THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE

March 25, 2021

Members present: Broemmel, A. (Chair), Alshibli, K., Bamwine, P., Baxter, T., Boder, E., Bonom, J., Boyd, A. (Graduate Student Senate President), Dittmann, P., Dzikus, L., Edwards, L., Ekici, K., Finotti, L., Fleming-May, R., Gerhold, R., Griffin, M., Guo, H., Hesari, S. (Graduate Student Senate Vice-President), Hewett, K., Kaplan, G., King, L., Lang, M., Mannik, J., Meschke, L., Misawa, M., Moyer, D., Ohnesorg, S (Chair-Elect), Thompson, P., Ward, M., Zhang, F.

Ex-Officio members present: Ambroziak, K., Anderson, D., Behn, B., Bradberry, Brothers, E., S., Cantrell, S., Cox, C., Kilic, O., Kilpatrick, Y., Kupritz, V., Mercer, H., Moore, T., Noble, C., Patterson, D. (Past Chair), Stier, J., Sullivan, M., Thompson, D.

1. Call to Order and Welcome (Amy Broemmel)

The Graduate Council Zoom meeting was called to order by Chair, Amy Broemmel on Thursday, March 25, 2021, at 3:00 p.m.

2. Minutes of the Preceding Meeting

The February 18, 2021, Graduate Council Minutes were approved electronically on March 12, 2021.

3. Committees (A. Broemmel)

We will now have our committee reports.

- **Academic Policy Committee (Eric Boder) - March 4, 2021 Report (Attachment 1)**

  We discussed two items at our March 4 meeting. But, we are only bringing one proposal forward as a seconded motion for Council's vote.

  1) Proposal: to edit catalog language for Grievances and Appeals policy.

  As a reminder, we talked about this at our last Graduate Council, relating to the policy changes for academic misconduct. The academic penalty appeals will now go through the Graduate Council Appeals Committee. Therefore, we have a revision to the catalog language in the Graduate Catalog.

  Please review the proposal for the revised catalog language for the Grievances and Appeals process. Are there any questions?

  With no questions. Broemmel asked for a vote to approve the proposal to revise the Graduate Catalog language for the Grievances and Appeals policy.

  I will launch a poll and council members will vote to approve the revised language.

  Graduate Council voted. Results: 31 voted yes, 1 voted no, and 1 voted to abstain.

  2. The second item we discussed at our March 4 meeting relates to graduate student fees and the registration of course 600 (dissertation hours). This was just a discussion. Dr. Thompson communicated that she meets regularly with other SEC deans and that she will bring up the topic of dissertation hours and will share those results to begin a benchmark of some of our peers.

- **Appeals Committee (Stefanie Ohnesorg)**

  No appeals to report.

  The Appeals Committee will have a proposal for the next Graduate Council Meeting to revise the appeals process and outline the procedures.

- **Curriculum Committee (Laurie Meschke) - No meeting, therefore, no report.**

  Dixie Thompson
  As we move forward with curriculum proposals and the work of the Curriculum Committee and the Graduate Council, we need to think about how we make curricular changes. As we move into a new budget model, there will be discussions about course changes and program changes. In the future, we need to think about the financial impact of our course and program changes.

- **Student/Faculty Research Awards Committee (Dixie Thompson)**

  SFRA Report for the spring 2021 submissions.
  - We received 53 applications.
  - We awarded 12 applications, for a total of just over $52,000.00.
  - The Robert W. Peterson Award went to: Kristin Bowers and David Anderson in Comparative and Experimental Medicine.
  - Total funds requested were over $230,000.00.

  My thanks to the committee members for their time in reviewing the applications. And, thank you to the faculty who work with our students on the research to submit such great proposals.

4. New Business: No new business

5. Administrative Reports and Announcements:

Deans Update: (Dixie Thompson)

- Graduate and Professional Student Appreciation Week is April 5 – 9. I hope you have some activities planned in your departments and colleges to celebrate these students.
- Please mark Wednesday, April 7 on your calendar. This is the 3MT competition. This year, because of COVID, we had to make this a virtual event. Instead of a live competition, we are having a watch party. The students have already submitted their presentations. The judges will review and make their recommendations ahead of time. On April 7, at 1:00 p.m., we will watch the presentations and hear from the students. After all the presentations and interactions with the students, we will announce the winners. This is a great opportunity to see the work and research of our students.
- I am very happy to report that this week we have given out nearly $220,000.00 in one-time fellowships. Earlier this spring, I requested nominations for graduate and professional students for fellowships. The nominations could be based on merit, financial need, or because of their contribution to our DEI initiatives. I received over 100 nominations. I read every nomination letter and was very impressed by the commitment of our students. All the students nominated received some fellowship support. Those notices were sent yesterday and today.
- A task force has been appointed to review the curricular approval process. As we move into a new budget allocation model, our Curriculum Committee will need to consider the financial implications of proposals. The Task Force is headed by R.J. Hinde and myself. Dr. Hinde (Vice Provost for Academic Affairs) works with the Undergraduate Council in much the same way as I work with Graduate Council. The Chairs of Undergraduate and Graduate Councils and the Chairs of the Undergraduate and Graduate Curriculum Committees will join the task force. Along with some Associate Deans (John Stier and Chuck Collins). Representatives from both the Registrar's Office and the Graduate School will also take part. We are going to look at and review the following:

- The calendar: when do we submit and how do we submit proposals to provide a scrutiny of the proposals?
- The mechanics: we know this is a laborious process. We want to make modifications to make it a less onerous process.
- Department documentation: are there financial implications to the proposal?
- Proposal priority: triage proposals to put those that are most impactful as priority. Our current process has all proposals together, from a course name change to proposing a new program.

- The Task Force has an earnest task and by early summer, we will submit a report to the Provost.

Any questions?

Question: Will this new budget model create a situation where there is a complication and/or competition between departments?

Thompson: The Task Force resolve might be to put guardrails around the decision-making process. Every college wants to advantage themselves in the budget model. However, I believe we can find ways to do that without disadvantaging others. It is also so important that our students get some cross-pollination.

Graduate Student Senate (Austin Boyd)

- It is near election time for GSS. At our next meeting, I should be introducing to you the new president and vice-president.
- Graduate and Professional Student Appreciation Week is April 5-9. We have a Knoxville Zoo event planned.

Graduate Council Chair (Amy Broemmel)

As this is our next to last meeting, then it is time to vote for our next chair-elect. I will ask Stefanie Ohnesorg, chair of the nominating committee to address Council.

S. Ohnesorg: this is a three-year commitment as you serve as chair-elect, chair, and then past-chair. I am delighted to announce our candidate, Laurie Meschke, as the chair-elect nominee. Laurie has been on Graduate Council four years and has served as Curriculum Committee Chair for two years. I will ask Amy to cast the vote.

A. Broemmel: You received Laurie's biography yesterday by email. Even though we have only one candidate, we will still cast a vote. I will launch the vote now. Please vote.

I am happy to announce, it is a unanimous decision. Congratulations Laurie as our next chair-elect.

Our next and last meeting for this academic year is April 29.

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 3:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Cox
Graduate Council Liaison

ATTACHMENT 1

REPORT OF THE ACADEMIC POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING

Thursday, March 4, 2021
3:30 – 5:00 p.m., Zoom Meeting

Committee members present: Eric Boder (Chair), Patricia Bamwine, Julie Bonom, Austin Boyd (GSS President), Lars Dzikus, Luis Finotti, Greg Kaplan, Mohammed Mohsin.

Other attendees: Sara Bradberry, Stefanie Ohnesorg (Graduate Council Chair-elect), Dixie Thompson, and Catherine Cox (Graduate Council Liaison).

Eric Boder called the meeting to order at 3:30 p.m.

Agenda Item:

1. Proposal to edit catalog language for Grievances and Appeals policy

Boder reminded the committee: the need to revise the language in the Graduate Catalog for the Grievances and Appeals policy is because of the revisions coming forward from the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards concerning their appeal process.

We need to separate out the student misconduct judicial process (if academic misconduct has taken place) from the grade appeal process. The grade appeal process should go through the Graduate Appeals Committee, as grades are part of the academic process, not to go through and be part of the misconduct judicial process.

Dr. Dixie Thompson submitted a proposal to revise the language for the Grievances and Appeals process. Are there any questions or edits concerning the proposal?

Current Graduate Catalog language

Grievances and Appeals

The *Graduate Council Appeal Procedure* can be obtained at the Graduate School Appeals Committee website. In brief, appeals should be handled first at the department level through the student's academic advisor, the director of graduate studies, or the department or program head. Further appeal may be made to the dean of the respective college, the Graduate Council Appeals Committee through the Assistant Dean of the Graduate School, and ultimately to the Dean of the Graduate School. Per Board of Trustees bylaws, Article V, Section 5, "Any employee or student of the University who feels that he or she may have a grievance against the University shall have the right of appeal through the appropriate Chancellor or Vice President to the President of the University, except as otherwise provided by University policy." In the case of UT students, they may appeal the decision of the Dean of the Graduate School to the Provost and then the Chancellor.

Appeals may involve the interpretation of and adherence to university, college, and department policies and procedures as they apply to graduate education and the issuance of grades based on specific allowable reasons stipulated in the *Graduate Council Appeal Procedure*.

Appeal procedures in regard to allegations of misconduct or academic dishonesty are presented in Hilltopics under Student Code of Conduct.

Students with grievances related to race, sex, color, religion, national origin, age, disability or veteran status should file a formal complaint with the Office of Equity and Diversity, 1840 Melrose Avenue.

Proposed Language

The *Graduate Council Appeal Procedure* can be obtained at the Graduate School Appeals Committee website. There are three types of appeals that may come before the Graduate Council's Appeals Committee: (1) students with grievances concerning the interpretation of and adherence to university, college, and departmental policies and procedures as they apply to graduate education; (2) students with grievances concerning grades; and (3) students with grievances concerning academic penalties imposed for academic and/or research misconduct. When possible, grievances should be resolved at departmental or college level without coming to the Graduate Council.

To initiate an appeal with the Appeals committee, a student should contact the Assistant Dean of the Graduate School at gradschool@utk.edu. The Assistant Dean will work with the student and the Chair of the Appeals Committee to process the appeal as outlined in the Graduate Council Appeal Procedure. Once the Appeals Committee has made a determination, it will send its recommendation to the Dean of the Graduate School. The Dean will review the Committee's recommendation along with all relevant information. Subsequently, the Dean will issue a decision. Notification of this decision will be sent to the student, the Chair of the Appeals Committee, and the Assistant Dean to be entered into the student's record.

Students may appeal the decision of the Dean of the Graduate School to the Provost and then the Chancellor.

Academic misconduct (plagiarism, cheating, etc.) is a violation of the UT Student Code of Conduct, and allegations of academic misconduct are handled as described in Hilltopics under Student Code of Conduct. Allegations of research misconduct are managed through the Office of Research Integrity. Academic penalties (e.g., dismissal from a program) and grade penalties resulting from research or academic misconduct are heard by the Appeals Committee as described above.

Students with grievances related to race, sex, color, religion, national origin, age, disability or veteran status should file a formal complaint with the Office of Equity and Diversity, 1840 Melrose Avenue.

Discussion:
D. Thompson: it will also be necessary to revise language for the Appeals Procedure Process.
There was a suggestion to create a flow chart of the appeals process to publish on the Appeals Committee webpage.

Boder: Any further discussion? With no further discussion, Boder asked for a vote.

Upon motion duly made and seconded, APC members voted and approved the proposed catalog language to revise the wording in the Graduate Catalog for Grievances and Appeals.
Voting was unanimous.

Eric Boder
There are no other items on our Agenda. However, I would like to bring forward a discussion item that came about from our last Graduate Council meeting. The concern and discussion was about the cost of graduate student fees.

Graduate student fees:
Currently, a petition is circulating trying to reduce the amount of fees that graduate students pay each semester. Out-of-pocket fees for graduate students on assistantships can be very high. Some graduate students (depending on the program) pay differential fees. What sources are available for graduate students on assistantships with these out-of-pocket fees?

- Unless noted in the contract, those differential fees cannot be charged against the grant or contract.
- Departments have an option to pay the fees from the Department E or Gift R account.

Full-time status with 6 hours on a half-time assistantship and 9 hours on a quarter-time assistantship seems logical when you consider 12 credit hours is a full-time course load for undergraduate students who have no assistantships.

Registration of course 600:
Currently, once PhD students begin registration of course 600, they must continue to register each semester for a minimum of 3 credit hours of course 600 until they defend and submit their dissertation. Other institutions have a "dissertation status" in their doctoral programs. Could we possibly adopt a policy that once the required 24 credit hours of course 600 is met, that we might then reduce the registration hours of course 600?

D. Thompson

- All the deans in the Southeast Conference meet regularly. I will bring up in our discussions dissertation research hours. I will share the results to begin a benchmark against some of our peers.
- For some programs, the faculty time in mentoring and guiding doctoral students may be higher than in other programs.
- We want timely graduations for our graduate students. We want our students to be productive, excel and finish.

With no further discussion, the meeting adjourned at 4:05.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Cox
Graduate Council Liaison