

Graduate Council 2023-2024

March 7, 2024

Members present: Andrew C Wilber, Costas Tsatsoulis, Courtney Simpkins, Chris Wienke, Heidi Bacon, Hale Yilmaz, Jeremy Allen, John Pollitz, Jennifer Spreng, Karen Jones, Kelly Bender, Khaled Ahmed, Kim Parr, Liliana Lefticariu, Lisa Brooten, Matthew Young, Mark Pease, Myla Burton, Nwamaka Anaza, Rolando Gonzalez, Rhonda Kowalchuk, Scott Collins, Sheryl Tucker, Tomas Velasco

Executive-Officio: Juliane Wallace, Julie Dunston

Guests: Jennifer Horton, Michelle Kibby

Meeting started at 8:00 AM

Consideration of the minutes of the previous meetings:

The minutes of Feb 1, 2024, meeting Vote:

Approved (Majority-0-0)

Remarks from the Chancellor: Austin Lane

- Absent

Remarks from Provost: Sheryl A. Tucker:

Budget Training Sessions:

- Mention of recent budget training sessions led by CFO, Susan Summers.
- Highlight on the success of these sessions and the enhanced transparency regarding the budgeting process for fiscal year 2025.

Academic Calendar Adjustments:

- Introduction of adjustments to the academic calendar for the next two years in response to a national trend and student leadership requests.
- Incorporation of mental health days into the fall schedule, particularly due to the timing of fall break and Thanksgiving.
- Decision to designate the Friday before homecoming as a non-class day, facilitating student participation in other activities.
- Note on the pending determination of the homecoming date for the year following the next due to incomplete athletic schedules.

Legislation on Mental Health Days:

- Discussion of existing Illinois legislation allowing K-12 students mental health days and the potential implications for higher education.
- Concerns over the feasibility of implementing unscheduled mental health days in higher education due to the lack of attendance tracking.
- Preference for scheduled mental health days to ensure clarity for faculty and students.

- Engagement of John Charles with the SIU system in legislative discussions to address higher education's unique environment and concerns.

Compliance and Institutional Environment:

- Assurance of compliance with instructional hours requirements as per accrediting bodies.
- Openness to answering questions regarding the discussed matters.

Future Discussions:

- Indication of willingness to provide further information on the state budget if Chancellor Lane is unable to attend.

Remarks from Vice-Chancellor for Research/Dean of the Graduate School:

Costas Tsatsoulis

Graduate Applications and Admissions:

- Announcement of surpassing 2,000 applications for the fall, with over 500 admissions and a significant increase in admitted master's students (more than doubled from the previous year to 446).
- Commendation of the schools and colleges for their efficient processing of applications and admissions, expressing hope for a record year in 2024.

Concerns Regarding PhD Admissions:

- Expression of concern over the pace of PhD student admissions, emphasizing its critical role in achieving research objectives and the university's R1 status aspirations.
- Comparison with the previous year's admissions, highlighting a decrease in admitted PhD students despite an increase in applicants.
- Call to action for departments and colleges to expedite the evaluation of PhD applicants to ensure a robust and timely intake.

Discussion on Deadlines and Procedures:

- Explanation of the absence of official deadlines from his office but stressing the importance of making timely offers to attract top candidates, especially international ones.
- Advice on speeding up the decision-making process for doctoral candidates, including the allocation of graduate assistantships, to enhance competitiveness and efficiency.
- Addressing a question about deadlines, emphasizing the competitive nature of doctoral admissions and the importance of early offers to secure top candidates.
- Agreement on the urgency, particularly for international students, due to the lengthy visa process.

Remarks from Associate Dean and director of the Graduate School Karen

Jones

Graduate and Professional School Fair:

- Announcement of an upcoming fair on April 5th, designed to promote graduate programs to the university's undergraduate students.
- Call for programs to register for a table at the fair, emphasizing the importance of this event for recruitment and visibility among students.
- Information on the marketing efforts to students and academic advisors to ensure a strong turnout.

Graduate Council Elections:

- Start of the nomination process for Graduate Council elections, with vacancies and nominee requirements communicated to units.
- Plan to conduct elections in early April, highlighting procedural guidance received from Ira Glass.

Outreach and Engagement Initiatives:

- Offer to visit academic units for informal discussions to understand their challenges and explore potential solutions.
- Invitation for units interested in such a visit to contact Karen Jones or Cecilia Porter for scheduling.

Recruitment Position Update:

- Notification about a vacancy for a recruiter position within the Graduate School, which has recently been approved and will soon be advertised.
- Emphasis on the importance of this role for student recruitment and a call to recommend potential candidates for the position.

Remarks from Dean of Library Affairs: John Pollitz – Jennifer Horton

Strategic Planning Process:

- Announcement of the library's engagement in a strategic planning process aimed at developing a new strategic plan.
- Current phase involves conducting focus groups with various campus groups to gather insights and feedback.

Outreach to Graduate Students:

- Upcoming outreach to graduate students for participation in focus groups.
- Emphasis on the importance of graduate student opinions in shaping the library's services and resources.

Comprehensive Scope:

- Clarification that the strategic planning process encompasses all aspects of library affairs, including Morris Library, the Sharp Museum, the University Press, and records management.

Report from Council Chair: Scott Collins

Committee Coordination:

- Ongoing efforts to coordinate with the chairs of various committees to ensure progress and resolution of tasks.

Meeting Schedule and Objectives:

- Reminder of the academic calendar, noting that there are two more meetings remaining in the current academic year.
- Emphasis on the goal to conclude various tasks within this timeframe to wrap up the year's objectives.

Election Cycle for Graduate Council:

- Announcement of the commencement of the election cycle for new graduate council membership, indicating a focus on governance and representation within the graduate school.

Remarks from GPSC: Myla Burton

No Report

Remarks from Council Vice-Chair: Tomas Velasco

Completion of Representation Tasks:

- Announcement that all university communities requiring representation from the Graduate Council have successfully been filled.

Acknowledgments:

- Expression of gratitude towards Dr. Nasa for volunteering for the university-level Teaching Excellence Award committee for tenure and tenure-track.
- Thanking Dr. Ahmed for contributing to the Teaching Excellence Award for non-tenure track faculty.

Remarks from the Dean's Council Cecil Smith

- Vacant

Report from Faculty Senate: Elaine Jurkowski

- absent

Report from Educational Policies Committee: Andy Wilber

Resolution to the Graduate Catalog Language Defining a GPA Requirement for the Awarding of a Graduate (Post-Baccalaureate) Certificate Introduction of Resolution:

- The resolution proposes introducing a minimum GPA requirement of 3.0 for the awarding of post-baccalaureate certificates, responding to a request from APAP.

Background and Justification:

- Clarification that students must be admitted to the graduate school and apply formally to certificate programs.
- Current graduate courses may count towards both a graduate degree and a certificate if the student is enrolled in the certificate program before completing the last required course.
- Noting a lack of cumulative GPA requirement for certificates, despite a 3.0 requirement for master's degrees.

Proposed Changes:

- The resolution seeks to establish a 3.0 cumulative GPA requirement for all graduate coursework required for a certificate, aligning certificate standards with those for master's degrees.

Discussion Points:

- Inquiry about whether a certificate program could require a higher cumulative GPA than the proposed minimum.
- Confirmation that the graduate catalog sets minimum standards, and programs can impose higher requirements as long as these are clearly stated in the catalog.

Vote to approve the Resolution:

- *Approved (15-0-0)*

Resolution [second one] Resolution for Southern Illinois University at Carbondale to No Longer Sign On to the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) April 15 Resolution

Resolution Proposal:

- The proposal suggests that SIUC should withdraw from the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) resolution, which mandates that graduate students have until April 15th to accept financial offers without obligation.

Rationale for Withdrawal:

- Highlighting the lack of consequences for withdrawing and suggesting that departing from the resolution could provide SIUC with the flexibility to request earlier commitments from graduate students to financial offers.

Considerations and Responses:

- Concerns were raised regarding the potential impact on SIUC's reputation and its alignment with major Illinois universities and R1/R2 institutions that are signatories.
- Provost Sheryl Tucker reasoned for withdrawal, noting the difficulty in enforcing the resolution, its diminishing relevance, and the necessity for competitive financial offers to graduate students.
- Additional points included the Council of Graduate Schools' own reconsideration of the resolution, particularly regarding its feasibility for international students due to visa processing timelines.

Discussion on Binding Nature of Financial Offers:

- Questions arose about the language suggesting that acceptance of a financial offer is binding. It was clarified that this stance aligns with the current CGS resolution's spirit but acknowledged the challenges in enforcement.

Vote to Table the Resolution

- A motion to table the resolution for further consideration was proposed but not seconded:
- *Rejected (3-11-2)*

Vote to Approve Resolution

- The resolution was ultimately put to a vote, passing and indicating SIUC's decision to withdraw from the CGS April 15th resolution, allowing for earlier commitments from graduate students to financial offers.
- *Approved (14-2-0)*

Graduate council resolution to the graduate catalogue language describing a second master's degree option

Purpose of the Resolution:

- The resolution aims to clarify the language in the graduate catalog regarding the ability of students to earn a second master's degree at SIUC. It addresses the ambiguity in the current language to make it clearer.

Proposed Changes:

- The proposed revision allows a student who has earned a master's degree from SIUC to earn a second master's degree, provided it is from a different unit or program and the criteria of that unit or program are met.

Discussion Highlights:

- Clarification was sought on whether the policy applies to concurrent master's degrees or sequential ones. It was clarified that it applies to students who complete one master's degree and then pursue a second one, regardless of the time interval between the two.
- The new language was generally well-received, with appreciation for its clarity and flexibility. It was noted that it properly frames the policy while avoiding potential misuse, such as earning two very similar degrees that do not contribute significantly to the student's professional development.
- Questions were raised about whether credits from the first master's degree could be reused towards the second. It was clarified that another section of the catalog prevents the transfer of credits used to complete a degree, ensuring all credits for the second master's degree must be unique to it.

Vote to approve the resolution:

- *Approved (16-0-0)*

Resolution to the Graduate Catalog Language Describing Transfer Credits for Master's or PhD Degree

Proposal for Clarification:

- The resolution aims to clarify the graduate catalog language regarding the number of eligible graduate credits that can be transferred toward the requirements for a master's or Ph.D. degree at SIUC.

Current Transfer Credit Rules:

- The existing rules for transfer credits are somewhat fragmented across the graduate catalog, with specific stipulations for master's and Ph.D. programs.
- For master's degrees, there are limitations on the number of credits that can be earned at other universities and transferred to SIUC, as well as requirements for the level of coursework and the proportion of credits that must be earned at SIUC.

Proposed Changes:

- The proposed change is to allow only 9 transfer credits for a master's degree, aiming for consistency with the current transfer credit rules for a Ph.D. where approximately 33% of credits are transferable.

Concerns and Suggestions:

- Graduate students expressed concerns about the financial burden and potential extension of time to degree completion.
- The necessity to carve out an exception for the MFA program was highlighted, given its status as a terminal degree with a higher credit requirement.
- Faculty members emphasized the academic integrity of SIUC degrees and the importance of ensuring that a significant portion of a student's coursework is completed within the university.
- It was noted that transfer credits require approval by academic units, ensuring that transferred courses are academically appropriate and meet SIUC standards.

Table for future consideration Graduate Council Resolution to the Graduate Catalog:

- After discussion and consideration of feedback, the council decided to table the resolution for further discussion and refinement, particularly to address concerns about financial impact on students and to potentially adjust the policy for specific programs like the MFA.

Vote to table the resolution:

- *Table Approved (15-0-0)*

Discussion on Faculty Emeritus Criteria

Criteria Establishment:

- The Faculty Senate developed and approved criteria for faculty to obtain emeritus status, aiming to clarify the process and requirements.

Key Criteria:

- Must have worked at SIU for at least 10 years.
- Demonstrate significant contributions as defined by their academic unit, school, or college.
- Apply for emeritus status at retirement or within 24 months after retirement.
- Application review process involves the basic unit (department/school), evaluation by the dean or designee, and review of recommendations by the provost.

Concerns and Suggestions:

- A suggestion was made to clarify the criterion regarding "conduct contrary to professional standards" to be more specific, possibly by referencing violations of policies.
- The importance of specificity regarding ethical standards was also highlighted, suggesting that criteria should be clear about what behaviors or actions may disqualify someone from emeritus status.

Policy Background:

- The initiative to define criteria for emeritus status arose due to the absence of a clear policy, despite some belief that such a policy existed.
- Discussion included whether the chancellor has the authority to revoke emeritus status retroactively for faculty previously granted this title under different or no formal criteria.

Discussion Outcome:

- The conversation served as an informational session to introduce the criteria set by the Faculty Senate.
- It was indicated that a formal resolution would be developed for future discussion and potential approval by the Graduate Council.

Report from New Programs Committee: Heidi Bacon

Introduction:

- Heidi Bacon introduces three resolutions for consideration, with the first being to rename the law school due to a significant donation.

Resolution for RME to Rename the School of Law

Proposal:

- A \$10 million donation by attorney Simmons, the largest in SIU campus history for the law school, prompts the proposal to rename the law school to Simmons Law School in honor of the Simmons family and Mr. Simmons' service on the SIU Board of Trustees.

Impact:

- The donation will enhance resources for the School of Law without affecting program delivery, faculty, staff, students, equipment, or physical facilities. Educational unit curricula, degrees, and current assessment activities will remain unchanged.

Support:

- Strong support from the law school dean and faculty, with a vote of 18 yes, 0 no, and 0 abstain. The new programs committee voted 6 yes, 0 no, with one member not voting, resulting in unanimous approval.

Resolution:

- The Graduate Council Committee recommends the approval of the resolution to rename the SIU School of Law to Simmons Law School.

Vote to Approve Resolution for RME to Rename the School of Law:

- *Approved (15-0-0)*

Resolution for RME for Eliminating Mining and Mineral Resources Engineering Concentration

Proposal:

- The resolution proposes the official elimination of the mining and mineral resources engineering concentration due to low enrollment and operational adjustments. The program has been teaching out its remaining student, and the affected faculty member has been reassigned without affecting their tenure status.

Support:

- The proposal has the support of the dean of the College of Engineering, Computing, Technology, and Mathematics, with a faculty vote of 32 yes, 0 no, and one abstain. The college curriculum committee and the new programs committee unanimously approved the resolution with votes of 6 yes, 0 no.

Discussion Points:

- Concerns were raised about the potential missed opportunities in funding and research, particularly regarding critical minerals in coal mining waste. The discussion also touched on the national and global relevance of mining engineering in the context of shifting resource interests.
- Some members suggested that eliminating the program might not be the best direction considering the emerging interest in extracting critical minerals from coal mining waste, which could present significant funding and economic development opportunities for the region.

Vote to Table the resolution

- A motion to table the resolution was proposed to allow further discussion and invite the Dean of Engineering to provide more insights into the decision to eliminate the program.
- *Table Approved (10-6-1)*

Resolution for RME in Multidisciplinary Biomedical and Biological Sciences

Proposal:

- The SIU School of Medicine proposes merging three graduate programs—Pharmacology and Neuroscience, Molecular, Cellular, and Systematic Physiology, and Molecular Biology,

Microbiology, and Biochemistry—into one unified MBBS program offering both MS and PhD degrees.

Outcomes and Benefits:

- Expected outcomes include increased graduate enrollment and retention, enhanced educational opportunities, centralized recruitment, and marketing efforts. The merger is also anticipated to leverage teaching and personnel resources, align with administrative reorganization, and enhance administrative efficiency.

Delivery Mode and Budgetary Effects:

- Most courses will remain in-person, with the non-thesis online MA in Pharmacology and Neuroscience staying online. Future online courses may be added. Budgetary effects include marketing costs, graduate assistantships, and a full-time civil service administrative assistant, with funding already approved by the dean and provost of the School of Medicine.

Support and Approval:

- The proposal has the support of the dean and provost of the SIU School of Medicine, the Dean of the College of Agriculture, Life and Physical Sciences. A faculty vote of 43 yes, 0 no, and the new programs committee also voted unanimously in favor (6 yes, 0 no).

Discussion Points:

- Concerns were raised about the administrative housing of the program and its impact on graduate students' ability to enter into collective bargaining. Clarification was provided that PhD programs within the School of Medicine are included in the collective bargaining agreement (CBA).
- A letter of concurrence between the School of Medicine and the School of Biological Sciences addressed concerns regarding the program's name.

Vote to approve the resolution:

- *Approved (15-0-0)*

Resolution to Establish a Center for Virtual Expression

- Will be ready in the next meeting.

Report from Program Review Committee: Iraklis Anagnostopoulos

The Program Review Committee's report was introduced by Dr. Collins.

Committee Activities:

- Anagnostopoulos was unable to attend the meeting due to engagement in organizing the Graduate Council elections alongside Dr. Jones.
- The committee is actively involved in the Graduate Council elections, contributing to the administrative processes.

Program Reviews:

- The committee has a pending program review for the Master of Science in Oncologic Sciences.
- Another program review was completed, while a different one was deferred for the year, indicating a diverse range of statuses for program reviews under the committee's consideration.

Report from the Research Committee: Liliana Lefticariu

Progress on Academic Student-Driven Papers:

- The committee has been focusing on student academic-driven papers, engaging in discussions to reconcile differing perspectives from students, faculty, and administration. The aim is to address and integrate the various viewpoints effectively. Ongoing work is noted, indicating that the project is still in progress and requires further deliberation.

Instrumental Repairs Proposals:

- The Research Committee has received five proposals concerning instrumental repairs. There is a scheduled meeting to review these proposals thoroughly and to formulate recommendations for the Vice Chancellor for Research (VCR) office. This step indicates a practical aspect of the committee's work, focusing on the maintenance and enhancement of research infrastructure.