

1 **Meeting Minutes of the Graduate Council**

2 **Date:** March 10, 2026

3 **Location:** Alumni Board Room

4

5 **Members Present**

6 Wesley Bradford (MUS, Chair), Philip Auter (CMCN), Sandy Brack (Grad Student Representative, PhD
7 ENGL), Ignatius Cahyanto (MGMT), Natalie Douglas (CODI), William Ferguson (ECFN), Nicholas Kooyers
8 (BIOL), Erika LeBlanc (COUE), Eddie Metrejean (ACCT), Clement Okolo (GSO President, PhD CMPS),
9 Nathan Rabalais (MODL), Jonathan Raush (MCHE), Catherine Roche-Wallace (MUS), Laurel Ryan (ENGL),
10 Jennifer Sittig (NURS), Frances Stueben (NURS), Mehmet Tozal (INFX), Amy Veprauskas (MATH), Rui
11 Zhang (GEOS), and Mary Farmer-Kaiser (Graduate School, ex-officio).

12

13 **Members Absent**

14 Julius Austin (COUE), Farzad Ferdowsi (EECE), Natalie Keefer (EDCI), Amanda Mayeaux (EDFL), Scott
15 Sittig (HLSI), Abby South (MUS), and Mark Zappi (CHEE).

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17 **I. Call to Order**

18 The meeting was called to order by Wesley Bradford, chair, at 2:04PM.

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20 **II. Invited Guest: Dr. Jaimie Hebert**

21 J. Hebert, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, addressed the council. He thanked the
22 members for their service and acknowledged the importance of the Council's work. Hebert discussed the
23 recent appointment of President Ramesh Kolluru. He shared the *Louisiana Vision 2035* strategic initiatives
24 from the administration and how graduate education is highly intertwined in these initiatives moving
25 forward. He noted that while the institution has launched this plan with high expectations, further efforts
26 are needed to align University resources (especially faculty and staffing concerns and space/facility
27 concerns) to be able to successfully achieve these goals. Hebert invited questions from the Council,
28 leading to a discussion on numerous topics regarding legislation updates, graduate education, and faculty
29 concerns.

30

31 **III. Announcements and Approvals**

32 **Provost Meeting Recap/Update:**

33 Bradford shared a recap of his meeting with Provost Jaimie Hebert and Dean Farmer-Kaiser. Beyond
34 providing updates from the December council meeting, he noted that follow-up discussion was held about
35 the status of the request to update the Curriculum Committee description. Dr. Hebert shared that the
36 Curriculum committee description for both the Undergraduate Council and Graduate Council was placed
37 on the next Dean's Council meeting agenda for review and discussion. Once the Provost receives feedback
38 from the Dean's Council, the final review will be made.

39

40 **February 10, 2026, Meeting Minutes:**

41 Motion made by L. Ryan to approve the February meeting minutes. The motion was seconded by P. Auter
42 and carried unanimously.

43

44 **Graduate Student Appreciation Week (March 23 - March 28):**

45 Graduate Student Appreciation Week (GSAW) will be held March 23-28, 2026. Farmer-Kaiser shared the
46 schedule. Council members were encouraged to host departmental appreciation activities or to celebrate
47 the contributions of graduate education and graduate students in other ways that week. Also, Council

1 members were encouraged to participate in events, serve as research and creative showcase judges, and
2 to encourage their colleagues to do the same.

3 4 **IV. Standing Committee Reports**

5 **Appeals – Heather Stone:**

6 No report.

7 8 **Curriculum – Dr. Amy Brown:**

9 No report.

10 11 **Fellowships and Awards – Ryan Nelson:**

12 No report. Farmer-Kaiser shared that the Fellowships and Awards Committee considered more than forty
13 applications for the 2026-2027 Dissertation Completion Fellowships. Sixteen recipients have been
14 identified, and they will be notified shortly. Also, she shared that the committee will review nominations for
15 the Outstanding GTA Award and the Graduate Teaching Excellence Award shortly. Award winners will be
16 announced during Graduate Student Appreciation Week.

17 18 **Graduate Faculty Membership – Frances Stueben:**

19 No report.

20 21 **V. Old Business**

22 **Ad Hoc Committee on Committees**

23 L. Ryan shared that the Ad Hoc Committee on Committees had their first meeting to discuss the
24 committee’s charge of reviewing the need for additional Graduate Council standing committees and
25 recommending additions necessary to support the evolving priorities of graduate education and its
26 governance at the University. L. Ryan shared that the Graduate School had provided a list of peer and
27 aspirant-peer institutions to assist with the committee’s research. Also, L. Ryan shared that the committee
28 will reconvene in April to discuss their findings and finalize recommendations. A final report will be
29 submitted to the Graduate Council prior to the end of the semester.

30 31 **VI. New Business**

32 **Spring 2026 Grand Marshals**

33 Bradford shared that Dr. Durga Poudel and Dr. David “Rick” Perkins will serve as Grand Marshals at the
34 2026 Spring Commencement ceremonies. Since the University has modified the Commencement
35 schedule, a Grand Marshal selection is needed for the third ceremony. Bradford opened the floor for
36 consideration of nominations for Grand Marshal. After discussion of the Grand Marshal nominees, the
37 Graduate Council voted unanimously on a faculty member to be invited to serve at the Spring 2026
38 commencement ceremonies. Farmer-Kaiser will extend the invitations from the Graduate Council and
39 report back in April.

40 41 **Manuscript Binding and Printing Fee Request**

42 Bradford led further discussion regarding the request by the Graduate School to revise the previously
43 approved increased Binding Fee of \$30 to instead establish a set Binding & Printing Fee of \$45, effective
44 Fall 2026. Discussion was held regarding the cost analysis presented and the fee amount. After discussion
45 and questions, N. Kooyers motioned to approve the request as presented, and L. Ryan seconded. Motion
46 carried.

47

1 **Grad Council Webpage and Moodle Accessibility**

2 Bradford led discussion about the Grad Council webpage and Moodle accessibility. Discussion centered
3 around the upcoming April 24 deadline for accessibility requirements on these platforms. Several
4 suggestions were made including the possibility of removing or hiding past years' records and changing all
5 Council members to non-editing teacher role on the Moodle page instead of the current student role. In
6 addition, Council members recommended archiving all material older than three years to the University
7 and Graduate School archival records and maintaining a rolling three-year cycle of all meeting materials to
8 provide historical perspective which aligns with members' appointment terms. Agenda item to be
9 continued at the next meeting.

10
11 **Preparing for Graduate Council Elections**

12 Bradford reported that the form for Graduate Council nominations and committee interest will be made
13 available to all graduate faculty and asked that members of the Graduate Council encourage their
14 colleagues to participate. Elections for all seven academic college representatives will occur after Spring
15 Break. The election results will be reported during the Annual Meeting of the Graduate Faculty on May 6.

16
17 Election of the new Graduate Council Chair will be held at the Council meeting in May. Interested
18 individuals should reach out to Bradford to learn more about the role.

19
20 **TOEFL English Language Proficiency Graduate Application and Admission Policy**

21 Bradford and Farmer-Kaiser introduced the Grad Council proposal requesting to identify the minimum
22 expectation for TOEFL iBT English language scores under the new 1-6 score scale. Following guidance and
23 recommendations from ETS, the Graduate School has requested to set 4.5 as the minimum expectation,
24 noting that official score reports will include dual reporting including both the new 1-6 and old 0-120 TOEFL
25 iBT scales for two years. Agenda item to be continued at the next meeting. No action taken at this time.

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27 **VII. Good of the Order**

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29 **VIII. Adjournment**

30 Motion was made by J. Sittig to adjourn the meeting at 3:51pm. The motion was seconded by N. Kooyers
31 and carried unanimously.