

Meeting Minutes of the Graduate Council

Date: September 9, 2025

Location: Alumni Board Room

Members Present

Wesley Bradford (MUS, Chair), Julius Austin (COUE), Phil Auter (CMCN), Sandy Brack (Graduate Student Representative, PhD ENGL), Farzad Ferdowsi (EECE), Natalie Keefer (EDCI), Nicholas Kooyers (BIOL), Erika LeBlanc (COUE), Amanda Mayeaux (EDFL), Eddie Metrejean (ACCT), Clement Okolo (GSO President, PhD CMPS), Nathan Rabalais (MODL), Jonathan Raush (MCHE), Catherine Roche-Wallace (MUS), Laurel Ryan (ENGL), Jennifer Sittig (NURS), Scott Sittig (HLSI), Abby South (MUS), Frances Stueben (NURS), Amy Veprauskas (MATH), Rui Zhang (GEOS), and Mary Farmer-Kaiser (Graduate School, ex-officio).

Members Absent

Brian Bolton (ECFN), Ignatius Cahyanto (MGMT), Mark Zappi (CHEE)

Guests Present

Dianne Olivier and Dilip Depan

I. Welcome and Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Wesley Bradford, chair, at 2:00 PM, proceeded by introductions.

II. Invited Guest – Dr. Dianne Olivier

D. Olivier, Interim Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, addressed the council. She thanked the members for their service and recognized the importance of the council's work, reflecting also on the value of her own experience serving on the body. In her remarks, Olivier shared that Academic Affairs is finalizing creation of an Undergraduate Council—a governance body that is modeled after the Graduate Council in many ways—and that proposals for new graduate programs, specifically a Master's degree in Interior Design and a PhD degree in Counseling, will move forward this year. She welcomed time for a Q&A session. Dean Farmer-Kaiser opened with a question regarding the fiscal health of the University and concerns about impacts on graduate education. Additional questions from the council asked for more information on the budget issues, how new programs would be impacted by decreased funding, and whether strategic targets for graduate education would be adjusted. Olivier encouraged all to attend the upcoming Town Hall meeting with a date TBD and acknowledged that cost cutting will be necessary with adjustments to, for example, travel grants, special meals, and overall reduction in LaCarte spending. She assured the council that more information about the fiscal concerns and their impact on programs and processes would be forthcoming. Bradford thanked Olivier for joining the meeting and she indicated that she would welcome the opportunity to return later this semester.

III. Announcements and Approvals

Graduate Council Goals and Objectives for 2025-2026

Bradford shared that Graduate Council goals and objectives for the year would be an agenda item for the October meeting.

Graduate Council Moodle Page and Meeting Materials

Bradford and Farmer-Kaiser provided an overview of the Graduate Council Moodle page and reviewed how meeting materials are shared. The Council agreed that meeting reminders and communications would be sent through the Moodle course forum function. Farmer-Kaiser asked that members review their Moodle access and to let her know if they cannot access the page.

Meeting Minutes

Motion made to approve the May 13, 2025 meeting minutes. Motion seconded and carried.

Graduate Assistantship Handbook

Live link to GA Handbook and PDF on Moodle page. Farmer-Kaiser would like to thank the ad hoc committee and all participants. The GA Handbook was rolled out to new GAs this semester and the intent is to update the document every semester.

Catalog Update: GTA English Language Proficiency

Farmer-Kaiser reported that following endorsement of the recommendations of Graduate Assistantship Handbook Committee by the Graduate Council to update the language in the Academic Catalog to reflect current practice and to specify applicability to graduate students appointed to GTA instructor of record roles in May, a formal policy change request was forwarded to and approved by the Provost for inclusion in the 2025-2026 Academic Catalog. She also shared that graduate coordinators were included in the certification of new faculty, including GTA instructors of record, for English proficiency. Conducted by Academic Affairs, this certification process records the assessment of undergraduate instructional personnel to meet the English Proficiency requirements as described in ACT 745 of the 1991 Session of the Louisiana legislature.

IV. Standing Committee Reports

Appeals

The Graduate School submitted a report on behalf of Yung-Hsing Wu (past chair) and Heather Stone (in-coming chair) detailing the May and August Appeals Committee meetings. Motion made to accept the report. Motion seconded and carried.

Fellowships and Awards

No report.

Graduate Faculty Membership

No report. Farmer-Kaiser reviewed the major changes to the University Guidelines for Graduate Faculty Membership passed by Council in 2024-2025 and provided an update on preparations for the Fall 2025 application and review cycle. She thanked the individual colleges for their work to update the college criteria in response to the updates made to the policy by the Council last year. She shared that updates to the individual college criteria were ongoing by several colleges and noted that these updates are necessary to ensure successful implementation of two major changes to the University Guidelines—automatic appointments to new tenured/tenure-track faculty are dependent upon directives set in the individual criteria and the new retiree membership

1 can be further defined in the college criteria. She requested input and support from the Council to
2 change the deadline for applications from September 15 to October 15 to ensure those applying
3 have sufficient time to review the new University Guidelines and college criteria and to prepare
4 application accordingly. Motion was made to shift the application and review timeline as proposed.
5 Motion seconded and carried with one “nay” vote recorded.

6 7 **V. Old Business**

8 9 **Guidelines for the Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GAI) in Graduate Education** 10 **Research**

11 Farmer-Kaiser shared the document created by the Graduate School, presented to the graduate
12 program leadership and Graduate Council, endorsed by academic college deans during Spring
13 2025, and publicly released by the Graduate School this summer. At present, this guidance is from
14 the Graduate School and individual departments have been charged with creating guidance
15 specific to their programs. Bradford posed the following question for consideration in preparation
16 for the October meeting: Does the Council want to endorse the guidelines and/or to recommend
17 adding them to the Academic Catalog as other universities have done?

18 19 **Review of 2024-2025 Reports and Recommendations**

20 Bradford asked Council members to review the following materials in preparation for a discussion
21 of goals at the October meeting: University Committee on Graduate Student Success and
22 Retention Report, Graduate Student Organization reports for Fall 2024, Spring 2025, and Summer
23 2025; and the Ad Hoc Graduate Assistantship Handbook Committee report and recommendations
24 for policy development.

25 26 **Catalog Revision: English Language Proficiency Application Requirements**

27 Tabled continuing review of exempt countries and individual English language proficiency test (e.g.,
28 Duolingo, IELTS, PTE, TOEFL and TOEFL Essentials) thresholds due to time considerations.

29 30 **VI. New Business**

31 32 **Report on Summer Grad Council Executive Committee Actions**

33 Bradford reported that no actions had been taken.

34 35 **Graduate Council Standing Committees**

36 Bradford and Farmer-Kaiser shared that the description of the Curriculum standing committee’s
37 role and function Graduate Council Handbook is in need of review. A discussion followed focused
38 on how the committee has operated in recent years, changes in process adopted after
39 implementation of Curriculog by Academic Affairs, and the roles of similar committees at other
40 universities. Bradford asked Council members to review the current description and to think about
41 the purpose and need for the committee in preparation for the October meeting. Council members
42 also discussed the possibility of creating another standing committee as well as the idea of
43 creating an ad hoc committee on committees to review graduate council committees at other
44 universities.

1 **Appeals of Appeals Committee Decisions**

2 No appeals were received.

3
4 **Official Leave of Absence Exception Request**

5 The Council reviewed a request from a department to grant an exception to the policy that limits an
6 official leave of absence from graduate studies to one year. The student in question is an advanced
7 PhD student who has already taken a one-year official leave, returned to graduate studies, and is
8 now requesting approval for an additional year of official leave. After review of the particular
9 situation this student faces and discussion, a motion was made to support the student by granting
10 the exception and allowing one additional year of official leave. Motion seconded and approved
11 unanimously.

12
13 **Institutional Repository Request**

14 A request from Zachary Stein, Assistant Dean of Technical Services and Associate Professor in
15 University Libraries, to include theses, dissertations, and synthesis projects in the institutional
16 repository, Scholars Hub, was presented. Bradford noted that Stein had been invited to the October
17 meeting to discuss the request further and to answer questions.

18
19 **Manuscript Binding Fees**

20 A request from the Graduate School to increase the binding fee for final theses, dissertations, and
21 manuscript projects from \$15 to \$30, effective Fall 2026, was presented. The request shared that
22 the current binding fee of \$15 that was replaced the \$10 fee in 2017 and offered details of average
23 cost per binding, the history of the fee, and notification of binding fee increase. Questions and
24 discussion ensued. Council members were asked to review the request and to collect input from
25 their colleges and departments.

26
27 **VII. Adjournment**

28 Motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 4:00pm. Motion was seconded and carried.