

## **Graduate Council Meeting September 17, 2020**

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

**Absent:** Professors: Badovinac, Butali, Campo.

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

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

- Dean Keller introduced and welcomed Sue Gardner, a newly appointed member to the Graduate Council representing the College of Nursing, and called on each member to introduce themselves.

### **2. Approval of September 03, 2020 Meeting Minutes**

- No revisions to the distributed minutes were offered, a motion for approval was presented (Huber), seconded (Cwiertny), and unanimous consent obtained.

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

- Dean Keller acknowledged the commendable service over the years by two members of the Graduate College staff:
  - i. Assistant Dean Heidi Arbisi-Kelm's (Academic Affairs Office) wide-ranging involvement with the electronic thesis and dissertation (ETD) process at the Graduate College, including the [United States Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Association \(USETDA\)](#), and [ProQuest](#).
  - ii. Assistant Dean Jennifer Teitle who will be receiving a Board of Regents Staff Excellence Award for her extensive leadership with both Graduate Success and Professional Development services at the Graduate College.
- Two [Director of Graduate Studies](#) meeting announcements were shared:
  - i. The meeting convened on September 09, 2020 focused on holistic admissions in graduate education and featured a presentation and Q&A by guest speaker, [Mark Smith](#), Senior Vice Provost for Academic Affairs and Dean of the Graduate School, University of Texas at Austin. His presentation was on Holistic Admissions Practices from an underrepresented perspective. The video recording will be made available and the subject matter, as well as the value of the GRE in admission practices, will be addressed further in a future council meeting.
  - ii. Associate Dean Varga will be re-convening a discussion on [Higher Learning Commission \(HLC\)](#) interests and outcomes measures at the graduate level at the scheduled meeting for September 23, 2020. All council members are encouraged to attend and participate.
- Acknowledgement from Dean Keller was expressed for the endeavors of the Academic Affairs Office (AAO) in implementing the important policies and deadlines that guide and shape graduate education on campus with the continuation of COVID this fall and into the spring semester. The options expanding for the comprehensive and final examination for thesis and dissertation were noted and discussed further by Associate Dean Steve Varga and Assistant Heidi Arbisi-Kelm. For this semester and foreseeable future, the AAO is allowing

for flexibility on how the comprehensive and final examinations can be conducted depending on the personal preferences of the students and the committee members.

- i. Examinations can be in person on campus under conditions commensurate with the University's policies for social distancing and wearing PPE.
- ii. Alternatively, hybrid examinations (i.e., combination of virtual and in person) or all virtual arrangements are permissible if all committee members are in accord.
- iii. The number of required committee members will not be changed (i.e., no fewer than five members of the Graduate Faculty).

Surveys are being conducted with regards to the virtual examinations and the data being collected will be shared with the council. Preliminary response indicators included:

- i. Students feel less anxious undertaking the examination virtually.
- ii. The hybrid or virtual allows advantageously greater accessibility for the public portion of the defense.
- iii. The hybrid model will be the most stimulating source for developing best practices and for assessing creatively how to insure members' inclusivity and participation.

(For additional information, please see "Holding Your Thesis or Dissertation Defense" on the Graduate College website, [Coronavirus and Return to Campus FAQs](#) and "[Remote Defense Guidelines](#)".)

- The Graduate College is cognizant of the many challenges that our students are facing in these difficult times and is attempting to provide needed assistance. To that end, Dean Keller announced a new grassroots crowdfunding campaign of the Graduate College, in collaboration with the [Center for Advancement](#), entitled [Tech Equity for Grad Students](#).

The impetus for the campaign was a noted disparity that has occurred for some of our students—particularly underrepresented scholars—in terms of a lack of financial revenues necessary to access essential technological resources for succeeding as the UI moved to online instruction to curb the spread of the coronavirus.

The goal of the campaign is to assist our students in the procurement of essential technological tools (i.e., laptops/internet plans, cell phones/data plans, maneuverable workstations, etc.) that will enable them to focus on their academic careers; to seek external resources to support their needs and ease the financial burden students are encountering.

- Assistant Dean Teitle announced the virtual [Three Minute Thesis](#) (3MT) 2020 competition that will be held and highlighted the event's high-quality professional development workshops preceding the final competition recording, the latter scheduled for October 19-30.
- [Graduate Professional Development Newsletter](#). An online resource for news and information on upcoming events, workshops, and programs for graduate students and postdoctoral scholars.

#### **4. Review of Graduate College Academic Unit Representation on Graduate Council**

- An overview of the council's membership configuration was presented by Dean Keller and two proposals for consideration in order to achieve more accurate council representation for the academic units that report to the Graduate College.

[Membership Status Quo](#) (Synopsis): The Graduate Council consists of thirteen elected members from the graduate faculty (eleven collegiate and two at-large representatives

serving three year terms), four graduate students chosen by the Graduate Student Senate (serving one-year terms), and deans of the Graduate College (ex officio nonvoting members).

One college, the academic units that report to the Graduate College, has historically been unrepresented on the Graduate Council—the [School of Planning and Public Affairs](#), [School of Library and Information Sciences](#) and the [Center for the Book](#); comprising thirty-plus tenured and instructional faculty.

**Redress Proposals (2):**

- i. Notwithstanding concerns on voting procedures (i.e., a tie vote, lost motion), include an additional member to represent the series of academic units conjointly resulting in twelve collegiate council members.
- ii. Limit the two at-large membership to one; replace a current serving member on the council with a collegiate electee from the academic units effective fall 2021.

**Determination** (Informal)

Substitution proposal favored based on the reasons one current at-large member's term will expire spring 2021 (Huber/CON), members are serving university at-large interests despite their collegiate affiliation and unanimity for maintaining a smaller governing entity. A formal amendment to the [Manual of Rules and Regulations of the Graduate College](#) will be drafted and presented in the future to the council.

**5. Graduate Faculty Voting Procedures---Electronic Options**

- A discussion was led by Dean Keller addressing the need for the development and implementation of efficient methods for convening virtual meetings and e-voting on resolutions presented before the Graduate Faculty, initially due to time and geographical constraints, and now Covid-19.

Ensued discussions resulted in a proposal for a tiering model allowing for presentation and deliberation—the latter particularly for policy and procedural matters that require more consideration of formal actions than items handled pro forma—prior to voting at the joint Graduate Faculty/DGS Meetings that occur at the end of the fall and spring semesters (Wednesday, December 16, 2020; May / 2021 respectively)

**6. Update on Graduate College External Advisory Board (CEAB) Meeting**

- Graduate College External Advisory Board (GCEAB) meetings are held bi-annually for the purpose of presenting updates and topic items for further consultation with the members. A virtual meeting was convened with the advisory board on Monday, September 14, 2020. In addition to the updates that were shared—many of which were gleaned from our previous council meeting—two specific items were presented on:
  - i. The crowdfunding campaign, *Tech Equity for Grad Students*, which was discussed at length and viewed particularly appropriate because of the Graduate College's connection with our diversity, equity, inclusion efforts and the university's plan to move to online instruction after Thanksgiving (beginning November 30<sup>th</sup>), along with final exams being delivered remotely. The advisory board viewed the initiative very positively and it received the members' explicit endorsement.
  - ii. The Graduate College's participation in a pilot project undertaken by the [Council of Graduate Schools \(CGS\)](#), in collaboration with the [JED Foundation](#), to ascertain information about graduate students' mental health and wellness issues in higher education. The Graduate College has submitted a two-page proposal which has been

approved. Serving on the advisory board for the CGS/JED Foundation project is the director of the [University Counseling Service, Barry Schreier](#), a national and internationally known expert on student mental health issues. At this juncture the Graduate College leadership is beginning to target different student listening groups to determine some of the challenges they are facing, particularly during the COVID-19 state, and gather pilot information about student perspectives. Before the virtual meeting planned in October, leadership will meet with veterans to speak to their specific issues, URM students, women in science and engineering (WISE), and LGQBT students. Included as well will be the Graduate Student Senate leadership to obtain more global perspectives of mental health related matters that they are hearing from constituents in general. As more information is gathered, the Graduate College will keep the Council updated on this important effort that is underway.

The Graduate Council at-large expressed sincere well-wishes for Wendy Danger during her current leave of absence.

The meeting adjourned at 9:18 AM

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

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