

GRADUATE COUNCIL (GC)

Tuesday, May 12, 2020

Meeting Minutes

The Graduate Council 's regular meeting was called to order at 1:31PM via Zoom by Chair LeRoy Westerling.

I. Chair's Report—*Chair Westerling*

Chair Westerling updated GC members on DivCo's discussion about the possibility of "hybrid" instruction combining remote and in-person instructions, where instructors would need to be prepared to capitalize on in-person instruction when feasible. At the Graduate Group (GG) Chairs' meeting, there was no verbal feedback on the CRF Policy workgroup's requests, but there was discussion on the need to highlight communication for graduate students. Chair Westerling emphasized to the GG Chairs the importance, in light of covid-19 in particular, of GG Chairs communicating with students and GG faculty about specific changes in their groups' requirements.

ACTION: Chair Westerling will follow up with GC/Graduate Division communication to students at the end of semester, after the review of the use of the S/U grading policy by graduate students for Spring 2020.

Chair Westerling also met with Laura Martin to talk about implications for the accreditation of courses in Fall 2020, if instruction was carried out online. Normally, 50% of more of credits need to be earned from in-person courses. This would be especially hard for one year MM students if no waiver is granted in AY20-21.

II. Vice Chair's Report—*Vice Chair Hratchian*

The continuing student fellowships' reviews are still not complete. GC Vice Chair, acting Graduate Dean, and GC Member DePrano will complete the reviews. Vice Chair Hrant also suggested GC members encourage their GG chairs to take the initiative in modifying program requirements, as GC policy was designed for flexibility for Graduate Groups.

III. Consent Calendar

- A. The agenda (3/31)
- B. [Minutes from the 4/28 meeting](#)
- C. [Minutes from AY 2018-19](#)
- D. IOR petitions for Graduate Students to teach during Summer 2020:
[Gomez, Laura CRES 102 202020](#)
[Spezzano, Theresa PH 102 202020](#)

The consent calendar was approved as presented.

IV. Discussion Item: CRF Policy Workgroup Recommendations for Policy Changes—*Chair Westerling*

GC members reviewed the feedback from Department, Graduate Group, and Executive/Curriculum Committee Chairs on the proposed changes, and discussed the list of items that had not been considered for or against abbreviated review. It was decided that these items will also be reviewed using the abbreviated process, bypassing the Graduate Council. Chair Westerling pointed out that some Graduate Groups do not have Special Topics course approved yet, and, also taking the chairs' feedbacks in consideration, the 12-month lead time for Course Request approval will be phased in slowly, possibly starting in Spring 2021.

The motion to approve additional items to be placed on the abbreviated review process was made, seconded, and carried unanimously.

ACTION: In two weeks/by the end of month, analyst will complete the draft revised CRF policy, which would be circulated for one week for GC members to comment. Communicate GC decision from today to UGC.

V. Discussion Item: Remote Instruction in Fall 2020—Chair Westerling, Guest Becky Mirza

At DivCo's request, GC considered the possibility of remote instruction in Fall 2020 and its potential impacts. GC members discussed accreditation (if no blanket waiver from WSCUC is granted), accommodation of international students (at the moment there are no Department of Homeland Security guidelines for Fall 2020), and hybrid instruction. Chair Westerling explained why hybrid might be necessary (to accommodate students and faculty at higher health risks, international students who cannot enter the country, need for smaller class size, changing directives about social distancing), and asked GC members to think how to craft a policy to accommodate these factors, and who would determine the mode of instruction. It was suggested that it may be most sensible to keep classes online unless there is significant benefit from in-person instruction (such as labs). It would be important to craft a policy that gives sufficient flexibility but does not leave the burden of decisions to individual instructors.

Becky Mirza from the International Affairs Office (IAO) provided information regarding government guidelines on international students as well as the status of international students' visa applications. It was agreed that the International Affairs Office would draft a document that offers guidance for international students and post-docs about visas, employment, travel, and relaxation of academic progress requirements during the COVID-19 emergency. IAO has already issued many (about 20) exceptions to the time to degree requirements (which are in line with the EEC policy issued by GC in April). Most administrative processes, including hiring, have moved online. Hiring students remotely from abroad is a payroll question, and IAO has not received guidelines from the Office of the President. As the situation remains fluid, the document will be very general. GC Vice Chair Hrant will review it before it is posted on IAO's website.

Chair Westerling reminded attendees that GC needs to start consideration of the instructional policy for Fall 2020 now, to aid planning of the Fall instruction. Even if the decision-making may be postponed until the last minute, all the different modes of instruction must be thought through. Chair Westerling encouraged GC members to start writing down their ideas about the different modes, including considerations that have so far not been addressed, such as lack of daycare and childcare, that impact the feasibilities of different modes of instruction.

ACTION: Chair Westerling will present Graduate Council comments at DivCo's May 13 meeting. Becky Mirza will draft a guideline document for GC Vice Chair Hrachian's review.

VI. Consultation with VPDGE (with Incoming Interim VPDGE Chris Kello)

- [International Student enrollment](#) and employment: Becky Mirza went over the spreadsheet that was shared with the council. IAO's visa specialist is in contact with all SIRs. GC Chair Westerling relayed the concerns he has been hearing about the possible TA shortage if international students were unable to enroll. Incoming Interim VPDGE Kello replied that the enrollment projections were still at the previously reported level of 725 students, which, with the undergraduate "melt" beginning to be seen, would likely cover the TA needs, although it is too early for any conclusion.
- Research Resumption. The outgoing and incoming Vice Chancellor of Research and Economic Development, Sam Traina and Marjorie Zatz, and Chris Kello are members of the group tasked with planning research resumption. The group has drafted initial recommendations, which have not been finalized yet. The group's main focus is on getting research back on campus, especially lab access for graduate students, post-docs, and junior faculty. The group focuses on policymaking and planning, to minimize density and coordinate across labs on the same floor. It is hoped that research groups would self-organize so that no formal prioritization of specific populations is necessary. The group is also sensitive to the individual situations, especially of students. The timing of opening is not entirely in UCM's control due to the county's health office's jurisdiction over the campus, as well as logistics (such as lack of sanitizer dispensers). Vice Chair Hrachian added that campus closure has disproportionately impacted some groups (such as

graduate students in 4th or 5th year, post-docs, mothers, and labs with more people), and expressed concerns about UC Merced students' and faculty's competitiveness in securing funding in the next couple of years.

- Recruitment: Incoming Interim VPDGE Kello anticipates that no fairs will happen in person, some may happen online. Recruitment plan is in the making, and GC will be consulted. UCM has successfully used in-person interactions for recruitment, and its lack will likely affect recruitment. IIVPDGE plans to reach out to the SIRs to reduce melt (for CA and domestic students).
- Graduate Student Opportunities (CARES Act Emergency Funds, UC-HIS Doctoral Dissertation Initiative professional development plan): UCM received \$13M in CARES Act Emergency funds, for both undergraduate and graduate students. Only title IV students are eligible. \$513,000 is for graduate students; there is a separate fund for undocumented students. Students can use it for whatever they need. Chair Westerling asked about the possibility of rolling over these funds, as the needs are more likely higher in the fall, and IIVPDGE Kello responded that rollover is unlikely to be allowed. Separately, Graduate Division received additional \$50K from the Office of the President last week for professional development trainings during summer. CSU campus visits, as well as career days, are being proposed using these funds, which can be rolled over. Chair Westerling asked GC members to contact the IIVPDGE if they had any questions or concerns about these funds.

VII. Library Consultant Status—*Chair Westerling*

The library consultant was introduced on a pilot basis in Fall 2019. The consultant and GC are invited to consider whether or not to institute the library consultant on a permanent basis for AY 20-21.

Chair invited the consultant to comment. The Consultant acknowledged that he had not been a vocal participant but he has shared information from GC with the library, and it provides insights into matters that library might not have been aware of. It has been useful for the library planning for the future, especially for those in the library that work with graduate students. GC members supported the idea of making the library consultant permanent, as it is beneficial to build relationships with other parts of the university as a community in general, and in new program reviews in particular.

A motion to make the library consultant permanent was made, seconded, and carried unanimously.

VIII. New Items?

The Vice Chair invited members to consider becoming GC Vice Chair, as members with experience make the committees operate better.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:02PM. Attested by LeRoy Westerling, GC Chair.