

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

Minutes  
October 1, 2019

**Denman Room**  
**SU 2.01.28**  
**3:30-5:00PM**

**I. Call to order and taking of attendance**

Present: Matthew Brogden, Lupita Carmona, Michael Cepek, Catherine Clinton, Arkangel Cordero, Bridget Drinka, Kandyce Fernandez, Fathali Firoozi, Judy Haschenburger, Shamshad Khan, Nicholas Large, Ambika Mathur, Megan Piel, Libby Rowe, Elaine Sanders, Jorge Solis, Erica Sosa, Drew Stephen, Liang Tang, Marie Tillyer, Laura Upenieks, Victor Villarreal, Melissa Wallace, HungDa Wan, Alistair Welchman, Tyler Werland

Excused: Jennifer Smith, Corey Sparks, Rohit Valencha

Absent: Jurgen Engelberth, Alexandra Holdbrook, Francine Johnson, Wei-Ming Lin, Angela Lombardi, Muntasir Masum, Mohammad Nur Nobli, Ariel Suselo, Heather Trepal, Ram Tripathi

**II. Reports**

A. Council Chair

- Alistair Welchman congratulated and thanked Michael Cepek (Membership), Jurgen Engelberth (Program Review), and Matthew Brogden (Graduate Programs and Courses) for agreeing to serve as chairs for this academic year. He also noted that the Academic Policies and Requirements Committee does not have a chair at this time.
- The consent agenda, consisting of the minutes of the September meeting and the special membership applicants, passed unanimously.
- A motion unanimously passed to reorder the agenda and let the Committee on Graduate Programs and Courses present first.

B. Committee on Graduate Programs and Courses

The committee chair, Matthew Brogden presented the following:

1. MA in Bicultural Studies program closure. There were no objections from the committee. There was no discussion. The vote to accept the recommendation of the committee was unanimous.
2. Mexican American Studies (certificate) – The proposed certificate was approved by the committee. In the discussion, it was noted that the courses may contribute to the degree in the programs listed. Will this certificate be available to programs beyond those listed? Dr. Mathur noted that the program is not exclusionary. The vote to accept the recommendation of the committee was unanimous.

3. Dual degree program Civil Engineering was presented by Victor Villareal. There were no questions or comments over the summer related to this program. A new memo was added to the proposal. The dual degree will be between programs at UTSA and in Brazil. Some courses will be offered in Brazil. Dr. Ali Firoozi asked what the benefit of this program will be to UTSA students? The response was that we need strong doctoral students in our program. The dual degree program increases the number of students in the UTSA doctoral programs and in the number of degrees granted from those programs. Twenty-four votes supported the recommendation of the committee. One Councilor abstained.
- C. Senate Report (Alistair Welchman)
- The revision to the Graduate Council Bylaws passed in Faculty Senate and was approved by the Provost and the President.
  - The MS Cyber Security program was held in Senate due to a degree that has a name similar to a program in ITCS. They are negotiating for name changes. Chad Mahood thinks it will resolve soon.
- D. Graduate Dean: We need to look at graduate education as a whole. Tier 1 status is based on at least 200 doctoral graduates per year. President Eighmy, Provost Espy, and Dean Mathur are creating a new joint task force looking at graduate student success for both doctoral and master's students (focus on doctoral). Dean Mathur is looking for volunteers from Graduate Council to serve on the task force. Mike Cepek, Megan Piel, Libby Rowe, Tyler Werland, and Bridgett Drinka volunteered. The Dean noted that this is our moment to bring graduate education front and center. This committee will be working to hire a recruiter, understand admissions versus interest, look at strategic marketing, understand what constitutes value added activities, review how are we tracking progress, look at professional development, develop assistance to students, work toward more attractive packages, track three year outcomes, and engage alumni to give back. The committee will include faculty, associate deans, students (30-35). She hopes to have results in 6 months.
- E. Secretary: (Elaine Sanders) We continue to have a lack of participation in Graduate Council. Most of the committees are short of committee members. Some departments do not have Councilors. She asked for nominations for Parliamentarian. No nominations were forthcoming. There is a lot of work to be done this academic year. We need our Councilors to step up.
- F. Committee on Graduate Program Evaluation: (Jurgen Engelberth) No report. Elaine Sanders reviewed the history of the decline program evaluation.
- G. Committee on Academic Policy and Requirements: (No Chair)
- Elaine Sanders asked again for nominations to chair of this committee. No nominations were made.
  - Alistair Welchman brought up the new policy on incompletes and asked for a review by the committee.

- Alistair Welchman also asked the committee to review the +/- grading policy. He noted that the +/- grading system was introduced by John Frederick. This system could not be mandated, was not consistently applied, and Graduate Council was not consulted prior to the decision being made. The impediment specific to graduate students is that a B- = 2.6, leading to probation or dismissal. In May, a committee agreed with student government that the +/- system should be. Discussion points:
  - Only a small number of SGA students voted on the student report (9%).
  - The system could be revised with a change to the scaling of letter grades to numerical equivalents.
  - In Astronomy, the faculty teaching graduate students want whole grades, faculty teaching undergraduate do not.
  - For graduates courses, getting a B- sends a signal that the student is not doing well.
  - Differentiate between undergraduate and graduate.
  - Keep A+, A-, and B+ for graduate students but don't give B-.
  - A straw pole was called on support for the recommendation to drop the +/- system. Ten Councilors voted to support, 14 voted against, and 1 abstained.

### **III. Unfinished Business**

### **IV. New Business**

### **V. Adjournment**