![SMU logo](Office of Research and Graduate Studies)

Minutes of the Graduate Council
April 23, 2020

Members in Attendance:
Amy Freund, Kevin Hofeditz, Alan Itkin, Duncan MacFarlane, Renee McDonald, Daniel Millimet, Anthony Petrosino, James E. Quick, Dinesh Rajan, Johannes Tausch, Paul Yovanoff

Ex officio members: Suku Nair

Members Not in Attendance:
Mark Chancey, Heather Shaw (*ex officio*)

Business:

- **Approval of the minutes of the March 4 meeting:** The Council agreed that the PowerPoint presentation that typically accompanies the Graduate Council meeting should be included in the meeting minutes. It was agreed that the minutes, therefore, would be maintained as a PDF including both the summary of the Council's discussion and motions and the PowerPoint slides. The March 4 meeting minutes also included a summary of votes held online, including the number of "yes" and "no" votes on each motion. It was agreed that the number of Council members who did not vote or who abstained should be included in that record as well. A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes with these changes. The motion was approved by a unanimous vote of those present.

- **Moody Hall "User" Group and Working Group on COVID-19 and Graduate Student and Postdoc Issues:** Dr. Quick explained that a "user" group for Moody Hall, the new building to be funded by the Moody gift, had been formed by the President's office, and he shared the list of members for that group with the Graduate Council. The group includes at least one representative from each of the schools with Ph.D. programs. Dr. Quick thought one member could be added: a representative of the Faculty Senate. The Council recommended that Dr. Quick propose that either the incoming Faculty Senate President or her designate be added to the group.

  Dr. Quick also explained that a working group had been formed on issues related to COVID-19 that are affecting graduate students and postdocs. This group is primarily tasked with facilitating communications to graduate students and others about these issues and about actions taken in response to them. Dean Quick shared the list of members of this committee with the Council.

- **Procedures for selecting Graduate Council members in academic year 2020-21 and beyond:** Dr. Quick asked all Council members to share their vision for the composition and selection process for the Graduate Council in future years: What would each of them do, if they were "queen" or "king"? Different proposals were discussed, including the idea that each school with representation on the

Council would get one vote, like a delegation at the UN General Assembly. One concern was raised: Dedman College has a relatively large number of Ph.D. students in a broad range of disciplines in three different divisions, humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences. How could the variety of different interests in Dedman College be represented, and how could the representation be equitable given the disparity in numbers of Ph.D. students and programs across schools, if Dedman College has only one vote like the other schools?

Ultimately, the Graduate Council agreed on the following: Each of the four schools represented on the Council, Dedman, Lyle, Meadows, and Simmons, would have three representatives. These representatives would all be tenured or tenure-track faculty members. Two members would be elected by a vote within the school, and one member would be appointed or elected at the discretion of the school dean. A motion to approve this proposal was made and seconded. The motion was approved by a unanimous vote of those present.

- **Regular assessment of Ph.D. students' progress by their programs:** Dr. McDonald presented on the current practice of annual assessment of Ph.D. students' progress in Dedman College (see slides 17-24). The goals of this practice of assessment are: to allow for early identification and remediation of student problems, especially problems that commonly derail students but often fly "under the radar" longer than they should; to be efficient in the use of institutional resources (i.e. graduate stipends); and to ensure that programs are following best practices in monitoring student progress and supporting their professional success. Each Ph.D. program in Dedman College is responsible for assessing the progress of their own students, and each do so using their own form and their own procedure. Each program is asked to evaluate students' performance in three areas: academics, research, and professional development. All faculty who have been responsible for the student's training in any way are asked to participate in the review process. The programs provide information to the Dedman College Dean's Office about students who are judged not to be making satisfactory progress, include a remediation plan discussed with the student. Council members agreed that it would be important for the Moody School to require that Ph.D. programs perform an annual review, but, due to differences across fields and departments, that the Moody School should not dictate, at least at any level of specificity, how these reviews are performed.

- **Responsible conduct of research:** Dr. Itkin presented information on federal requirements for responsible conduct of research training for graduate students, postdocs, and faculty funded by the NSF and the NIH (slides 6-7). He also shared information on the responsible conduct of research training programs at aspirational peer institutions as well as the current responsible conduct of research training program at SMU and issues arising from the current configuration of that training (slides 8-13). Finally, he presented a proposal for a new responsible conduct of research training program at SMU (slides 14-15). Due to limited time, there was only a brief discussion of this item. Dr. MacFarlane suggested that the credentials of those teaching the responsible conduct of research seminar be reviewed by the Graduate Council, and Dr. Quick agreed that it was a good idea to present their qualifications to the Council.

- Meeting adjourned.

Graduate Council Meeting

April 23, 2020, 2:00-4:00pm

Zoom Meeting

April 23, 2020, 2:00-4:00pm, Zoom Meeting

- Approval of the minutes of the March 4 meeting

- Update on committee on the impact of COVID-19 on graduate programs and students

- Update on planning for Moody Hall

- Procedures for selecting Graduate Council members in academic year 2020-21 and beyond

- Responsible conduct of research training

- Regular assessment of Ph.D. students' progress by their programs

- Other items

Graduate Council Composition and Selection

Key Questions

- How many members from each school (Dedman, Lyle, Meadows, Simmons)? A few options:
  - The same number from each school
  - The same number from each school, but additional Dedman members to represent the three divisions (natural sciences, social sciences, humanities)
  - Numbers proportional to Ph.D. student population
  - Numbers proportional to the number of Ph.D. programs
- How should members be selected? A few options:
  - All members appointed by agreement between home school dean and Moody School dean
  - All members elected
  - Some members elected, some appointed by agreement between home school dean and Moody School dean
- Please consider:
  - The Council should not be too large, and procedures for selection should not be too complex

Responsible Conduct of Research

NIH Requirements

- "NIH requires that all trainees, fellows, participants, and scholars receiving support through any NIH training, career development award (individual or institutional), research education grant, and dissertation research grant must receive instruction in responsible conduct of research."

- Training must include in-person component.

- Training must be for at least 8 hours. It is recommended that this be spread out.

- Training should address a set of prescribed topics (conflict of interest, authorship, etc.)

- Training should involve faculty.

- Training should occur at all career stages and at least once every four years.

- Source: Update on the Requirement for Instruction in the Responsible Conduct of Research: https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/not-od-10-019.html

NSF Requirements

- Requires that institutions "have a plan in place to provide appropriate training and oversight in the responsible and ethical conduct of research to undergraduates, graduate students, and postdoctoral researchers who will be supported by NSF to conduct research."

- Requires that institutions certify this on each proposal.

- Does not prescribe any form that RCR training must take.

- Source: Proposal and Award Policies and Procedures Guide: https://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/pappg19_1/index.jsp

What SMU Currently Does

- Ph.D. students funded on federal grants do one-day (8-hour) training led by Asst. Dean of Graduate Studies and Asst. Vice President for Research Integrity and Operations

- Faculty are not involved, but we show video vignettes from SMU faculty

- Master's students funded on federal grants do online CITI training

- No credit appears on students' transcripts for this training

- We have added milestones on the transcript for students who did the training in Spring '19

- One big issue: records of students who are funded on federal grants are poorly maintained; it is often difficult to know who should be required to do the workshops; students not in compliance are missed; others are asked to attend the workshop who do not need to

Duke University

- Only does in-person training

- All Ph.D. students do six hours of training at orientation and three two-hour elective seminars– 12 hours total (School of Medicine Ph.D. students do more)

- Master's students do four hours of training at orientation and one two-hour elective (six hours total)

- Faculty can propose elective courses; departments can also propose to have a course or seminar they already offer carry RCR credit (only up to two hours of RCR credit)

Vanderbilt University

- All Ph.D. and Master's Students (in programs requiring a thesis) do CITI online AND in-person RCR training in their first year

- Science and engineering students do a full-day (8-hour) class including elective sections

- Humanities students do a half-day class

- Classes are led by faculty

Notre Dame

- Offers an in-person 8-hour RCR training course in January every year

- All STEM Ph.D.s must attend this training in their first year

- All Ph.D.s (regardless of discipline) must also complete a 3-hour research ethics course– this is a graduation requirement

Northwestern

- McCormick School of Engineering: All Ph.D.s complete CITI training and a five-week, 10-hour total "Responsible Conduct of Research for Engineers" course in their first year; master's students funded on federal grants do both kinds of training too

- Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences: Graduate students funded on federal grants do CITI training plus four hours of in-person training offered by their home department

Key Takeaways

- SMU is not currently following NIH requirements and recommendations– in particular on faculty participation, training for scholars at all levels (including postdocs), and in spreading training out over multiple sessions.

- We are behind our aspirational peers in only making NSF-funded students do the training and in not following the NIH requirements and recommendations.

- We don't have accurate records of students who have done the training or students who need it, according to our current procedure.

- SMU's current training is "one size fits all"– all students get the same training, regardless of discipline.

Proposal:

- Require that all Ph.D. students and postdocs do 8 hours of in-person training in their first year

- Have Ph.D. students and postdocs do a four-hour core course (led by ORGS) plus two two-hour faculty-led electives spread across their first year

- Require master's students funded on federal grants to do the same

- Require other master's students in programs that require theses to complete CITI training in their first year

- Recruit and compensate faculty in different disciplines to develop electives relevant to research in their disciplines

- Add RCR as a course on students' transcripts

Additional Proposal:

- All graduate students and postdocs who are required to complete the in-person responsible conduct of research WILL ALSO be required to complete CITI online training in their first year.

Rationale for annual evaluations

- Early/prompt identification and remediation of problems

- Identify and document problems that commonly derail students, but which often fly "under the radar" longer than they should

- Efficient use of institutional resources (stipends)

- Best practices

  - Annual performance review

  - Attention to student well-being, program morale

  - Explicit attention to socializing students as professionals

Timing and content of evaluations

• Evaluate all students annually

• Collective process

• All faculty involved in a given student's training should participate

• Performance evaluated in the domains of

  • Academics

  • Research

  • Professional development

Informing students

- Students should be

  - informed beforehand (e.g., student handbook) about evaluations

  - Provided with forms and instructions regarding materials to be submitted

    - Snapshot of progress toward degree, CV, etc.

- One faculty member should provide program feedback to the student

  - Note successes

  - Address problems/deficiencies

    - Remediation plan w/clear definition of success

    - Timeline for remediation

    - What will happen if problems recur or are not resolved

GPRS Student Evaluation Report

		Academics	Research	Professional Development			
Student Name:							
Academic Year:							
Courses (if taken)							
CORE Course:							
Classroom Courses:							
Directed Studies:							
Independent Studies:							
Dissertation Research/Writing: (if relevant)							
Marks of evaluation: S = Satisfactory; U = Unsatisfactory							
Additional Notes:							
If an "Unsatisfactory" is present, remediation plan for improvement, including dates of completion:							

Religious Studies Assessment Form

GPRS Student Evaluation Worksheet						
Student Name:						
Academic Year:						
		Academics	Research	Professional Development		
Courses (if taken)						
	CORE Course Fall:					
	CORE Course Spring					
	Classroom Courses:					
	Classroom Courses:					
	Directed Studies:					
	Directed Studies:					
	Directed Studies:					
	Independent Studies:					
	Independent Studies:					
	Independent Studies:					
Dissertation Research/Writing: (if relevant)						
Marks of evaluation: S = Satisfactory; U = Unsatisfactory						
Additional Notes:						
If an "Unsatisfactory" is present, remediation plan for improvement, including dates of completion:						

Process and Focus of the Evaluation

- All GPRS students will be evaluated in the spring of every academic year. The Director of the GPRS will organize and guide the evaluation process with the aid of the Program Coordinator. The evaluation will cover three areas of a student's performance:

- Academics – grades, timeliness, tardiness/absences, classroom participation, responsiveness to feedback, initiative, etc.

- Professional Development – meeting of deadlines, responsiveness to emails, ethics, collegiality, appropriate interactions with students as a TA, etc.

- Research – fulfillment as an RA, ability to do significant research in preparation to writing a dissertation, making significant progress in writing a dissertation, etc.

- Clearly, as a student progresses through the program, the relevance of each of these criteria will change.

Evaluation Data

- The data used for the evaluation will consist of the student's academic record, which is kept up to date in the Program Coordinator's office, and personal evaluations by all faculty members who are involved in any aspect of a student's education and training during the current academic year.

- ***Academic Record***

- Every March, the Program Coordinator will send each student her or his Academic Record and will ask him or her to provide any corrections or additions to the record and return it to her office. Students will also be asked to evaluate their own progress in the program. Students should reflect on what they have done that year and where they see their work moving over the next two years. Students beyond their second year may also prepare and provide a CV of their work.

- ***Personal Evaluations***

- In April, the Director will ask various individuals for their overall evaluation of the progress that a student is making in their studies.

- For students in their *first and second years* these may include: Coursework advisor, CORE professors, professors for other courses the student is taking, professors for courses in which the student is a TA, professors for whom the student is an RA, and the Program Coordinator.

- For students in their *third year and beyond,* these may include: dissertation advisor, dissertation committee members (if relevant), professors for courses in which the student is a TA, professors for whom the student is an RA, professors who serve as a resource for the practice teaching requirement, and the Program Coordinator.

Evaluation Report

- The evaluation process will conclude with a written statement from the Director to the student, providing an overview of the evaluation process and giving advice about how the student may proceed most productively in the program. In the vast majority of cases, students should expect a short, positive evaluation of their progress, their strengths, and the extent to which they are developing as responsible, ethical, professional members of their disciplines and guilds.

- On rare occasions, if there are clear areas in need of improvement or if the student is having significant trouble in any domain, the Director will consult with the Assistant Dean for Graduate Studies and may provide the student with a specific remediation plan for the student to follow, including a timeline for its fulfillment. This plan will be filed with the Dedman College Dean's Office and with the Assistant Dean for Graduate Studies. If a student is unable or unwilling to follow the plan for remediation, action that is more serious may be necessary, up to and including dismissal from the program.