

1 **Meeting Minutes of the Graduate Council**

2 **Date:** March 11, 2025

3 **Location:** Alumni Center Board Room

4
5 **Members Present**

6 Nathan Rabalais (MODL - Chair), Ashlie Boelkins (ARCH), Gracie Babineaux (Grad Student Rep,
7 PhD EESC), Brian Bolton (ECFN), Wesley Bradford (MUSC), Beenish Chaudhry (CMIX), Mary Farmer-
8 Kaiser (Graduate School, ex-officio), Raju Gottumukkala (MCHE), Nicholas Kooyers (BIOL), Robin
9 Koytcheff (MATH), Christy Lenahan (NURS), Amanda Mayeaux (EDFL), Catherine Roche-Wallace
10 (MUSC), Laurel Ryan (ENGL), Meng-Ru Shih (CJUS), Frances Stueben (NURS), and Mark Zappi
11 (CHEE),.

12
13 **Guests Present**

14 Andrea Bonin (HR Business Partner), David Khey (Department Head, Criminal Justice), Ani
15 Kokobobo (Dean College of Liberal Arts), Paul Leberg (Associate Dean, Graduate School), Teresa
16 LeDay (Title IX Coordinator)

17
18 **Members Absent**

19 Marietta Adams (EDCI), Elena Babatsouli (CODI), Josh Bendickson (MGMT), Farzad Ferdowsi
20 (EECE), Natalie Keefer (EDCI), Clement Okolo (GSO President, PhD CMPS), Javier Portillo-Elias
21 (ECFN), Scott Sittig (HLSI), Peng Yin (MCHE), and Rui Zhang (GEOS).

22
23 **I. Call to Order**

24 The meeting was called to order by Nathan Rabalais, chair, at 2:05 PM.

25
26 **II. Announcements and Approvals**

27 **February 11, 2025, Meeting Minutes:**

28 A motion to approve the February meeting minutes was made by Amanda Mayeaux and seconded
29 by Robin Koytcheff. The motion carried.

30
31 **Graduate Education Climate Survey Summary Report**

32 Farmer-Kaiser shared the Climate Survey Summary report with the Council. Details will be
33 discussed at the March Graduate Program Leadership meetings.

34
35 **Updates from Chair:**

36 Rabalais shared that Josh Bendickson has been appointed to serve for the remainder of the Spring
37 2025 semester for Ignatius Cahyanto who is currently on leave.

38
39 **Spring Grad Council Meeting Dates:**

40 Rabalais reviewed the Spring 2025 Grad Council meeting dates: April 8 and May 13.

41
42 **III. Standing Committee Reports**

43 **Appeals – Yung-Hsing Wu:**

44 No report.

1 **Curriculum – Amy Brown:**

2 No report.

4 **Fellowships – Ryan Nelson:**

5 No report.

7 **Graduate Faculty Membership – Patricia Lanier:**

8 Farmer-Kaiser shared that graduate faculty application review process has proceeded through the
9 college review processes and that those applications requiring review of the standing committee
10 have been identified and shared with the committee. A full report will be delivered to the Council in
11 April.

13 **Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access – Davide Oppo and Lily Shih:**

14 Shih shared that the IDEA committee has organized two panel discussions for undergraduate
15 students during Graduate Student Appreciation Week. Entitled “Grad School Demystified:
16 Resources and Supports to Make Grad School a Reality,” these sessions will include graduate
17 students, faculty, and staff who will share reasons for pursuing a graduate degree, opportunities that
18 graduate degrees can provide, and resources—financial and otherwise—for being successful in
19 graduate school.

21 **IV. Old Business**

22 **Graduate Faculty Membership: Emeritus/Retired Faculty and Non-Tenured/Temporary Faculty:**

23 Farmer-Kaiser shared that the proposal was approved by the Provost. The updated Graduate
24 Faculty University Guidelines was shared with the Academic Deans. Colleges have been tasked to
25 update their college criteria over the remainder of the Spring 2025 semester. The aim is to fully
26 implement the updated Graduate Faculty policy for the Fall 2025 application cycle.

28 **Creation of Ad Hoc Committee: Guidelines for Graduate Assistants Handbook:**

29 Leberg shared that the Ad Hoc committee has a working draft of a new Graduate Assistantship
30 Handbook that offers guidance on responsibilities, procedures, and resources to graduate students
31 appointed to GTA, GRA, GA roles, faculty and other individuals who serve as supervisors, and
32 University units who employ graduate students in these roles. Currently, the draft is with Dean
33 Farmer-Kaiser for review and input will be gathered from graduate coordinators during the April
34 Graduate Program Leadership meetings. He reported that the ad hoc committee is on track for
35 delivering a draft handbook and recommendations by the end of the Spring 2025 semester as
36 requested by the Council.

38 **Graduate School Request to Expand English Language Proficiency Exempt Countries:**

39 This agenda item was tabled until the next meeting due to time constraints.

41 **V. New Business**

42 To accommodate the schedules of invited guests, new business items were reordered during the
43 meeting.

1 **Discussion of Post-Complaint/Resolution Title IX and Power-based Violence:**

2 Andrea Bonin and Teressa LeDay (Department of Human Resources) reviewed with the Graduate
3 Council the Title IX policy and University compliance guidelines. Discussion was held regarding the
4 procedures for reporting Title IX violations and investigation process. Council members were able
5 to ask questions and receive scenario-based guidance.

6
7 **Discussion about Emergency Graduate Faculty Appointment:**

8 Ani Kokobobo, Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and David Khey, Criminal Justice Department
9 Head, met with the Council to share concerns they had regarding the Council decision in
10 December 2024 to deny their request for an emergency one-semester graduate faculty
11 appointment. Their concerns focused on a perception of “gatekeeping” by the Council and
12 challenges posed by faculty constraints. Discussion ensued regarding the individual’s credentials,
13 understandings and use of outside or external members by departments and colleges represented
14 by members of the Council, the meaning of “terminal” degree, and variation in individual college
15 criteria.

16
17 **Health Insurance for Graduate Students / Graduate Assistantships:**

18 Farmer-Kaiser reported that providing accessible and affordable health insurance for graduate
19 students—particularly those in assistantship and fellowship roles—remains a significant and
20 ongoing challenge.

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22 International graduate students appointed to assistantship or fellowship roles currently receive a
23 50% subsidy toward the mandatory international health insurance plan during the Fall and Spring
24 semesters. This benefit, established in 2013–2014, represents a considerable financial investment,
25 with institutional costs projected to exceed \$300,000 in 2024–2025. The plan covers only the
26 student, not dependents, and does not include Summer coverage, which limits its competitiveness
27 compared to peer institutions.

28
29 While this partial subsidy offers meaningful support for international students, there is no
30 equivalent plan or subsidy in place for domestic graduate students. Efforts to secure a provider
31 through the RFP process have been unsuccessful, largely due to limited domestic graduate
32 enrollment and structural limitations. By contrast, peer and aspirational-peer institutions like LSU
33 subsidize 75% of premiums as part of an assistantship benefit, while others—like NC State,
34 Clemson, and others—provide more robust coverage, including subsidies of 100% for eligible
35 students.

36
37 Ongoing efforts involve collaboration with the UL System, graduate schools across the state, and
38 campus units including Human Resources, Academic Affairs, and the Research Division. Among
39 the most promising solutions are models that join multi-institutional insurance pools, like the
40 model administered by the Kansas Board of Regents. No viable pathway is in place that would
41 extend benefits to domestic graduate students by the 2025-2026 academic year, however.

42
43 In sum, while we remain committed to retaining the benefits in place and expanding coverage, the
44 current landscape reflects incremental progress amidst persistent structural barriers. Ongoing

1 challenges—including enrollment scale, rising premium costs, structural constraints, and the lack
2 of a provider for a domestic graduate student plan—limit available solutions.

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4 **Catalog Revision: GTA English Language Proficiency:**

5 The Graduate Council reviewed a proposed catalog revision to clarify the policy governing
6 demonstration of English language proficiency by graduate students appointed to GTA roles.

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8 **VI. Adjournment**

9 A motion to adjourn the meeting was made. The motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 4:08
10 PM.