

MINUTES OF THE GRADUATE COUNCIL

The University of Alabama

November 3rd, 2021

The regular meeting of the Graduate Council was in Hewson Hall

on Wednesday, November 3rd, 2021 at 3:00 pm.

Members Present: Blake Berryhill, Kenon Brown, Pat Carter, Jeffery Carver, Susan Dewey, Seung Eun Jung, Bill Evans, Martin Evans, Allison Grant, Hilary Green, Paul Hubner, Sebrena Jackson, Kevin Kocot, Kristina McDonald, Dana Patton, Troy Pollard, Cecil Robinson, Nicole Ruggiano, Steve Shepard, Merinda Simmons, Brenda Smith, Wei Song, Firat Soylu, Peggy Swails, Miriam Sweeney, Nicole Swoszowski, Alan Tidwell, Teresa Welch, Mesut Yavuz, Lea Yerby, Leslie Yow

Members Absent with Alternate: Daniel Riches (Anthony Buhr), Jeff Weddle (Heather Carmack)

Members Absent without Alternate: Arthur Allaway, Angela Benson, Katherine Chiou, Peter Harms, Janie Hubbard, Deidre Leaver-Dunn

Student Representatives: Quin Kelly, Dudley Moore

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; Lesley Campbell, Director of Graduate Recruitment; Catherine Doughty Walker, Executive Secretary; Amanda Maltbie, International Graduate Admissions Officer; Deb Mamuti, Office Associate; Landon Waid, Director of Graduate Admissions; Beth Yarbrough, Registrar

Guests: Carmen Jones (Institutional Effectiveness)

Dean Carvalho welcomed everyone. She called for any corrections to the minutes of the September 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 Curriculum Committee report was presented by committee chair Cecil Robinson.

- Proposal for a Certificate in Digital Communications in the Department of Advertising and Public Relations. This is an online-only program. Kenon Brown offered additional information about the proposal. A friendly amendment was added to change the time for program completion to six years from enrollment in alignment with the Graduate Council policy for Masters programs. The motion is approved 33-0.
- Proposal for Name Change for the MA in Quantitative Economics to the original Economics. Last year the Department of Economics, Finance, and Legal Studies erroneously changed the name of their MA degree to match their changing CIP code, which was changed to benefit international students with

extended Optional Practical Training after graduation. The motion to revert to the original name (“Economics”) is approved 30-0.¹

- Proposal for Name Change for the Ph.D. in Quantitative Economics to the original Economics. Last year the Department of Economics, Finance, and Legal Studies erroneously changed the name of their Ph.D. degree to match their changing CIP code, which was changed to benefit international students with extended Optional Practical Training after graduation. The motion to revert to the original name (“Economics”) is approved 35-0.²

The Graduate Policy Committee report was presented by committee chair Dana Patton.

- Proposal for Changes to Virtual Participation in Committee-Based on Oral Examinations Policy. This policy would remove the requirement for approval from the Dean of the Graduate School for offering comprehensive exams or defenses via virtual (audiovisual) platforms. It also updates technical requirements. The departments are provided with autonomy to create and enforce the proposed policy or to enforce in person-only participation in committee-based oral exams. There is a brief discussion of having an alternative technology plan in place, in case Zoom fails. Motion to allow departments to set their own policies on virtual participation is approved 35-0.
- Proposal for Reduction in the Minimum Hours of Coursework Required for a Ph.D. This proposal seeks to reduce the minimum coursework hours for the Ph.D. from 48 to 36. Departments or Programs have the autonomy to require more than 36 hours of coursework. A discussion of why the minimum was set at 36 hours ensued. Engineering put forth the idea of 36 hours, while 30 was also an option offered by many benchmark universities. 36 hours would put us in the middle with our peers. Transfer hours would be limited to 18 (that is, 50% of the minimum coursework). There is a discussion of minimum coursework for master’s degrees and whether there would be interest in changing that requirement; that suggestion was tabled for a later discussion. This new 36-hour minimum applies to current doctoral students retroactively, if the department and college approves. If the Board of Trustees gives final approval to this policy, all departments will be invited to re-evaluate their coursework hours and then make a proposal to the Curriculum Committee. Ginger Bishop says the system office needs to be in discussion about how much information they want to have for these program changes, but ACHE approval is not needed. Motion approved 34-1.
- Proposal to Change the Definition of Candidacy. This proposal seeks to preserve departmental autonomy in defining when a student enters candidacy, while also adding some degree of consistency across departments. Departments will clarify and document their definition of candidacy. Students do not begin to enroll in dissertation research hours (e.g. 699, 739, 799) until after admission to candidacy. Motion approved 35-0.
- Proposal to Change the Continuous Enrollment in 699 Hours policy. This proposal seeks to reduce the number of 699 or 739/799 hours a student must enroll in to maintain continuous enrollment once a student has reached the minimum number of dissertation hours needed for their degree program. The proposed policy will decrease the required minimum hours for continuous enrollment from three hours per semester to one hour per semester, after the student has reached the department’s minimum requirement. Prior to completing their required minimum number of 699 or 739/799 hours

¹ Subsequent note: this name change was subsequently vetoed at the OAA level, since last year’s change from Economics to Quantitative Economics is so recent; this request will be considered in a future year.

² Subsequent note: this name change was subsequently vetoed at the OAA level, since last year’s change from Economics to Quantitative Economics is so recent; this request will be considered in a future year.

for their degree, the student is still required to continuously enroll in at least three hours per semester. This proposal aims to reduce the financial burden on students. Motion approved 35-0.

- Proposal to Change the Minimum Number of 699 Hours. This proposal seeks to reduce the required minimum 699 hours that a student must complete in order to receive a PhD, from 24 to 18. This would help reduce the financial burden on self-funded students and could potentially accelerate time to degree completion. Programs can still set their own required minimum number of hours for dissertation completion. The number of hours is not as important as producing a quality dissertation. Students should understand that the minimum number of hours does not necessarily correlate to the quality of the dissertation. Motion approved 31-3.
- Proposal to Change Qualifications of the Graduate Faculty. This change would better reflect our status as an R1 institution and match our system peers. Change one is an expansion of “Full” status to renewable contract faculty in cases where a department feels is appropriate. Change two is eliminating the six-year expiration/renewal process for Full or Associate members. Change three is a revocation clause included in the newly revised Standards for Graduate Faculty Status. All policies will be laid out in the Graduate Catalog’s Standards for Graduate Faculty Status, and then in each program’s own Standards document. Departments will develop their agreed upon standards this fall, once OAA has approved the recommended changes. Motion approved 30-0.

No new reports from UA Faculty Senate.

No new business.

Meeting adjourned at 4:30 pm.