

## MINUTES OF THE GRADUATE COUNCIL

The University of Alabama

February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2022

*Minutes approved by Graduate Council on 4/6/2022*

The regular meeting of the Graduate Council was held via zoom on Wednesday, February 2<sup>nd</sup>, at 3:00 p.m.

Members Present: Arthur Allaway, Angela Benson, Heather Carmack, Pat Carter, Jeffrey Carver, Katherine Chiou, Bill Evans, Martin Evans, Allison Grant, Peter Harms, Paul Hubner, Sebrina Jackson, Seung Eun Jung, Kristina McDonald, Dana Patton, Troy Pollard, Daniel Riches, Cecil Robinson, Nicole Ruggiano, Jon Shemwell, Steve Shepard, K. Merinda Simmons, Brenda Smith, Wei Song, Firat Soylu, Peggy Swails Trosper, Miriam Sweeney, Nicole Swoszowski, Alan Tidwell, Teresa Welch, Mesut Yavuz, Lea Yerby

Members Absent with Alternate: none

Members Absent without Alternate: Blake Berryhill, Kenon Brown, Susan Dewey, Hilary Green, Janie Hubbard, Kevin Kocot, Deidre Leaver-Dunn, Dudley Moore

Student Representatives: Quin Kelley

Ex officio Members Present: Donald Gilstrap (Dean of Libraries), Jaber Abu Qahouq (Faculty Senate)

Graduate School Representatives: Susan Carvalho, Dean; André Denham, Associate Dean; Andrew Goodliffe, Associate Dean; Angela Abrams, Admissions Counselor Senior; Amanda Maltbie, International Graduate Admissions Officer; Shenika Williams, International Admissions Counselor

Guests: Ginger Bishop (Institutional Effectiveness), Robert Hayes (CCS), Roger Sidje (A&S), Daniel Strickland (University Registrar), Stefanie Wind (ESPRMC), Leslie Yow (Institutional Effectiveness)

Dean Carvalho welcomed everyone. She called for any corrections to the minutes of the November 2021 meeting, included in the packet. No call for amendments. Minutes approved by unanimous consent.

Committee reports then followed.

### **Graduate Council committee reports:**

The Graduate Admissions & Recruitment Report was presented by committee chair Steve Shepard.

- Dr. Shepard explained that there were some concerns about the level of rigor for admission to the Accelerated Master's Program (AMP), given that a large percentage of undergraduates are now eligible to enter (due to GPA increases over the years since AMP was first designed). The

GPA threshold for admission to AMP is currently 3.30. An ad hoc committee was formed in September 2021, called the Ad Hoc Accelerated Master's Program Review Committee (AHARC). The committee was composed of members from across campus, and co-chaired by Dana Patton (Graduate Council) and Brad Tuggle (Undergraduate Council), to review the eligibility requirements as well as other issues such as the number of potentially double-counted credits.

- The AHARC recommendations were subsequently reviewed and modified by the Graduate Council Admissions & Recruitment Committee, and are now presented for Graduate Council approval. If approved by the Graduate and Undergraduate Councils, these recommendations will then go forward to the provost for final approval.
- The following recommendations are now presented to the Graduate Council:
  - Reduction of maximum double-counted credits from 15 to 12, to align UA more closely with peer institutions. As is the case now, programs may still set lower limits for double-counted credits.
  - Increase of minimum GPA for admission, from 3.30 to 3.70, equivalent to the Latin "magna cum laude" Latin honors designation. 3.70 is also approximately the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile GPA for UA undergraduates, campus-wide. This will ensure that the program is limited only to our stronger students. (It should be noted that many programs already had thresholds higher than 3.30, for admission to their AMP program.)
  - If a program has a lower 75<sup>th</sup> percentile, somewhere between 3.30 and 3.70, they can propose a lower GPA threshold for admission.
  - Percentiles are calculated based on the GPAs of graduating seniors over the most recent 5-year period, and will be reviewed periodically to ensure that AMP remains appropriately selective.
  - Three of the double-counted hours may come from the student's minor; the rest must be within the major.
- These changes mean that all programs with an AMP option will now need to reapply, outlining their proposed double-counting maximum and GPA minimums. The process for AMP applications will also be more robust, in terms of defining how the learning outcomes, particularly for the bachelor's degree, will be achieved with the double-counted hours. This will ensure that the graduate class also addresses the learning outcomes of the undergraduate class that it replaces. Proposals must also include an assessment of the outcomes for past AMP students (e.g. are the AMP students performing as well or better/worse than regular master's students), and confirmation that any cross-listed or slash-listed courses meet UA guidelines, with the 500-level course having higher standards than the 400-level course that it is replacing.
- The impact on the AMP program was reviewed by AHARC, which saw that current GPAs of AMP students are quite high; the threshold of 3.70 would mean that only 30 current AMP students would not be eligible under the higher GPA requirement. Underrepresented students are not disproportionately impacted, although the relatively low AMP enrollment of African American students is an issue that needs to be addressed.
- Dean Carvalho mentioned the potential elimination of the A+ grade from undergraduate grading, which would require a reassessment of the GPA threshold. She also mentioned the increased scrutiny by SACSCOC, for programs that involve double-counting, so this reassessment

is timely. It also marks the first time the Graduate and Undergraduate Councils have worked together on any project.

- The motion to approve the committee's recommendation was approved by a vote of 30 to 2. Motion carried.

The Graduate Curriculum Report was presented by committee chair Cecil Robinson.

- Proposal for a Graduate Certificate in Measurement and Psychometrics, in the Department of Educational Studies in Psychology, Research Methodology and Counseling, College of Education. This proposal was based on the program's current robust enrollment in other certificate programs, as well as the employment credentials needed for future graduates. There being no questions, the motion was approved by a vote of 30-0. Motion carried.
- Proposal for a change of name and CIP code for English as a Second Language (CIP 16.1701) to Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) (CIP 13.1401). The name change is proposed to bring the program more in line with the current industry standards within their discipline, and to foster future growth. There being no questions, the motion was approved by a vote of 30-0.
- Report on the proposed reversal of the Economics name change (follow-up from November meeting). Dean Carvalho reported that, while the Graduate Council in November had endorsed the Economics program's name change from Quantitative Economics back to Economics, that change was not endorsed by Provost Dalton, given that the name change from Economics to Quantitative Economics was only approved a year ago. UA has a moratorium on repeated name changes – once a name change has been approved, it cannot be altered again within five years. This is to avoid an appearance of being erratic or confused about what we want to call our programs. The name change last year was an unfortunate procedural error, but is now inscribed in the BOT Minutes. A new name change can be considered in a future year.

The Graduate Academic Policy Report was presented by committee chair Dana Patton.

- Dissertation Embargo. This item was presented for information only, prior to a future recommendation. UA currently does not have a policy requiring or recommending advisor involvement in questions regarding a student's dissertation embargo. Dean Carvalho and Dean of Libraries Don Gilstrap summarized national-level policies and practices around dissertation embargos. There was discussion about disciplinary differences regarding embargo norms, and about what happens if the advisor and the student have different perspectives on whether or not to embargo the work. The committee hopes to present a recommendation at the April meeting.
- Grade and Grade Points. This item was presented for information only. The committee hopes to bring a proposal to the April meeting, regarding potential plus/minus grading for graduate students. Discussion ensued about a plus option without a minus option, as well as whether departments can opt in or out. Graduate Council members are asked to gather input from their

networks about this potential change, and email that input to Dr. Patton to share with the committee.

- Leave of Absence from 699 Continuous Doctoral Enrollment. The proposed amendments to this policy clarify the process for ODS-endorsed leaves of absence. It adds a separate avenue for medical leave of absence, with protections to student confidentiality. It includes the military-leave policy currently mentioned elsewhere in the Catalog. And it adds a provision for leave of absence for family caregiving, with narrow parameters. Dean Carvalho pointed out that leave of absence from coursework does not require any permission; but leave of absence from continuous doctoral enrollment is more restricted. Motion approved, 28-0.
- Dissertations and Article-Style Dissertations. This Catalog change eliminates the separate distinction of “article-style dissertations,” since they now are common, and integrates two sections of the Graduate Catalog to provide more seamless guidance to students and faculty. Motion carried 29-0.
- Dissertation Defense Policies. In response to questions about whether virtual defenses should be public or private, this new section of the Catalog defines the sections of a defense and what must/may/cannot be public, as well as requiring that the committee have two weeks to read the manuscript prior to a defense, and that the dissertation manuscript be submitted to the Graduate School within 60 days of the defense. Discussion ensued about a program’s autonomy in terms of the length of each of these four sections of a dissertation defense, in accordance with disciplinary norms. Two amendments were made – to clarify that the major professor must approve all manuscript changes made after the defense, and to clarify that graduation deadlines are separate from the 60-day deadline for manuscript submission. Motion carried 29-1.
- Dr. Patton said that, in addition to the embargo and grading policies that will be presented at the April meeting, the Policy Committee is also working on transfer credit policies and other issues.

The Report from the Committee on Teaching, Research, and Service Awards was presented by committee chair Katherine Chiou.

- The following award recipients were announced:
  - Outstanding Teaching by a Doctoral Student: Cassie Whitt, Psychology
  - Outstanding Teaching by a Master’s Student: Grey LaJoie, English
  - Outstanding Research by a Doctoral Student: Jonathan Frame, Geological Sciences
  - Outstanding Research by a Master’s Student: Julia Loup, Psychology
  - Outstanding Service by a Graduate Student: Katie Lightfoot (Modern Languages & Classics)
  - Non-traditional Thesis Award: Roderick Borisade, Communication Studies
  - Outstanding Mentor Award: Yuehan Lu, Geological Sciences
  - Outstanding Dissertation and Outstanding Thesis awards – being evaluated now by a committee of emeriti faculty.
- An awards ceremony will be held in April.

The Fellowships & Scholarships Committee Report was presented by committee chair Mesut Yavuz.

- First round of fellowship awards is complete, for current students, with a 100% acceptance rate. Round Two decisions have just been issued. The number of nominations was substantially higher this year, so the number of offers in this round was also increased. The second round is traditionally the most competitive.

#### Reports from the Dean's Office

- Dean Carvalho reported that the Graduate Council policy changes approved in November have now been finalized by the UA System Office. The Curriculum Committee can receive proposals from programs that wish to lower their coursework or 699 requirements during the spring semester.
- The proposed changes in Graduate Faculty membership are on a different timetable, and are pending input from the Faculty Senate in March. They will go into effect either in April or in August, depending on those timetables.
- All Graduate Education Strategic Plan committees have concluded their work, and we will have a plan to present to you at the April Graduate Council meeting. That plan will guide future investments in graduate education.
- Personnel updates for Graduate School: Eric Harris has stepped into the Graduate Registrar role; Assistant Registrar search is ongoing; John Chambers will retire on March 31 after 25 years as Director of Administration; Lesley Campbell will retire on April 1 after 10 years in the Graduate School and 26 years at UA.

No new reports from UA Faculty Senate.

No new business.

Meeting adjourned at 4:18 pm.