Graduate Council Minutes - April 25, 2024

Graduate Council

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THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE

April 25, 2024


Ex-Officio members present: Ambroziak, K., Anderson, D., Bishop, W., E. Brothers, Bruner, M., Cahill, K., Cathey, A., Collins, C., Danquah, M., Dzikus, L., Haramule, J. (Undergraduate Curriculum Operations Coordinator), Lane, I., McConville, B., Meschke, L. (Past Graduate Council Chair), Scheb, J., Steele, J., Stier, J., Thompson, D., Tran., L., Cox, C. (Graduate Council Liaison)

1. Call to Order and Welcome (Phyllis Thompson)

The Graduate Council Zoom meeting was called to order by Graduate Council Chair, Phyllis Thompson on Thursday, April 25, 2024, at 3:00 p.m.

2. Minutes of the Preceding Meeting

P. Thompson reported the March 21, 2024, Graduate Council Minutes were approved electronically on March 28, 2024.

3. Committee Reports:

   - Academic Policy Committee (Melissa Hines, chair) – (Attachment 1)
     - Hines reported that the agenda item Continuous Enrollment was discussed at the April 4 meeting with some units in favor and some are not. Pros and Cons for both were shared. The plan is to continue to gather information from the various units and the proposal will come forward in the fall as a discussion item.

   - Appeals Committee (Siris Laursen, chair) - No appeals. No report.

   - Curriculum Committee (Sibyl Marshall, chair) - No meeting. No report.

   - Graduate Student Research Awards (Dixie Thompson)
     - There were 104 GSRA applications submitted and reviewed.
     - There were 22 applications that received awards from seven different units.
     - The committee felt the applications were very strong this year in showing the collaboration between the student and the mentor.
     - One change this spring was that the department head no longer had to write a letter of support. Instead, the onus is on the faculty member that will oversee the project to write an endorsement letter.

4. Administrative Reports and Announcements:

Dean's Update (Dixie Thompson)

   - We are rapidly approaching the end of another successful year. I want to thank Graduate Council for your service this year. And I want to thank Katherine Trubee and Hannah Thomoson with GSS for their service.

   - Enrollment trends for spring 2024.
     - Total enrollment: 7264; an increase of 9.2% compared to spring 2023
     - PhD Enrollment: 2258; an increase of 4.5% compared to spring 2023
     - Professional Doctorate Enrollment: 1021; an increase of 4.4% compared to spring 2023
     - EdS Enrollment: 45; an increase of 32.4% compared to spring 2023
     - Masters Enrollment: 3772; an increase of 15.6% compared to spring 2023
• DE Master’s Enrollment: 1825; an increase of 29.9% compared to spring 2023
• Residential Master’s Enrollment: 1947; an increase of 4.7% compared to spring 2023

• Application trends for fall 2024:
  o Completed applications (5943) are 19.2% higher than at same time last year
  o Active admits (2210) are 6.8% higher than at the same time last year
  o Many applications have yet to have a decision rendered by the department. PLEASE ensure that all applications receive a decision ASAP.

Office of Graduate Admissions is working to ensure that the fall 2025 application is ready to launch in August. Please be reminded that they will be contacting your department to review and update your section of the application.

Graduate Hooding is Saturday, May 18 at 9AM in Thompson-Boling Arena. We expect a large number of graduates. The Graduate School anticipates around 1150 graduates this spring (that doesn’t include Vet Med and Law).

Graduate Student Senate Update: (Katherine Trubee, Graduate Student Senate President)

• Graduate and Professional Student Appreciation Week (GPSAW)
  o The Awards Brunch was on April 1, in SU Ballroom A. We had an amazing turnout.
  o GSO Summit was on April 2.
  o We celebrated with other professional development and social events with campus partners.

• Senate meeting #9 was on April 18.
  o Speaker: Parking and Transportation Executive Director, Tanara Teal-Tate and Wood Consultant.

• GSS Elections will be held this week for GSS President and Vice President. Voting ends Friday, April 26, 5:00 p.m. We have two senators running for President and two students running for Vice-President. We are also voting on our Constitution Amendments.
  o Fall Senator Reporting. We are trying to build up the Senate for next year. Our plan is to send to the Director’s of Graduate Studies an email asking for names and contact information for next year’s senators.
  o Graduate Student Networking with College Leadership Events. This was with CEHHS and CAS/SS and CAS/NSM.

• Travel Awards
  o Year review: Each college will get a report over the summer for how many students received travel awards from GSS.
  o Final deadline: applications are due tomorrow, April 26. For this deadline we have over 200 applications. This period covers travel from May 1 through August 31, 2024.
  o For travel in September and beyond, the application will open the first day of classes, and as with every year, the earlier periods may see travel happen before award notification.
  o Visit gss.utk.edu/gss-travel-awards or email gsstravel@utk.edu for more info

• Newsletter – The Gist
  o The final 2023-24 version was sent out on Monday, April 22.
  o We had 6 installments this year: exceptionally successful at engaging and informing students.
  o April metrics: 64% open rate and nearly 600 total clicks.

• Coming up:
  o Senate meeting #10 will be held on May 2. Our speakers will be Janelle Coleman and Marla Bruner.
  o Final social event: May 2: Grad Night out at Term Club. This will be a senator appreciation and a fund raiser.
  o We want to produce an Annual Report. We understand this is very successful in other SEC graduate organizations. We will recap the year and show our wins and losses. We plan to send this out in a farewell email.

Graduate Council Chair (Phyllis Thompson)

I have one item to bring forward. I was asked by the Faculty Senate to bring to Graduate Council the discussion of winter mini term and how they were reduced to 10 days. Based on dialogue with the provost, they are asking:
that both the Undergraduate Council and Graduate Council, along with the Faculty Senate, to be involved in the calendar and provide feedback before it is finalized.

- It was noted that the Executive Academic Calendar Committee requires only 4 faculty representatives. And that a quorum can be met without those representatives.
- Sharing projected changes to the academic calendar via informational items on both the Undergraduate and Graduate Council agendas would allow a far wider range of faculty to offer relevant feedback.
- The proposed modification to the process would help ensure that the provost is given due consideration to faculty perspectives on matters directly related to scope and structure of the curricula.
- While in some years calendar approval may be routine, in others calendar changes will have a direct impact on instruction.
- Informing the faculty of potential changes in advance and allowing time for course correction, if needed, will allow us to move forward with greater confidence and in the best interests of students.

I open this for discussion.

- The calendar committee, which has broad representation from faculty, staff, and students has met for years and years. Based on feedback from Knox County Schools, staff, athletics, and others then the committee makes a recommendation to the provost. Things got complicated when winter mini term got added and when 3 sessions for summer got added. With only 365 days in a year, there became a need to decrease the length for winter mini term. There were discussions and information gathered about what other schools were doing for winter mini term. The decision was made to keep winter mini term in January which pushed back the start of spring term. That decision then caused a ripple effect. There was no intent on anyone’s part to be difficult, but the decision has caused complications for faculty. Having voices to help make decisions is a good idea.
- The Faculty Senate recognizes that much thought went into that decision making process. They just want to be better connected in the future.
- It is a cumbersome process to create the quality content of course into a 10-day term.
- The idea and goal is to get to a calendar sequence that is standard and works. Not one that keeps changing.
- Transparency and communication are needed for future discussions.
- Possibly have proxies for the actual faculty members that cannot attend the meetings.

P. Thompson thanked everyone for their input and noted she will take this back and share with Faculty Senate.

**Nominating Committee** (Siris Laursen)

- Greg Kaplan self-nominated at the last Graduate Council meeting. His CV was attached for reference.
  Greg shared that he has experience as he previously served as the chair of the Undergraduate Council and has been on Faculty Senate. Also, has been in a leadership role with the Benefits Committee.
- A motion was made and seconded to vote to approve Greg Kaplan as the next chair elect.
- A poll was launched to vote Greg Kaplan as the next chair elect. The results were: unanimously approved.

P. Thompson: Are there any items from the floor for discussion? No items came forward.

As this is our last Council meeting, I want to thank everyone for a wonderful and successful year. I want to thank Catherine Cox for her support and guidance. I also want to thank Laurie Meschke for being available and a rock for me this year. Lastly, I want to thank all the chairs of the various committees and the members who served on those committees. This has been a wonderful experience. I look forward to seeing you all in the fall.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Cox
Graduate Council Liaison
Attachment 1

REPORT OF THE ACADEMIC POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING
Thursday, April 4, 2024
3:30 – 5:00 p.m., Zoom Meeting

Committee members present: Ahmed Bettaieb, Maria Castillo Rodriguez, Aly Fathy, Siris Laursen (served as chair), Adam Love, David Maslar, Jennifer Patrick, Katherine Trubee.

Other attendees: Phyllis Thompson (Graduate Council Chair), Marla Bruner, Carl Collins, Dixie Thompson, Catherine Cox, Grace Favier (Graduate School).

Siris Laursen called the meeting to order at 3:30 p.m.

Agenda Item: Continuous Enrollment

D. Thompson:
I bring the Continuous Enrollment policy back to APC as a continued discussion item. At the February meeting I asked the committee members to talk with your units and bring to this meeting those discussions.

The Graduate Catalog policy:
Continuous Enrollment
All degree-seeking students are expected to make a full commitment to their graduate and/or professional study in order to ensure that they can complete all degree requirements without unnecessary delay. Graduate students are therefore required to maintain an active status through continuous enrollment from the time of first enrollment until graduation. (Doctoral students registered for course 600 Dissertation have option of exemption under special circumstances of full-time internships not related to the dissertation. See section below Exemption from Continuous Enrollment of Course 600.

Continuous enrollment is maintained by registering for a minimum of one graduate credit hour per semester (excluding the summer, unless stipulated otherwise by the program or department). However, students who have started taking dissertation hours (course 600 Dissertation) must maintain a minimum of 3 credit hours per semester during all semesters, including the summer, in order to comply with the Continuous Enrollment requirement.

This proposal is open for discussion.

From the discussion of the members in attendance, some units are in favor, and some are not. Pros and Cons for both were shared. We will continue to gather information from the various units, and this proposal will come forward again in the fall as a discussion item.

D. Thompson: Thank you for your input and the dialogue at today’s meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 4:10.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Cox
Graduate Council Liaison