Student Spotlight

Hugh Broome, a doctoral student in the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry, enjoys sharing his enthusiasm for chemistry with other scientists and educators. During the Fall 2014 semester he assisted visiting doctoral student Kathryn Kellett, a Winston Churchill Fellow from the University of Hertfordshire, United Kingdom. Kellett visited USM to collaborate with Dr. Karl Wallace, Associate Professor in the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry. Her goal was to develop sensors for “designer drugs”. Broome’s role was to design the sensors using Kellett’s theoretical calculations and protein models. For more information see the December 16, 2014 article in Southern Miss Now (http://www.usm.edu/news/article/winston-churchill-fellow-collaborates-southern-miss-researchers-designer-drug-detection). In addition, Broome was named an American Chemical Society Science Coach for the 2014-15 school year, along with colleagues Emily Matthews and LaCrissia Bridges. Science Coaches “are chemistry professionals who share their expertise and enthusiasm for science with an elementary, middle, or high school teacher over course of one school year” (ACS, http://www.acs.org/content/acs/en/education/outreach/science-coaches.html).
Graduate School Staff Changes

Ms. Emily Lymon is the new Senior Graduate Admissions Specialist in the Graduate School, beginning her new role in early December. Emily served as Admissions Specialist in the Graduate School since January 2014 and worked for 5 years as Information Specialist in the Office of Undergraduate Admissions. She was selected in a competitive search from a pool of 34 candidates. Emily’s experience in admissions at both the graduate and undergraduate levels will be a valuable asset in her new role. We welcome her to her new position.

Professional Development Opportunities for Students and Faculty

1. Graduate Research Symposium

   The abstract deadline for the 2015 Susan A. Siltanen Graduate Student Research Symposium (to be held March 25 from 9 AM to 5 PM at the Thad Cochran Center) has been extended until January 30. Students will have the opportunity to select either oral or poster format for their presentations. Abstract guidelines can be found at [http://www.usm.edu/graduate-school/graduate-student-research-symposium](http://www.usm.edu/graduate-school/graduate-student-research-symposium). Please encourage students to participate.

2. Graduate Coordinator/Program Manager Workshops

   Informational workshops featuring round table discussions and case studies that highlight commonly-faced student and policy issues will be the format of Graduate Coordinator/Program Manager workshops. Graduate School staff will be present to answer questions. Two sessions will be offered in hopes of avoiding conflicts with teaching schedules. Attendance is very important.
   - Date and Time: Wednesday, Feb. 4, 1:00 – 3:00 PM or Thursday, Feb. 5, 1:00 – 3:00 PM
   - Location:
     - Hattiesburg campus: Thad Cochran Center Room 216
     - Gulf Park, GCRL, and Stennis campuses: Videoconferencing will be available. More information will follow.

Operational Changes Promoting Improved Efficiency

1. Fee increases effective July 1, 2015:

   The application fee for admission or readmission to all graduate degree and certificate programs will increase by $10 (from $50 to $60). Anticipating fee-paying applications in the neighborhood of 2500 based on 2013-14 data, this fee increase should raise our revenue by about $25,000.

   A $50 late fee for a missed deadline to apply for a degree will be imposed. The imposition of this fee will encourage students to apply for graduation on time, allowing Graduate School auditors adequate time to conduct degree audits. At present there is no penalty for tardiness, and students are not compelled to submit the degree
application on time. While collecting this fee will benefit Graduate School operations, incurring this fee would be self-inflicted. It is difficult to predict the amount of revenue that will be collected from this late fee.

2. Thesis/dissertation/capstone project review by Graduate School:

The Graduate Reader will no longer review theses/dissertations/capstone projects for grammar and accuracy of the bibliography. Those reviews are the responsibility of the major professors and graduate committee members. The Graduate Reader will limit her review to document formatting and spot checking for document quality. Documents that are poor quality will be returned to the student, the major professor will be notified, and the document will be moved to the back of the queue. The Dean will not sign these documents until she is assured of their high quality.

3. Plans of Study Spreadsheets:

Plans of Study spreadsheets will soon be removed from the Graduate School website. A generic Plan of Study fillable form that students will access online and complete with the approval of their major professor and committee members is under construction. This change will foster mentorship as students map out their required coursework with their major professors. It will eliminate the recurring problem of outdated program requirements remaining on the web and the liability issue that follows inaccurate information available online. With this change it will be very important for programs to maintain updated and complete plans of study information in the Graduate Bulletin.

4. Six Sigma recommendations:

Six Sigma analysis identified a number of factors that hold up admissions decisions and skew aging reports. Changes are being implemented to correct these issues. The following implementations are underway or in planning:

- Problem: Low GPA (< 2.5) applicants who are not eligible for admission frequently languish in departments.
  - Solution: Graduate School will issue a denial of admission and encourage enrollment in non-degree coursework.
  - Departments will still have access to applications for data collection.

- Problem: Applicants delay start date for 1 year. The delay occurs typically because of the need to retake the GRE, GMAT, or TOEFL. Some applicants remain in the queue for many months and even years.
  - Solution: Admissions Pro will flag the application for rejection at 365 days.

- Problem: Stakeholders complain about insufficient training opportunities for departmental users of Admissions Pro.
  - Solution: Offer different types of opportunities for training
    - Multiple group training sessions will be scheduled each semester
    - One on one training will be available upon request
    - An online tutorial will be constructed and posted for easy access
Problem: Programs delay making decisions on applicants
- Solution: Provide department chairs with aging data so they can understand the length of time applications remain undecisioned in departments.

Problem: Poor communication between Graduate School and departments. Departments complain that they are not well informed about policy and procedure and that they are not notified when new applications are ready for review.
- Solution: To assure departmental contact information is up-to-date, Kim Wyatt will send out an email during week one of fall and spring semesters requesting updated lists of program managers, graduate coordinators, and department chairs.
- Solution: Policy and/or procedural changes will be communicated to program managers, graduate coordinators, and chairs via email in a timely manner.
- Solution: Graduate coordinator workshops will be held annually.
- Solution: The Bulletin will be updated each year and continue to be available online.
- Solution: Graduate School staff will read through the Bulletin to identify “anchor” words that will allow better searchability of the online Bulletin.
- Solution: An automatic email will be sent to graduate coordinators and committee chairs when an application is ready for review.
- Solution: If an application is delayed at departmental/program level, the Graduate School will notify chairs that action is needed.

December Graduation Numbers:

Graduation counts for students completing degrees in August 2014 and December 2014 included:
- 82 Doctoral degrees
- 4 Educational Specialist degrees
- 481 Master’s degrees