



GRADUATE COUNCIL Meeting Notes

Wednesday, April 15, 2020 from 9:00-10:30 via Zoom

Attendees: Fetter (chair), Sayer (co-chair), Avilez, Beise, Cohen, Carpenter, Dawkins, Enriquez, Fernandez, Green, Jarzynski, Kirmani, Klauda, Kleman, Lawley, Lewis, Liu, McIver, Rabenhorst, Roberts, Segura, Shea, Slater, Sprinkle, Strausser, Taboada Barber, Waguespack, Washington, Xie, Zhu

New Members: Laura DeMaria, Abhijit Dasgupta, Lindsey May, Paul Turner, Alex Williams

1. Welcome, announcements, and discussion

a. Thank you to exiting members and welcome to our new members!

- i. Thank you to everyone who served on the Graduate Council! We thanked previous members and welcomed new members. A roster of all current Graduate Council members can be found here:
<https://gradschool.umd.edu/about-us/advisory-boards-and-councils/graduate-council>. We will update this with the new fall 2020 members closer to the start of the semester.

b. GAAC meeting debrief

- i. The major concerns presented at the meeting were related to funding and time to degree.
- ii. Their concerns were very similar to what was brought up at the community meetings (see below).

c. Community meetings debrief

- i. Wed 4/8: Master's (9am), doctoral (10am), and international (11am): Two key concerns raised by students: 1) Anxiety and uncertainty about funding and 2) concern about time to degree.
- ii. Dean Fetter explained that graduate assistants are not part of the hiring freeze. We expect programs to honor all written commitments that were made to students. If a student has an offer in writing, it should continue on as planned.
- iii. **Student Crisis Fund**: Many attendees had questions about the fund and their eligibility. There has been a lot of student demand for this fund and UMD is trying to get more funds. **Note that graduate students are eligible for the crisis fund.**
- iv. Time to Degree: Students wanted automatic extension for deadlines for all students, but that would have been difficult to do (modifying 10,000 student records individually). Programs should support extensions for students who need more time due to COVID19. The Graduate School will approve these extensions. See <https://gradschool.umd.edu/coronavirus/frequently-asked-questions>.

- v. Recordings of the community meetings will be posted when captioned: gradschool.umd.edu/coronavirus/frequently-asked-questions
- d. Questions on S/F policy?
 - i. We have moved to [satisfactory/fail grading](#) for graduate students for Spring 2020. The Graduate School consulted with Deans, Associate Deans and student groups to discuss their concerns with this grading method.
 - ii. The threshold for Satisfactory grading is C- or higher.
 - iii. Any student can opt to receive a letter grade, but the grades will default to S/F. The system to make that selection should roll out tomorrow or Friday.
- e. COVID-19 questions/concerns? Feedback on the Graduate School's COVID-19 response so far?
 - i. More significant funding will come from the CARES Act. The University should receive its first allocation of over \$10m in emergency grants for eligible students. Graduate students will be eligible for these allocated funds. We will be announcing how the funds will be allocated by the end of this week (April 13).

2. Fall 2020 & beyond

- i. Plan is classes will be in person - no date set by which a decision will be made as to whether classes will be online. Please note that a decision about this will not be made anytime soon. However, all constituents will be informed of any decisions.
- ii. New international students may not get a visa in time for fall because visa processing is suspended by the state department. Currently, there is no date which this processing will resume. Three weeks ago we asked programs to think about how to help international students coming in fall. Options include: defer admission to Spring 2021 or Fall 2021, or you could also offer online instruction to students. If all classes are online in fall, then impact should be minimal on international students. If we return to in person classes, programs should consider whether to create new online sections for international students who cannot come to campus
- iii. We will offer fellowship to substitute for tuition remission for new students who cannot utilize their GA appointment.
- iv. We are moving forward as planned with the new admission system. We are on track to use the new system for the next application cycle. Training will be available in May. We will follow up with you with more information.
- v. Workshops available in May and June for faculty who are designing online courses - keepteaching.umd.edu for more details .
- b. [April 15 deadline](#)
 - i. Following guidance from the Council of Graduate Schools, the April 15 Resolution remains in effect for applicants admitted to University of Maryland graduate programs. Specifically, applicants who received offers of financial support have until April 15 to decide on whether to accept the offer. Graduate programs can make offers of admission and of financial support after April 15, as long as the decision deadline is after April 15, 2020.
- c. Tuition fellowships
- d. English proficiency testing

- i. ETS now has an online based TOEFL for all countries except China and Iran. MEI expects to be able to deliver a different version of the TOEFL in China, beginning next week.
3. Action - Proposed Leave of Absence (LOA) policy: Allows financial concerns to be a reason for LOA. We were already doing this in practice so now the policy will match our practice.
 - a. Drafted in consultation with Graduate Academic Counselor, Simone Warrick-Bell.
 - b. Simone will review all LOA requests - this is a shift in process.
 - c. Approved unanimously by 28 councilors.
4. Action - Advisor policy (see attached GS policy, sample unit policy): Provost requested this policy and as a result the Grad School formed a working group. This drafted policy is flexible. In situations where there is no mutual agreement, this policy provides guidelines to use to help with changing an advisor. Once there is an agreement, the policy requires a transition agreement. Minimally, students should be funded for the rest of the semester (or summer). It is incumbent on the program to make sure the student is still funded for this time.
 - a. The idea is that the student should not be without funding. If a new advisor is able to pick up funding for the student, then that should happen. We cannot force an advisor to fund a student from an external grant, but we are trying to set moral guidelines.
 - b. Students should be given at least a month's notice if funding is ending/changing
 - c. Sometimes funding ends because of a student not making progress. These guidelines remain in place for those situations.
 - d. Some councilors asked about defining what an advisor is for students. However, defining an advisor is difficult, and can work differently among graduate programs. We are leaving it open. Sometimes it is the faculty member facilitating the 799 or 899 section.
 - e. We want to protect the students from unhelpful/abusive advisors and we are mindful of the language in this policy.
 - f. This policy does not guarantee a new advisor but it does require a discussion to be had. The best we can do is facilitate a discussion on funding and possibility of a new advisor.
 - g. Suggestion to clarify consequences of students not meeting expectations vs. advisor not meeting expectations.
 - h. Brooke was noting the specific comments of the councilors and will share those edits with the working group. Once the working group finalizes, it will be distributed to the Graduate Council for a vote. All voting members will vote on changes hopefully in the next week.
5. Faculty mentoring circles:
 - a. This is targeted towards 8-10 new faculty.
 - b. They will meet 1-2 times per semester and the group would be led by a senior faculty member who had been awarded a Mentor of the Year Award from the Graduate School. This would elevate the importance of Graduate Student mentoring.
 - c. This is our first initiative toward increasing awareness of best practices of good and effective mentoring.
6. Ph.D. student support and student success
 - a. The Graduate School completed a study between PhD student support and student success. Dean Fetter showed slides that were distributed with the meeting materials. Dean Fetter completed the study with his graduate assistant, Tianqi Gan.
 - b. The main research question was: "What is the relationship between financial support and success."

- c. Dean Fetter discussed the study details, which are included in the slides distributed ahead of the meeting.
- d. Main findings of this study:
 - i. Increasing support from 0-2 years to 3 years of full support increases probability of graduation by 20-30%.
 - ii. Increasing support from 3 years to 4-5 years of full support increases probability of graduation by an additional 20-30%.
 - iii. Increasing support from 0-2 years to 3 years of full support decreases time to degree by about 1 year.
 - iv. Increasing support from 3 years to 4-5 years of full support decreases time to degree by about an additional 2 years.
 - v. No evidence of significant differences between college or large problems in effect of financial support on graduate rate or time to degree.
 - vi. Moral imperative on programs to only admit students who can be fully supported for at least 3 years. Programs should consider how they are supporting students and how many students they can actually support through their graduate career.
 - vii. They controlled for gender and if the student was international. We can do more analysis to determine any relationships between funding and gender.
 - viii. You can share these slides with your programs. We will make these details available and will discuss with DGSs
 - ix. We do not know causation - we are open to suggestions to identify causality.
- e. Dean Fetter wants to inform policy with the best available data that is available.

The meeting adjourned at 10:20.

This was the final meeting of the semester. We will be in touch with scheduling the meetings for the next academic year. Thank you to everyone who has served!

These minutes were unanimously approved at the 10/13/2020 Graduate Council Meeting.