



Graduate Council Meeting

Wednesday, March 15, 2023, 2:00-3:30 pm
[Zoom](#)

ATTENDEES: Steve Fetter, Jason Farman, Betsy Beise, David Van Horn, Debabrata Biswas, Douglas Julin, Edmond Shenassa, Eun Kyoung Choe, Henry Gittens, Jason Rudy, Joey Haavik, Jose Aranda-Espinoza, Laura Demaira, Leila De Floriani, Lorae Bomamy-Love, Maria Bustamante, Patrick Wohlfarth, Paul C. Turner, Paul Gold, Rob Wells, Stephen Mount, Yueming Qui, Lauren Cain, phone #008 (24)

GS Staff: Robyn Kotzker, Sparkle Lonesome, Teddy Wu, Blessing Enekewe, Fan Tsao, Brent Hernandez, Patty Woodwell, Waqeelat Gaji

AGENDA

1. Welcome
2. Approve [February 15, 2023, Graduate Council](#) meeting minutes
 - a. Approved.
3. Updates and announcements
 - a. gradSERU, opened February 27 and closes March 27
 - Hope all faculty will encourage students to complete the survey
 - b. [3MT](#) (three-minute thesis) reminder.
 - The deadline for registering has passed, looking forward to the college competition soon.
 - University-wide competition on April 19th at 1:00 pm, everyone is invited.
 1. In-person at Stamp in Charles Carroll Room
 2. Broadcast through Facebook Live.
 - c. Flagship, President's, and McNair fellowship update.
 - Moved through two rounds and made all award offers.
 - McNair
 1. Record number of nominations. Twice as many as in previous years, 13 total.
 2. With the support of the Provost, offered funding to all nominees.
 - Wylie
 1. Notifications will go out later today.
 - d. [Exceptional recruitment funds](#)
 - Providing matching funds for college providing enhancements for Ph.D. applicants who would improve diversity for programs.
 - DGS are providing nominations.
 - Ongoing.
 - e. DGS/CGS Office hours, Tuesday, April 11, 2 pm (virtual)



- Brent is facilitating, and topics will be led by participants who have questions, etc.
 - Follow-up from DGS/CGS Orientation.
 - f. Graduate School Writing Center's [upcoming workshops](#).
 - [Preparing for Conferences series](#).
 - [Developing as an Academic Writer series](#).
 - g. [Sloan Foundation call for pre-proposals](#): Sloan Center for Systemic Change
 - GS Priority is highlighting, lifting up, and emphasizing faculty mentoring of graduate student research.
 - URM Ph.D. students - lower completion rate, longer time to degree.
 - Sloan Foundation has called for proposals but needs 8 STEM programs to participate.
 - Evelyn is leading this effort
 - \$250k in the first stage for a pilot program. If Successful: upon review, a larger amount for a longer amount of time.
 - If you're in a STEM program and would like to participate, please contact Evelyn or the Associate Dean of your college
 - h. Graduate Student Appreciation Week, April 3-7
 - [Graduate Research Appreciation Day \(GRAD\)](#), April 5.
 - i. Reviewing some of the campus mentorship statements and mentorship templates.
 - Jason has been in touch with colleges/schools.
 - Looking to get drafts/revisions in by end of Spring 2023.
 - All programs with thesis/dissertation attached should have this in place by end of Spring 2023.
 - Using in combination with GradSERU results to make awards to recognize programs for excellence in mentoring.
 1. Q1: How will the awards work?
 2. Answer: doing this internally in the GS
 - j. Doctoral Career Pathways Conference May 3-5
4. Discussions
- a. Health Insurance
 - Background:
 1. Renegotiate SHIP premiums, no long-term price set. Claims going up, the insurer would like to raise rates. Concern about the increase in rates.
 2. Several years ago, GC decided to require Health ins for all grad students
 - a. Similar req for undergraduates, but undergrads have a hard waiver process.
 - b. Billed for SHIP, it shows up on the bill, if they want the charge removed, have to show proof of insurance.



- c. Have not done this for students. Flat rate, grad students pay the same rate as an undergrad, but not a hard waiver.
 3. Insurers can offer lower premiums with a hard waiver.
 - a. 10,000 grad students (except 6,000 GAs) will be automatically charged and have to submit proof of insurance for the waiver.
 4. Grad student participants in SHIP are using health ins more so than undergrads.
 - a. A Separate rate for grad students?
 - b. An increased rate significantly may have less uptake and more uninsured students.
 5. GS began to pay the full cost of SHIP for all fellows. Premiums increasing has an effect on the GS budget.
 - a. Not clear that GS can continue to pay 100% of the premium for fellows if rates keep increasing.
 6. Would like to tell Provost we'd like to keep a flat rate for all students.
 - a. The effect in practice is undergrads pay a higher rate.
 - b. Community benefit: increasing # of students who have health insurance.
 - c. Grad students, to exchange for this, could agree to a hard waiver, which would impose a burden.
 7. There would be a date beyond which the charge cannot be removed, which could create complications.
- Discussion
 1. Q1: Is there any way to get concrete numbers on these different possible options?
 - a. Yes, have asked and provided those numbers to Joey and GSG team, soft numbers, though.
 - b. No change in policy, premiums increase by 12% for all students
 - c. If agree to a hard waiver for grad students, the increase is only 9%.
 - d. Premium is currently \$2233/year.
 - e. Split undergrad and grad, combined with a hard waiver:
 - i. UG: \$2000
 - ii. GS: \$3000
 2. GSG President Comments: had a chance to talk to SGA about this, they need more conversation on their end.
 - a. Healthcare costs should be healthcare costs regardless of usage based on univ populations.
 - b. SGA Exec team: don't feel it's correct to have split rates between UG and GR students.
 - c. Waiting for a formalized vote from SGA.



- d. In terms of the waive-out process, this puts some responsibility in the hands of grad students and also could be framed as agency to go through this relatively easy process.
 - i. Pretty easy ask, esp if it brings down the cost considerably.
 - ii. Probably generally supported and seems tenable.
- e. Trying to understand if students have the ability to waive the process after they've been billed.
 - i. Q: If something hits bill, is that the antenna to say "no, not for me" in case they're ignoring emails?
 - ii. A: Would hit the bill early in the summer, deadline to waive is Sept 15th, but we are generous with a grace period beyond that. Would be grateful for broader support.
3. Comments: agrees with GSG statement, all predicated upon the importance of mandate in the first place. Doesn't seem like a big ask for grad students to take that step.
4. Q2: By opting out, you mean without alternative health insurance, correct? So you are essentially talking about the graduate students who can least afford insurance giving it up so the majority pay lower prices?
 - a. No, the only opt-out is to show proof of health insurance. Currently, if they fail to submit that info, we don't automatically enroll in SHIP and bill. That is what we would now be doing with this change.
 - b. Under the age of 26, they can utilize their parents' health insurance or spouse's insurance.
5. Comment:
 - a. 3+1 undergrad students taking graduate courses are treated differently.
6. Q3: If we go for a hard waiver requirement, what is the process, and will our systems be able to handle the additional workload?
 - a. The same process as for undergrads.
 - b. Students would go to the website and fill out the form
 - c. Easy for domestic students.
 - d. One reason for concern: more difficult for international students with international plans and for the administrator to verify, documents may be in a different language + need translation, never seen plan before, and might not meet standards for coverage.
 - e. If an international student believes they are covered, but it does not meet standards, e.g. coverage for hospitalization.



- f. The requirement only applies to students enrolled in in-person programs, NOT online-only programs. That would continue.
- b. [Leave of Absence policy](#)
- Background
 1. [GSG Resolution](#) to amend the Leave of Absence policy.
 2. LOA is for 1 semester or longer, with limited circumstances to be granted, otherwise, expect continuous registration.
 3. Heard students are reluctant to take LOA.
 - a. Health insurance for GAs - on LOA, can't hold assistantship nor retain state health ins, end up losing their state health ins and stipend.
 - b. Take a leave of absence due to a health issue but then lose the insurance needed to treat the said issue.
 - c. Only option: is COBRA, expensive, over \$6000/year, barriers.
 4. This led us to produce the document linked above, an additional guidance document.
 - a. Sent a version out in a newsletter to grad students to try and encourage students who need LOA to take one.
 5. GSG passed the resolution above to consider modifications to the LOA policy.
 - a. Already provide time away from duties for GAs to be used for sick leave, which could be longer at the discretion of the supervisor.
 - b. Parental accommodation.
 6. How long can a student be absent from the classroom, GA appt, without taking an LOA?
 - Discussion
 1. GSG comments:
 - a. Reluctance around grad students taking LOA, significant drawbacks.
 - b. 1-2 semester basis, 1-3 12-week terms.
 - c. Opportunities for something shorter than that? Half semester? Longer? More than a year to recover?
 - d. Request for the student to be enrolled for 1 full semester before LOA.
 - i. 1st semester LOA questions, esp around mental health concerns and challenges, acclimation phase at the start.
 - e. Response: Simone handles, we are pretty permissive, require indication from a healthcare provider that person can continue. Don't want it to be completely open-ended, at some point, the continuity of study has been lost.



- i. 1st semester: usually just defer admission. Wipe the semester out, and defer admission (if early enough).
 - ii. Discussed with Provost, and her assessment was that it's really problematic to provide more than 2 weeks of leave for parental accommodation, 6 weeks of leave in the semester, and still maintain student status. Lots of time missed in a semester and GAship. The semester is only 15 weeks long, at what point have you lost so much time that you were really absent.
 - iii. Faculty could cope with a 6-week absence but then need a new GA and may not have money for that.
2. Question: Some students in mid-semester want to go home because their parent is dying, never know how long they'll be gone. What do we tell them?
 - a. Answer: retroactive LOA would cancel that semester. Remain in the course, then negotiate that with every instructor. Not a uniform absence policy for grad students. For GAs, discuss with a supervisor. Require 2 weeks of time away from duty, and more could be up to the supervisor.
3. Comment: Know of a TA whose professor had to go home because their parent is dying, TA is not being supported. No faculty is stepping in. This happens on both sides, grad students being taken advantage of, unpaid?
 - a. Answer: Volunteer TAing is prohibited. If a student wishes to teach w/o a GA appointment and wants teaching experience, they can ask for permission, but it has to come from the student. We want to protect students from being pressured into serving as a TA without any compensation. If you are aware of that, may want to bring this policy to their attention.
 - b. Leaves for faculty and graduate assistants are supposed to be collegially supported within your category. The chair of the dept must identify someone to take over the role if a faculty member leaves. That should be brought to the Chair, not fall on the student/GA.
4. Question: How does the leave of absence program we may enforce interact with foreign student visa restrictions?
 - a. Answer: A student visa may run out or expire. Probably need to go through new F-1
 - b. ISSS should work with the student, webpage about this on ISSS site.



(<https://globalmaryland.umd.edu/offices/international-student-scholar-services/leave-absence-and-reenrollment>)

- c. Not seen as a barrier to LOA.
 5. GSG comment: To point out deferring 1st semester would still run into issues with health insurance and stipend.
 - a. Answer: right now, the health insurance administrator doesn't have a list of students. If moving to a hard waiver process, they would have a list of enrolled grad students, updated each semester, still TBD.
 - i. Might be a process that becomes in place if the hard waiver process happens
 6. Steve: Open to ideas on how to make LOA policy more effective.
 - a. How best to support students so they don't feel like they need to remain in class, struggling if they need help
 7. GSG Question: Talking to students, what potential there might be for a Zoom LOA? Where folks talk to GA supervisors and professors to continue with work/class, but from the safety of zoom? E.g. traveling out of state for a sick relative, or mental health concerns, zoom can provide a nice shelter.
 - a. Answer:: may need to go through requesting accommodation, and the supervisor can work out what needs a reasonable approach.
 8. Comment: There are going to be classes/duties that are not possible to do remotely. Putting under ADS, where you put pressure on someone to develop a zoom option for the course, duplicating for one student may not always be appropriate.
 - a. Answer: going through ADS provides a resource to negotiate and advocate instead of having faculty remediate on their own.
- c. Honor Board Sanctions for violations of [Code of Academic Integrity](#). Continue discussion (from 2/3/23) of academic integrity and support for academic preparations.
- “The normal sanction for a graduate student is the grade of “XF” and dismissal (suspension or expulsion) from the University.”
 - Of 111 cases in which graduate students were found responsible for violations of the Code of Academic Integrity, only 9 (8%) resulted in suspension.
 - Change policy to conform with practice or practice to conform with policy? See [Senate Bill 21-22-22](#).
 - Violations related to GA duties: “GAs who are charged with any violation of the Code of Academic Integrity, the Code of Student Conduct, another University policy, or with a criminal offense may be suspended from their



positions while the charges against them are pending. Students found responsible for any such violation or offense may be terminated."

■ Background

1. OSC are the ones considering revisions to policy/sanctions. Steve relayed the views of the Grad Council and Associate Deans (DGS/CGS more split) that grad students should retain the possibility of dismissal for serious violations of these codes.
 - a. Talked about what constitutes a serious violation, plagiarism on a thesis/dissertation, cheating on a Ph.D. exam, etc.
 - b. Agreed that dismissal should be the normal sanction.
2. Visa status and health insurance should not be mitigating factors.
3. For violations related to GA duties, fabrication of data/grades in RA/TA should be GA sanctions, terminate GAship, not sure if should be in the code, GS policy, etc.
4. Waiting for them to draft their revisions, maybe at the next Senate meeting

■ Discussion

1. Comment: revision will probably be at the April 26th meeting, not clear yet, but likely not April 4th meeting.
 - a. The last Grad Council meeting is 2nd week of April.
 - b. Revisions are usually close to about a week before the Senate meeting, which might not be soon enough for the last grad council meeting.

5. New and Future Business