

Meeting Minutes of the Graduate Council
April 4, 2023

Members Present: Amanda Shuford Mayeaux (Chair, EDFL), Elena Babatsouli (CODI), Ashlie Boelkins (ARCH), Wesley Bradford (MUS), Amy Brown, (PSYC), Ignatius Cahyanto (MKTG), Frank Del Favero (EDFL), Farzard Ferdowsi (EECE), Raju Gottumukkala (MCHE), Robin Koytcheff (MATH), Christy Lenahan (NURS), Javier Portillo-Elias (ECON), Nathan Rabalais (MODL), Kelly Robinson (BIOL), Catherine Roche-Wallace (MUS), Frances Stueben (NURS), Colleen Wolverson (MGMT), Peng Yin (MCHE), Mark Zappi (CHEE), LaToya Roberts (PhD ALSS, SREB Fellow), Marietta Adams (EDCI), Kalimuthu Krishnamoorthy (MATH).

Members Absent: Beenish Chaudhry (CMIX), Deedra Harrington (NURS), Clement Okolo (Ph.D. CS, GSO)

Welcome and Call to Order

A. Mayeaux welcomed new and returning members to the Graduate Council. She thanked everyone and invited those present to introduce themselves.

Graduate Council Moodle Page and Meeting Materials

P. de Mahy reported that the meeting materials from previous years are accessible in chronological order on the Graduate Council Moodle site and that updates for upcoming meetings will be made via the platform's announcements function. M. Farmer-Kaiser added that the Graduate Council Handbook as well as the 2023-2024 Graduate Council membership is available for review. She also asked that all members confirm that they had been given access to the Moodle site.

Approval of the September 11, 2023 Meeting Minutes

Motion made to accept the May 9, 2023, meeting minutes. Motion seconded and carried.

Stats Lab Update

M. Farmer-Kaiser reported that the Statistical Consulting Center has hired a full-time director and is now open to graduate students for the first time since the initial pilot year ended. She said that the need for statistical support, particularly among doctoral students, was well established by the pilot and that this will be an important resource for graduate students completing their degrees. R. Koytcheff confirmed that the new director, Philip Whitman, is a member of the Math Department.

Committee Reports

Curriculum Committee

No report.

Student Appeals

A report was submitted by the Graduate School on behalf of Y. Wu that provided information on both the June and August meetings. In addition, the report recommended the adoption of a policy that creates a one-semester probationary period for graduate students who become ineligible within set terms. M. Farmer-Kaiser emphasized that the committee put a lot of time and care into reviewing the appeals and that this recommendation will ensure that their work continues to meet the needs of graduate students. A. Mayeaux encouraged members to review the proposed policy with their departments and to bring feedback to the October meeting. Motion made to accept the report. Motion seconded and carried.

1 **Fellowships Committee**

2 No report.

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4 **IDEA Committee**

5 A report was submitted by K. Robinson on behalf of the IDEA Committee. A. Mayeaux noted that the
6 report was received after the final meeting of the spring semester and asked that it be discussed by the
7 Graduate Council. K. Robinson summarized the report, noting that all recommendations from the
8 different working groups within the committee can be considered by the Graduate Council but that this
9 year the committee will be taking a more focused approach in the coming year. Motion made to accept
10 report. Motion seconded and carried.

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12 **Graduate Faculty Membership Committee**

13 No report.

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15 **Committee Updates**

16 A. Mayeaux and M. Farmer-Kaiser added that both the Fellowships Committee and the Curriculum
17 Committee are going through a process of reviewing their purpose. They reported an expectation that,
18 as they report on their progress in future meetings this semester, the Council will be asked to update
19 their committee descriptions accordingly.

20
21 **Old Business**

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23 **University Committee on Graduate Student Success and Retention Report**

24 A. Mayeaux reviewed the report that was submitted by the University Committee on Graduate Student
25 Success and Retention and noted the goals that were stated for upcoming meetings in the fall and spring
26 semesters. She also highlighted the work of the graduate student who serves as a GRA to the
27 committee; with the committee chair, Emily Sandoz, Abbey Warren has collaborated to analyze student
28 feedback in relation to a literature review on graduate student success, retention, and persistence. M.
29 Farmer-Kaiser reported that the Climate Survey project was the result of several years of work and that
30 the committee was now focusing on analyzing data that was gathered for the first time in the spring.
31 She said that review of the data so far confirms that graduate students are in need of the supports and
32 resources that have been advocated for by the Graduate Council. She added that later this year the
33 Graduate School will be sharing their findings in both departmental and university-wide reports to
34 inform improvements to the graduate community environment.

35
36 **Graduate Student Key Access**

37 M. Farmer-Kaiser reviewed the challenges related to key access that had taken place during the previous
38 year that negatively impacted graduate students, faculty, and staff. She reported that the University
39 continues to invest in transitioning to the use of electronic card readers outside of buildings on campus
40 but that many of the spaces that are used by graduate student researchers have not been changed yet.
41 A general discussion followed that confirmed that departments are still experiencing issues with
42 securing room access. K. Robinson noted that many researchers have contractual obligations to work in
43 their labs at specific times and that there were additional legal implications to this lack of access as well.
44 M. Zappi emphasized that research is happening at the university twenty-four hours a day and that
45 access to not just to individual buildings but specific labs within those buildings is crucial to the ongoing
46 work of graduate students and graduate faculty. The Graduate Council continued to discuss advocating
47 to the university to dedicate the resources necessary to move forward with the electronic card readers
48 with prioritization of buildings that have more graduate students working in them. M. Farmer-Kaiser

1 added that she will include the resolution that was passed by the Graduate Council last year for
2 members' review. It was suggested that it could be updated in the form of a second resolution by the
3 Graduate Council.

4 5 **New Business**

6 7 **Report on Summer Grad Council Executive Committee Actions**

8 A. Mayeaux reported that while she collaborated with the Graduate School on committee appointments
9 no actions were taken on behalf of the Graduate Council over the summer break.

10 11 **Requests for Continued Graduate Faculty Chair/Membership for Departing Faculty Members**

12 A. Mayeaux presented two requests from department heads that a departing faculty member be
13 allowed to continue to chair on several student committees. After a general discussion, a motion was
14 made to approve the requests for the departing graduate faculty members be allowed to continue on
15 the individual student committees as requested, to allow them to count as one of the required members
16 of graduate faculty on these committees, and to limit approval to the remaining term of appointment to
17 the graduate faculty. M. Zappi confirmed that in the event that more time was needed the department
18 could request an additional extension. Motion seconded and carried.

19 20 **Review of Temporary Acceptance of Duolingo and TOEFL Essentials English Language Proficiency** 21 **Exams**

22 M. Farmer-Kaiser introduced a request from the Graduate School for the Council to review the
23 temporary acceptance of Duolingo and TOEFL Essentials. She reminded the committee that, in response
24 to access limitations due to COVID in December 2021, the Graduate Council made temporary alterations
25 to our graduate admissions policy, particularly related to demonstration of English language proficiency,
26 and that these changes were temporarily extended through the 2024 summer semester. At the time,
27 the Graduate Council approved the continued acceptance of Duolingo with a revised minimum score of
28 110 and that TOEFL Essentials be accepted with a minimum score of 8.5, with the expectation that
29 during that time data will be collected on how adequately students perform based on their test scores
30 so that the standards can be revisited. M. Farmer-Kaiser agreed to provide data on how many applicants
31 used both tests and to benchmark the use and scores against other universities for the October meeting.

32 33 **Graduate Council Goals and Objectives for 2023-2024**

34 A. Mayeaux asked the Graduate Council to continue to consider clear deliverables for the year. K.
35 Robinson reported that the IDEA committee will be advocating for the development of an official
36 campus map that shows the location of all handicap accessible entrances, and the location of elevators
37 in all campus buildings. A. Mayeux emphasized that other concrete and achievable goals will be a focus
38 for the year. She added that the conversation on setting goals and objectives will continue in the
39 October Graduate Council meeting.

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41 Motion made to adjourn at 3:29. Motion seconded and carried.