

## MINUTES OF THE GRADUATE COUNCIL

The University of Alabama

September 1, 2021

The regular meeting of the Graduate Council was held virtually via Zoom  
on Wednesday, September 1st, 2021 at 3:00 pm.

**Members Present:** Arthur Allaway, Blake Berryhill, Heather Carmack, Pat Carter, Jeffery Carver, Katherine Chiou, Susan Dewey, Seung Eun Jung, Bill Evans, Martin Evans, Allison Grant, Hilary Green, Peter Harms, Janie Hubbard, Paul Hubner, Sebreana Jackson, Kevin Kocot, Deidre Leaver-Dunn, Kristina McDonald, Dana Patton, Troy Pollard, Cecil Robinson, Nicole Ruggiano, Steve Shepard, Merinda Simmons, Brenda Smith, Wei Song, Firat Soyly, Peggy Swails, Miriam Sweeney, Nicole Swoszowski, Owen Tidwell, Teresa Welch, Mesut Yavuz, Lea Yerby

**Members Absent with Alternate:** Jeff Weddle

**Members Absent without Alternate:** Angela Benson, Kenon Brown, Daniel Riches

**Student Representative:** Dudley Moore

**Student Representative Absent without Alternate:** Quin Kelly

**Ex-officio Members Present:** James Dalton (Provost), Donald Gilstrap (Dean of Libraries), Jaber Abu Qahouq (Faculty Senate)

**Graduate School Representatives:** Susan Carvalho, Dean; André Denham, Associate Dean; Andrew Goodliffe, Associate Dean; 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:** Ginger Bishop, Robert Hayes, Carmen Jones, Sharif Melouk, Daniel Strickland

Provost Dalton opened the meeting with a few remarks, as is customary at the first meeting of the year. He said that he is very happy with the progress we are making in graduate education. We are doing our best to make life better for current graduate students and we are recruiting more students. We have increased some of our graduate student stipends to be more in line with our peers, and we hope to do more in the coming years. We have exceeded 6,000 graduate students for the first time. Our graduate students are split between

distance and main campus students. We are also trying to encourage more research and increase the number of Graduate Research Assistants. We have only 20% as many COVID cases this year as we did last year at this time. A low number of faculty have tested positive. Our vaccination rates and our masking policy seem to be giving us better results than fall 2020.

There were no questions from the Council members.

Dean Carvalho welcomed everyone, especially new members. She called for any corrections to the minutes of the March 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 concentration in Digital Communications inside the MA in Advertising and & Public Relations. The motion is approved 32-0.
  - Proposal for a concentration in Community Journalism within the MA in Journalism. This is the only concentration of its kind in the United States. All resources are already in place for this concentration. The motion is approved 29-0.
  - Proposal for a concentration in Sport Media within the MA in Journalism. This proposal seeks to formalize an area of research already existing in the program. No new resources will be required. The motion is approved 30-0.
- The Admissions & Recruitment Committee report was presented by committee chair Steve Shepard.
  - Proposal for a Computer Engineering (BCO-BS) and Electrical Engineering (MS) AMP program. The program has a minimum GPA of 3.3 and a maximum of 6 double counted hours. The motion is approved 30-0.
- The Graduate Academic Policy Committee report was presented by committee chair Dana Patton.
  - Proposed Change to Revalidation of Expired Credits Rule – The proposed policy would provide a way for a returning student to revalidate up to 50% of their expired required coursework, but only if the student can demonstrate currency of knowledge. The evaluation of currency will be evaluated by a faculty committee, and final approval will be made by the Dean of the Graduate School. The motion is approved 29-0.
  - Proposed Academic Fresh Start Policy – The proposed policy would provide former UA students with a GPA below 3.0 the opportunity to exclude all previous graduate work at UA from future GPA calculations. Students can apply for this one time only. Students must have not been enrolled in UA graduate classes for at least 36 consecutive months. Friendly amendments from Daniel Strickland 1) Remove language about “first semester” and replace with “once the student has fulfilled the 12-hour obligation with a 3.0 or higher.” This amendment ensures that students do not get their academic records cleared, and then never enroll. The Graduate School policy would match a similar policy at the undergraduate level. 2) In the 2<sup>nd</sup> full paragraph – where we say “...will not be included in calculations regarding

academic standing, grade-point-average, or eligibility for graduation” we should insert the phrase “earned hours” into that list of items. 3) Add the phrase “with the exception of any credit hours applied toward an existing degree, certificate, or credential” to the end of the first sentence of the second paragraph. The motion is approved with the friendly amendments 30-0.

- Andrew Goodliffe gave an update on the 699 continuous enrollment policy. There are potential tuition-revenue impacts to this potential policy change, and we are working with Student Account Services to further understand the impacts. A draft proposal is ready, but we are waiting for approval with regards to finances before sending the proposal back to the policy committee.
- Dana Patton offered a preview of policies that will be coming to Graduate Council in future months. They include Graduate Faculty status, virtual participation in defenses, definition of doctoral candidacy, coursework hours required for PhD, and as previously mentioned the 699 continuous enrollment policy.
- Teaching, Research & Service Awards Committee report by Katherine Chou.
  - Outstanding Graduate Mentor Award – This award recognizes the support that faculty provide to graduate students. Nominations are due September 30<sup>th</sup>. Our campus-wide winner will be sent on to the Council of Southern Graduate Schools Mentor Award competition.
  - Non-Traditional Thesis Award Nominations - The Council of Southern Graduate Schools offers awards this year in two categories – Life Sciences and Social Sciences, Business, and Education. The winner of UA’s 2021 Outstanding Thesis Award, Jonathan Tidwell from Anthropology, is our nominee for the latter category. Anne Mulholland from Kinesiology will be put forward as our nominee in the former category. There is a new category for Non-traditional Thesis/Project. We are looking for a UA nominee for this category. Faculty should watch for an announcement for this category.
- Fellowships and Scholarships Committee
  - No report at this time.

#### **Dean’s Office and Academic Affairs reports:**

- Andrew Goodliffe, Associate Dean
  - Fellowship Report – Summary of fellowship categories: Graduate Council Fellowships, National Alumni Association Fellowships, McNair Graduate Fellowships, and Capstone Graduate Council Fellowships. The deadline for current student fellowships will be in December 2021. There will be three deadlines for new students throughout the Spring 2022 semester. A more detailed email will be sent to faculty shortly.
  - Last year, we had an increase in nominations for all fellowship categories. Overall acceptance rates were strong with a significant increase in Capstone Graduate Council Fellowship acceptances. Increasing our stipends has produced a higher acceptance rate for the Graduate Council Fellowships. We are always looking for more nominations from departments that do not typically nominate.
  - We were able to do a special round of “writing fellowships” for students in their final years. This allowed us to fund 18 students for this academic year.
  - Applications, Admissions, and Enrollment – In general applications were up significantly for 2021. Most of the increases are for main campus programs. International application numbers have jumped significantly. It is important to compare numbers to 2019 because 2020 will always be a unique year due to COVID-19. We currently have the highest graduate enrollment UA has ever seen.

- André Denham, Associate Dean
  - GTA Workshop – We had our 35<sup>th</sup> annual new GTA Workshop. We had approximately 320 new GTAs attend the workshop.
  - Graduate Teaching Fellows (GTFs) Pilot – We are extending the roles of GTFs to include ongoing professional development beyond the two-day workshop. We have our first cohort of 12 students serving as GTFs. The plan is for them to deliver three to four workshops this fall.
  - GradACTS Essentials – We are working on establishing core competencies for graduate students. This is a forthcoming project with Director of Programming Tierney Jenkins.
  - Campus Career Influencer – This program identifies faculty and staff that have a compelling interest in the development of student career readiness as well as academic excellence. This is a partnership with the Career Center. There are a number of events for this program confirmed for the fall.
  - Career Center Resources – There are several resources available for students to pursue career networking opportunities virtually.
  - Tide Timeout – An initiative to support graduate student mental health and well-being needs. This is a partnership with the Counseling Center. The launch is coming soon.
  
- Susan Carvalho, Dean
  - Graduate Strategic Plan – We are working with Provost Dalton as he enters his second year in updating the 2015 campus-wide strategic plan. For the Graduate School- specific strategic plan, there are 5 committees working on the following five themes: the growth in professional/masters/certificate programs; growth in doctoral/research programs; inclusive excellence in recruitment, admission, and support; innovative program development and revision; graduate student success. Fifteen Graduate Council members volunteered to serve, five more members were nominated by the Faculty Senate, and ten additional members were nominated by deans. Each subcommittee has six members, and they will develop five to eight recommendations for action. One to two “most critical” actions will be chosen by each subcommittee to be keys to success. The work for this committee will be completed by the end of the Fall 2021 semester.

### **Standing University Committees Reports**

- None

### **New Business**

- None

Meeting Adjourned at 4:26 PM