

**Minutes of the Graduate Council
February 14, 2024**

Members in Attendance: Ali Beskok, Kate Carté, Alan Itkin, Akihito Kamata, Elfi Kraka, Anna Lovatt, Volkan Otugen, Alexandra E. Pavlakis, Anthony Petrosino, Robin Poston, Dinesh Rajan, Gretchen Smith

Members Not in Attendance: Renee McDonald, Brian Molanphy

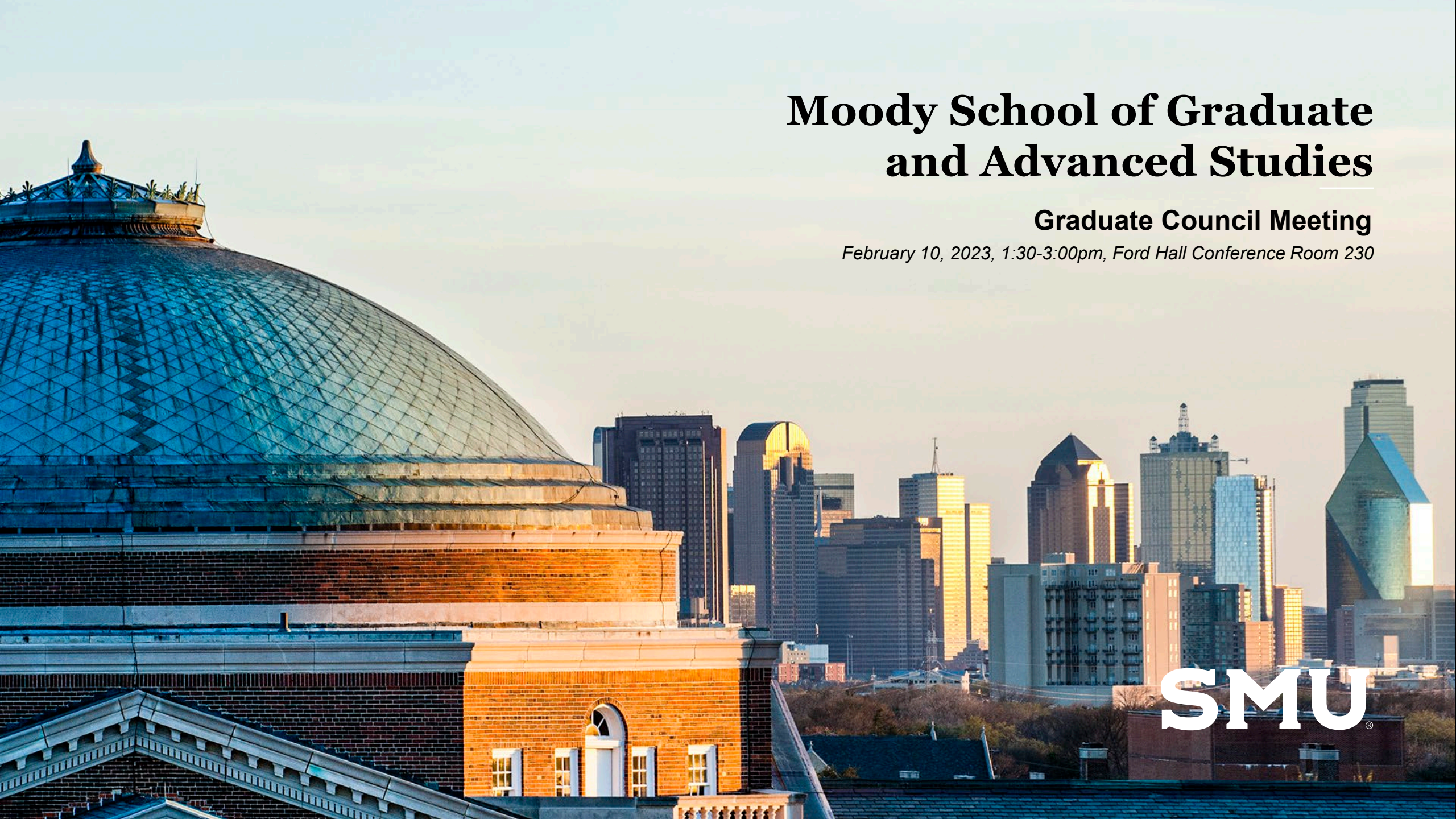
Business:

- **Minutes of the January 24 meeting:** Drs. Poston and Itkin confirmed that a quorum was present and asked if there were any comments or concerns on the January 24 minutes. The Council agreed that there were no comments, and they approved the minutes.
- **DPRs for Graduate Programs:** Bobby Lothringer, University Registrar, and Joe Papari, Director of Enrollment Services for Student Systems and Technology, shared information about progress that had been made on establishing degree progress reports (DPRs) for graduate programs: DPRs are in progress or finished for all schools except for the Lyle School of Engineering and Dedman School of Law. Work is expected to begin on DPRs for those schools next. Sample DPRs were shared with the Council. Graduate DPRs can be customized as programs wish. Council members raised concerns about additional work that might be required of department administrators to maintain graduate DPRs. For now, graduate DPRs are generally fairly simple, given that they are only capturing general degree requirements and not the complex ways in which students can complete individual course sequence and exam requirements for each program.
- **Grading for Research/Dissertation Courses:** Bobby Lothringer shared information with the Council on this topic. At a previous meeting, he had brought it to the Council's attention that faculty are not always entering grades for graduate research and dissertation or thesis classes in a timely fashion or are using incompletes to designate that a student's work is not being evaluated at this time. Both of these create issues with regards to reporting requirements to the US Department of Education. One reason that this practice has persisted is that faculty do not have a way to designate that a student has been working on research and dissertation/thesis writing but not at a level the faculty member feels comfortable certifying as satisfactory. After benchmarking with peers and discussing this internally with colleagues at SMU, the Registrar's Office has determined that the best course is for schools and departments to use a menu of grades for these courses—P, F, S, U, C, NC—and to each determine a policy that will guide which of these options will designate that a student is conducting research or writing that the faculty member cannot certify represents good progress towards the degree

(see slide 6). The Council discussed this. Council members were not all sure that this approach would perfectly solve all issues, but were supportive of adopting it.

- **Rescheduling March Meeting:** After discussion, the Council agreed to choose between two options for rescheduling the next meeting, since the meeting was originally scheduled during Spring Break (slide 8). Dr. Itkin agreed to circulate a Doodle poll.
- **Parental Leave Policy:** Dr. Itkin informed the Council that the draft policy was approved by the Graduate Council unanimously (12-0). He thanked the Council for their input on the policy and updated them on next steps: additional input will be sought from several groups (slide 10). Any revisions will be shared with the Graduate Council.
- **Moody Faculty Fellowship Proposal:** Drs Poston and Itkin shared the outline of the faculty fellowship program that had been developed with the Council's input (slide 12). The fellowships will now be called Moody Outstanding Mentor Awards. One question remained: will faculty members be eligible to win a Moody Outstanding Mentor Award more than once? The Council agreed that it made sense to limit eligibility to once every five years, so that a truly outstanding mentor could be recognized more than once, but not every year. Nominations will be collected starting Fall 2024.
- **Doctoral Hooding:** Drs. Poston and Itkin updated the Council on discussions surrounding doctoral hooding ceremonies (slide 14). The current plan is to try to hold a separate doctoral hooding ceremony in Moody Hall the night before December 2024 all-University commencement. That event would replace the doctoral graduate recognition dinner as well as the hooding ceremony at the all-University commencement. A reception would follow the ceremony.
- **Research and Innovation Week 2024:** Dr. Itkin updated the Council on the Research & Innovation Week events and encouraged them to share information with colleagues and to encourage students to participate in the poster sessions (slides 16-17).
- **Federal Work Study and Graduate Assistantships:** Drs. Poston and Itkin updated the Council about this: the Moody School is working with the Office of Financial Aid to pilot using federal work study funds to cover part of PhD students' assistantships (slide 19). After consulting with Dedman College, it was determined that the Chemistry Department would be offered the opportunity to pilot this with their PhD students. If this is successful, it could be expanded to other departments, subject to the availability of federal work study funds. The Council will be apprised of developments.
- **Annual Progress Reports for PhD Students:** There was not adequate time to discuss this item.

Meeting adjourned.



Moody School of Graduate and Advanced Studies

Graduate Council Meeting

February 14, 12:00-1:30pm, Frances Anne Moody Hall 241

SMU[®]

Meeting Agenda

1. Minutes of the January 24 Meeting
2. DPRs for Graduate Programs (with Bobby Lothringer and Joe Papari)
3. Grading for Research/Dissertation Courses (with Bobby Lothringer and Melissa Stanford)
4. Rescheduling March Meeting
5. Parental Leave Policy
6. Moody Faculty Fellowship Proposal
7. Doctoral Hooding
8. Research and Innovation Week 2024
9. Federal Work Study and Graduate Assistantships
10. Annual Progress Reports
11. Other Items

Minutes of the January 24 Meeting



<https://smu.box.com/s/obh9vhu3jgeyi21imyr3ypcwrrrh6ndk>

DPRs for Graduate Program



Grading for Research/Dissertation Courses



Dissertation and Thesis Grading

- All in-progress dissertation and thesis courses need to be graded at the end of the term
- Cannot use Incomplete grade
- We want departments and schools to have flexibility and multiple options rather than a single grading policy applied uniformly across campus
- Existing grades available in grading scheme table provide multiple options:
 - Traditional grades of A, B, C, etc. with grade points included in GPA
 - Grade options excluded from GPA:
 - P – Pass
 - CR – Credit
 - NC – No Credit
 - S – Satisfactory
 - U - Unsatisfactory

Rescheduling March Meeting



Rescheduling March Meeting

- » The March Graduate Council meeting was originally scheduled during Spring Break
- » We would like to reschedule this meeting
- » Could we aim for the same weekday/time one week before or after? Is there another time that works well for everyone? Should we circulate a Doodle poll?

Parental Leave Policy



Parental Leave Policy

- » The revised policy was unanimously approved (12-0) by the Graduate Council
- » The current policy and other documents are available here:
<https://smu.box.com/s/al7aazpe6m5ggbc44smfpbjtpmo46aem>
- » Next steps:
 - » Discuss with Moody School program representatives
 - » Discuss with Faculty Senate Graduate Studies Committee
 - » Solicit comments from students and others
 - » Graduate Council vote on any substantive revisions
 - » Share policy with President's Executive Council for final approval
 - » Additional revisions made as needed

Moody Faculty Fellowship Proposal



Moody Faculty Fellowships

- » We have revised the proposal for Moody Faculty Fellowship funds with input received at the last Graduate Council meeting:
 - » Four Moody Outstanding Mentor Awards will be awarded each year, selected for their outstanding mentorship of graduate students and/or postdoctoral scholars
 - » Moody Outstanding Mentors will receive a \$10,000 fund to cover research-related expenses for graduate students and postdocs under their mentorship that must be used within the fellowship year
 - » Each department will be able to nominate one faculty member each year
 - » The nomination packet will include: 1) a statement of mentoring experience and philosophy, 2) a letter of support from a former or current mentee, 3) a letter of support from the department chair, 4) the nominee's CV, 5) a short statement of how they plan to spend the \$10,000 fund
 - » Moody Outstanding Mentors will be expected to share best practices in mentoring at the Graduate Student Success Day and at other venues
 - » Faculty members will only be able to win a Moody Outstanding Mentor Award once? Once every five years?

Doctoral Hooding



Doctoral Hooding

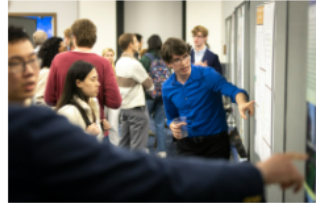
- » Currently, Ph.D., D.Eng., Ed.D., and D.L.S. recipients are honored at the Moody School dinner the evening before the all-University Commencement, and then they are hooded by their advisor on stage at the all-University commencement ceremony.
- » We would like to try to offer a doctoral hooding ceremony the Friday before the all-University Commencement
- » This event would replace the dinner and the hooding at the all-University Commencement ceremony
- » Some possibilities for the ceremony:
 - » Short statements from the student and advisor could appear in the program and on a screen
 - » A reception would be held afterwards
 - » The event could start with remarks from a speaker
 - » One student could be selected to give a short valedictory speech
 - » The fall event could be held in the Moody Hall Auditorium, but the spring event would need to be held elsewhere, perhaps on the lawn under a tent

Research & Innovation Week 2024



Research & Innovation Week 2024

Research & Innovation Week 2024 Events



Undergraduate Poster Session

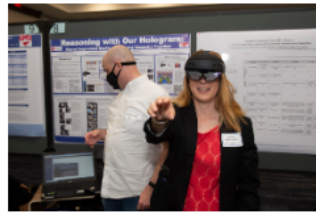
Date: Tuesday April 02, 2024

Poster presentations by SMU undergraduates will take place in the Moody Hall atrium from **2-5 p.m.**

Contact Information:

asneal@smu.edu

[Learn more about this event](#)



Graduate Poster Session

Date: Wednesday April 03, 2024

Poster presentations by SMU graduate students and postdocs will take place in Frances Anne Moody Hall.

Session 1 (Dedman College programs): **9 a.m. - 12 p.m.**

Session 2 (All other programs and postdoctoral scholars): **2-5 p.m.**

Contact Information:

aitkin@smu.edu

[Learn more about this event](#)



Keynote Talk

Date: Thursday April 04, 2024

Dr. Keivan Stassun, Director of the Frist Center for Autism & Innovation, and Stevenson Professor of Physics & Astronomy at Vanderbilt University will give a talk titled, "The (Neuro-) Diversity Revolution: Tapping the Human Diversity of Mind to Accelerate Scientific Discovery."

This talk will take place in the Moody Hall Auditorium from **5-6 p.m.**

Reception and refreshments to follow.

Contact Information:

aitkin@smu.edu

[Learn more about this event](#)

Research & Innovation Week 2024

» Events will take place April 1-5

» Ways that you can help:

» Encourage students to participate in the poster sessions

» Encourage faculty to serve as judges for the poster sessions

» Encourage colleagues to come out for the keynote

» Suggest departmental events that can be promoted as part of Research & Innovation Week

Federal Work Study and Graduate Assistantships



Federal Work Study and Graduate Assistantships

- » We are working with Financial Aid, Payroll, and other offices to explore this possibility
- » Federal work study would provide $\frac{3}{4}$ of a student's stipend, up to \$6,000 in total (so the federal work study contribution would be \$4,500)
- » This could be done for domestic students who demonstrate need by completing the FAFSA
- » Using these federal work study funds as part of the support for eligible students would free up funds that could be used to increase support for all graduate students in the school/program
- » We are discussing with the Office of Financial Aid how to pilot this with one or two programs starting Fall 2024
- » There are still some issues to be worked out, but this is done at other universities, like U Memphis

Annual Progress Reports for PhD Students



Annual Progress Reports for Moody School Students

- 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
- MFA students are also assessed annually. Should a policy apply to them as well?
- 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.

Other Items



Thank you!

