

## **Graduate Council Meeting September 03, 2020**

**Present:** Professors: Badovinac, Butali, Cwiertny, Doucette, Gfeller, Greyser, Forbes, Hoffmann, Hribar, Huber, Kang, O'Shaughnessy; Graduate Students: DeYoung, Gabriele, Piegors, Waldstein; Graduate College Personnel: Arbisi-Kelm, Campo, Keller, McKibben, Teitle, Varga.

**Absent:** Graduate College Personnel: Lara.

The meeting was called to order by Dean John Keller @ 8:15 AM.

### **1. Welcome and Introductions**

- Dean Keller extended a warm welcome to the new and current members and called on each to introduce themselves. One additional serving member will be appointed to represent the College of Nursing.

### **2. Announcements and Updates from the Graduate College**

- Dean Keller provided an overview of the activities the Graduate College leadership undertook to address the immediate educational, research challenges and academic planning on campus due to the disruption of the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak and the call for action on social justice, racial equality and Black Lives Matter (BLM) interests:
  - i. Modification of Graduate College policies and deadlines ([Manual of Rules and Regulations](#)) to accommodate student needs, notably the virtual examination dissertation defense (Academic Affairs Office).
  - ii. Human Resources guidance on caring and accommodating for staff and students in both learning and work environments (graduate student appointments, fellowships, emergency funding; health, well-being, payroll benefits, employment service, etc.).
  - iii. Limiting on-campus operations to necessary offices and moving most staff and faculty to remote working.
  - iv. Collaboration with the Office of the Vice President for Research (OVPR) and collegiate Associate Deans for Research (ADRs) in guiding the creation of a detailed plan to keep the UI research enterprise moving forward.
  - v. Graduate College doctoral and master's virtual commencement ceremony, New Graduate Student ICON course, Welcome and Orientation.
  - vi. Issuance of position statement on Black Lives Matter, Social Injustice, and action plan to building a diverse, equitable and inclusive experience for graduate and professional students and postdoctoral scholars within the UI academic community. (For more information, please visit the [Graduate College](#) website landing page.)

### **3. The first [Director of Graduate Studies \(DGS\)](#) meeting is scheduled on September 09, 2020.**

- i. Guest speaker, [Mark Smith](#), Senior Vice Provost for Academic Affairs and Dean of the Graduate School, University of Texas at Austin. His presentation will be on Holistic Admissions Practices from an underrepresented perspective.
- ii. In addition to the [Higher Learning Commission \(HLC\)](#) learning outcomes activities to be discussed in future DGS meetings, invitations have been extended and accepted for speakers to address and share general experiences and issues of BIPOC students and faculty, mentoring practices across different cultures, topics of addressing racism and unconscious bias in graduate education. All members of the Graduate Council are welcome to attend.

### **4. Review of the Fall Schedule**

- Members of the council were directed to the calendar listing of the meeting dates included on the agenda. The following are the 2020-2021 Graduate Council Meeting Dates: September 3, 17, October 1, 15, 29, November 12; January 28, February 11, 25, March 11, April 1, 15.

#### **4. Review of Council's Duties and Responsibilities**

- An excerpt from the Graduate College [Manual of Rules and Regulations](#) on the Graduate Council ([Section XVI](#)) was provided to the members. Dean Keller discussed the role the faculty members serve as the executive committee for the graduate faculty and the student members for graduate students, representing their cohort, colleges, and programs. In addition to input sought from the council on topical items related to how graduate education is implemented at the University of Iowa, and on rare occasions endorsement on matters of relative urgency, two key areas that the council has great responsibility for were highlighted:
  - i. Evaluating new graduate programs, revisions in existing programs or their termination. Requests of this nature are received from various areas on campus, vetted carefully by the Graduate College prior to being brought before the council for evaluation and potential action. Only upon approval by the council, do action items proceed to the graduate faculty, the provost, and [Board of Regents](#), respectively.
  - ii. To supervise changes to the Manual of rules and regulation (i.e., policies and procedures established by the Graduate Faculty implemented by the Graduate College) on the conduction of graduate education.

#### **5. List of 2019-2020 and Tentative 2020-2021 Activities**

- A summary list of activities the graduate council conducted from September 2019 through March 2020 were provided for review by the current members and to inform new members on the nature and scope of the work undertaken by the council. In combination a list of tentative activities and conversations anticipated to be undertaken for the forthcoming year was also provided. Members are invited to submit items of interest for the council's consideration. It was noted that council members represent a very robust, active working committee council providing valuable input in how graduate education is implemented at the University of Iowa.

#### **6. Updates from the Graduate Council and Council Members Regarding COVID Challenges**

Dean Keller opened the meeting to the members to address any Graduate College policy matters and to share candidly challenges, concerns and responses experienced over the last six months or currently for their units or programs due to the outbreak and ramifications of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and the Black Lives Matter and racial justice movements.

The range of shared comments encompassed the reverberations from the campus closures and move to online instruction, admission and Graduate College policies; student supports, resources, fellowship deadlines; the current operation of the hybrid model adopted for the fall semester and Black Lives Matter and racial justice interests.

#### **Noted Challenges**

- Many students conducting their research involving human subjects were forced to terminate their projects due to Institutional Review Board (IRB) requirements and approvals. (School of Music)
- Abrupt endings to internships impacted students' impending time-to-degree objectives and requirements.
- Degree programs with certification (clinical) requirements were disrupted, notably clinical suspensions due to the dearth of needed personal protective equipment. (CON)
- A prevailing challenge in providing sufficient clinical experiences required for licensure and certification. (CON)
- The fall back in research (approximately a four-month lag).

- Implementing and managing cumbersome but necessary policies and procedures (CIMT, Associate Dean for Research) for the re-opening of research laboratories; managing physical distancing protocols and the additional time required to schedule access and supervision. (Environ Occup Hlth)
- Increased demands placed on faculty and graduate assistants to supervise, mentor, and advise; dealing with student anxiety over and above what would be a normal teaching load (Across-the-Board).
- Building a sense of community to show that underrepresented students are valued and maintaining retention rates (CoE, Immunology).
- Balancing domestic and professional responsibilities. (Across-the-Board)

#### **Noted Concerns**

- Addressing proactively the research agenda and its effect on Graduate students' academic trajectories given the prevailing uncertainty. (Across-the-Board)
- Students meeting upper deadlines for when credits expire due to uncontrollable negative life circumstances. (COE)
- English Speaking Proficiency Assessment (ESPA) requirements for students who have first-time appointments as a graduate teaching assistant. (Comm Studies)
- Graduate Record Examination Requirements. (PHAR)
- Internal fellowship awards, associated requirements for degree completion and departmental repercussions (Ballard Seashore Dissertation, Post Comprehensive Research). (Comm Studies)
- Mental health support for graduate assistants. (Across-the-Board).
- Increase substance use, relapse, and overdose rates (GSS, CLAS).
- Graduate Students feeling valued and supported in their roles teaching in a vulnerable classroom setting. (CoE, Chemistry)
- Budget reductions and ramifications for untenured and graduate assistants. (CON)
- Potential reclosure of research laboratories. (IDST)
- Efficient dissemination of information to graduate students in response to their concerns (GSS, Chemistry, CLAS)

#### **Noted Responses (Commentaries, Implemented Measures, Proposals)**

- The Graduate College's management of the virtual examination defense was favorably acknowledged; students, in some cases, viewed the process less stressful than an in-person defense. (Occup Environ Hlth, Comm Studies)
- Departmental assistance was provided directly to each student resulting in a positive adjustment outcome. (CON)
- Existing online education already integral in some UI departments (e.g., CON), particularly graduate curricula, has been an advantage in response to the need for utilizing greater a virtual learning platform.
- One noted creative management strategy adopted was enrolling students earlier in the fall semester to lessen the burden of arranging required clinical contact hours given the reduced student to UIHC faculty ratio currently allowed. (CON)
- It was appreciated that the Zoom bandwidth needed to enable a quick transition and support for virtual instruction was sufficient. (Occup Environ Hlth)
- Given the unprecedented circumstances, student effort and resiliency were commented on favorably. (Occup Environ Hlth)
- Follow-up will be directly provided regarding [Teaching Assistant Preparation in English \(TAPE\)](#) requirements for students who have first-time appointments as a graduate teaching assistants (Grad Coll, Comm Studies).

- [Graduate Record Examination \(GRE\)](#) Requirements: The Graduate College eliminated the GRE as a collegiate requirement and no longer requires the GRE as a graduate admissions policy; those decisions are left to individual programs and departments and the national trend is to not have it required at the program level. (Keller)
  - i. It was commented that the standard error for measures of differences (between three and five) on the test are such that the test really can't be used to distinguish scores at comparable levels but rather are a very optimistic way of assessing someone's potential (Hoffman, COE). Two relevant resources were cited: <https://www.sciencemag.org/careers/2017/01/student-performance-measures-don-t-perform>; [https://www.ets.org/s/gre/pdf/gre\\_guide.pdf](https://www.ets.org/s/gre/pdf/gre_guide.pdf)  
(For more information, on departmental admission requirements please visit the [Iowa Graduate Admissions](#) website.)
- Fellowships awarded to students that were expected to graduate in spring or fall 2020 (i.e., Ballard Seashore Dissertation, Post Comprehensive Research) will be given a level of latitude if there was a disruption that occurred in their timeline. (Campo, Grad Coll) ([Fellowship Deadlines](#))
- Formal institutional support in the form of offering communities (i.e., space and time to share and strategize, followed by an active applied workshop) early on can be valuable in saving time and later moving forward in a better way. (Proposal | Amer Studies)
- Creation of an open forum comprised of neutral faculty from across disciplines and [Graduate Student Senate](#) officers to engage with students' concerns and to advocate. (Proposal | Keller, CoE, GSS)
- As an active member of the [Council of Graduate Schools \(CGS\)](#), the Graduate College is participating in a CGS effort, in conjunction with an external foundation, to begin a pilot project ascertaining information about graduate students' mental health and wellness issues in higher education. The director of the [University Counseling Service, Barry Schreier](#), is a national and internationally known leader in this area of mental health (i.e., graduate professional age students), serves on the advisory board for the CGS project, and is aware that we're going to be participating. Dean Keller is beginning conversations with him and his staff about some of these issues and how to get potentially groups of students from different kinds of backgrounds to discuss issues relevant to the project. (Keller)
- It was acknowledged that the current crisis imposes greater challenges for us all in balancing professional and domestic responsibilities and calls for greater flexibility and accommodations in terms of professional job expectations and what we can accomplish. As a group comprising faculty, students, and administrators, we going to have to work through this; continuing to expect good work and acknowledging that we are probably not going to get as much done as we might have anticipated. The Graduate College will need to continue to be flexible in our thinking of student expectations. (Keller)
- Dean Keller noted that Diversity, Equity and inclusion interests have been prevalent within the Graduate College and the leadership is aware writ large of Black Lives Matter issues and is working to identify and develop the best ways it can help our students amidst the limitations managing affairs virtually, particularly in building and connecting communities. The new appointment of [Liz Tovar](#), University of Iowa's Associate Athletics Director for Student-Athlete Academic Services, as Interim Associate Vice president for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion to serve our campus in this vital leadership role and support our university on a broader scale represents a step in establishing stability in these areas moving forward. The Graduate College will continue plans this fall to develop innovative ways to bring the Directors of Graduate Studies together to

address issues that are pertinent to graduate education in general but also concerning critical issues related to underrepresentation in graduate programs. (Keller)

- With the re-opening of the University and research laboratories, the University is purposeful in maintaining research at a high-level capacity. One model contingency planning groups might consider if necessary, would be reverting possibly to a virtual world version at the undergraduate teaching level while maintaining professional and graduate activities at their restored level. Professional programs and CON to some extent—though there is a substantial undergraduate population in their college—are more self-contained given that a lot of their classes exist online. (Keller)
- The occurrence of the pandemic in our lifetime is unprecedented and the University continues facing multiple challenges in addressing the complexities of many of the issues affecting our institution, including assimilating and responding to the large amount of information being received. There are a lot of questions and in some cases, there are not always clear answers to provide. However, Central Administration and the University as a whole is trying actively to work in the very best interest of everyone on the campus and the voices from students are being heard. (Keller)

Dean Keller expressed his appreciation to all the members for attending the first council meeting of the academic year and for all that they have done to help the graduate enterprise at Iowa this past spring, into the summer, and presently here in the fall; moreover, for all that they will be doing to help the Graduate College serving as council members this current academic year.

The meeting adjourned at 10:00 AM

**[Future 2020-21 Graduate Council Meeting Dates](#)**

September 17, October 1, 15, 29, November 12; January 28, February 11, 25, March 11, April 1, 15.