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Graduate Council Minutes

Graduate Council

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9-26-2019

## Graduate Council Minutes - September 26, 2019

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## THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE

September 26, 2019 Minutes

**Members present:** Patterson, D., (Chair), Broemmel, A., (Chair-Elect), Boder, E., Bonom, J., Buehler, M., Choi, S. (Graduate Student Senate Vice-President), Dittman, P., Dzikus, L., Ekici, K., Finotti, L., Fleming-May, R., Fouts, H., Griffin, M., Herron, F., Hewett, K., Hines, M., Jewel, L., Kotowski, M., Lang, M., Mason, L., Meschke, L., Misawa, M., Okafor, C., Ownley, B., Preuss, N., Sachs, A., Schmidt, H., Stehle, M., Willis, D. (Graduate Student Senate President)

**Ex-Officio members present:** Aydeniz, M., Bradberry, S., Cantrell, S., Cihak, D., Lavin, R., Mercer, H., Moore, T., Sullivan, M., Thompson, D., Cox, C.

1. **Call to Order and Welcome** (David Patterson)

The Graduate Council meeting was called to order by Chair, David Patterson on Thursday, September 26, 2019, at 3:00 p.m. in the Friesen Black Cultural Center, Multipurpose Room.

2. **Minutes of the Preceding Meeting**

The Graduate Council Minutes of the August 29, 2019 meeting were approved electronically on 9-19-2019.

- Our committees will give their reports.

3. **Committees:**

- **Academic Policy Committee (Maria Stehle)**

We discussed two proposals at our meeting on September 5: Academic Second Opportunity and Attendance Confirmation.

- 1) Attendance Confirmation. Sara Bradberry will gather information and data concerning this proposal and we will discuss it further at our next meeting on October 31.
- 2) Academic Second Opportunity. This was discussed in detail at our meeting and are bringing this to Graduate Council as a discussion item.
  - a. Undergraduates have the Academic Second Opportunity Program. Currently, graduate students do not have such an option.
  - b. From comparative data gathered, we discovered not many schools offer a second opportunity. None of our peer aspirational schools has such a policy. However, a few schools do offer a second opportunity for graduate students.
  - c. Because this proposal is student-focused, APC felt favorable with this policy. This policy would only affect a small group of students. This policy will give former UT graduate students who were failing and unsuccessful years ago to petition to come back and earn their graduate degree. The student would first talk with the department and prove that he/she has grown and is in a good place in their life emotionally, academically, financially and physically to come back, do the work required, and earn the degree. If the department is in favor and approves, an endorsement letter would be submitted and the student would be allowed to submit a readmission application. With this approval, the student's academic history would be amended to remove all the previous grades (maybe with a W). The student would start fresh with a clean slate.
  - d. Because of the current academic standing policy we now have established, this poor GPA standing will become less of an issue and is very unlikely to happen now.

- e. I now open the floor for questions or concerns about this proposal.
  - i. The department spokesperson from where this previous student and proposal came about, communicated that the research is fairly clear that students from under-represented groups feel less supported in Graduate School. This policy may show that we are supportive of those under-represented groups. This young man is an ideal candidate for this restart program.
  - ii. If approved, departments may choose to opt out of this policy.
  - iii. How will the transcript look? Not all the details concerning the transcript are worked out at this time. If the student is granted the restart and the department readmits the student, then only when the student enrolls will their transcript be amended along with a notation of Restart/Academic Second Opportunity.
- 3) With no more questions, we will discuss this proposal again at our next APC meeting and possibly bring a proposal to you at the next Graduate Council meeting.

- **Appeals Committee (Amy Broemmel)**

- I am happy to report no appeals were submitted.

- **Curriculum Committee. (Laurie Meschke)**

- Our September meeting was cancelled as no curricular proposals were submitted.

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

- The SFRA committee met and determined the fall submission date. We sent out the proposal notification and the fall 2019 applications are due October 1.
- The SFRA committee will meet October 21 to determine the fall awardees.

#### 4. **New Business:** David Patterson

I met this week with Gary Skolits, Faculty Senate President; Misty Anderson, Past-President; and Michael Kilbey, Research Council President to discuss the new proposed Oak Ridge Institute (ORI). This is the possible partnership between UTK and ORNL. I want to bring this forward to Graduate Council to get your thoughts about forming an ad hoc committee of Graduate Council to consider the implications of this partnership. Some concerns and questions we might have are:

- How will these 500 new PhD graduate students be mentored?
  - Dr. Thompson clarified that the 500 students are really 380 students, as 120 of those students are currently in the Bredesen Center. The proposal also has 60 additional faculty at UT, as well as 60 additional faculty at ORNL. The Provost also plans to add 100 new faculty. It is important for Graduate Council to look at the proposal, carefully consider it, and make some recommendations about the distributions of the new faculty where the need will be the greatest.
- Graduate policy states that to form a doctoral committee, two tenure or tenured-track faculty must be on the committee. What departments will this effect? What will be the workload increase on tenure-track professors in those departments?
- I want us to bring some understanding and calculations of the impact of this plan on graduate education to the conversation. There is the issue of mentoring, instructing, and recruitment.
- One faculty member reminded everyone that only UTK has the authority to award degrees.
- The Research Committee is preparing a paper about this proposal with their concerns and questions.
- I am suggesting that we also gather our concerns and questions to go before Faculty Senate.
- Is anyone against forming an ad hoc committee? (No one opposed)
- If you are willing to volunteer and be on this ad hoc committee, please see me after our meeting or send me an email. I would like to have at least five on the committee.
- This will be a short commitment. We want to articulate our concerns or areas of other considerations, draft a report, and bring it to Graduate Council for discussion at the November 21 meeting.

**5. Administrative Reports and Announcements:****Deans Update:** (Dixie Thompson)

We had the grand opening of the Graduate Commons last Friday. Thank you to everyone who joined us for the opening. This new space is located on the first floor of the Library and is just for graduate and professional students. There are areas for studying, for relaxing, for meeting in groups and for socializing. I encourage you to check it out. I truly appreciate the efforts of the Library and Holly Mercer to help make this space possible. The graduate students are excited and truly grateful for this space.

I am part of a task force that the Chancellor charged to look at issues related to sexual harassment. In particular with graduate students. We know the power differential between a mentor and a graduate student can sometimes put graduate students in vulnerable positions. This task force is charged with getting some information back to the Chancellor by next week. I anticipate what will come out of this is that the Chancellor will create a larger group with people from across the university to participate. I believe this will involve Graduate Council and your individual units, as we will be charged to review our handbooks, the Graduate Catalog and Hilltopics to look for opportunities to strengthen our language around the protection for graduate students. We want to create more opportunities for mentoring networks so that students are not obligated to a single individual but have other people around them who are supportive. If anyone has ideas or experiences you have learned in how to set up structures to protect students, please share those with me.

In early October, we will announce the Fellowships for next year. The Graduate School has a number of endowed Fellowships that we offer each year. We will send that information in the next couple of weeks and it will look much like it has in the past.

**Graduate Student Senate** (David Willis)

We had our first meeting on September 18.

- We established all our internal committees.
- We talked about connecting and belonging and creating a community.
- Sue and I both set goals for ourselves and for GSS.
- Each internal committee set goals for this year.

Travel Awards: We had over 230 applications. We awarded 160 applications with an average award of \$466.00. With this being the first all-electronic application, we knew there would be some hiccups. We sent a questionnaire to those that applied to get their feedback on the process. The Travel Awards Committee will meet and discuss those responses and what improvements we can make for next submission.

**6. Items from the Floor:**

There were no items from the floor.

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 3:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Cox  
Graduate Council Liaison