

Graduate Council- General Council Meeting Minutes

September 4, 2025

Members present: Kelly Bender, Rhonda Kowalchuk, Kim Parr, Dong Han, Julie Hibdon, Cheng-Yao Lin, Bobbi Knapp, Kelly Collinsworth, Mark Peterson, Khaled Ahmed, Hale Yilmaz, Kayla Malone, Sabrina Nilufar, Ahmad Fakhoury, Matthew Young, Ben Richardson, Miguel Alvarez, HD Motyl, Jane Dougherty, Iraklis Anagnostopoulos, Adeshewa Ibrahim, Liliana Lefticariu, Pattie Chalmers, and Ayodeji Oyekunle.

Executive-Officio: Karen Jones, Constantinos Tsatsoulis, Julie Dunston, William Walters

Guest: Craig Engstrom, Jennifer Sherry, Kym Morgan, Elyse Weller,

Meeting started at 8:01 AM

Consideration of the minutes of the previous meetings:

The minutes of May 1st, 2025, meeting were approved (vote 14 yes, 0 no, 2 abstentions)

Remarks from the Chancellor: Austin Lane

- Absent

Remarks from Provost: Sheryl A. Tucker

- Absent

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

- Dr. Tsatsoulis reported that the official 10th day graduate numbers are up compared to last fall. Doctoral student numbers are down and have been declining for the past few years. Master student numbers are up, but on-campus enrollment is down for Master students. Online Master's enrollment increased by 27%. Fewer graduate students physically on campus.
 - Yield (admitted students who enrolled):
 - Domestic: 71.1% (average in past has been around 68%)
 - International: 17.3% (does exclude US based international students)
 - Only 81 new international graduate students enrolled
- Dr. Tsatsoulis urged continued efforts to recruit, advise, and graduate students to maintain R1 ranking and ensure research success. Doctoral students have a current graduation rate of 100 per year. This is down from 120 per year. There must be 70 doctoral students graduating per year to maintain R1 status. The Graduate School offers a program to bring top PhD or terminal degree students to campus for visits.

This program is aimed at continuing to recruit the best students and maintain robust PhD student enrollment.

- Dr. Tsatsoulis reported enrollment totals for this year are 2,732. Previous year was 2,649.
- Dr. Tsatsoulis explained the possibility of student visa delays causing deferrals for enrollment. Could possibly see these students Spring 2026.

Remarks from Associate Dean and Director of the Graduate School: Karen Jones

- Dr. Jones stressed that support for students should not be limited to assistantships—other funding options (fellowships, scholarships, employer sponsorships, etc.) should be explored before turning applicants away.
- Dr. Jones expressed concern for the low number of Morris scholarship applications, which is SIU's highest-value award.
- Dr. Jones advised the contracts are almost completed. About 40 contracts remain.
- Dr. Jones highlighted the upcoming events:
 - Graduate Student Meet & Greet – September 4th at Becker Pavilion
 - Slate Training – September 16th at Morris Library
 - Assembly of Fellows – October 2nd
- Questions and remarks from Graduate Council Member: Ben Richardson
 - Is the decline in international students is a national trend or specific to SIU?
 - Dr. Richardson expressed concern that the political and visa issues could be suppressing enrollment.
- Remarks from Graduate Council Member: Jane Dougherty
 - Explained that there is some confusion in admissions from last year. There was advisement not to admit doctoral students without budget for Graduate Assistantship, but mixed messages came from administration. Possibly could have been a factor in admissions and left applicants waiting too long, so they sought admissions elsewhere.

Report from Dean of Library Affairs: William Walters

- Dr. Walters announced there are budget cuts to library collections since current subscriptions are too costly. Approximately 62% of Springer articles are already freely available online and our current subscription cost does not justify paying for it. There is a consideration for alternatives to cancel or renegotiate publisher deals and exploration for per-article access.
- Dr. Walters has other initiatives being explored: redesigning the library website for more research focus support and the pilot of free printing for students.

Remarks from Director of Center for Teaching Excellence: Craig Engstrom

- Dr. Engstrom proposed D2L Brightspace course inactivation and deletion policy which would have a hidden, but retrievable option for courses older than three years. However, after five years, these would be deleted permanently. The reasoning consists of a user cap that has been hit and resulted in a purge of 1,000 inactive users. These older courses and inactive users affect system performance and data reporting. According to current D2L contract, storage only has 500MB storage per user. Faculty will be able to export “windows” for their classes to save older courses, but this would mean instructors would have to be responsible for saving content (IP ownership).

Report from Chair: Kelly Bender

- Dr. Bender thanked Dr. Peterson for a smooth transition from last year.
- The GC website should be up to date right now with committee membership and new member information. Please check to confirm.
- Dr. Bender set up a Teams Channel for Graduate Council to keep files all together.
- Dr. Bender thanked all the committee chairs for the work they are already doing.
- Grad Council representation on university committees:
 - Mark Peterson has volunteered for the Chancellor’s Budgetary and Planning committee, but a second volunteer is still needed.
 - Need a volunteer for the Technology Advisory Council.

Report from VP of Graduate & Professional Student Council: Miguel Alvarez

- Mr. Alvarez reported successful GPSC elections on September 2nd. The goals to expand the graduate student engagement, improve communication, and strengthen advocacy are main concerns.
- Mr. Alvarez does support the Quiet Week Proposal to reduce stress, support self-care, and balance teaching/research loads.

Report from Vice-Chair: Iraklis Anagnostopoulos

- Dr. Anagnostopoulos reported that the Student Appeals Committee for grievances is almost finalized. One more member is needed before finalization occurs.

Report from Vice President of Faculty Senate: Jennifer Sherry

- Dr. Sherry advised the Faculty Senate is filling committee vacancies.
- Dr. Sherry expressed how the emeritus Faculty language will be reviewed in collaboration with Graduate Council.
- Dr. Sherry does want faculty to provide input on ICE evaluations in D2L.

- Dr. Sherry warned that Quiet Week may not fix issues since this could delay student grades being posted/updated promptly.

Report from Educational Policies Committee Chair: Hale Yilmaz

- Dr. Yilmaz expressed the emeritus policy for Graduate Faculty Status needs to be clarified for eligibility for administrators and possibly simply the process, so it is less like a tenure review. It is unclear if emeriti can serve on new dissertation committees.
- Dr. Yilmaz explained the Credit Transfer Policy may be too restrictive and suggested raising to 12 credit hours or up to 50% of the degree to remain competitive.
 - Remark from Dean of the Graduate School: Costas Tsatsoulis
 - Suggested looking into what out peer institutions are accepting.
- Dr. Yilmaz summarized her committee's thoughts on the Quiet Week proposal: committee does not support limiting assignments before the week of finals. There are concerns about academic freedom and feasibility for graduate programs. A resolution will be upcoming for a vote.
 - Remarks from various Graduate Council members
 - Concern with how this policy would work with certain programs especially with Thanksgiving the week before and how this would ensure that faculty entered all grades before final exams.
 - Remark from Graduate Council Member and GPSC Rep: Miguel Alvarez
 - Strong support by GPSC as graduate students need time to study for exams while completing assistantship duties.
- Dr. Yilmaz brought up the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA) and if the language is required in the graduate catalog how this should be approached.
 - Remarks from Graduate Council Member: Kim Parr
 - Indicated that a link to a website would likely not fulfill the SARA requirement and that language would likely need to be added to the catalog.
 - Remark from APAP: Julie Dunston
 - Will get clarification on the specific language and requirements.

Report from New Programs Committee Chair: Cheng-Yao Lin

- Dr. Lin read for the first time the resolution supporting the RME to Move the MS in Counseling and Rehabilitation Education (CARE) program from the School of Health Sciences to the School of Psychological and Behavioral Sciences within the College of Health and Human Sciences

- There were no questions or concerns regarding this resolution, so a motion was passed (vote 15-0) to suspend the rules to vote on supporting the resolution.
- The final resolution supporting the REM passed (vote 17-0).
- Dr. Lin indicated that committee is working on reviewing numerous other RMEs.

Report from Program Review Committee Chair: Ahmad Fakhoury

- Dr. Fakhoury reported that the committee reviewed and approved reviewers for:
 - MA and MS in Geology
 - PhD in Geosciences
 - MS in Geography and Environmental Resources
 - MS and PhD in Electrical and Computer Engineering

Report from Research Committee Chair: Ben Richardson

- Dr. Richardson reported that the committee will be meeting later this month to discuss VCR Equipment Funding requests and RA funding limits that are currently in policy.
 - Remark from Vice Chancellor for Research: Costas Tsatsoulis
 - Would like the help of the Research Committee in re-visiting charging graduate tuition on external grants.

The meeting adjourned at 9:45 a.m.