

MINUTES OF THE GRADUATE COUNCIL
The University of Alabama
March 31st, 2020

The regular meeting of the Graduate Council was held virtually via Zoom
on Tuesday, March 31st, 2020 at 3:00 pm.

Members Present:

Dr. Kristi Acker	Dr. Aaron Kuntz
Dr. Arthur Allaway	Dr. Deidre Leaver-Dunn
Dr. Susan Appel	Dr. Jeffrey Lozier
Dr. Marco Bonizzoni	Dr. Steven MacCall
Dr. Joy Burnham	Dr. Carmen Mayer
Dr. Heather Carmack	Dr. Sharif Melouk
Dr. Jeffery Carver	Dr. Joshua Pierce
Dr. Katherine Chiou	Dr. Daniel Riches
Dr. Lucy Curzon	Dr. Cecil Robinson
Dr. Mary Alice Davis	Dr. Jenny Shaw
Dr. Bill Evans	Dr. Steve Shepard
Dr. Tom Fitzgibbon	Dr. Merinda Simmons
Dr. Peter Harms	Dr. Brenda Smith
Dr. Janie Hubbard	Dr. Wei Song
Dr. Paul Hubner	Dr. Amanda Thompson
Dr. Sebrena Jackson	Dr. Mesut Yavuz
Dr. Linda Knol	

Members Absent:

Dr. Ajay Agrawal	Dr. Kagendo Mutua
Dr. Kenon Brown	Dr. Raheem Paxton
Dr. Karri Holley	

Ex-officio Members Present:

Dr. Robert Gaines
Dr. Robert Hayes

Ex-officio Members Absent:

Dr. Donald Gilstrap
Dr. Kevin Whitaker

Graduate School Representatives:

Dr. Susan Carvalho, Dean
Dr. Andrew Goodliffe, Associate Dean
Dr. Cathy Pagani, Associate Dean
Ms. Catherine Doughty-Walker, Executive Secretary
Ms. Deborah Mamuti, Office Associate
Ms. Beth Yarbrough, Registrar

Student Representatives:

Ms. Erica Campbell

Ms. Krystal Flantroy

Ms. Julie Vence

Guests:

Dr. Beth Bennett

Dr. Ginger Bishop

Dr. Carmen Jones

Dr. Adam Lankford

Dr. James McNaughton

Dr. Michael Parrott

Dr. Troy Pollard

Dr. Christina Staudhammer

Dr. Eric Williams

I. Welcome and Introduction

Dr. Carvalho thanked everyone for their attendance and patience with technology. She offered gratitude for the hard work of the faculty transitioning to online learning. The minutes from the February 4, 2020 meeting were approved unanimously.

II. Reports from Graduate Council Committees

A. Admissions & Recruitment: Dr. Steve Shepard, Chair

1. Proposal for admission test score waiver for the Communication and Information Sciences PhD program

The College of Communication and Information Sciences proposed an admission test score waiver for all applicants to the Communications and Information Sciences PhD program. In lieu of a test score, the program will use a detailed evaluation of a four-part statement of purpose for each applicant. Motion for approval carried.

2. Proposal for admission test score waiver for the Communication Studies MA program

The College of Communication and Information Sciences proposed an admission test score waiver for all applicants to the Communication Studies MA program. In lieu of a test score, the program will use a rubric to evaluate the statement of purpose for each applicant. Motion for approval carried.

3. Proposal for admission test score waiver for the Journalism MA program

The Department of Journalism and Creative Media proposed an admission test score waiver for all applicants to the Journalism MA program. In lieu of a test score, the applicants will be evaluated holistically with an emphasis on a remodeled statement of purpose and previous experience in journalism and creative media. Applications will be evaluated quantitatively by assigning scores to each dimension of the application. Motion for approval carried.

4. Proposal for admission test score waivers for the Biological Sciences department

The Department of Biological Sciences proposed a test score waiver for all departmental programs. In lieu of a test score, faculty members will interview prospective students with research interests that match their own. A rubric will be used to score the interview and statement of purpose. Motion for approval is carried.

5. Proposal for admission test score waivers for the English department

The Department of English proposed a test score waiver for all departmental programs. In lieu of a test score, applicants will be evaluated on their statement of purpose and required writing sample. Motion for approval is carried.

6. Proposal for admission test score waiver for the Criminal Justice MS program

The Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice proposed that the admission test score requirement be waived for applicants to the Criminal Justice MS program with a 3.5 GPA or higher. In lieu of an admission test score, a writing sample will now be required.

This will be evaluated using existing departmental rubrics that are used to assess writing quality. Motion for approval is carried.

7. Proposal for admission test score waivers for the Accounting MAC and Tax Accounting MTA programs

The Department of Accounting proposed that the admission test score requirement be waived for some applicants to the Accounting MAC and Tax Accounting MTA programs. Applicants with a GPA of 3.25 or above in a minimum of 15 upper-division credit hours in Accounting will be eligible for a test score waiver. Those with a GPA below 3.25 will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Motion for approval is carried.

8. Proposal for admission test score waiver renewal for the Nursing MSN and DNP programs

The Capstone College of Nursing proposed that the admission test score requirement continue to be waived for applicants to the Nursing MSN and DNP programs. In lieu of test scores, applicants are required to have a valid nursing license, among other criteria. Motion for approval is carried.

9. Proposal for a Management AMP

The Department of Management proposed an AMP which combines the BS in Management with the MA in Management. Motion for approval is carried.

10. Proposal for additional admission test for the Executive MBA program

The College of Business proposed the use of an additional admission test for the Executive Master of Business Administration. The Executive Assessment test offered by the same company as the GMAT will now be accepted by the Executive MBA program for admissions. Applicants must be in the 50th percentile of test takers. Motion for approval is carried.

B. Graduate Curriculum: Dr Daniel Riches, Chair

1. Health Education and Promotion PhD

This is a proposal for the University of Alabama's current joint Health Education and Promotion PhD program with UAB to become an independent program based entirely out of the Tuscaloosa campus. Both programs have proposed to operate separately. This is a resource-neutral proposal. Motion for approval is carried.

C. Graduate Academic Policy : Dr. Aaron Kuntz, Chair

1. Graduate Faculty Appointments in Multiple Departments

The proposal permits graduate faculty to have full faculty status in multiple departments in order to teach courses and serve on thesis and dissertation committees. The procedure in which the department chair initiates the request for graduate faculty status remains the same. The department chair of the primary department must be made aware of an allocation of effort in a secondary department. The appointing department can choose the graduate faculty status they would like a faculty member to receive. All tenure-track faculty would be associate level or higher in a secondary department. Appointments would expire at the same time for all departments. Motion for approval is carried.

2. Graduate Faculty Appointment – Retired Faculty

This proposal extends retired faculty members' eligibility to chair thesis and dissertation committees from the current one-year term to a three-year term. Dissertation projects may go beyond one year as part of their natural course, and some students as well as retired faculty would like the principal faculty member to be listed as the chair. For up to three years, retired faculty will maintain full graduate faculty status, and after that point the departments can nominate them for affiliate status if they wish. Motion for approval is carried.

3. Proposed Changes to the 75% Rule

The current policy is as follows *"At least 75 percent of the hours taken must have been completed with grades of "A" or "B" at The University of Alabama. In applying this 75 percent rule, a maximum of 6 hours of thesis research may be counted, if appropriate. In other words, a student may only have earned a "C" grade in 25 percent of the hours taken for the degree.*

Proposal One – Graduate students may now receive a grade of C in 30% of their classes instead of the current maximum of 25%.

Proposal Two – Eliminate the 75% Rule altogether. Degree programs can set requirements on their own.

Students must have a 3.0 GPA overall to earn their graduate degree.

Dr. Paul Hubner pointed out that his department (Aerospace Engineering) does have a handful of students this affects, and it seems fair to have overall GPA matter more than the grades in particular courses.

It was asked how Incomplete grades would factor into this. Ms. Beth Yarbrough responded that there is a separate rule for that. We give four weeks into the next term of enrollment to resolve Incompletes. If after that four weeks a student has a GPA below 3.0 and at least one Incomplete grade, the student will go on Academic Warning or Suspension. With the 75% rule in the 30-hour degree program (the majority of programs), a maximum of 7.5 hours can carry a "C" grade. With 70% , 9 hours can have a grade of "C," which is a bit more reasonable for students.

It was asked how this affects a Pass/Fail course. Dean Carvalho stated that this applies only to courses with a letter grade. The special exception for COVID-19 effectively suspends the current 75% rule for this semester.

Proposal Two was chosen with a tie-breaking vote from Council chair Dr. Susan Carvalho.

Dr. Carvalho would like to remind everyone that while this was a close vote, programs can set narrower requirements if they so choose. This will be submitted for approval to the Provost office and possibly to the system office as well.

4. Doctoral Projects – Appendix J

Dissertation committees must be chaired by full members of the Graduate Faculty. The committee proposes that the Faculty Handbook further specify that committees for final projects of professional-practice doctorates may be chaired by affiliate members of the Graduate Faculty who meet all of the following qualifications:

(a) hold an appropriate doctoral degree;

- (b) have the appropriate professional qualifications; and,
- (c) hold the rank of at least assistant professor in a full-time position at UA.

Dean Carvalho proposed a friendly amendment – “Committees for final projects of professional-practice doctorates *must* be chaired by *full, associate or affiliate* members of the Graduate Faculty who meet all of the following qualifications:”

Dean Carvalho also clarified that this proposal is intended to allow clinical faculty with renewable contracts to chair doctoral projects for degrees like the Doctor of Nursing Practice. Motion for approval is carried.

This proposal must also go before the Steering Committee of the Faculty Senate, and then to the full Faculty Senate, before final approval.

5. Discussion Item: Continuous 699 Enrollment

This proposal should be presented in full at the September Grad Council meeting. There is discussion of disassociating continuous enrollment from the 699 dissertation research course. Instead, to maintain continuous enrollment, students would only have to enroll in one hour of 699 graduate credit, OR one or more credits in other courses. This would not replace the requirements for full-time enrollment for international students and those serving as graduate assistants, teaching assistants, and research assistants.

Dean Carvalho would like clarification in the next version about when this “clock” would start. It usually starts after the completion of qualifying exams, but we don’t track when those are taken. The Graduate School will look for another way to track this. The Financial Affairs office will have a look at this proposal as well before it returns to the Council for a vote in the fall.

D. Teaching, Research & Service Awards: Dr. Amanda Thompson, Chair

No updates. Thank you for your service. We regret that we cannot hold our annual reception due to the COVID-19 restrictions on gatherings.

E. Fellowships and Scholarships: Dr. Jeff Lozier, Chair

Dr. Andrew Goodliffe shared statistics from this year’s nomination period with the Council. There were 263 Graduate Council Fellowship nominations, and 107 offers were made. Sixty students already accepted, 13 declined, and 34 have not responded yet. There were 48 McNair Fellowship nominations, and six offers were made. Five students accepted and one declined. There were 66 National Alumni Association Fellowship nominations, and 24 offers were made. Twenty one students have accepted and three students have yet to respond.

This year we introduced the five-year Capstone Graduate Council Fellowships. We made 22 offers with eight acceptances, three declines, and 11 who have not responded yet. We have been surprised that there were not more acceptances so far for these especially in comparison to the regular Graduate Council Fellowship because this is a substantially more attractive offer. However, we recognize that this subset includes the most competitive graduate students, who are probably receiving multiple attractive offers.

After April 15th, Dr. Goodliffe will send out a detailed summary on final acceptance rates.

III. Reports from the Dean's Office and Academic Affairs

A. Dean Susan Carvalho:

COVID-19 changes

- The Graduate School staff is working remotely with same access as if in office. Operations are running as usual with no delays.
- Most programs have agreed to suspend admission test scores for summer 2020, fall 2020, and spring 2021. There is a website that lists programs still requiring the test scores.
- The Graduate School is now accepting the Duolingo English proficiency exam on an experimental basis to give students access to a test during the COVID-19 crisis. The Undergraduate side uses it already as do some peer institutions. This will apply to summer 2020, fall 2020, and spring 2021 applicants for most programs. There is a website that lists programs that will not accept this exam. This is a pilot period, and if the outcomes are not good, the test option can be dropped in the future.
- There is a Pass/Fail option for all courses for the Spring 2020 semester. We followed the lead of a lot of schools with this policy. It's not ideal, but we recognize a number of students are undergoing extraordinary changes and differing circumstances as they continue their graduate education. A "D" grade will become an "F" if a graduate student chooses Pass/Fail over a letter grade. If a student is on academic warning right now they can still choose the Pass/Fail option but must earn their way out of academic warning in the fall semester with letter grades. They can also take a letter grade for the spring semester to move out of academic probation if they choose. Students will choose Pass/Fail option through a process being set up by the Registrar. This semester doesn't factor in to the rule that students only can take 20% of their courses Pass/Fail.

Dean Carvalho thanked all Council members for their service this year, and recognized the outgoing Council members.

IV. Reports from Standing University Committees

Dr. Robert Gaines informed us that the Academic Affairs subcommittee of the Faculty Senate tabled addressing excused absences. Absences caused by pregnancy or religious holidays are currently excused under university attendance policies.

V. New Business

None

VI. Adjournment

There being no further business, Dean Carvalho adjourned the meeting at 4:22 pm.

