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REPORT OF THE ACADEMIC POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING
Thursday, September 17, 2020
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, Amy Broemmel (Graduate Council Chair), Dixie Thompson, and Catherine Cox (Graduate Council Liaison)

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

Agenda Items:

1. Leave of Absence

Proposal presented by Dean Dixie Thompson.

Proposal – To remove language related to financial hardship from the LOA policy. The proposal is to remove the one sentence that mentions financial hardship (see highlighted text in the current policy), and otherwise keep the policy intact.

Rationale – Many of the challenges that our students face can be complicated by financial hardship. Removing that language from our policy will give students more freedom to use this option when the need arises. Although there is no evidence to support this supposition, it is possible that our current policy unduly harms those students with limited financial means.

CURRENT POLICY:

Leave of Absence (LOA) and Reinstatement Following a LOA

If extenuating circumstances arise that make it necessary for students to interrupt their studies temporarily, a [Request for a Leave of Absence](#) (LOA) for a maximum of two years may be granted by the Graduate School upon approval by the student's home department or program. All Graduate Student [Leave of Absence Requests](#) are reviewed and granted on a case-by-case basis. There are many situations for which a leave can be requested, such as the birth or adoption of a child, dependent care, a serious medical condition, military service, or other personal reasons. **A Leave of Absence (LOA) will not be granted with the sole reason of financial hardship.**

Graduate students are strongly encouraged to consult with their program, advisor, and Director of Graduate Studies of their academic unit in order to determine whether a Leave of Absence (LOA) is the most appropriate course of action, and international students must also consult with the [Center for Global Engagement](#) (CGE) in order to ensure compliance with Federal immigration policy. Prior to requesting a Leave of Absence (LOA), graduate students should always explore alternatives which would allow them to remain registered and make progress toward the degree, even if at a slower pace.

Students who are granted a Leave of Absence (LOA) by the Graduate School in accordance with this policy are eligible for Reinstatement provided they enroll no later than the term immediately following the expiration of the approved Leave of Absence, excluding summer (see Reinstatement policy below for more details). The term(s) and/or year(s) of an approved Leave of Absence (LOA) will not be counted toward time to degree, and milestone deadlines such as Admission to Candidacy will be adjusted accordingly. Having a Leave of Absence (LOA) granted does not imply a guaranteed continuation of funding options upon return.

Graduate students who are on a Leave of Absence (LOA) suspend their active study for one semester or more (up to 2 years), and while on a Leave of Absence (LOA) they are not able to make any formal progress toward their degree. In addition, they may not use faculty services and/or university facilities for the period of time that they are on a Leave of Absence (LOA).

Students are expected to return from a Leave of Absence (LOA). If they do not return to active student status by the end of the period of time stipulated in the approved Leave of Absence (LOA), they will be considered non-enrolled once their LOA has expired and lose their eligibility for Reinstatement. Graduate Students who have lost their eligibility for Reinstatement need to seek Readmission prior to being able to continue work in their graduate degree program (see policies below on Consequences of Non-Enrollment without Leave of Absence and on Readmission).

In order to return to an active student status, graduate students on an approved Leave of Absence (LOA) need to establish Reinstatement into their graduate degree program by the end of the leave period stipulated on their approved Leave of Absence (LOA). Students on an approved Leave of Absence (LOA) need to complete and submit their Request for Reinstatement to the Graduate School no later than on the last day of classes of the semester prior to the semester for which they seek to be reinstated (also see policy below on "Reinstatement").

PROPOSED POLICY (revised to show sentence removed from first paragraph)

Leave of Absence (LOA) and Reinstatement Following a LOA

If extenuating circumstances arise that make it necessary for students to interrupt their studies temporarily, a Request for a Leave of Absence (LOA) for a maximum of two years may be granted by the Graduate School upon approval by the student's home department or program. All Graduate Student Leave of Absence Requests are reviewed and granted on a case-by-case basis. There are many situations for which a leave can be requested, such as the birth or adoption of a child, dependent care, a serious medical condition, military service, or other personal reasons.

Graduate students are strongly encouraged to consult with their program, advisor, and Director of Graduate Studies of their academic unit in order to determine whether a Leave of Absence (LOA) is the most appropriate course of action, and international students must also consult with the Center for Global Engagement (CGE) in order to ensure compliance with Federal immigration policy. Prior to requesting a Leave of Absence (LOA), graduate students should always explore alternatives which would allow them to remain registered and make progress toward the degree, even if at a slower pace.

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Discussion: APC discussed the benefit of removing the sentence concerning financial hardship.

With no further discussion, Dr. Boder asked for a vote.

Vote: APC voted and unanimously approved the proposal to remove the financial hardship sentence from the LOA policy. We will move this proposal forward with recommendation for approval to the Graduate Council.

2. Graduation Deadline Dates

Eric Boder asked about the timing for the Second Deadline Dates for defending and submitting thesis/dissertations. It was conveyed the second deadline date allows students to submit to TRACE the day before the next semester starts to give students every opportunity to finish in the semester they are in. An exception for the defense date can always be requested. Students should work with Abby Sherman (Thesis/Dissertation Consultant) and the Graduation Specialists in the Graduate School to make sure they are track for a successful graduation.

Dr. Boder thanked everyone for the discussion and feedback of these two items.

With no further items of discussion, the meeting adjourned at 4:10.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Cox
Graduate Council Liaison