and committee be created for the review of MOUs. A copy of the MOU memo is included along with this report.

As the year progressed, the LGC began marketing the North Campus as a venue for hosting graduate programs from institutions outside of the LGC triumvirate, including USC and Clemson. LGC’s argument has been that it is cost effective to do this because external schools pay a tuition percentage to the LGC (and thus also to its fiscal agent CofC). However, there is concern that these programs compete with programs on the main campus. For example, last year the LGC allowed an engineering degree with a concentration in cybersecurity to be taught at the North Campus at the same time that a graduate certificate in cybersecurity was being introduced by the College of Charleston’s Computer Science Department. This year the LGC negotiated with Clemson to allow both a PhD and a MS in Computer Science to be taught at the North Campus, even in the face of the considerable state political effort expended to introduce a computer science PhD at CofC and expand the College’s joint Computer Science MS with The Citadel (this matter was later resolved when SSM Dean Michael Auerbach and Graduate School Dean McCandless negotiated an agreement directly with Clemson administrators). The LGC also aggressively courted a graduate health care management program from SCSU, even though a similar program is under development between CofC and MUSC (two LGC schools).

As the year ended, the LGC was trying to convince graduate programs on the main campus to move all or parts of these programs to the North Campus. The LGC also changed its previous policy and began charging main campus programs for use of the North Campus facilities.

Committee members met with Interim Provost McGee to discuss these concerns throughout the academic year. The Interim Provost indicated that, as chair of the board that oversees the LGC, he is committed to making sure that no harm comes to the College’s main campus programs. However, he also indicated that the way the LGC chooses to do business is outside the jurisdiction of the College.
Graduate Course Numbers and Accreditation Issues

There is a lack of consistency pertaining to graduate course numbering and prerequisites. Many courses at the 500 and 600 level are cross-listed with undergraduate courses of various levels. Graduate students are expected to do more work than undergraduates enrolled in the linked course, but the additional workload expectations vary from department to department and from course to course, with no college-wide standard. Some graduate programs are cross-listed in order to share resources with undergraduate programs; others do it to provide undergraduate opportunities, increase enrollments, or even for licensure. In other words, there is no consistency. After surveying programs and departments to verify the problem’s extent, the Committee was tasked by the Interim Provost and the Graduate Council with studying the issue further. Potential solutions that the Committee discussed were to a) let programs keep their existing numbering and police programs for appropriate course levels, or b) renumber courses across campus. Possible renumbering schemes were a) 4-digit course numbers, or b) the introduction of new acronyms. The Committee realized that this is a problem with potentially far-reaching repercussions: the Law of Unintended Consequences indicates that these schemes have a good chance of affecting undergraduate courses and their course numbering as well. The Committee’s final recommendation, made at the last Faculty Senate Meeting of the academic year, was that a College task force be appointed, composed of faculty, staff, and administrators, to address the problem. Interim Provost McGee agreed to form a task force during 2015-16 to resolve this problem.

New Graduate Faculty definition

The Committee approved a new definition of Graduate Faculty, developed by an ad hoc committee headed by Graduate School Dean McCandless and reviewed by faculty and faculty committees throughout the academic year.