

Graduate Council- General Council Meeting Minutes

October 2, 2025

Members present: Kelly Bender, Kim Par, Sabrina Nilufar, Rhonda Kowalchuk, Julie Hibdon, Ahmad Fakhoury, Jane Dougherty, Dong Han, Khaled Ahmed, Cheng-Yao Lin, Matthew Young, Mark Peterson, Iraklis Anagnostopoulos, Ben Richardson, Kelly Collinsworth, HD Motyl, Hale Yilmaz, Miguel Alvarez, Enrique Paz, Kayla Malone, and Samuel Idowu

Executive-Officio: Karen Jones, Constantinos Tsatsoulis, Austin Lane, Sheryl Tucker, Julie Dunston, Juliane Wallace, and William Walters.

Guests: Jennifer Sherry, Kymberli Morgan, and Elyse Weller.

Meeting started at 8:02 AM

Consideration of the minutes of the previous meeting:

The minutes of the September 4th, 2025, meeting were approved unanimously.

Remarks from the Chancellor: Austin Lane

- Reported 3% graduate student enrollment increase and 2% doctoral increase.
- Highlighted 23% growth in online enrollment, largely in graduate programs (161% increase in graduate online students), as well as mentioned partnership with Rise Point to support online growth.
- Discussed credit hour production and funding implications.
- Addressed the federal government shutdown, noting SIU is monitoring impacts on research and grants.
- Chancellor Lane praised Graduate School leadership (Dr. Tsatsoulis and Dr. Jones).
- Emphasized urgency around improving international student recruitment later in meeting discussion.

Remarks from Provost: Sheryl Tucker:

- Presented academic program review overview and IBHE low-producing program list.
 - Explained peer benchmarking via IPEDS data, noting SIU's low student–faculty ratio (11–12:1) is unsustainable financially.
 - Reviewed data on degree program headcounts: SIU has more programs but fewer students per program compared to peers.
 - Outlined IBHE program criteria (sunset, consolidate, redesign).
- Promoted 4+1 pathways and master's in-route to Ph.D. options.

- Announced implementation of CourseDog software for academic scheduling and catalog modernization.
- Stressed shared governance and collaborative improvement of programs, not punitive review.

Questions/Comments to Provost Tucker

- Ahmad Fakhoury confirmed that the GC Program Review committee will meet to discuss graduate council's role in program review process including rubric approval and engagement with the Provost's Office.
- Kim Parr raised concerns about Occupational Therapy doctoral program being flagged on low-production list despite recent accreditation. Provost Tucker confirmed it will be exempt from review.

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

- Confirmed guidance to faculty on research continuity during shutdown — deadlines remain despite funding pauses.
- Reported \$7.8 million in July research awards, down 34% from prior year, though federal awards rose slightly.
- Noted delays in state flow-through funding.
- Cautioned about potential federal restrictions on grants and tuition tied to institutional endowments.
- Discussed need to speed up graduate admissions, improve 4+1 program promotion, and boost international recruiting.
- Suggested programs add course-only master's options to help students that are not able to complete theses or dissertations obtain a degree.
- Addressed international enrollment decline and visa delays; 81 students deferred to Fall 2026.
- Advocated for quicker admission processes and separating admission decisions from funding allocations.

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

- Discussed a survey of graduate admissions practices to identify bottlenecks and improve communication.
- Outlined upcoming events:
 - Assembly of Fellows (recognizing scholarship recipients)
 - Let's Talk Graduate Studies coffee event
 - Outstanding Thesis/Dissertation & Willis Schwartz Awards (due Oct. 9)

- Offered graduate school assistance for 4+1 program development and course-only master's transitions.
 - Responded to questions about streamlining 4+1 admissions through Slate and fee waivers.

Questions to Dr. Jones

— Julie Hibdon: asked about simplifying 4+1 admissions to make it more accessible to students.

Remarks and Report from Dean of Library Affairs: William Walters

- Presented on Springer Nature journal negotiations:
 - Current cost: \$296,000 for 65 journals (\$4,500 per journal).
 - Plan to negotiate cost reductions or cancellations.
 - Cited Elsevier success: price dropped from \$734K → \$524K with 15× more journals.
 - 62% of Springer content available free online; advocating for better deals.
- Dr. Walters also reported from Deans Council:
 - Success of Global Career Accelerator (virtual internships).
 - Plans to simplify conditional admissions terms for students.
 - Ongoing efforts to increase class sizes and manage faculty-student ratios.

Report from Graduate Council Chair: Kelly Bender

- Recognized the service of council member Scott Comparato who passed away this summer.
- Welcomed Enrique Paz as a new council member and part of the Program Review committee.
- Thanked Julie Hibdon and Liliana Lefticariu for volunteering for the Extended Campus Director Search as well as Ben Richardson and the Research Committee for agreeing to reassess limits to assistantship funding.
- Addressed the status of the Faculty Emeritus policy draft and its progress through Faculty Senate.

Report from GPSC Student Representative: Miguel Alvarez

- Shared graduate student concerns for the delays in Social Security numbers, I-20s, insurance, and assistantship payments. He suggested creating an online step-by-step guide for international student processes and expressed support for the university's effort to improve international student experience.

Report from Council Vice Chair: Iraklis Anagnostopoulos

- The Student Appeals Committee met yesterday and discussed three student grievance cases and how to proceed.

Report from Faculty Senate Representative: Jennifer Sherry

- FS Volunteer process for Executive Director of Online and Extended Campus search.
- Discussions on ICE evaluation link, emeritus status policy, and low-producing programs.
- FS will be considering 10 RMEs at the next meeting.
- Preparing for JRB elections, DFW/ICE reviews, and Quiet Week policy.
- Working on alignment of Faculty Senate operating paper with Employee Handbook.

Report from Education Policies Committee Chair: Hale Yilmaz

- Reported work on continued exploration of Quiet Week resolution (week before finals).
- Reviewed Emeritus Faculty Status Policy draft and conveyed concern about potential reduction of library privileges as well as unit review issues.
- Working on resolution to increase transferable graduate credits from 9 to 12 hours (or up to 50% of degree).
- Confirmed 12-hour limit is common among peer universities.

Questions/Remarks to Hale Yilmaz

— Dr. Walters indicated that per the Emeritus Faculty Status Policy draft that it is not the Library's decision to limit retirees access to some materials. It is a limitation set by the issuers of content.

Report from New Programs Committee Chair: Cheng-Yao Lin

- Indicated that the New Programs Committee has reviewed the RMEs below and sent questions and comments back to the units for explanation.
 - Add a Post-Baccalaureate Certificate in Artificial Intelligence for Learning and Training, eliminate Online Learning Concentration, and rename Learning and Performance Technology Post-Baccalaureate Certificate to Instructional Technology
 - Southern Illinois African American heritage Center- Temporary Status
- Encouraged considering 4+1 certificate programs to boost enrollment based on current RMEs in the committee's hands.

- Resolution supporting the **RME for Name Change and Relocation of the Master of Fine Arts in Mass Communication and Media Arts to Master of Fine Arts in the School of Media Arts**- first read through.

Questions/Remarks regarding RME on MFA

- Karen Jones asked if the curriculum would remain the same and if moving to a different unit would cause issues with having enough faculty members inside and outside of the program for student committees.
 - HD Motyl, council member and faculty member of impacted program, responded that the curriculum would remain the same and that there would be plenty of faculty within the program for student committees.
- A motion to suspend the rules so that the council could vote on approving the resolution after the first reading was brought forward by HD Motyl and seconded by Ben Richardson.
 - The vote to approve was unanimous.
- An official motion to vote on approving the resolution was brought forward by Ben Richardson and seconded by Julie Hibdon.
 - The vote to approve was unanimous.

Report from Program Review Committee Chair: Ahmad Fakhoury

- Reviewers for the Advanced Energy Institute have been approved.
- Committee meeting next week to discuss review of low producing graduate programs.

Report from Research Committee Chair: Ben Richardson

- Working on revising RA contract funding limits or funding time limits.
- Looking into whether certificates should be listed as degrees on the transcript.
- Reviewed VCR equipment request proposals last week.
 - As a reminder, there's two rounds each semester.
 - Recommendations to were made to Dr. Tsatsoulis's office and at least one proposal was funded.

Meeting adjourned at 9:40 a.m.