



Graduate Council Meeting Minutes

Monday, September 11, 2023

10:00-11:30 am

[Zoom](#)

ATTENDANCE

Attendees: Edmond Shenassa, Alexis Lothian, Autumn Dawn Perkey, Chris Ellis, Christina Getrich, David Van Horn, Evelyn Claire King-Marshall, Jeffery B. Klauda, Ryan O'Grady, Lauren Cain, Hiro Iseki, Janet Walkoe, Jason Rudy, Jillian Rothschild, Ken Elpus, Leila De Floriani, Lucy Qiu, Maria Cecilia Bustamante, Ernest Calvo, Souradip Chakraborty, Stephen Mount, Thomas Cohen, Min Wang
(23 voting members)

GS Staff: Steve Roth, Evelyn Cooper, Jason Farman, Sparkle Lonesome, Kate Oravec, Christopher Perez, Fan Tsao, Yi Hao, Linda Macri, Patty Woodwell, Blessing Enekwe, Simone Warrick Bell, Maria Palmaira, Heather Kissinger, Brent Hernandez, Robyn Kotzker, Henry Gittens, Michelle Tan, Matthew Nesson, Will Reed, Betsy Beise
(19)

AGENDA Minutes

1. Welcome new Graduate Council Members:
 - AGNR: Christopher Ellis
 - ARCH: Hiroyuki Iseki
 - ARHU: Alexis Lothian
 - ARHU: Jessica Gatlin
 - BSOS: Ernesto Calvo
 - CMNS: Thomas Cohen
 - EDUC: Janet Walkoe
 - EDUC: Min Wang
 - ENGR: Jeff Klauda
 - SPHL: Evelyn King-Marshall
 - Graduate Student Life: Nishant Patel
 - Autumn Perkey, GSG President (EDUC)
 - Jillian Rothschild, GSG VPAA (BSOS)
 - Saikumar Reddy Yeduguru, graduate student, ENGR
 - Souradip Chakraborty, graduate student, CMNS
 - Lauren Cain, graduate student, ARHU
2. Approve [April 17, 2023 Council Meeting Minutes](#)
 - Approved with no recommended changes.
3. Announcements
 - What is the [Graduate Council](#)?
 - Policy advisory making body overlooking graduate standards.



- It has a few sub-committees, and is in the process of creating one for fellowships and awards.
- Grad PCC is a sub-committee, which looks at any new programs proposed at the university, and pushes them through the approval process.
- Dean's overarching priorities (student well-being and success; grad program demographics/retention; diverse career mentoring)
 - Help faculty become better mentors to students.
 - Only 40% of doctoral students move into academia. Others head to industry, governmental sectors.
 - Couple with career and professional development opportunities.
 - Non-credit career development courses on Canvas (see details and links below).
 - Grad program demographics/retention:
 - Aim to close the gap in graduation rates, especially for historically marginalized populations.
 - Enhance enrollment of graduate students so that it reflects the demographics of the state of Maryland.
- Graduate School staffing updates: post doctoral associate, fellowship manager, Assistant Director for business operations, and business coordinator positions searches in progress.
 - Few vacant positions listed above, and the searches are getting started.
 - There have been delays in finance/admin processing since we have 2 people doing jobs of 5 people; thanks for your patience.
- DGS/CGS Orientation, August 29, [presentation slides and video HERE](#)
 - Recording on Spring 2023 orientation
 - Orientation will be held every semester
 - New and existing DGS/CGS welcome
 - Drop-in hours to be scheduled during semester
- New Graduate Noncredit Classes via OES
 - [Doctoral Career Design](#) (Yi Hao)
 - Pilot, non-credit course
 - Helps doctoral students for self-assessment for career-thinking process
 - Guided by their interests, skills, and values
 - Topics to explore: What careers are suitable for PhD, networking, managing their career, how to decipher job postings
 - About 30 students currently enrolled, offered every semester
 - Good for doctoral students in second year or beyond
 - [Improv to Improve Communication](#) (Linda Macri)
 - Pilot, non-credit course through OES, previously under TLTC
 - Live and in-person, begins 26 Sept, 10-week, meets Tuesdays
 - Offering more in Spring. If you have ideas, contact Linda!
- Strategic planning forthcoming
 - To be in alignment with Fearlessly Forward
 - Goal to be broad with stakeholders, GC, DGS/CGS, Grad Faculty



- Support campus strategic plan
 - GS will follow up with additional details.
- April 15 Resolution (we are [signatories](#))
 - CGS (Council of Graduate Schools)
 - GS across the country: offer of admission with a financial offer, cannot retract offer of financial assistance until after April 15th.
 - Cannot give an earlier deadline for graduate applicants to accept or decline offer than April 15th.
- SCOTUS admissions update
 - Actions GS is taking:
 - Key Takeaway and Reminder: UMD remains absolutely committed to ensuring that we are attracting, enrolling, supporting, retaining, and graduating a diverse population of graduate students in world-class programs.
 - Applicants still enter race/ethnicity data in the application portal.
 - a. Shielded from reviewers until after admission cycle ends
 - b. Can then be used for retention programming
 - Three new Personal Experience questions
 - a. Applicants must answer 1
 - b. Speak to different elements of personal experience, contextualize their academic record
 - c. Community engagement, leadership, overcome personal challenges
 - Developing a Holistic admissions training program for all faculty/staff who are part of training project
 - a. Asynchronous, online on Canvas
 - b. Best practices on holistic admission review, understanding where implicit bias can enter the application review process
 - c. How to use the new questions, breadth of materials in application
 - d. Selecting academically qualified students, and diverse perspectives/experiences
 - e. DGS/CGS tasked with providing names of reviews in-program to undergo this training
 - Diversity yields better educational opportunities for all students
 - Awaiting guidance from MD Office of Attorney General about related activities
 - Funding, Pres Fellowship, SROP
 - Unsure how those programs will be affected.
 - May need to come to GS, GSG, for decisions on how to move forward. GS will keep these groups updated.
 - Send any SCOTUS questions to grad-scotus@umd.edu.
- Steve is looking to move Graduate Council meetings to hybrid or in-person in the future.
- [Postdoc Research Symposium](#)
 - Part of National Postdoc Appreciation Week, Sept 18-22



- Poster sessions, other presentation opportunities, happy hour
 - [Call to faculty judges](#) - forward form to any faculty interested in serving as a judge for this symposium.
4. Discussions
- Intro
 - Policies to create equity around the student experience.
 - Test-drive policies at CADGE as well.
 - Chat about ideas around policy shifts, understand implications of policy shifts.
 - [Time Extensions](#)
 - Notes/Context:
 - Confusion on how many extensions doctoral students have when they run out of time.
 - 5 years to achieve candidacy, then 4 years post-candidacy.
 - Allows for 3 possible extensions – unclear how many before vs. after candidacy
 - a. Spirit of policy: 3 total, not 3 before and 3 after
 - b. Suggested language: 3 extensions during time as a graduate student.
 - Question 1: Alexis Lothian - During COVID, time extensions were automatically granted for those whose progress was affected.
 - Answer: Those under COVID time extensions do not count under this.
 - Would address that as unique if any concern about a student's academic progress and completing degree.
 - Question 2: Tom Cohen - Has a concern, every so often, a student is having difficulty, but then finally gets back on track, but then their advisor leaves. 7th year student. Truly out of academics, what do they do?
 - Answer: Typically, historically, almost all policies build in escape hatches for unique situations and exceptional circumstances.
 - Rare circumstance is the third extension.
 - a. Triggers are then set off in terms of documentation to provide.
 - Question 3: Autumn Perkey - Requests that the GS consider pushing to four or six extensions. COVID is still affecting everything, even if someone wasn't given a COVID-specific extension. Bringing in diversity, students who are parents, different economic backgrounds, first generation students; these populations may need more extensions.
 - Question 4: Alexis Lothian - Have diverse cohorts in many categories, have had quite a number of students have more than 3 extensions. COVID as an example of structural circumstances, like illness, disability, family support, conditions people have lived in for a long time. Agree at some point there has to be a hard stop. Sure, it looks bad for time to degree, but for particular cases, most of them are from historically marginalized populations. Loophole is needed.



- Jason quick question: What happens to those students with 3+ extensions in terms of department funding?
 - a. Alexis: Depends on teaching needs a lot of the time. They could get teaching if there is a need for teaching. Probably could not offer as much as they used to. Many have had funding from other sources. Typically not funding, past guaranteed. Could be eligible.
- Steve counterpoint: Concern that students who are not on assistantships are being stretched or possibly abused to stay in programs longer when less likely to be successful. How to balance this?
- Autumn Perkey - 60% of students not entering academia anymore. Can leverage this by helping students understand other local opportunities that exist for funding.
- Question 5: Hiro Iseki - In some cases, students see a committee member/chair passing away. How would GS handle this issue in relation to time extension?
 - Answer: This is addressed in advisor policy for units.
- Question 6: Evelyn King - How does this policy compare to others in BTAA? After 3 are you cut off, or can you apply for an exception?
 - Answer: We don't have a BTAA comparison, could get a comparison if there is a concern if we want to pause voting.
 - Answer to 2nd question: When a student does not achieve candidacy in 5 years, they'd apply for extensions. If they achieve candidacy on time, then they can complete degree in 7 years post candidacy.
- Question 7: Alexis Lothian - Two new hires from the UC system didn't know how to handle continuous enrollment requirement. Their experience is that grad students unenrolled for a while, and then come back w/o formal LOA at UC. Maybe make continuous enrollment requirements less stringent to address this instead.
 - Jason suggestion: Can add language as escape hatch "unless approved by the Graduate School."
 - Tom Cohen: Leave previous language in place: Under normal circumstances, GS will not approve additional extensions except under extraordinary circumstances. That allows for the prospect of "abnormal".
 - Ken Elpus: Suggest adding "ordinarily".
- Question 8: Autumn Perkey - Has analysis on department requirements to advance to candidacy been done to compare to GS requirements?
 - Answer: Ongoing conversation in GS for benchmarking to achieve candidacy on time.
- Question 9: Matt Nessian - The longer it takes to complete the dissertation, the further removed from coursework the student could become.
 - Answer: Departments do not validate coursework beyond 5 years.
- Vote: Passed
 - Yes: 82%



- No: 9%
- Abstain: 9%
- Inclusion of Credit
 - Notes/Context:
 - There are limitations on how many credits to apply to your degree (6) if transferring credit from another university.
 - If Inclusion of Credit at UMD: Anything that is relevant to the degree being switched to, and the department feels that the credits apply to the new degree, then you can bring all those credits over with no limitations.
 - a. This is different from transfer of credit from a different university.
 - Question 1: Ken Elpus - What is the reason for bifurcating Non-Degree Seeking Students (NDSS)?
 - Steve: Recollection is that NDSS don't have to go through the full admissions process. This still requires that they would go through the full admissions process.
 - Ken update: Traditionally offered courses for teachers in Summer. This became a pool to recruit into the Music master's program.
 - Matthew Nesson: Is it equitable to relegate non-degree seeking students to a credit limit and open it up to degree-seeking students?
 - a. Patty says to write an email to Teddy to address this question.
 - b. Jason will also follow up for more clarity.
 - Question 2: Jillian Rothschild - Is there any sort of guidance for helping departments decide whether or not it should be included? Departments might not want to include credits just because they shouldn't?
 - Answer: Rely and lean on department to make those judgment calls. Danger with GS arbiting disciplinary-related calls, "you do need to include this." Leaving autonomy with units is best. GS is always here for when there is a dispute; student could use grievance procedure and/or Ombudsman procedures, to allow for a conversation for GS to weigh in.
 - Question 3: Tom Cohen - Yes, GS shouldn't make final call, but do worry about leaving this to the department, i.e. the Graduate Director. There should be procedural guidance rather than specific case guidance.
 - Jason follow up question: There is business procedure for transfer credits established in unit, is it usable for inclusion?
 - Question 4: Jillian Rothschild - Agree, it would be helpful for GS to create a guide for how to evaluate classes for transfer/inclusion credits.
 - Jason interested in surveying DGS/CGS meeting, conversation around best practices.
 - Vote: Passed
 - Yes: 86%
 - No: 5%
 - Abstain: 9%



- [Credit by Examination](#). How can this policy be adapted to be useful for your programs and alternative approaches to credits / learning?
 - Notes/Context:
 - Student comes in with significant work/life experience; an entry-level graduate seminar may be redundant. Department can waive that requirement, and replace it with an elective better for student's needs and use of time.
 - Allows 400-level course as part of program's previously approved curriculum
 - There is a ton of confusion around this; people asking for this, then realizing it's not applicable to their program.
 - Question 1: Jillian Rothschild - Is the 400-level typically Masters?
 - Answer: It's an upper level undergrad course, senior-level as part of curriculum. Some PCC programs have that as part of their approval.
 - Question 2: Evelyn King - "Not generally available"; what does this mean? 400-level is typically an elective. They could take a test for that elective and it would count for a program?
 - Answer: Yes, a student could test out of those credits. "Not generally available" is an escape hatch: specific circumstance GS should consider leave open possibility of program petitioning for 600-level. Can consider, but not typical.
 - Question 3: Maria Bustamante - If Jason's initial impulse is to scratch the policy, then why have it?
 - Answer: The policy has existed for decades, and has existed for a purpose. Mostly out of the legacy of the policy, someone might be using it. Does changing the wording allow us to consider different possibilities of usage rather than denying outright? GS opening up space for students to pull in life/work experience that is credit-worthy?
 - Alternative learning for students.
 - Question 4: Tom Cohen - An equity question; suppose the student is a UMD student, and took 400-level as UG degree, applied to GS program, the course could in principle count to GS program. Someone takes the same course at OSU, asks to do credit by exam. OSU student gets credit, UMD student does not?
 - Answer: Both denied. Both cases, any credit applied towards a degree is denied. Department should be able to identify that knowledge base drawing from is part of the previous degree, and should not be able to test out.
 - Question 5: Evelyn King - This is a fine line, asking department to look carefully at prior degree to ensure the knowledge is from work/experience and not the undergrad degree. Is there a cap on the number of credits by exam?
 - Answer: 12 for non-thesis, 6 for thesis.
 - Question 6: Henry Gittens - "Not generally allowed"; he has one now. Waiver, would that be a waiver of regulation? Does this go to GS first?



- Answer: Yeah, the standard approach is WR for 600+ level. Have not yet encountered a request that cannot be solved by the department waiving that requirement and replacing it with another course.
- Second part - Jason will look into it.
- Question 7: Matt Nesson - Revision has helped the questions that come through OES in the past. Primarily are 600+ level, very few programs with 400-level.
- Question 8: Steve Roth - If we were to remove policy, some other workaround that such a unique, rare request could come through other policies? Should we reduce confusion, and leave the door open?
 - Answer: Not that we're aware of. Maybe something needs to be designed, a new policy written that meets needs and is less confusing? This is the start of that.
- Jason: Maybe put it to a vote for now, and then chat with departments about their needs and see if something else can be put together. To continue discussion about bigger reasons?
- Vote: Passed
 - Yes: 78%
 - No: 17%
 - Abstain: 6%