

**Minutes of the Graduate Council
October 11, 2023**

Members in Attendance:

Ali Beskok, Alan Itkin, Akihito Kamata, Elfi Kraka, Anna Lovatt, Renee McDonald, Brian Molanphy, Alexandra E. Pavlakis, Anthony Petrosino, Robin Poston, Dinesh Rajan, Gretchen Smith

Members Not in Attendance:

Kate Carté, Volkan Otugen

Business:

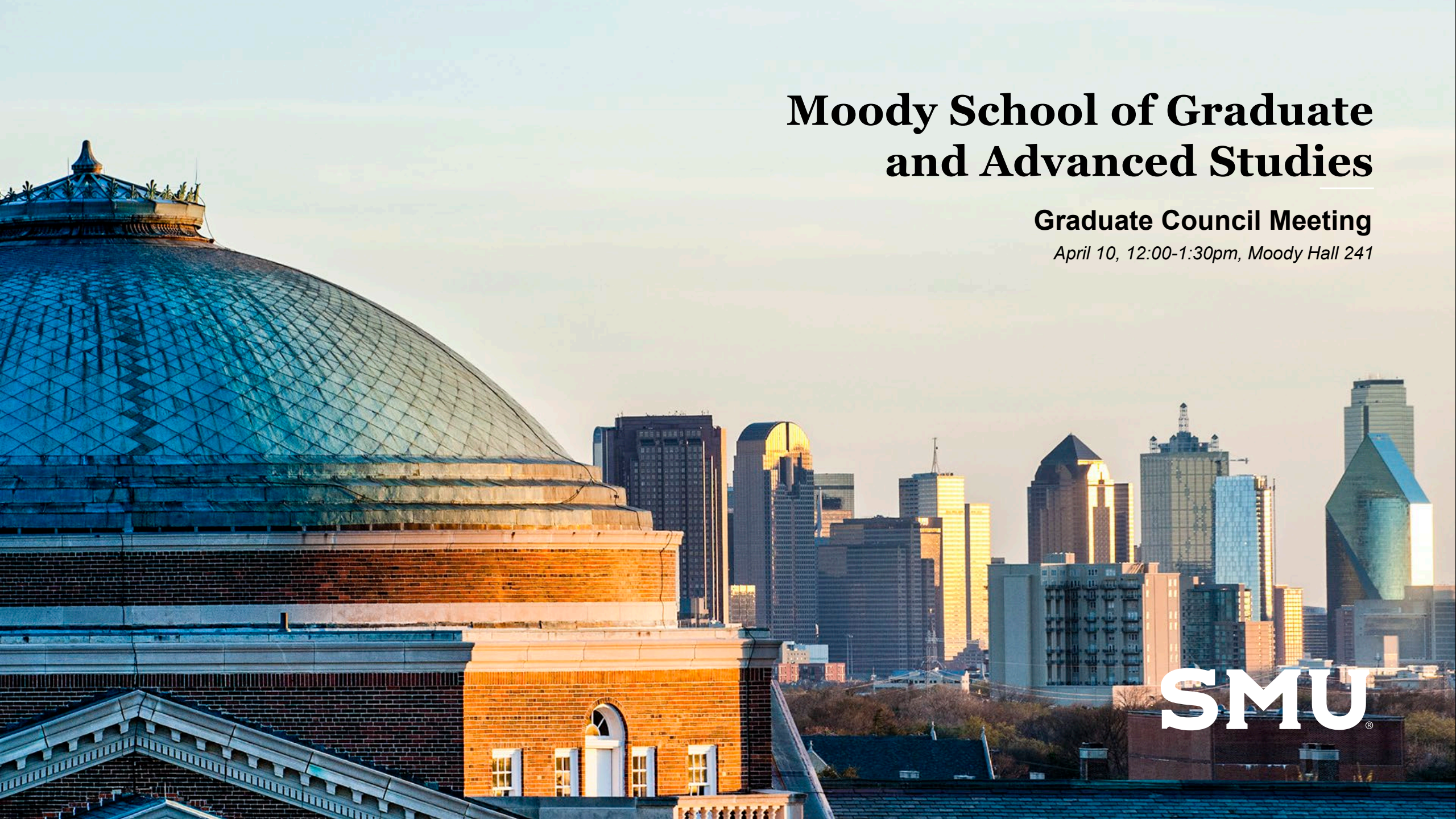
- **Minutes of the September Meeting:** The Council discussed processes for amending meeting minutes and adding agenda items. Previous edits made to minutes and agendas directly in the shared documents by Prof. Molanphy had not been recognized. The Council discussed and agreed that, if Council members have recommended items to add to the agenda, they will email those to Drs. Poston and Itkin at least a week before the meeting and that Council members would be welcome to add comments to meeting minutes that could then be discussed at the next meeting. The Council discussed and agreed on a change to the language of the May minutes. A motion to approve the minutes of the May meeting with that change was made, seconded, and approved. A motion to approve the September meeting minutes was made, seconded, and approved. The additional items Prof. Molanphy had added to the agenda for the September meeting were discussed: The Council agreed that, if a Council member needed to attend remotely, they could request a Zoom link. Prof. Molanphy raised concerns about CAPE (Continuing and Professional Education) not taking full account of the interests of schools and colleges, and Dr. Poston suggested that she and Michael Robertson, Assistant Provost for Global, Online and Continuing Education, meet to discuss those concerns with Prof. Molanphy and colleagues in the Meadows School. Dr. Poston affirmed that SMU GOCE (Global, Online and Continuing Education), including CAPE, would not be moving into Moody Hall. The Council discussed health insurance awards for MFA students, and Dr. Poston suggested that the Meadows School would need to submit a budget proposal to the Provost's Office or find other funding for the program.
- **Graduate Enrollment Update:** Dr. Poston presented data about graduate enrollments by school and college (see slides 6-7). The Council discussed the data, why some schools and colleges have lower overall enrollments in Fall 2023 and what schools and colleges are doing to increase graduate enrollments.
- **Expectations for Fellows:** Dr. Itkin outlined three issues that have arisen recently with regards to expectations for Moody Graduate, Mustang, and Provost's Doctoral Candidacy Fellows (see slide 8):

A fellow was discovered to be employed full-time by SMU while pursuing their PhD with fellowship funding; a fellow complained about research expectations set by their advisor, because the fellowship does not come from their department; a department has not been able to convince fellows to serve as TAs, because the department usually pays PhD students a small bonus to teach, something which the fellowship prohibits. Regarding the last point, the Council agreed that it would be fine for the department to pay fellows a small bonus for teaching. Regarding the other points, the Council discussed and agreed that it would be helpful to discuss proposed revisions to the fellowship offer letter.

- **Doctoral Graduate Recognition Dinner/Luncheon:** Dr. Itkin informed the Council that advisors would be hooding their doctoral graduates on stage at the all-University commencement starting December 2023 (slide 10). This raises the question whether the Moody School should continue to offer a doctoral graduate recognition event (usually a dinner or luncheon) the evening before commencement. At the Moody School's doctoral graduate recognition dinner/luncheon, advisors speak about each of their graduating students' accomplishments, and the students thank the advisor in return. With the hooding on stage now, doctoral advisors will be expected to do double duty at commencement. The Council discussed and agreed that the doctoral graduate recognition dinner should still take place this December and then be reevaluated for future semesters.
- **Parental Leave Policies:** Dr. Itkin reviewed parental leave policies for graduate students at Vanderbilt, Rice, and Notre Dame (slides 12-14). Council members agreed that establishing a parental leave policy for graduate students was important for SMU and that such policies are standard at other institutions. However, one challenge for creating such a policy is that funding would need to be provided for the leave period for students usually supported by stipends. In the case of students supported on research grants, it is especially unclear who would be responsible for this funding and where it would come from. The Council advised that Dr. Poston should consult with deans of other schools and colleges on this question before a taskforce is established to develop a policy.
- **Sloan Foundation Grants:** Rob Strauss and Lesley Warren from SMU Development and External Affairs shared information about a grant opportunity from the Sloan Foundation, "Creating Equitable Pathways to STEM Graduate Education." Letters of interest for these grants can be submitted to the Sloan Foundation at any time. Previous grants have provided funding of more than \$100,000 to institutions to create opportunities for graduate study and advanced careers in STEM fields for underrepresented students.
- **Appeals of Suspensions and Dismissals:** Drs. Poston and Itkin reminded the Council about the grade appeal policy that was developed last year and approved by the Graduate Council (slide 16). A similar policy will need to be developed for appeals from graduate students who are suspended or dismissed from their programs for reasons other than low grades. A taskforce will be assembled to develop this policy.
- **Moody Faculty Fellowships:** Drs. Poston and Itkin mentioned that the first class of Moody Faculty Fellows is expected to be named for the 2024-2025 academic year but that the Council has not yet

come to a consensus on the details of this program (slide 18). This will be discussed more at further meetings and a taskforce may also be established to develop a proposal for the program.

- **Grade Assignment Policy Taskforce:** There was not time to share the update on this item at the meeting (slide 20). It will be discussed at the next meeting.
- Meeting adjourned.



Moody School of Graduate and Advanced Studies

Graduate Council Meeting

October 11, 2023, 12:00-1:30pm, Moody Hall 241

SMU[®]

Meeting Agenda

1. Minutes of the September 13 Meeting
2. Graduate Enrollment Update
3. Expectations for Fellows (Assistantships, Extra Employment, Additional Compensation)
4. Doctoral Graduate Recognition Dinner/Luncheon and Doctoral Hooding
5. Parental Leave Policies
6. Appeals of Suspensions and Dismissals
7. Moody Faculty Fellowships
8. Grade Assignment Policy Taskforce
9. Sloan Foundation Grants
10. Other Items

Minutes of the September 13 Meeting



<https://smu.box.com/s/2pkboolhezk5roa3dhk90noow546kfs1>

Graduate Enrollment Update



New Graduate and Professional Students – Fall 2023

Data as of 10/10/23

School/College	Fall 2022	Fall 2023	Percentage Change in New Enrollments
Cox	563	572	+1.6%
Dedman College	133	135	+1.5%
Dedman Law	281	233	-17.1%
Guildhall	50	51	+2.0%
Lyle	247	369	+49.4%
Meadows	73	121	+65.8%
Perkins	72	58	-19.4%
Simmons	317	320	+0.9%
Total Graduate and Professional (New)	1,736	1,859	+7.1%

Total Graduate and Professional Students – Fall 2023

Data as of 10/10/23

School/College	Fall 2022	Fall 2023	Percentage Change in New Enrollments
Cox	1,321	1,111	-15.9%
Dedman College	546	530	-2.9%
Dedman Law	753	729	-3.2%
Guildhall	103	95	-7.8%
Lyle	837	888	+6.1%
Meadows	170	208	+22.4%
Perkins	267	259	-3.0%
Simmons	944	905	-4.1%
Total Graduate and Professional (New)	4,941	4,725	-4.4%

Expectations for Fellows



Expectations for Fellows

- » 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

Doctoral Graduate Recognition Dinner/Luncheon



Doctoral Graduate Recognition Dinner/Luncheon

- » Each December and each May, the Friday before all-University commencement, the Moody School offers a dinner or luncheon to honor graduating doctoral students
- » At this event, advisors recognize their graduating students' accomplishments, and students thank their advisors
- » Starting December 2023, advisors will be invited to hood their doctoral students at the all-University commencement ceremony
- » Question: Should we continue to offer the dinner/luncheon? Or is that too many obligations for the advisors and students?

Parental Leave Policies



Notre Dame Parental Leave Policy

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

Rice Parental Leave Policy

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

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

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>

Appeals of Suspensions and Dismissals



Appeals of Suspensions and Dismissals

- » 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

- » 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

Grade Assignment Policy Taskforce



Grade Assignment Policy Taskforce

- » 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

Sloan Foundation Grants



Other Items



Items for Future Meetings

- » Annual Review of PhD Students
- » Provost Faculty Fellow Assistantship Project
- » Certificates for Graduate Programs
- » Dissertation Title Pages
- » Retired and Former Faculty Serving on PhD Committees
- » Yellow Ribbon Agreement
- » Reporting on Postdocs and Non-faculty Researchers

Thank you!

