

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT SAN ANTONIO
DOCUMENTS AND PROCEEDINGS OF THE GRADUATE COUNCIL
ACTION MINUTES

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Location: TEAMS 9/3/2024 3:30-5:00

I. Call to order and taking of attendance

- The Chair called the meeting to order at 3:31 PM
- Quorum met.
 - i. Present: Alfonso Apicella, Amy Chanmugam, Andrea Aleman, Andrew Konove, Arkangel Cordero, Byongook Moon, David Restrepo, Eduardo Duenez, Elaine Sanders, Elizabeth Sooby, Gabriela Romero Uribe, Ginger Hernandez, Guadalupe Carmona, Hannah Macnaul, Jeff Ragsdale, Jeffrey Howard, Joe Houpt, John Harrichand, Joshua Thurow, Judy Haschenburger, Jurgen Engelberth, Kathryn Henderson, Mariela Rodriguez, Michael Cepek, Michael Newell, Min Wang, Nancy Membrez, Ovidio Giberga, Rita Mitra, Shamshad Khan, Stephanie Westney, Tansu Demir, Tulio Sulbaran, Wei-Ming Lin, William Land, Ying Huang, Zachary Tonzetich
 - ii. Absent: Angela Lombardi, Fathali Firoozi, Kenneth Walker, Xiaoyin Wang
- The Chair welcomed new members and explained the dynamics of GC and where to find files in TEAMS

II. Consent Agenda – *Approved with no objections*

- Meeting Minutes
- Special Membership
 - The Chair described the functions of each Graduate Council standing committee

III. Reports

A. Committee on Graduate Programs and Courses

- No report.
 - The chair mentioned applications pending for October's meeting

B. Council Chair

- The Chair detailed the standing committees' function and gave examples of each committee's work during the last academic year.
- The Chair informed on the modifications to the Graduate Council bylaws done during the last academic year, an effort from the previous Chair.
- The Chair updated on the special request made by the Dean of Graduate School last academic year related to developing mentoring policies/guidelines. An Ad hoc committee was created to work on the task. During this semester a document summarizing the Graduate Council recommendations for mentoring guideless will be created and shared to the council for feedback.
- The Chair talked about the 99-hour policy, a limit on the number of doctoral semester credit hours (SCH) that students can take while receiving support. After the 99 SCH students pay out-of-state tuition. Doctoral students can request to the Graduate School a 1SCH exemption from the traditional 9/9/3 SCH requirements on their last semester of doctoral studies. Oftentimes, students fail to graduate within the 1SCH exemption semester. Last academic year, the Graduate Council and the Graduate School worked on developing a policy that allows doctoral students to request additional 1 SCH exceptions in the lasts

semesters of their degree. The 1 SCH exception needs to be well justified by the student's advisor and the GAR and approved by the Dean of Graduate School.

- The Chair updated on this academic year's Faculty Senate priorities that concern to the Graduate Council. Some of the priorities are research infrastructure and support (which directly impact graduate students), ongoing legislation changes from the state and how to implement them, and ongoing concerns with shared governance.

C. Dean of Graduate School

- Ginger Hernandez, Senior Manager of Administrative Support Operations from the Graduate School gave a presentation on the updates done to the graduate policies and forms. She mentioned that training sessions were offered during the summer and the presentation of those sessions is available on the Graduate School website.
- Ginger emphasized that the new policies will apply all the forms required for graduate students to Degree Works.
- Ginger provided information on where to find forms and the deadlines in the semester to submit forms.
- The presentation given was shared via TEAMS with the Graduate Council (in the chat of the meeting and the Council folder) for distribution among graduate students and faculty.
- Ginger informed that more sessions to train graduate students on how to use the forms will be available in the Fall.
- Ginger shared a table indicating the different graduate faculty memberships available.
 - Joshua Thurow asked about the difference between graduate faculty and graduate faculty scholar and committee composition.
 - Stephanie Westney asked how to request a special membership
 - Ginger answers both questions
- Ginger commented on the updates of committee forms and special and adjoint memberships forms.
- Ginger finalized sharing the point of contact in the graduate school for each specific task and liaison for each college.

D. Secretary

- The Secretary introduced herself.
- The Secretary gave an update on the vacancies available in the Graduate Council Executive Committee, including the Parliamentarian. The role of the Parliamentarian was explained.
- The Secretary updated the composition of the Graduate Council Standing Committees and explained the distribution.
- The Secretary highlighted the time commitment and service done by all Graduate Council members and invited them to share with department chairs to take into consideration.
 - Michael Cepek commented on the importance of the Graduate Council and Executive Committee.
 - The Chair reiterated on the matter

E. Committee on Graduate Program Evaluation

- No report

IV. Unfinished Business

- The Chair provided context and explained in detail the activities done during the past academic year by the Ad hoc committee on the mentorship plan. The mentorship plan aims to guide mentee-mentorship relationships.
- The Chair informed that a mentorship plan will be drafted in the next couple of months and shared with the Graduate Executive Committee and the Graduate Council.

- Rita Mitra asked whether mentorship training will be required for all graduate faculty.
- The Chair answered that will be recommended but not a requirement.
- Michael Cepek brought back to discuss the minimum requirement for thesis committee members' composition. The composition exam currently accepts 2 committee members as a minimum, however, thesis committees require a minimum of 3 members. For some departments in COLFA is difficult to meet the 3 committee members requirement leading to overloaded faculty and perhaps the inclusion of members that lack the qualification to judge a particular thesis. Other UT system institutions, including UT Austin, already accept 2 as a minimum number of thesis committee members.
- Michael Cepek emphasized that this change will not affect what each department later set up as a minimum requirement.

Action to take by Graduate Council Members: Bring to your departments for discussion the following proposal to modify in the Graduate Catalog. The proposed changes are in **bold and italic**. The rest of the text is how it reads currently in the Graduate Catalog

Requirements for Thesis

The following steps for completing a thesis as part of a master's degree are the responsibility of each degree candidate selecting Option I:

1. Secure the approval of the supervising professor, who is also Chair of the Thesis Committee. Upon recommendation of the Graduate Program Committee and the academic College, the Graduate School appoints the Thesis Committee. ***The Thesis Committee consists of the Thesis Chair and at least one additional member of the Graduate Faculty.*** The chair of the Thesis Committee must be a member of the Graduate Faculty for that graduate program. A majority of the thesis committee must consist of graduate faculty or adjunct faculty in the student's program. For interdisciplinary committees, the chair of the committee may be a graduate faculty member from another program and/or the committee may consist of half of graduate faculty members from outside the student's program, upon approval of the Associate Dean of the College and Dean of the Graduate School. Changes to the Thesis Committee require documentation to be signed by the Department Chair, the Associate Dean of the College, and the Dean of the Graduate School and must be received by the Graduate School. The student is expected to work closely with the Thesis Chair in selecting the thesis topic and in completing other details of their study.

Note: The current version of the sentence proposed to change is "The Thesis Committee consists of the Thesis Chair and two additional members of the Graduate Faculty."

V. New Business

- The Chair talked about Individual Development Plans (IDP) required for doctoral students. Last academic year were put in place and there was a lack of compliance. This academic year will be implemented in Digital Measures and requirements will be stricter.
- The Chair emphasized the importance for faculty to ensure that doctoral students complete and submit IDP.
- Michael Cepek commented on the process of IDP at UTSA which involves the advisor and doctoral students discussing milestones that will serve for end-of-the-year evaluations.
- IDP is implemented at the university level and departments can retain their milestone agreements and other evaluation forms.

Action to take by Graduate Council Members: Bring to your departments the following information regarding IDP from UTSA's Graduate School definition.

“To prepare doctoral students for successful careers of the 21st century “Reimagining the PhD” stresses the importance of the use of the Individual Development Plan (IDP) that promotes a strong culture of positive mentoring towards this objective. The Graduate School, in partnership with academic colleges, faculty, staff and students, has developed a streamlined combined Annual Review and IDP initiative, that requires a mandatory annual review for all doctoral students. The Academic Review and IDP is an assessment of scholarly activities, types of funding received and sources, milestone achievements and future goals for the upcoming academic year. Students will complete this form with their currently assigned graduate advisor and submit to the Graduate School for review.”

Note: Doctoral students are informed via email about the deadlines to submit IDP. More information about the process and how to star can be found at: <https://graduateschool.utsa.edu/current-students/Graduate-Annual-Review-and-IDP.html>

- The Chair encouraged to email him or the Secretary to add a new business for discussion in the agenda during future Graduate Council meetings.
- The Chair commented after Michael Cepek highlighted the new merge of UTSA and UTHSA. The new merge will bring Graduate School and Graduate Council implications that will be discussed eventually but more details from leadership are required.

VI. Adjournment : The Chair adjourned the meeting at 4:45 PM