

**GRADUATE COUNCIL (GC)**

Tuesday, March 17, 2020

1:30 – 3:00 PM

Meeting Minutes

**I. Discussion Item: Graduate P&P Handbook Revision –*Marjorie Zatz, Jesus Cisneros***

GC and Graduate Division discussed the Handbook revisions regarding the wording on non-resident student tuition (whether language on guaranteed payment by the graduate programs/division should remain—GC recommends removal, and explicit statement that Masters students are expected to pay), course load limitations (whether the language on the need to secure approval by the advisor and graduate group should remain—GC recommends removal), application for a lesser degree (GC recommends removing the sentence that refers to “lesser degree in another field” so that students may apply for a lesser degree even in the same field, as students may find them useful), additional language on advisors (GC’s 5/6/2019 motion to include the language was upheld), and committees for capstone other than thesis (GC recommends not requiring the listing of the committee members).

ACTION: Graduate Division will revise the Handbook after internal consultation, and bring it to GC’s consideration for consent calendar.

**II. Consent Calendar**

A. The agenda (3/17)

B. [Minutes from the 3/3 meeting](#)C. [Economics P&P](#)D. [IOR Petition](#): petition for the following graduate student to teach the listed course has been approved by GC Chair Westerling: Jones, Bristin\_ENG 129\_202020 Animal Studies and Literature

Hearing no objection, consent calendar was approved as presented.

**III. Chair’s Report**

The Chair introduced the proposed [draft policy statement pertaining to P/NP and S/U grading](#), and [comments](#).

Chair reminded that instructors can alter course learning outcomes, and modalities of instructions. The potential negative impact, for students, of not having letter grades was discussed. The registrar explained that most other UC campuses have decided not to switch grading policies for the Winter quarter, and assess the situation after final grades are submitted; Policy as written seems to be focused on faculty, rather than students not wanting a letter grade. From student perspective, maybe they would want letter grades, but may not have had the chance to address their preference. For financial aid, this will alter student ability to obtain financial aid. A member suggested that, if you are convinced you cannot offer the course in the meaningful way, to cover what needs to be covered, the best case scenario would be incomplete.

A member expressed that, although this proposed change does not seem to be a huge benefit for grad students, maybe it benefits faculty that teach large courses in undergrad education. Grad students have to have letter grades, they will not count if it’s S/U. Another concurred that graduate students do not benefit from this proposed change, and, while some instructors may feel discomfort, her unit is doing their best to deliver the courses as they had set out to teach.

A motion was made, and seconded, in which GC expresses its disagreement with the proposed policy with respect for S/U grades for graduate students. Motion carried unanimously.

Chair asked if anyone supported the P/NP policy, and none expressed their support.

ACTION: Transmit a memo to DivCo expressing GC's disagreement with the proposed addendum, as described above.

**IV. Vice Chair's Report (this item preceded item III in the meeting)**

The Teach Preparation Program (TPP) Working Group held its first meeting. The Vice Chair proposed a change in the membership structure, such that the outside member on the Curriculum Advisory Board for TPP would be a consultant, and not a member, and the VPDGE and the non-senate member of the working group be ex-officio, with the understanding that the ex-officio members may be invited to executive sessions.

ACTION: Vice Chair will draft a Charge, with this membership structure, for GC's review and approval by consent calendar.

- V. [PROC Report](#)** The liaison reported that the external review team's report for CCB came in, and it was a strong and positive report, supporting all the suggestions that the program had made, and highlighted the need for more and better support from Office of Research and Economic Development.

**VI. Consultation with VPDGE**

**A. Update on TA situations systemwide and at UC Merced campus**

UCM graduate students have been working with the Graduate Division, and do not plan to strike, unlike other campuses. Graduate Division started with conversation (before SC strike expanded), about transportation and food. VPDGE has had, and will have meetings with the administration and students on wide ranging issues, and is working on a document with plans for housing, transportation, food security, and interaction with faculty. The graduate student representative confirmed VPDGE's presentation.

**B. COVID-19 updates**

Dissertation defense will be conducted virtually, and digital signatures will be accepted. UCOP has approved relaxation of residency requirements for graduate students. VPDGE and Vice Chancellor Traina would like GC to issue a statement, faculty to faculty, that makes sure faculty do not expect students to be in labs 24/7, and that recognizes graduate student safety is important. Graduate students are nervous about courses, especially where they were supposed to teach in person, feeling pressured to be in a lab, with other students in close proximity. Vice Chair agreed that such a statement would be beneficial for students who might not feel comfortable discussing it with their advisors.

ACTION: The Chair will draft a statement that consideration of graduate student safety and wellness are of the foremost importance, and circulate with GC members and VPDGE.

**VII. Campus Review Item: Bylaws pertaining to Graduate Council**

UC Merced's [Bylaws](#) were last revised in 2010. Committee on Rules and Elections (CRE) requested that Senate Committees review Bylaws pertaining to each committee. Graduate Council comments were solicited via emails, and transmitted to Senate Chair on 3/20/20.

**VIII. Discussion Item: CRF Policy Work Group—Chair Westerling**

Chair Westerling provided an update on, and invited members to discuss, [proposed changes](#) to the CRF process and Curriculog. Members agreed on an abbreviated review process for Special Topics Courses (STCs) to add lab sections, and on moving the CRF timeline, so that proposals submitted in Fall (Spring) will be offered the next Fall (Spring), respectively, except for newly approved programs and new faculty.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:00PM.