

**Minutes of the Graduate Council
September 24, 2021**

Members in Attendance:

Jodi Cooley, Adam Jasienski, Akihito Kamata, Elfi Kraka, Renee McDonald, Brian Molanphy, Volkan Otugen, Alexandra E. Pavlakis, Anthony Petrosino, James E. Quick, Dinesh Rajan, Gretchen Smith

Ex officio members: Suku Nair

Members Not in Attendance:

Ali Beskok, Alan Itkin, Heather Shaw (ex officio)

Business:

- **Minutes of the July 16 meeting:** Dr. Quick asked for a vote on the minutes of the July 16 meeting, which were made available to Council members before the meeting. All Council members present voted “aye.” The minutes were approved.
- **Public dissertation defenses:** Dr. Quick explained that many other universities require that the defense of a Ph.D. dissertation be announced in a public forum and be open to the public (see slides 4-6 on the attached PowerPoint presentation). Dr. Quick mentioned that an objection to adopting this practice had been raised by the Graduate Program in Religious Studies (GPRS). GPRS had objected that, because topics of research in the department are controversial, there could be threats to the safety of defense attendees if the defense was open and publicly announced. Dr. Quick also mentioned that there might be concerns related to the public disclosure of valuable intellectual property related to the dissertation research.

Council members discussed the concerns voiced by GPRS and concerns related to intellectual property. While recognizing the validity of these concerns, Council members expressed support for the principle that dissertation defenses should be public events. Following a suggestion of Dr. Rajan’s, Dr. Quick said that written proposals for the Council’s review and vote would be prepared and shared with the Council before the next meeting on this topic.

- **Extending retired/emeritus faculty members’ service as dissertation committee chairs:** Dr. Quick shared policies related to dissertation committee membership in the SMU Graduate Catalog with Graduate Council members (see slides 7-8) and raised two questions for the Council’s consideration (slide 9): 1) If a faculty member in good standing leaves their tenure-track position, either through

retirement or to accept a position at another institution, before a Ph.D. student they are advising defends the dissertation, should the faculty member be able to continue serving as dissertation committee chair? Co-chair? Regular committee member? 2) Should there be additional standards for dissertation committee membership across the University?

Council members discussed the variety of committee roles and standards for the composition of dissertation committees across the University. Council members also discussed the status of emeritus faculty and ambiguities related to this status. Council members agreed that it was important for faculty members who are advising a student on their dissertation to have the ability to continue to advise the student after leaving their position. They also agreed that the chair of the dissertation or supervisory committee—or, in the case of a committee with co-chairs, one of the co-chairs—should be a full-time tenured or tenure-track faculty member in the department at SMU. Dr. Quick proposed that an online vote be held on the question of whether faculty members who leave their full-time positions at the University be allowed to continue to serve on dissertation committees in roles besides that of sole chair of the dissertation committee. He proposed that questions related to emeritus status, the definition of a committee co-chair, and general standards for dissertation committee membership be tabled, as some of these questions would need to be addressed in a later meeting and some are not under the purview of the Council.

- **Outstanding Graduate Student Instruction Awards:** Dr Quick reminded Council members about the purpose and particulars of these awards and went through three questions that were raised at the Ph.D. Program Representative Meeting earlier in September (slides 10-11): 1) Should the application deadline be postponed to accommodate students who only teach in their final years? 2) Should eligibility be expanded to include graduate students who “teach” undergraduates by mentoring them in a lab while not serving as TAs or instructors? 3) Should additional nomination materials be solicited or should the option be granted to provide additional materials that might support the application (e.g. a letter of support from an undergraduate who was taught by the graduate student)?

Dr. Quick mentioned that, in response to question 1, the deadline for nominations for these awards was already pushed back to January. The Council discussed question 2. There was consensus that, rather than expand eligibility for the awards to include graduate students who teach undergraduates in other ways than in an official class setting, a separate award should be created to recognize these graduate students’ contributions. Dr. Quick put this to a vote, and all Council members present voted in favor of continuing to limit eligibility to only those graduate students teaching or serving as teaching assistants in University classes.

The Council discussed question 3. Council members agreed that additional materials might be helpful in providing a fuller picture of nominee’s qualifications for the awards, but felt that this could be accomplished by referencing additional evidence in the current supporting materials requested with award nominations. Dr. McDonald recommended that, in the interest of receiving comparable responses, a set of suggested questions for nominees to answer could be added to the prompt for the teaching experience statement from nominees. Dr. Quick agreed with this suggestion.

- **Other items:** Dr. Kraka raised an issue that is affecting Ph.D. students and may impact Ph.D. student recruiting: rents in Dallas, and especially in The Village, where many graduate students live, have increased significantly, and departmental stipends have not kept pace. Dr. Quick recognized that this was an issue but said that Moody School funds would not be sufficient to meet the need for additional support for Ph.D. students. Dr. Quick claimed that what is needed to address this issue is 1) that additional funding for TAships be provided University wide, 2) that TA funding be more transparently budgeted, and 3) that TA budgets be a component of school and University budget planning. Dr. Quick said that additional funding for TAs would not only assist with supporting graduate students but would help meet curricular need for teaching and classroom support for faculty.

Dr. Kamata raised the issue of graduate students not being allowed to work more than twenty hours per week. Dr. McDonald explained that this is not an issue of University policy, but one related to payroll and tax compliance. Additional tax complications would be created if a student worked more than twenty hours per week at the University. In addition, international students are usually prohibited by visa regulations from working more than twenty hours per week.

- Meeting adjourned.

Moody School of Graduate and Advanced Studies

Graduate Council Meeting

September 24, 2021, 1-2:30pm, Zoom meeting



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Meeting Agenda

1. Minutes of the July 16 meeting
2. Public dissertation defenses
3. Extending retired/emeritus faculty members' service as dissertation committee chairs
4. Outstanding Graduate Student Instruction Awards
5. Other items

Minutes of the July 16 Meeting

Minutes available in Box:

<https://smu.box.com/s/4rqzn72glljaiwe2645ucct542fne750>

Public Dissertation Defenses

Announcement of Thesis Defense

Oral examinations for the doctoral degree must be registered and publicly publicized at least 14 days in advance. Oral examination announcements must be registered with the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies by entering the information into the Graduate Students Thesis Defense Announcement form at <https://events.rice.edu/rgs>. Defenses that proceed without timely registration are unofficial and will not meet university degree requirements.

Oral Examination in Defense of Thesis

The public oral defense of a thesis is intended to be an examination of a completed body of work and should be scheduled only when the thesis is complete. Students may take the final oral examination in defense of their thesis only after the dean of graduate and postdoctoral studies approves their candidacy.

In addition to announcing the planned defense as described above, at least one copy of the thesis must be available in the departmental office not less than two calendar weeks prior to the date of the oral defense. Graduate programs may allow or require the thesis to be submitted and stored in an electronic format.

The length of the oral examination and the subject matter on which the candidate is questioned are left to the judgment of the thesis committee. The defense should be scheduled by the student after consultation with the thesis advisor, who agrees that the thesis is completed and ready to be defended. All oral thesis defenses must take place on the Rice University campus with the candidate and all thesis committee members in physical attendance throughout the entire defense. In exceptional cases, appeals to this in-person requirement can be made in writing to the dean of graduate and postdoctoral studies.

Rice University:

Public Dissertation Defenses

Final Examination

The candidate must pass his or her dissertation defense by the appropriate deadline for the date the degree is to be conferred, or by March 24 for May graduation. All conferral dates and deadlines are listed on the academic calendar. The final oral examination is administered by the student's Ph.D. committee and is on the dissertation and significant related material; the student is expected to demonstrate an understanding of the larger context in which the dissertation lies. The public is invited to attend the final examination, which is announced in advance in Vanderbilt's electronic calendar.

Vanderbilt University:

The chair of the Ph.D. committee or the director of graduate studies of the program, after consultation with the candidate, shall notify the Graduate School in advance of the place and time of the examination and the title of the dissertation. This should be done no later than two weeks prior to the examination. The Graduate School then formally notifies the Ph.D. committee and submits the defense notice to Vanderbilt's electronic calendar. The dissertation defense results form, signed by the committee members and the director of graduate studies for the program, should be forwarded immediately to the Graduate School.

Public Dissertation Defenses

Potential announcement venues:

Moody School Events Calendar

Events

Category Audience

< > Today September 2021 Agenda Day Week Month

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
29	30	31	1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9

5pm Outdoor Painting (on Friday, Sept 24)

12pm Technical Writing (on Wednesday, Sept 6)

Moody School Newsletter



MOODY SCHOOL NEWSLETTER



FAST FIVE

- 1 Join us for a fun, outdoor painting event with Pinot's Palette. RSVP on our online calendar
- 2 Attend Beyond the Professoriate's Career Success Conference. SMU students attend free!
- 3 Looking to build your Technical Writing skills? Apply for one of two workshops in October
- 4 SMU has an array of resources. Check out the Group Counseling Services
- 5 Stay alert about COVID 19. Visit SMU's COVID website to learn more about university policies.

Welcome to the Moody School Newsletter!

Stay updated with all things Graduate School. **The Fast Five** features quick updates. See more detailed information about these and other announcements and events below.

Stay up to date about professional development workshops and other opportunities.

SMU Moody School of Graduate & Advanced Studies

Retired/Emeritus Faculty on Dissertation Committees

From the Dedman College section of the Graduate Catalog:

Dissertation Defense

The defense is an examination administered by the student's Dissertation Committee. The Dissertation Committee shall consist of 1) the major adviser, who will serve as chair; 2) at least two other full-time members of the candidate's major department; and 3) at least one external reviewer who is either a faculty member outside the candidate's department or, with the approval of the department chair and the graduate dean, a scholar not associated with the University.

For all candidates, the major adviser (or designate) must be a full-time member of the department. Faculty members with joint appointments (excluding courtesy appointments) are considered internal members of the departments only, and they may not serve as outside members of the committee. The Dissertation Committee is appointed by the department chair or the director of graduate studies with the approval of the dean after the presentation of the prospectus, given well before the dissertation defense.

From the Lyle School of Engineering section of the Graduate Catalog:

Supervisory Committee

The membership of the supervisory committee is selected by the student in consultation with the dissertation director. After the student has obtained the written consent of those selected, they must obtain the written endorsement of the department chair before transmitting the list to the associate dean for official certification. The supervisory committee is made up of at least five members. Three tenured or tenure-track faculty members are drawn from the student's major field, as well as one tenured or tenure-track faculty member from each minor field. The chair of the supervisory committee shall be a resident tenured or tenure-track member of the school faculty and shall normally be the dissertation director and a member of the student's department. A minimum of three members must be resident tenured or tenure-track faculty of Southern Methodist University.

Retired/Emeritus Faculty on Dissertation Committees

Meadows and Simmons sections of the Graduate Catalog include no regulations regarding dissertation committee membership.

From the Moody School of Graduate and Advanced Studies section of the Graduate Catalog:

Dissertation Committee Membership

All Ph.D. programs require that the candidate write a dissertation embodying the results of a significant and original investigation. The dissertation is expected to be a mature and competent piece of writing and must make a significant and novel contribution to the student's discipline. In addition, all dissertations must be approved by a committee whose membership has been approved by the student's program and school. The dissertation committee is composed of experts qualified to judge the validity of the student's research and its contribution to the field. In most cases, the majority of the committee will be full-time tenured or tenure-track faculty in the student's program. Students are also often encouraged, and in some cases required by their program, to include an external member unaffiliated with their program on the dissertation committee. Students are advised to consult with their schools and programs for additional regulations with regards to the formation of the dissertation committee.

Retired/Emeritus Faculty on Dissertation Committees

Questions:

- If a faculty member in good standing leaves their tenure-track position, either through retirement or to accept a position at another institution, before a Ph.D. student they are advising defends the dissertation, should the faculty member be able to continue serving as dissertation committee chair? Co-chair? Regular committee member?
- Should there be additional standards for dissertation committee membership across the University?

Graduate Student Teaching Awards

Original Call for Nominations:

Sponsored by the Moody School of Graduate and Advanced Studies and the Office of Student Academic Engagement and Success, **Outstanding Graduate Student Instruction Awards** recognize exemplary contributions to the teaching of SMU undergraduates by graduate student instructors and teaching assistants. Two awards, each including a \$1,000 prize, will be made annually. In selecting awardees, the committee will take into account that teaching responsibilities and experiences vary widely from program to program.

Departments and programs not housed in a specific department may each nominate one graduate student. Nominations should be submitted by the department chair or graduate and should include:

- One letter of nomination from the department chair, graduate program director, or other faculty member with knowledge of the graduate student's teaching accomplishments (please include faculty members' impressions drawn from their observations of the nominee's teaching, if available)
- The nominee's CV
- The nominee's teaching evaluations for all classes taught at SMU
- A brief statement (no more than 1,000 words) by the nominee about their teaching experience

Graduate Student Teaching Awards

Three questions that were raised at the Dec. 10 Ph.D. Program Representative meeting:

1. Should the application deadline be postponed to accommodate students who only teach in their final years? **Yes**, we already pushed the application deadline back to January.
2. Should eligibility be expanded to include graduate students who “teach” undergraduates by mentoring them in a lab while not serving as TAs or instructors? There were strong feelings on both sides of this question.
3. Should additional nomination materials be solicited or should the option be granted to provide additional materials that might support the application (e.g. a letter of support from an undergraduate who was taught by the graduate student)?

Other Items

