

## School of Mechanical Engineering

### WebEx Open Forum

March 31, 2020

#### Attending:

Eckhard Groll	Marcial Gonzalez	Steve Kessler
Jackie Baumgardt	Marisol Koslowski	Tami Armstrong
Amy Marconnet	Marty Mylarnaik	Tina Denson
Bumsoo Han	Xianfan Xu	Xiaomin Qian
Farshid Sadeghi	Tricia Hunt	Greg Shaver
Fu Zhao	Pavlos Vlachos	Liang Pan
Jim Jones	Peter Meckl	Nicole Key
John Pearson	Richard Buckius	Bin Yao
Julia King	Sameer Naik	George Chiu
Kay Evans	Satish Boregowda	Ivan Christov
Kejie Zhao	Sheryl Willison	Steve Son
Kristin Deckard Dawson	Song Zhang	Zhan

Eckhard:

1. We started Purdue Pete's Pals Program
  - Faculty/staff are paired with students unable to go home or are socially isolated.
  - Matched up 19 students with 13 faculty. Some faculty already were in contact with students.
  - We have a total of 21 faculty/staff who have volunteered. So, we are in good shape and will try to recruit more students.
  - Please provide feedback to Eckhard. If a student has any needs (e.g., financial or otherwise), please let him know.
2. New Initiative for Undergraduate Students, who have had their internships or co-op work sessions rescinded
  - For students who are not graduating, we are considering two types of program for the summer to give them experience and/or enhance their professional careers.
  - One idea is to conduct a design team project. This would be similar to VIP, EPICS or Senior Design. Make projects available to them and team them up. The student would not receive credit and there would be no charge to the student. The school may try to give the student a participation fee to offset some of their loss of income. This effort will be funded by an ME alum.
  - Option 2 would be having the students helping with developing exercises for some of our hands-on lab courses. A need was identified in what used to be ME452 and now changed to the 300 level. We will continue to talk with faculty and staff on how to move these initiatives forward.

### 3. Incoming and Returning Undergraduate Students

- The University as a whole is concerned about student enrollment considering that we have had frozen tuition for many years, and to make ends meet Purdue has always relied on slightly increasing enrollments in the fall. There are significant concerns that we may see a decline in students coming in as well in students returning. Recruiting activities have increased significantly. Policy was issued whereas all students coming in this fall will get their first choice major (not just Engineering, but all colleges in the University). This also applies to all First Year Engineering students, who are completing the FYE requirements this spring. We may see a significant influx of students while other units could see a decrease. Overall, in the College of Engineering, the number of students may go down even with this first choice recruiting activity. However, ME will most likely see an increase. We expect about 500 students to join in the Fall. We have tried to limit our enrollment to approximately 400 students per year. Eckhard working with the Dean's office for resources in the form of faculty, TA's, and advisors and anything else necessary to handle the potential increase we will see.
- Comments
  - Jim Jones: The other trends that we are starting to see now is that some students are asking questions regarding delaying graduation due to the current issues. This will result in an increase of students in ME on both ends of the spectrum with more maybe staying an extra semester.
  - *Eckhard agreed this is a good point.*

### 4. Incoming Graduate Students

- It is confirmed that none of our incoming international graduate students, who are currently completing their degrees and residing in their home countries, will get a visa appointment in time to start at Purdue in August. However, international graduate students, who are currently completing their degrees and residing in the US should be able to come if they stay in the US throughout the summer. We discussed this topic at the ME Cabinet meeting in the morning and strongly recommend to these students to stay in the US. We need to have a plan for these students. Maybe we could help by providing some kind of bridge program for them during the summer. This could include a housing allowance. The Graduate Office sent them a message and informed them not to go home.
- The international graduate students currently outside the US will hopefully be able to start in January 2021. We need to create a program to keep them committed to come to Purdue and not pursue other options. There will be a College of Engineering School Heads meeting on Wednesday to discuss this topic. The latest program proposal is to offer as many graduate courses online as possible. This would allow these students to take ME graduate courses online during the fall to get them started. Student admitted to the MS program will be enrolled in the online MS program and then transferred to the on-campus MS program when they arrive on campus. Students admitted to the PhD program could enroll in online courses as non-degree seeking graduate students. They will be able to transfer these courses into their PhD plan of study when they arrive on campus and enroll in the PhD program. How these students pay for the online courses during the fall is being heavily discussed at the moment. One option is that they pay tuition at the reduced edX rate per credit hour and we will reimburse their tuition at the time they start their degree program on campus. Another option would be to give them

tuition waivers, but charge them the full tuition if they do not start a degree program on campus.

- We now have some of our own BS students, scheduled to graduate in May, that have rescinded offers for full-time employment. There is an opportunity to recruit these students to our graduate program to make up the short-fall of international graduate students not being able to start in August.

## 5. Questions

- Greg Shaver: There is a lot going on and we appreciate the communication. As for the international graduate students that would be in our program for fall, they won't be able to do research remotely because they won't be on the payroll. Is that correct?

*Eckhard: Yes, that is correct. The only thing they could do is to take courses. The Graduate School allows us to transfer 12 credit hours as a part of their plan of study. We cannot hire anyone at this time, however we may be able to hire them as a consultant. This would come with many hurdles to overcome and Eckhard is not positive that it is doable.*

- Greg: Are we starting to get a feel for whether or not we will be back on campus in the fall?

*Eckhard: It is my hope that we are back on campus and fully operating. The news in Wuhan is that they opened up today. They were in isolation for over 2 months. Hopes that we are out of this in June sometime. We still have to see.*

- Kejie Zhao: For the new incoming students in the fall. One of his students has confirmed that she is coming in the fall, but is waiting to hear what they can do. Should we communicate with them the news of international students not being able to come in August?

*Eckhard: Asked that we wait until we have time to check on everything (online courses, other resources, etc.). Asked that the faculty give him a couple more days and he may have a better idea. You can communicate with the student that with everything that we understand they will not be able to come in August. The problem is that they will not get their visas in time.*

- Bumsoo Han: If a student defers their starting date, will this delay their end date of the RA/Fellowship offer or will end date stay the same?

*Eckhard: A deferred start date will result in a delayed end date of the offer letter. Since we are discussing this topic, Eckhard would like to get to a model where our offer letters provide financial support for the regular duration of the degree. This means RA offers to incoming MS students should be for 2 years and RA offers to incoming PhD students should be for 3 years. It is a disadvantage in recruiting graduate students compared to our peer institutions when we only offer RAs first year. We should make our offers for the entire program. Of course, this is a topic for another date, but not today.*

*Nicole: The Graduate School allows deferment up to a year. Can find latest information on the Graduate Program website regarding COVID-19 and waivers, change in rules, allowing students to declare candidacy later, deposit later to meet the requirements for graduation, etc.*

- Greg Shaver: The no visa for international graduate students coming in August, where is it coming from?

*Eckhard: It is coming from the US government.*

- Greg: If people came to the US and self-quarantined, what would be the issue? Are we trying to create opportunity for those in the US?

*Eckhard: The real issue is that the embassies and consulate are currently closed due to COVID-19. The international graduate students are not able to get visa appointments in time to come in August. Most students will get visa appointments sometime later on this fall.*

- Kejie: Heard that the problem in China was that maybe because students cannot afford the visa application.

*Pavlos: I think it is a State Department policy with delays on scheduling.*

- Greg: We still expect more students this fall and spring. Would we be able to have the international students help with grading remotely? This could help them financially and would help faculty. Need to figure out how to pay people. We need to figure out how to pay people.

*Eckhard: Makes sense and we need to do more brainstorming.*

- Nicole: Here are the numbers of students impacted:
  - As of now we have admitted 178 students. 154 are currently on campus and of that 91 are international students. Given 54 RA offers so far, of that 31 have been international and 9 have accepted their offers. Of the 91 international graduate students admitted, 36 come from schools within the US, of that 36, 15 have accepted. The Graduate Office will send out an email to those 36 students to encourage them not to travel back home. Not all those admitted have accepted (178).
  - Eckhard: We need to create a summer bridge program for those international graduate students who are in the US and will be able to stay in the US for the summer. At the same time, we need to create a fall program for those international graduate students who are in their home countries so that they come to campus next year. We don't have all the answers today but need to think about how to accommodate both groups.
  - Nicole: Another variable in all this is that we have until April 15<sup>th</sup> to accept or decline offers. The Graduate office will have to make a decision on whether to admit MS students. Asked faculty to share their projected needs with her.

**Action: Have faculty send their projection of needs for the fall to Nicole so that we have an idea how many to admit.**

- Steve Kessler: Will there be summer school classes or is this still up in the air?

*Eckhard: Yes, we will definitely will have summer school courses as scheduled. The main question is if they will be on campus or online. That is still to be determined. May have to start online then move on campus. The classes are definitely needed, not only for regular students but also to accommodate other students based on new situations (students returning early from study abroad, students losing internships and co-op work sessions, etc.). We will talk to all our*

*instructors that are slated to teach summer school and make sure they are prepared to go online if needed. We would also like to bring on some new programs online (e.g., add a tech elect course to accommodate our students).*

6. Other last-minute comments

- Additional information has been posted on website for online instruction tips/suggestions.
- Email went out to all instructors regarding a workshop this afternoon for Zoom / Gradescope, grading and online exams. We have also, had some of our faculty offering hints.
- Kejie: How to you post PDF's on Gradescope?

*Amy: Can make it a picture, can't post PDF. Amy will share the information with Jackie and it will be posted on the online tips & tricks website.*

- We now have 3 accepted offers for Assistant Professors
  - Davide Ziviani
  - Rebecca Ciez
  - Monique McClain (will start one-year post-doc this summer and start Assistant Professor in August 2021)
  - Still have 3 offers out. Hope to wrap up in the next week. For the 2 regular searches for Innovation & Making and Autonomous & Connected Systems, we have good candidates and if the number 1 candidate does not work out, we will go after the #2 candidates.
  - Should wind up with at least 5 new Assistant Professors, possible 6. Now need to find the space to accommodate them.
- Eckhard would like to schedule another online open forum for Friday, April 3, at noon. *Will ask Jackie to schedule.* We will keep the open forums to 2 times a week for as long as we are working remotely.