

**Minutes of the Graduate Council  
November 8, 2023**

**Members in Attendance:** Ali Beskok, Kate Carté, Alan Itkin, Elfi Kraka, Anna Lovatt, Renee McDonald, Brian Molanphy, Anthony Petrosino, Robin Poston, Dinesh Rajan

**Members Not in Attendance:** Akihito Kamata, Alexandra E. Pavlakis, Gretchen Smith, Volkan Otugen

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**Business:**

- **Minutes of the October Meeting:** The graduate council confirmed that there were no comments made on the October minutes pdf. A motion to approve the minutes of the October meeting was made, seconded, and approved.
- **Graduate Enrollment Update:** Dr. Poston provided data about graduate student enrollment for R1 and R2 schools (slides 5-6). This year, SMU applications for graduate programs increased and are in line with the national trend, while SMU graduate certificate applications were down. Dr. Itkin confirmed that Guildhall and performance diplomas from Meadows produced the most graduate certificates on campus. The committee further discussed the data and hypothesized about why certificate applications are down.
- **Expectations for Fellows (Assistantships, Extra Employment, Additional Compensation):** Dr. Itkin presented an edited Moody graduate fellowship award letter, as he added language to clarify questions about assistantships and extra employment while in graduate school. The statement allows departments to set their own standards and asks students to consult their departments prior to attaining extra employment. The council discussed the language of the statement. Dr. Petrosino raised the question about whether students disclosing additional work to their departments would harm them, as it would then “label” them. Dr. McDonald believes it is important for students to go to the department so that the department can then assist them in finding appropriate employment that works in tandem with graduate study. The council agreed on the language: “you should also consult with your department before taking on any paid employment outside of your department.”
- **Provost’s Faculty Fellow Assistantship Report:** Dr. Karen Lupo, provost faculty fellow, joined the council meeting and discussed her ongoing project, which is to develop best practices for departmental assistantship packages for Ph.D. students. For the last few months, Dr. Lupo has been looking at departmental assistantship levels both at SMU (only what they receive from their department, *not* from Moody) and nationally, as she seeks to understand if SMU is on par with the national average for support of graduate students (slides 14-15). The committee

discussed additional methods and approaches to collect data beyond a survey for directors of graduate studies. Dr. Itkin added that Moody has met with other institutions like Notre Dame and Tulane to learn how they budget for assistantships. Dr. Poston noted that one of the institutions builds in support for an annual increase, which she and the council looked at favorably. The council discussed potentially adding tables and graphics to award letters that explain that a student's financial award is not limited to their stipend, but also includes their health insurance, tuition waiver, etc. Prof. Molanphy asked for MFA's to be included in Dr. Lupo's analysis, and she agreed to include M.F.A data, but to provide that data in a different graph, separate from PhDs.

- **Parental Leave Policies:** Dr. Itkin presented that a conversation with Notre Dame about their graduate student parental leave policy revealed that the cost is low to provide leave for students (slides 11-13). Based on this finding, Dr. Poston asked to put together a task force to draft a policy. Dr. Lovatt, Dr. Pavlakis, Dr. Rajan, and Dr. Carté volunteered to be on the task force and Dr. Itkin will lead the group.
- **Appeals of Suspensions and Dismissals:** Dr. Poston stated that she will lead a task force to draft a policy for appeals of suspensions and dismissals to give students due process. This policy will affect students who have not passed their qualifying exams and want to appeal, or who are terminated from a program and want to have an external group consider the decision (slide 18). Dr. McDonald noted that the appeal process for undergraduates will stop at the dean's level, and she questioned if the council wants to mirror that process. Dr. Rajan and Dr. Itkin recommended that the council pause this task force until the spring and the council agreed.
- **Moody Faculty Fellowships:** Dr. Itkin updated the council that Moody will be doing more benchmarking, and Dr. Poston will consult ACC peers (Slide 20).
- **Grade Assignment Policy Taskforce:** Dr. Itkin reminded the council that this taskforce was assembled to address the issue of faculty assigning late grades for research, dissertation, and thesis courses. The task force proposed not only using the "S" (satisfactory) grade and the "U" (unsatisfactory grade), but also adding "PR" (progress grade), which could eventually be changed to an S (Slides 21-22). A PR will be used for students who are continuing to work on their research, but not necessarily at an adequate level. The council contemplated if the PR should automatically change to an S, once the student successfully completes the dissertation. Dr. McDonald is concerned that automatically changing the PR to an S would give a false representation of the student's performance in graduate school and Dr. Rajan questions if we would need to clarify in the catalogue that a "PR" does not count as an "S." Dr. Poston asked the task force to determine what peer and aspirant universities do with this concern.
- **Graduate Student Night at the SMU Football Game:** All graduate students will receive 2 free tickets to the football game. Dr. Poston asked the council to encourage their students to attend.
- **Changing R1 Criteria:** Dr. Poston announced that R1 criteria will change in 2025 and that our strategies will need to pivot. Based on our FY23 numbers (slides 29-20), we should reach R1

criteria. Dr. Poston noted that once SMU achieves R1 status, to maintain it, then SMU must increase research expenditures.

- **Graduate Student Success Day:** There was not adequate time to discuss this agenda item.
- **Annual Progress Reports for PhD Students:** There was not adequate time to discuss this agenda item.

Meeting adjourned.





# Moody School of Graduate and Advanced Studies

**Graduate Council Meeting**

*November 8, 2023, 12:00-1:30pm, Moody Hall 241*

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# Meeting Agenda

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1. Minutes of the October 11 Meeting
2. Graduate Enrollment Update
3. Expectations for Fellows (Assistantships, Extra Employment, Additional Compensation)
4. Parental Leave Policies
5. Provost's Faculty Fellow Assistantship Report (visit from Karen Lupo)
6. Appeals of Suspensions and Dismissals
7. Moody Faculty Fellowships
8. Grade Assignment Policy Taskforce
9. Annual Progress Reports for PhD Students
10. Graduate Student Success Day
11. Graduate Student Night at the SMU Football Game
12. Changing R1 Criteria
13. Other Items

# Minutes of the October 11 Meeting



<https://smu.box.com/s/uldor1mw8tzm9te11yphd1mloa7y9f10>

# Graduate Enrollment Update





# Fall 2021 and Fall 2022

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- Applications for Admission

- +10.4% in applications to R2 Universities
- +2.6% in applications to R1 Universities

- First-time Enrollment

- -6.0% in first-time enrollment at R1 Universities
- -4.4% in first-time enrollment at R2 Universities

## Fall 2022 to Fall 2023

### SMU Applications for Admission

- Fall 2022: 5547
- Fall 2023: 6020
- +8.5%

### SMU First-time Enrollment

- Fall 2022: 1736
- Fall 2023: 1859
- +7.1%

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# Fall 2021 and Fall 2022

- -1.2% Graduate-level Certificates Awarded
- largest proportion of certificates awarded in health sciences (23.7%), engineering (15.0%), and education (12.2%)
  - +8.1% for R2 Universities
  - -7.6% for R1 Universities
  - Graduate certificates awarded has grown over last 5-10 years
- 84.5% of all first-time graduate students in Fall 2022 were enrolled in programs leading to a master's degree or a graduate certificate
  - master's degrees awarded by institutions increased 0.9%
- -0.8% Doctoral Degree Applications, -3.2% doctoral first-time enrollment during the same period, and +3% number of doctoral degrees awarded

## Fall 2022 to Fall 2023

### SMU Graduate Certificates Awarded

- AY 2021-22: 70
- AY 2022-23: 61
- -12.9%

### SMU Doctoral Degree Applications

- Fall 2022: 769
- Fall 2023: 760
- -1.2%

### SMU Doctoral Degrees Awarded

- FY 2022: 126
- FY 2023: 139
- +10.3%

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# Fall 2021 and Fall 2022

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- Underrepresented Minorities

- -1.6% First-time graduate enrollment American Indian/Alaska Native students
- -7.8% among Black/African American students,
- - 5.7% among Latinx students

- International Students

- +10.2% international graduate first-time enrollment
- Increase across all but one field of study, engineering (-0.7%)
- Increases were in mathematics and computer sciences (16.6%), other fields (13.5%), biological and agricultural sciences (10.4%) and physical and earth sciences (10.3%)

- Domestic Students

- -4.7% domestic graduate student first-time enrollment

## Fall 2022 to Fall 2023

### SMU Underrepresented Minorities

- Fall 2022: 1673
- Fall 2023: 1660
- -0.8%

### SMU International Enrollment

- Fall 2022: 715
- Fall 2023: 750
- +5.2%

### SMU Domestic Enrollment

- Fall 2022: 4282
- Fall 2023: 3977
- -7.1%

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# Expectations for Fellows



# Expectations for Fellows

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- » Recently, questions have come up regarding expectations for students with Moody School fellowships:
  - » Can they be expected to do the full work for a research/teaching assistantship?
  - » Can they take on extra work outside of their department? What are the limits on that?
  - » Can their department pay them a small bonus to teach, if that is their policy for other students?
- » Fellowship offer letters do not address these issues, and may need to be updated with more detailed guidance on these points

# Parental Leave Policies





# Notre Dame Parental Leave Policy

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## *Leave of Absence*

- Students are relieved of all responsibilities.
- If a student wishes to devote full-time care to a newborn or a newly adopted child, the student should request a leave of absence.

Departments are encouraged to be as flexible as possible with the student seeking accommodation. This student's assignments should allow for maximum flexibility in his/her schedule during the first 6 weeks after the child arrives. The amount of engagement and reduction in workload during the entire accommodation period (both prior to and after the birth or adoption of a child) should be specified in writing prior to the onset of the accommodation period. The notification section of this document outlines the process for requesting the accommodation.

## **Funding**

Students who are fully-funded and who have not yet completed their 5th year of study will continue to be supported financially. They will continue to receive a stipend at the same level for the length of the accommodation (see below for possible exceptions), receive a tuition scholarship, and receive the health insurance subsidy from the Graduate School. Terminal master's students, and students who have completed their 5th year of study, are eligible for the accommodation only, not for funding under this policy. Departments and advisors may provide funding in these cases if there are available resources. Parental relief cannot be combined with other funding.

Full policy: Graduate School Bulletin, pp. 109-111

[https://graduateschool.nd.edu/assets/493992/gsbulletin\\_2022\\_2023.pdf](https://graduateschool.nd.edu/assets/493992/gsbulletin_2022_2023.pdf)

# Rice Parental Leave Policy

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If a graduate student cannot fulfill the duties of his or her appointment due to a medical emergency or the adoption or birth of a child, the student may be temporarily released from their academic responsibilities. Parental Leave is available to both students if both are Rice students.

Enrollment and stipend support may be continued for up to six weeks or until the appointment expires (whichever occurs first). A student may apply for short-term medical (STMR) or parental (STPR) release at any time during the semester. If the student, after giving birth is unable to return after six weeks of parental leave, the student in good standing may take an additional six-week short-term medical leave with the support of the Director of Graduate Studies. The combined releases could be up to 12 weeks. Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies requests that short-term parental release (STPR) requests be submitted four weeks prior to the expected start date. Students taking a voluntary short-term release should make arrangements with their advisor and instructors to complete their academic responsibilities in a timely way.

The university may also insist on a student's short-term medical release if, in the judgment of the dean of graduate and postdoctoral studies, or her/his designee, the student has a serious medical or psychological condition that the student cannot effectively address while enrolled or which is likely to be severely exacerbated by the Rice academic and/or living environment.

Students may not do degree work or work involving Rice faculty or facilities while on short-term medical release. Students returning from a short-term medical release will be required to provide documentation that they are able to return to their studies.

Full policy: Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies webpage:  
<https://graduate.rice.edu/academics/policy/leaves>

# Vanderbilt Parental Leave Policy

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All students enrolled full-time in the Graduate School and supported by funding from either internal or external sources are covered by this policy. This includes students with funding through stipends, such as training grants or service-free fellowships, and students compensated for services, such as teaching or research assistants. Students supported by external funding sources may be subject to additional rules of the granting agency regarding parental leave. Students are not employees and thus are not subject to the provisions of the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA).

## PERIOD OF LEAVE

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Prior to and/or following childbirth or adoption of an infant, the parent caregiver (mother or father) will be allowed to take six weeks of parental leave, unless otherwise specified by the program. During this period, the student's current stipend, and, if applicable, funding for health insurance and tuition, will be continued without interruption. The student's enrollment status will be continued during this period as well.

Full policy: Graduate Catalog:  
<https://www.vanderbilt.edu/catalogs/kuali/graduate-23-24.php#/content/6480a5d8bdb6e4001c8722f1>

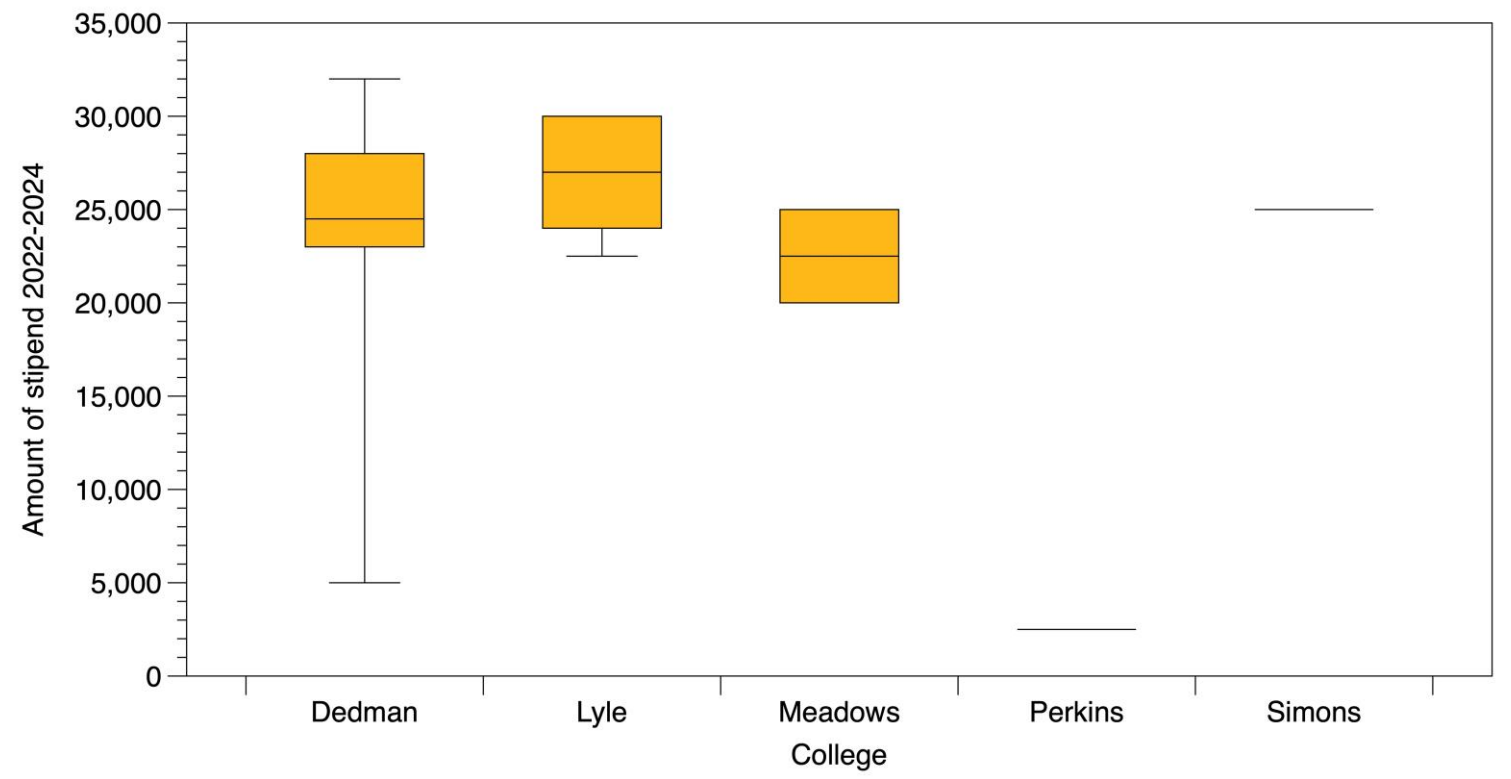
# Provost's Faculty Fellow Assistantship Report



# SMU Assistantships

## Data Sources

- Self-reporting from Units/departments
- Self-reporting from graduate students
- Responses from survey





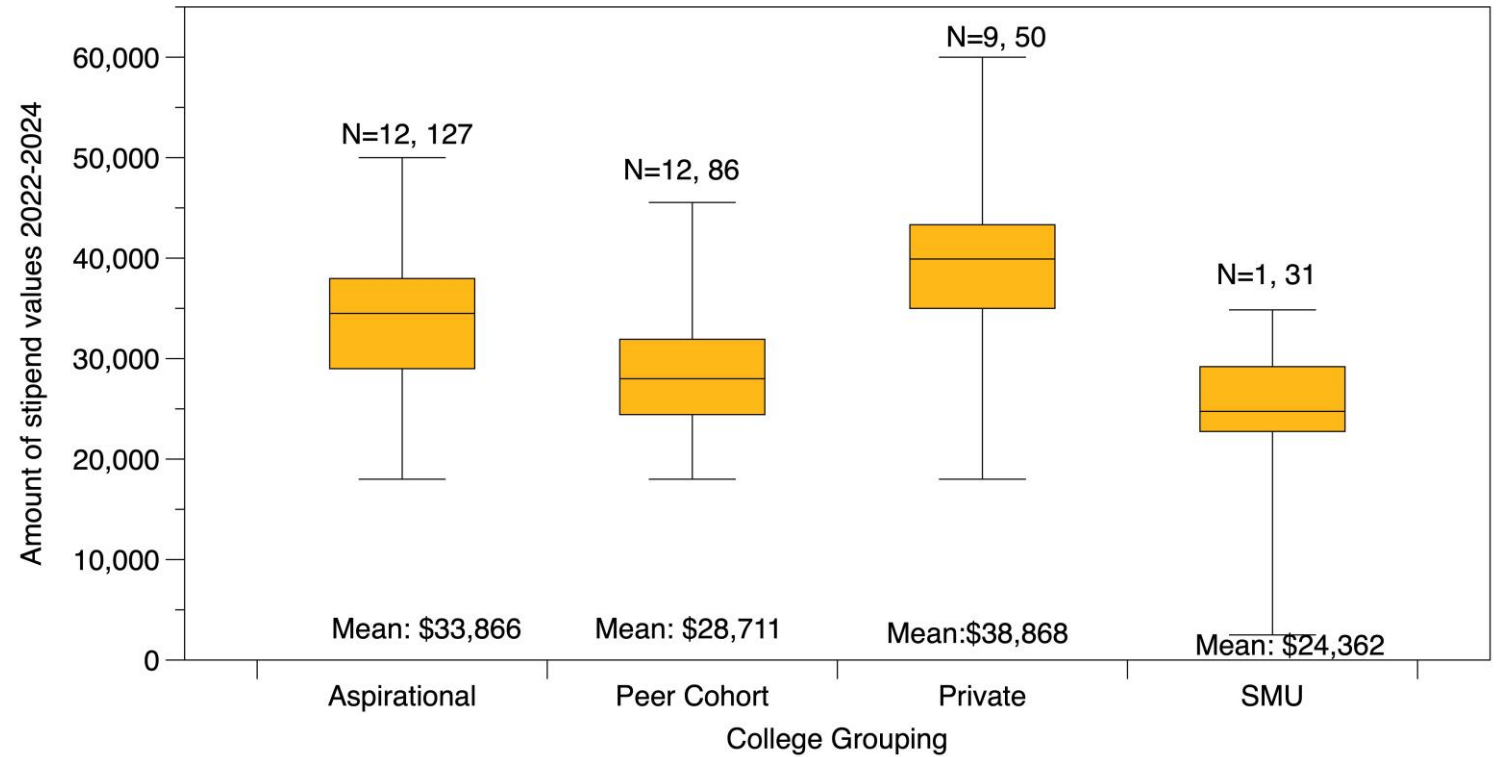
# Comparative Data and General Trends

-Total sample: 111 institutions, 1500 data points 2022-2024

-Graduate student unionization

-enhanced offers  
-signing bonuses, relocation expenses and research funding

klupo@smu.edu



# Appeals of Suspensions and Dismissals



# Appeals of Suspensions and Dismissals

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- » Last year, the Graduate Council (led by a taskforce) developed a policy for graduate grade appeals that was approved by EPC
  - » Grade appeal policy: <https://catalog.smu.edu/content.php?catoid=64&navoid=6260>
- » However, students sometimes appeal a program's decision to dismiss or suspend them for reasons related to other program requirements (qualifying exams, research progress, etc.)
- » No formal policy exists for these sorts of appeals
- » A new policy needs to be developed
- » The grade appeal process can serve as a model for the new suspension/dismissal appeal process

# Moody Faculty Fellowships



# Moody Faculty Fellowships

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- » We are planning to have our first class of Faculty Fellows in 2024-2025.
- » This is one of the programs proposed to the Moody Foundation in the gift agreement
- » Moody Faculty Fellowships “will support outstanding faculty, including visiting faculty, and reward and encourage mentoring of graduate students and the conduct of research.”
- » They are also intended to contribute to strategic goals, such as increasing conferrals of doctorates to support the Road to R1 and the Strategic Plan.
- » We are back to the drawing board on this item, as it was tabled at the May 2023 meeting
- » We are benchmarking this with ACC colleagues and will report back what we learn



# Grade Assignment Policy Taskforce



# Grade Assignment Policy Taskforce

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- » At the last Graduate Council meeting, a taskforce was assembled to address the issue of grades being assigned late for graduate research/dissertation/thesis courses
- » Taskforce members:
  - » Ali Beskok
  - » Aki Kamata
  - » Alan Itkin
  - » Bobby Lothringer
  - » Melissa Stanford
  - » Claudia Sotomayor Hart
- » The taskforce met, and developed the following recommendation:
  - » Graduate research/dissertation/thesis grades will be graded S/U/PR (progress)
  - » PR will be used for students who are continuing to work on their research, but not necessarily at an adequate level
  - » PR grades can be changed to S once the student completes research requirements

# Annual Progress Reports for PhD Students



# Annual Progress Reports for PhD Students

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- The question has come up, “what are SMU’s requirements with regards to annual review of PhD students?”
- A few cases have come up where it would have been helpful to have annual progress report documentation in the Moody School
- Current graduate catalog policy:

## **Assessment of Ph.D. Students**

Ph.D. students are evaluated regularly—at least once every academic year—to ensure that they are receiving the appropriate mentorship necessary for success in their program. Evaluations also determine whether students are meeting degree requirements, adhering to appropriate standards for conduct, and fulfilling the responsibilities of their assistantships. Students may be placed on probation, suspended, or dismissed if they are failing to meet standards in any of these areas. In the case of probation or suspension, clear conditions as well as a timeline for clearance of the probation or reinstatement in the program will be established and communicated to the student by their program. In all cases, Ph.D. students must maintain a 3.0 cumulative GPA, and are placed on probation for one regular term if they fall below this level. If, at the end of that term, their cumulative GPA is not up to 3.0, they may be removed from their program at the discretion of their school’s dean’s office.

# Graduate Student Success Day



# Graduate Student Success Day

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## DRAFT Agenda

### Moody Hall Auditorium and Atrium

January 29, 2024

9:00	<i>Light Breakfast</i>	
9:10	Dr. Robin Poston	Welcome Message
9:15	Dr. Maria Dixon-Hall	Best Practices in Working with Graduate Students
10:15	SMU Faculty Panel	Helping Graduate Students Graduate
	Chaired by Dr. Paige Ware	
11:00	Dr. Lillian Eby	Best Practices in Mentoring Graduate Students
12:15	<i>Break and Lunch</i>	Box Lunches to take to Break Out Tables
12:30	Multiple Facilitators	Breakout sessions on graduate student success
		Group by Topic:
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Science of Mentoring (Dr. Eby)</li><li>• Fellowship and Career Support (Ball-Phillips, Pearson)</li><li>• Recruit Highest Quality Students (Hoselton, Otto)</li><li>• Resources for Graduate Students (Bennett, Itkin)</li></ul>



# Graduate Student Night at the SMU Football Game



# Graduate Student Night at the SMU Football Game

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- » Graduate students do not pay for the “athletic package” and hence do not get free tickets to all games
- » Dean Poston worked with SMU Athletics to create a Graduate Student Night for SMU football games
- » Graduate students will have access to two free tickets to the SMU vs. UNT game this Friday, Nov. 10, 8pm
- » Graduate students will sit together in one section and are encouraged to network with one another

# Changing R1 Criteria



<https://www.chronicle.com/article/carnegie-is-changing-how-it-classifies-r1-institutions-will-your-university-make-the-cut>

# Changing R1 Criteria

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» ACE Carnegie R1 criteria starting 2025:

- » \$50 million in research expenditures in a year, AND
- » 70 doctorates, in any research field, conferred in a year

» SMU FY23 numbers:

- » \$58 million in research expenditures
- » 139 doctorates (90 PhDs)

# Other Items



**Thank you!**

