

Minutes of the Graduate Academic Council meeting of December 2, 2020, 8:30 AM via Zoom meeting.

Approved by the Council by vote of 11-0-0 on January 11, 2021.

In attendance: G. Berg (Chair), S. Appe, D. Card, A. Dawson, A. Gill, S. Faight, O. Lunin, R. Morse, E. Pacer, K.N. Stanwicks, C. Wolff, K. Williams (ex officio member), C. Davis (staff), S. Kent (staff), J. Deden (staff)

Guests: Zina Lawrence – Assistant Dean, Director, Full-time MBA program, School of Business
Rachel French – Assistant Registrar, Registrar’s Office
Tiffany Williams-Hart – Coordinator of Graduate Programs and Research, Dean’s Office, CEHC
Dyana Warnock – Director of Graduate Student Services, Dean’s Office, Rockefeller College

1. This GAC Agenda approved with change to move Dean’s report to after CC&I report.
2. Minutes of the GAC meeting of November 3, 2020 approved by a vote of 10-0-0.
3. GAC 2020-2021 Membership is final as of 11-5-20 including an undergraduate representative, who was unable to attend today’s meeting. GAC’s Committee on Curriculum & Instruction (CC&I) and Committee on Admissions & Academic Standing (CA&AS) are now fully staffed.
4. Chair’s Report – Chair Berg commented that the state of the SUNY budget worsening and he will inform the GAC members if that will have any impact on the GAC business. No other business to report.
5. Committee on Curriculum & Instruction (CC&I) Report (see attached) – Sydney Faight reported the Committee reviewed 2 proposals:
 - i) School of Public Health Biomedical Sciences requested to remove the GRE score requirement from admissions requirements and eliminate the requirement for at least 6 additional credits in each of three STEM fields outside the major field of study. R. Morse offered to share with , an additional report sent to Biomedical Sciences from J. Curcio on the subject of GRE, diversity and inclusion.
 - ii) The College of Emergency Preparedness, Homeland Security and Cybersecurity proposed to reduce the overall program requirements from 16 credits to 15 credits. This is in response to Rockefeller College’s moves to reduce the amount of credits in some of its courses, which are also taken by CEHC students.The GAC voted to accept CC& I’s report 9-0-1.
6. Dean’s Report – Dean Williams will be continuing to meet with department Graduate Directors along with Graduate School admissions staff Jane Champagne, Shanise Kent and Sean Pease
7. Graduate Bulletin Policy Updates – C. Davis reported on four updates that the continuing effort to update the Graduate Bulletin produced (see attached). None of the updates were a change in policy, rather, the goal is of removing out-of-date policies and terminology, clarifying language for readability and adding information for completeness.
8. Proposal to Extend the Graduate Course Withdrawal Deadline – C. Davis presented the proposal’s outline (see attached). The proposal is to align the graduate course withdrawal deadline with the undergraduate course withdrawal deadline. Currently, the graduate deadline occurs prior to the

undergraduate deadline. Effective term will be determined after consultation with involved administrative offices.

GAC voted to approve the proposal 10-0-0.

- 9. Other Business – Dean Williams requested that the GAC meet again in January 2021, before the semester starts on February 1, 2021.

Motion to adjourn the meeting approved without opposition.

University at Albany, SUNY

Graduate Academic Council 2020-21 - Membership Roster (as of 11/4/20)

- Gill, Andrew – GSA – Philosophy, CAS
Card, Dylan – GSA – Atmospheric Science, CAS
Pacer, Emily – GSA – Environmental Health Science, Public Health
Dawson, Alec – TF – History, CAS
Lunin, Oleg – TF – Physics, CAS
Stanwicks, Kabel – TF – University Libraries
Morse, Randy – TF – Public Health
Wolff, Christopher – TF – Anthropology, CAS
Appe, Susan – TF - Rockefeller
Berg, George (GAC Chair) – TF – CEHC
Ferraino, Michelle – SA – Human Development BS
Faught, Sydney – PF – Registrar’s Office
Williams, Kevin (ex officio) – Dean, Graduate School

- Davis, Colleen – staff – Graduate School
Kent, Shanise – staff – Graduate School
Deden, Julie – staff – Graduate School

GAC Committee on Curriculum & Instruction (CC&I)

Assistant Graduate School Dean Colleen Davis, staff

Table with 4 columns: Name, Title, Department, and Role. Rows include Susan Appe (Teaching Faculty, Public Administration & Policy, GAC Member), Sydney Faught (Professional Staff, Registrar’s Office, GAC Member), Dylan Card (PhD Student, Earth & Atmospheric Science, GAC Member), Andrew Gill (PhD Student, Philosophy, GAC Member), Stephen Weinberg (Teaching Faculty, Public Administration & Policy, Returning Volunteer), Haijun Chen (Teaching Faculty, Biology, Returning Volunteer), Jeannette Sutton (Teaching Faculty, CEHC, New Volunteer), and Ilka Kressner (Teaching Faculty, Spanish, New Volunteer).

GAC Committee on Admissions & Academic Standing (CA&AS)

Assistant Graduate School Dean Shanise Kent, staff

Oleg Lunin	Teaching Faculty	Physics	GAC Member
Kabel Stanwicks **	Teaching Faculty	University Libraries	GAC Member
Emily Pacer	PhD Student	Environmental Health Sciences	GAC Member
Chris Wolff	Teaching Faculty	Anthropology	GAC Member
Alec Dawson	Teaching Faculty	History	GAC Member
Sylvia Roch	Teaching Faculty	Psychology	Returning Volunteer
Ryan Torn	Teaching Faculty	ATM	Returning Volunteer
J. Ramon Gil-Garcia	Teaching Faculty	Public Admin	Returning Volunteer

** Chair

Curriculum and Instruction Committee

CCI Meeting via Zoom 11/24/2020 12pm

Committee Members in Attendance: Susan Appe, Dylan Card, Haijun Chen, Sydney Faight (chair), Andrew Gill, Ilka Kressner, Jeannette Sutton, Stephen Weinberg

Staff: Colleen Davis

Program Proposals Reviewed: Biomedical Sciences MS and PhD programs; Emergency Preparedness, Homeland Security and Cybersecurity CGS program

Biomedical Sciences MS and PhD Program Proposal

The Department of Biomedical Sciences is proposing the following changes to the MS and PhD admission requirements:

- Remove the requirement or option to submit GRE scores
- Eliminate the requirement for at least 6 additional credits in each of three STEM fields outside the major field of study
 - The current admission requirement is a combined total of 42 credits in biology, chemistry, mathematics, and physics, including 18 credits in one of these areas and 6 credits in every other area.
 - The department is requesting that the “6 credits in every other area” is eliminated.
- Justification: The overall goal of the changes to the admissions requirements for the PhD and MS programs is to increase the department's competitiveness in recruitment and remove barriers to application and admission for talented students from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. The elimination of the 6 credits will give applicants with more advanced coursework in a chosen field the option to apply to the program. The admissions review includes transcript evaluation, ability to perform independent lab-based research, and letters from research mentors. GRE scores currently do not carry much weight. Over 300 Biology and Biomedical Sciences programs at other institutions have eliminated the GRE requirement.

Based on the department's justification above, the committee voted to approve the proposed program changes (8 approve, 0 disapprove, 0 abstain).

Emergency Preparedness, Homeland Security and Cybersecurity CGS Program Proposal

The College of Emergency Preparedness, Homeland Security and Cybersecurity is proposing the following change to the CGS program:

- Reduce the overall program requirements from 16 credits to 15 credits.
- **Justification:** The current 5 course, 16 credit requirement reflects the inclusion of 4 credit courses offered by Rockefeller College as part of the curriculum. This credit requirement may put students in a position of having to take more than 5 courses, as listed in the curriculum requirement, to meet the credit threshold. The CGS program is offered by the College of Emergency Preparedness, Homeland Security, and Cybersecurity, where all courses offered are 3 credits. Rockefeller College is also in the process of updating their courses from 4 credits to 3 credits.

Based on the department's justification above, the committee voted to approve the proposed program changes (8 approve, 0 disapprove, 0 abstain).

Graduate Bulletin Policy Updates

Four areas of clean-up:

1. *Combined Baccalaureate-Master's Degree Programs:* Justification - The Combined Baccalaureate-Master's Degree Programs policies have not been adjusted to include the various degree levels available. There is a combined program with the School Psychology Certificate of Advanced Study now and the policy needs to reflect this. We have made the language more generic to encompass all the varying credit ranges and degree levels.
2. *Official Leave of Absence from a Graduate Program:* Justification – In practice, the Graduate School has been advising students that while on approved leave, students should not be progressing toward the completion of degree requirements. University resources are not available. The leave of absence form includes this information, but it is not completely reflected in the policy. We are proposing to add language that we have been enforcing based on practice.
3. *Readmissions:* Justification – in practice we have been requiring students to submit new applications for admission if they were previous students. We do not have a separate readmission application, but we do have students ask about being readmitted. We did not have this information listed in the bulletin and are looking to add this language to reduce confusion.
4. *Official Graduate GPAs:* Justification – the University at Albany does not have official graduate grade point averages that appear on official transcripts. This is confusing to students and is not clearly outlined in the Graduate Bulletin. Students are required to obtain a degree GPA of 3.0 in order to earn their degrees, but exact GPAs are not calculated or advertised. The 3.0 degree GPA is used as a minimum threshold when reviewing a student for degree conferral. We are recommending adding language indicating an official GPA is not available or listed on the official transcript. **** Amended note: this insertion of language was in reference to the Graduate Bulletin only. The official transcript key already includes a notation that graduate GPAs are not available.**

Proposal to Extend the Graduate Course Withdrawal Deadline

Proposal

Extend the graduate course withdrawal deadline to coincide with the undergraduate course withdrawal deadline.

History

Currently, the graduate course withdrawal deadline for semester length courses is established as 5 class days after the midterm point (8-week courses are established as 20 class days after the start of the term). The undergraduate deadline is as follows: semester length course – 15 class days after the midterm point; 8-week courses are 23 class days after the start of the term¹. Historically, the deadlines to drop courses were the same for undergraduate and graduate students. Undergraduate Academic Council (UAC) introduced a bill to the University Senate to change the undergraduate drop deadline in May 2003.² This bill was approved by the Senate and signed by the president with an effective term of Fall 2003. Since then, the drop deadlines have been different depending on the student's academic level.

Rationale

1. The differing deadlines cause confusion for faculty and staff, especially for faculty members who teach courses at both academic levels. Counseling combined undergraduate/graduate students is especially difficult. Faculty who teach shared resource courses that include both undergraduate and graduate students in the same course will need to be especially careful. The opportunity for unintentional mis-advisement exists.
2. Each course is structured differently regarding course assignments and due dates. With the deadline only 5 class days after the midterm point, students may have not received adequate feedback to make an informed decision as to whether they can be academically successful in the course or not.
3. The Graduate School has an administrative appeal process for graduate students to request late course withdrawals after the deadline. Appeals are received immediately after the deadline, and extend beyond the semester. Significant administrative time is involved in the appeal process (at the department level, within the Graduate School, and in the Registrar's Office). Approved appeals are ultimately processed through the Registrar's Office and include an administrative fee of \$20.

Summary

By extending the deadline, we would accomplish the following:

1. Reduce the confusion regarding the drop deadline dates,
2. Allow students additional time to make informed decisions,

¹ Information obtained from the University at Albany's Registrar's Office. These calculations are used to create the Academic Calendar for each semester.

² Senate Bill Number 0203-11 May 5, 2003, <https://archives.albany.edu/concern/daos/zw12z5948>.

3. Reduce the amount of manual administrative work,
4. Reduce the counseling workload for the late withdrawal appeal process within the department, and
5. Eliminate excess administrative fees for students.