



## **The Graduate Council**

Graduate Council Minutes: February 9, 2021

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### **1. Report from The Graduate School**

Dean Herness mentioned that this is the last GC meeting with Bryan Moschel, who is leaving the institution to pursue other career opportunities, and he acknowledged the innumerable contributions that Bryan has made to TGS and to the institution over the years. We are indebted to Bryan for everything he has done for the University. Bryan thanked everyone for their collaboration and support over the years. It has been great to participate and provide information, as well as receive information that he could bring back to his team.

Dean Herness mentioned the importance of the Graduate Student Advisory Board (GSAB) and the graduate students' representation in the Graduate Council. For the GSAB, we implemented a survey to determine their areas of interest and priorities, and we have two working groups: one group involves issues of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. We need to hear from the students their perspectives and needs regarding DEI issues from a wide range of angles. The second group involves mentorship. Examples included peer to peer mentorship, how it would be good for new students to receive practical guidance and a formalized peer mentoring system would be helpful in this area. Students also talked about encouraging students to go to their mentors and incentivize participation in the mentoring programs. He also mentioned the importance to include the perspective of Graduate Council student representatives in the work the Council is carrying out through its committees of curriculum and policy.

Bryan Moschel informed the Council about the Census data for graduate enrollment. The summary data he provided is as follows:

4,551 Total Students enrolled in Spring 22

554 New Students; last year the number of new students was 610.

Submitted applications were down 1.9%, and completed down 10.4%; we had 89% confirmation rate. compared to 86% last year.

The Graduate School Virtual Open House took place on February 6 and once again broke prior records of registration and attendance. Data summary: the proportion of international prospective students participating in these events continue to grow. Of the 2,894 registrants, 44.3% were international. Of the 1,721 attendees, 42.36% were international. For comparison, the Spring 2021 OH had 2,043 individuals registered, with 1,211 attendees.

Dean Herness commented on how Commencement this year will be at the Metlife stadium; it will be incredibly exciting to have this ceremony in this location.

Dean Herness asked for comments regarding how the semester is unfolding for faculty and students. Comments from Council members included:

- A student representative mentioned how some students were getting used to online, but in person they get to engage with other classmates and also see how the professor structures their teaching style. Online they are just starting at a screen. Everything has been positive, but there have been students that prefer online.
- Faculty expressed their opinions about how their classes are going, with positive aspects especially regarding the attitudes of students to being on campus and the benefits of in person interactions. Perhaps some students have been used to being behind a camera for too long.
- The convenience factors sometimes outweigh the benefits from in-person interactions.
- A student representative mentioned how the social component is an important motivator to be on campus.
- Students are more involved this semester, and they are more ready to complete the transition back to campus.
- Many students work full time and they do need to take online courses; the need for flexible schedules and online programming will persist in the future.

## 2. Report from the Graduate Curriculum Committee (GCC)

Committee Chair Helen Roberts recommended the approval by the Council of the following curriculum actions:

- a. Alteration of combined programs:
  - i. BS + MS in Math
  - ii. BS + MS in Applied Math
  - iii. BS + MBA
  - iv. BS + MA in Social Research
- b. Alteration of MS in Nursing, Care Coordination and Transition Management Concentration (pre-licensure program).

The above curriculum actions were approved unanimously by the Council.

Chair Roberts also informed the Council of the progress the Committee is making on defining guidelines for the development of stackable programs, especially to promote interdisciplinary programs in addition to more traditional. For the next Graduate Council meeting, the GCC will bring a draft document for Council feedback.

### 3. Report from the Policy Committee

Committee Chair Michele Fisher presented the survey draft to GPCs regarding grade grievances, given the unique circumstances of graduate students, for example the length of their stay at MSU being shorter than for undergraduate students. The committee's plan is for the survey to go to GPCs, Chairs, and Deans. Chair Fisher requested feedback from the Council on the survey content and target population. Comments from the Council members included the following:

- Should the survey go to the whole faculty? Many of them have not had any experience with a grade grievance so it may not be useful to include everyone. It makes sense to ask for the input of GPCs, Chairs, and Deans. GPCs do not get involved according to the policy, but in many cases they do get involved in practice, since many students go to them for help with their grade concerns.
- The question remains regarding whether the existing policies and procedures serve the needs and specific characteristics of graduate students. It seems clarification is needed about the process for undergraduate and graduate students if there are specific needs for the graduate population that the current policy does not address.
- There may be confusion as to when the informal process is taking place, and when the process becomes a formal grievance.
- Is there data of how many times an informal grievance process becomes formal? The Provost's office will have this information, since it is managed at that level.
- The university-level Academic Policy Committee is currently reviewing the existing university grade grievance policy. One question is whether that committee will include graduate students in their work.
- Suggestion: instead of link to policy add the complete policy to the survey questionnaire.
- We need a strong policy to protect students, it can often happen that the instructors are not responsive, and the GPCs often intervene because of this.
- In the current formal process, even if a final decision takes place in favor of the student, the instructor can still decide that the original grade stands. Should the decision of the final arbiter have more power to influence the actual outcome?
- The committee is also working to incorporate feedback from graduate students and will start doing so with the graduate student representatives to the Council.

- There is significant passion about these issues, and so the policy committee felt it was important to gather more information from those who may have experience with the process.

The Council agreed to send the survey to Council members as a pilot and ask for feedback about the survey before it goes out to a larger population.

4. Reminders:

- a. Graduate Council Meeting: March 16, 2022