Proposal to Modify the Graduate School Course Approval Policy

**Preamble:** The Executive Committee of the Graduate Council met Friday, April 12, 2013 to consider a modification to the practice of requiring all new course proposals to be reviewed for redundancy. The Executive Committee determined that certain changes were warranted and endorsed the recommendation to create a new system of classifying courses into campus courses and system courses. Based on further discussions with faculty and regional campuses representatives, clarifications of the policy were requested. The clarified policy is listed below, and the revised Required Signatures Chart is attached for consideration with this policy.

**Background:** The Graduate School has had a longstanding practice of requiring all new course proposals be reviewed for redundancy with other courses offered throughout the Purdue system. If a course is substantially similar to another course offered within the system, the proposer is directed to adopt that course rather than proposing a new one. The rationale behind this practice is to have uniformity among courses offered on all the campuses so that students could transfer course credit across campus boundaries.

The negatives associated with this practice have become increasing evident recently as the number of course adoptions has increased. Most problematic is that once a course created by a professor on campus A is adopted by campus B, the professor who created the course must obtain approval from campus B in order to modify the course. We’ve had the situation where upon a request for course change, campus B has declined to grant approval.

**Observations:** This longstanding practice of requiring course adoptions does not serve the Purdue System well. First, the change approval process stifles the ability of the original course instructor to keep his/her course up to date and hinders campus programs from maintaining a dynamic curriculum. Second, while originally envisioned that students would transfer credit from one campus to another, in reality this does not happen. Maintaining a burdensome course adoption policy to accommodate inter-system transfers that are not occurring is counterproductive. Third, should a student wish to transfer a course across campuses within the Purdue system, there already is and always has been a system in place to accommodate transfers. Every campus program has a process to receive, review, and accept transfer credits from other colleges and universities. Finally, it should also be noted that the Graduate School and University system-wide planning activities are in the process of establishing inter-campus communication and coordination of departments in the same discipline, the goal of which is explore course sharing that will by agreement benefit programs on all campuses and will be used substantially by our students. These system-wide planning activities underway should realize the efficiencies that inspired the current policy in a way that is embraced by all constituencies.
Recommendations:

1. Rescind the “area committee” practice of requiring course proposers to adopt a currently existing course if the proposed course is substantially similar in content. Campus based courses would be reviewed by the “area committees” for compliance with existing Graduate School standards on rigor, need for course, target audience, etc., but not for “overlap”.

2. From the effective date of this policy, proposers should submit a course as either 1) a campus-based course, which could be updated as appropriate by the course instructor; or 2) as a system-wide course, where one or more other campus departments agree to maintain content synchrony as updates are made to ensure that credits can be transferred seamlessly. If a department proposes to adopt a course from another campus, it should be with the approval of the department on the campus where the course currently resides.

   The decision to propose a campus-based course is made by the proposing faculty and should be supported by the department. The decision to participate in a system course resides with the participating campus(s), and each campus’ program may choose not to participate or to participate in a system course.

   Courses which are system courses would be transferable between or among the departments/programs signing the system-based course proposal. Campus based courses which are proposed for use by a student at another campus in the Purdue system would be reviewed for transferability in accordance with existing policy on transfer courses.

3. Continue to encourage that prior to submission, course proposers review all courses offered throughout the system for similarity. The rationale for this is that awareness of similar courses in the system is important for future planning and discovery of efficient course sharing opportunities.