



Office of Research and Graduate Studies

**Minutes of the Graduate Council
November 13, 2019**

Members in Attendance:

Amy Freund, Kevin Hofeditz, Alan Itkin, Duncan MacFarlane, Renee McDonald, Anthony Petrosino, James E. Quick, Dinesh Rajan, Johannes Tausch, Paul Yovanoff
Ex officio members: Heather Shaw

Business:

- **Introduction of new member:** Dr. Quick announced that Heather Shaw in Development and External Affairs would be joining the committee as an ex officio member. She will serve as a liaison to the Office of Development and External Affairs as the committee considers issues that will impact the use of funds from the recent Moody Foundation commitment to create the Moody School of Graduate and Advanced Studies. Ms. Shaw was one of the leaders of the development team that worked with the Moody Foundation to craft the commitment, and she brings a unique understanding of the goals and expectations of the Moody Foundation in making it. Dr. Quick recognized Renee McDonald for her contributions on the Graduate School Task Force that developed the proposal that ultimately led to the Moody Foundation commitment. Dr. Quick also recognized Alan Itkin and his predecessor as Assistant Dean of Graduate Studies, Reva Pollack, for their contributions to the effort to create a graduate school at SMU.
- **Approval of the summary of the November 5th meeting:** Dr. Quick asked the Graduate Council to vote on approval of the summary of the November 5th meeting. Council members asked if they could have more time to review the summary. Dr. Quick asked the Council members to review the summary, send comments or corrections to himself or Dr. Itkin, and to be prepared to vote on approval of the summary at the next meeting. Dr. MacFarlane asked if, going forward, meeting minutes could be taken rather than a summary of meeting proceedings. Dr. Quick agreed to this.
- **Discussion of Moody Foundation Commitment:** Dr. Quick described the Moody Foundation commitment and answered questions about it. The total amount of the commitment is \$100 million, and some areas of funding have been identified. They are available on the Moody School website: www.smu.edu/moody. The amounts of funding that will be dedicated to each area, though, have not yet been finalized. The commitment will truly transform SMU. The commitment includes funding for a new building, across Airline Rd. from Harold Clark Simmons Hall. There is funding for an endowed Deanship as well as discretionary resources for the Dean that will allow the Moody School to add staff and move through the four phases of the plan to create a graduate school laid out in the Task Force Report. There is funding for full-ride fellowships for Ph.D. students that will provide full stipend at a competitive rate, not just top-ups to departmental stipends. There is funding for faculty fellowships that will attract new faculty and reward faculty members who have been outstanding mentors. There will be funding for a research incubator that will attract nationally



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and internationally renowned scholars to conduct high-impact, cutting edge research at SMU. Other funding will stimulate interdisciplinary work across the university and support high-impact projects.

Council members asked what the stipend level would be for full-ride graduate fellowships. Dr. Quick stated that it would be about \$30,000 per year, but that the goal is to be nationally competitive. Council members discussed funds for graduate students to travel for conferences and agreed that this form of funding is very important to Ph.D. students' research and professional development. Dr. Itkin mentioned that the Office of Research and Graduate Studies increased the maximum dollar amount provided by graduate student travel grants from \$500 to \$750, and that students with a fellowship from the office can apply for one of these grants twice a year. This policy will presumably continue as the graduate office becomes the new Moody School.

- **Proposed administrative functions of the Moody School of Graduate and Advanced Studies:** Dr. Itkin presented a proposal for how the Moody School of Graduate and Advanced Studies would begin to perform administrative functions for Ph.D. students in all schools. These administrative functions include: final review of Ph.D. applications and release of offer letters; review of registration forms and approval of candidacy; review of leave requests; review of timeline extensions for advancement to candidacy and graduation; dissertation formatting guidance and checks; approval of graduation and collection of graduation surveys; awarding and disbursing dissertation completion fellowships; working with ISSS to process international student and postdoc paperwork. The Office of Research and Graduate Studies currently performs these functions for Dedman College Ph.D. students, but not for Ph.D. students in other schools. See slides 6-13 in the attached PowerPoint presentation for more information.

The council's discussion of this proposal focused on the Moody School's role in reviewing Ph.D. applications. Dr. Quick and Dr. Itkin stressed that in the majority of cases, the final review would proceed quickly and without issue. In cases where university requirements are not met or where there are missing materials, the Assistant Dean of the Moody School would work with the appropriate school associate dean and department chair or director of graduate studies to fill in missing information or correct the issue. In almost all cases, the Moody School would defer to the decision of the department and school on the application.

Dr. MacFarlane raised two issues with the proposed role of the Moody School with regards to final review of Ph.D. applications: 1) if the assistant dean performing the review is not qualified to perform the review or is not reliable, the review may not be done in a timely or appropriate manner, 2) having one person designated as the reviewer for the school represents a "single point of failure": If the assistant dean is unable to perform their duties for any reason, this may lead to delays in the admission of qualified applicants. Dr. MacFarlane suggested an alternate: a group of associate deans with faculty appointments could perform the final review for applications in their field or related fields.

Dr. Quick agreed that the issue of a "single point of failure" in review of applications was an important one. He suggested that the staff member in the Moody School who is responsible for



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final review of applications could be designated and supervised by the dean. That would offer flexibility in case the assistant dean is unable to perform that duty. Dr. Quick asked Dr. MacFarlane to write an alternative proposal for the final review of applications. Dr. MacFarlane will present his proposal at the next Graduate Council meeting, and the Council will vote on which proposal to adopt.

There was also significant discussion around the proposal presented by Dr. Itkin for the Moody School's role in the review of timeline extensions for advancement to candidacy and graduation. Dr. Rajan raised the issue that there are part-time Ph.D. students for whom the timelines in the catalog are not appropriate. The Council suggested that a flag could be added to Ph.D. students' records in my.smu indicating that they are pursuing their studies part time. Dr. Itkin stated that the catalog policies make allowances for part-time students. The Graduate Catalog states that timelines may be modified for part-time students as appropriate. He suggested that the Council could develop more robust policies for part-time students to be added to the catalog.

One change was recommended by the Council to the proposed policy presented by Dr. Itkin for the Moody School's role in review of dissertation formatting: Both the Lyle School and the Meadows School will continue to review dissertation formatting for their students, as they have staff who perform this function and who are versed in the particular demands of the fields their schools represent.

- Meeting adjourned.



SMU

Graduate Council Meeting

November 13, 2019, 9:30-11:00am

Perkins Administration Building 311



November 13, 2019, 9:30-11:00am, Perkins Administration Building 311

1. Introduction of new member
2. Approval of the summary of the November 5 meeting
3. Discussion of Moody Foundation commitment
4. Proposed administrative functions of the Moody School of Graduate and Advanced Studies with regards to Ph.D. students
5. Postdoctoral appointments
6. Other items



Moody Foundation Commitment



- **Moody Hall**, a new facility, will be home to the Moody School, spurring faculty and student interaction for significant, interdisciplinary research.
- **Moody Endowed Deanship** funding will provide the dean of the School with discretionary resources available for staff positions, programming and highest priority needs.
- **Moody Endowed Graduate Fellowship Fund** will position SMU with other elite universities to attract and support the best and brightest students. These students will supercharge our faculty research, enrich the University's intellectual environment and serve as SMU ambassadors when they earn positions at other institutions.
- **Moody Endowed Ph.D. Dissertation Fellowships** will provide the support necessary to enable timely completion of Ph.D. dissertations.
- **Moody Endowed Faculty Fellowships** will support outstanding faculty, including visiting faculty, and increase their capacity to mentor graduate students and conduct research.
- **Moody Research Incubator** funding will attract nationally and internationally renowned scholars to SMU to conduct high-impact, cutting-edge research.
- **Moody Academic Initiatives** funding will stimulate interdisciplinary work across the University and support high-impact projects, including capital projects and research initiatives.



Administrative Functions of Moody School



Proposal

Final review of Ph.D. applications and release of offer letters

- Once review is completed at the school level, the application file will pass to the Moody School of Graduate and Advanced Studies in Slate. *The Moody School will guarantee review within two business days.* If the application meets university and school standards as laid out in the catalog, or if review forms contain a reasonable explanation of why an exception to these standards is warranted, the application will be approved and the acceptance letter will be released.
- In the few cases where there are questions, the Assistant Dean of the Moody School will reach out to the appropriate Associate Dean in the school. Once questions are resolved, the application will be approved and the acceptance letter will be released right away.
- Acceptance letters will have two signatures: One from the School Dean (or designate) and one from the Dean of the Moody School of Graduate and Advanced Studies.



Review of registrar forms, approval of candidacy

- Late add/drop and other Registrar forms that require a “school signature” will be forwarded by departments to the School Dean’s Office for review and signature and then to the Moody School. The Assistant Dean of the Moody School will sign the form and forward it to the Registrar for processing.
- Candidacy forms, signed by the Director of Graduate Studies or Department Chair, will be forwarded to the Moody School, so that the Moody School can add milestones to the student’s transcript. This will allow support accurate tracking of candidacy for data purposes, recognition at candidacy reception, and tracking of progress to degree. Tracking progress to degree will allow the Moody School to alert departments/programs when students are close to limits prescribed in the catalog so a timeline extension may be considered.



Review of leave requests

- Leave requests will be forwarded by the department/program to the Moody School for approval so that the Moody School can work with the Registrar to have the leave noted in the student's record. Students will be asked to discuss the leave with their DGS or Department Chair. The DGS or Department Chair will sign the leave request form to indicate that they have discussed the request with the student. A record of the leave will be provided to the appropriate School Associate Dean.
- Having the Moody School review these requests will allow for accurate tracking of eligibility for Ph.D. Health Insurance and other financial support provided by the Moody School that is dependent on students' time in the program.



Review of timeline extensions for advancement to candidacy and graduation

- When a student is nearing the limit set in the catalog for advancement to candidacy or graduation after advancing to candidacy, the department/program will forward a petition for an extension (generally a one-year extension) to the timeline to the Moody School along with a letter of support from the DGS or Department Chair. The Moody School will approve extension requests and share a record of the approval with the program/department and the school.



Dissertation formatting guidance and checks

- Lyle will continue to check formatting for their student's dissertations and provide guidance to students on formatting issues. The Moody School will review formatting for Art History Ph.D. and Education Ph.D. students' dissertations using the same standards currently used for Dedman Ph.D. students.

Approval of graduation, collection of graduation surveys

- The Moody School will be responsible for collecting Survey of Earned Doctorates information. The Moody School will coordinate with departments and the Registrar's office on final graduation lists for Ph.D. students.
- Coordinating the graduate list will assist the Moody School in recognizing doctoral graduates at the graduation dinner or at a hooding ceremony to be instituted in the future. Collecting Survey of Earned Doctorates information will allow for accurate tracking of graduation statistics and accurate, uniform responses to Survey of Earned Doctorates requests for information.



Awarding and disbursing dissertation completion fellowships

- Ph.D. students in Lyle, Simmons, and Meadows will now be eligible for these awards. The award budget will be increased to allow for a larger target number of awards each year to accommodate additional students from these schools. Typically, about 10 awards have been made per year. This number should increase to about 14 awards per year.

Working with ISSS to process international student and postdoc paperwork

- The Moody School will primarily play an advocacy role on behalf of international graduate students and the programs that enroll them. Schools and departments will continue to work with ISSS on this process. The Assistant Dean of the Moody School may be included in communications and asked to provide support for departments and schools in working on time-sensitive issues involving international student paperwork.



How Taking On Administrative Functions Supports the Goals of the University

- “The Task Force was in complete agreement that the role of a graduate school should be focused on facilitating program success and efficiency, ensuring financial support, and providing oversight of University standards for graduate education, but should not reduce or subsume important faculty responsibilities in creating graduate programs and curriculum, and in recruiting, admitting, mentoring, and graduating outstanding students” (Graduate School Task Force Report).
- Monitoring student progress and providing final approval of admissions decisions allows a graduate school to “facilitate program success and efficiency” and to “provide oversight of University standards.”
- We expect to see continued improvement in key metrics of student success: completion rates, time-to-degree, career outcomes, etc.



Aspirational Peer Universities

- University of Notre Dame
 - Reviews admissions decisions
 - Performs most proposed administrative functions for graduate students
 - Policies and Forms page: <https://graduateschool.nd.edu/policies-forms/>
- Vanderbilt University
 - Reviews admissions decisions
 - Performs most proposed administrative functions for graduate students
 - Academic Forms page: https://gradschool.vanderbilt.edu/academics/forms_timeline.php



Proposed Administrative Functions of the Moody School of Graduate and Advanced Studies with Respect to Ph.D. Students

Table 1. Responsibilities of Graduate Schools at SMU Aspirational Peer and Colonial Group Institutions.

School	Admissions Decision Oversight	Tuition Waiver	Stipend Funding	Special Fellowships	Best Practices and Policy Baselines	Student Life and Professional Development
Boston College	✓	N/A	✓	✓	✓	✓
Boston University	✓	N/A	GS or Department	✓	✓	✓
Brandeis University	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Emory University	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
New York University				✓	✓	
University of Notre Dame	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
Syracuse University	X	X	X	✓	✓	✓
Tufts University	✓	✓	✓ (TA not RA)	✓	✓	✓
University of Miami	X	GS or Department	GS or Department	✓	✓	✓
USC	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Vanderbilt University	✓		X	✓		✓
Wake Forest University	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

From the Graduate School Task Force Report



Graduate School Implementation Plan in Task Force Report, Stages One and Two

- Stage One: Launch of a Graduate School in the Fall Semester, 2019, with initial focus on Ph.D. programs, as this element of graduate education has the greatest potential to contribute to the Strategic Plan and improve SMU's stature in higher education. Responsibilities for Dedman Masters programs currently handled by the Office of Research and Graduate Studies will also be within the purview of the Graduate School at this stage.
- Stage Two: Expand the Graduate School purview to include other terminal degrees – the Doctor of Engineering, Master's of Fine Arts, and Doctor of Education. The Graduate School would also take on the responsibility of overseeing all university post-doctoral scholars. Stage two would include adding positions of a Director/Assistant Director of Postdoctoral Fellows, and a Director/Assistant Director of Career and Professional Development.



Graduate School Implementation Plan in Task Force Report, Stages Three and Four

- Stage Three: Include Lyle School master's degrees within the purview of the Graduate School. To accommodate this significant expansion in responsibility, stage three would include adding the positions of an Enrollment Services Manager and a Graduate School Coordinator within the Graduate School.
- Stage Four: Include the remaining master's degrees in the Meadows and Simmons Schools, including the Liberal Studies program. Stage four would include adding positions of a Recruitment/Admissions Coordinator and an Assistant



Current Responsibilities of Graduate Studies for All Ph.D. Students

- New student orientation (also includes master's students in Dedman and Lyle)
- Candidacy reception and certificates (also includes DE students in Lyle)
- Fall graduation luncheon and spring graduation dinner (includes other doctorates)
- Student life and professional development events (all graduate students)
- University Ph.D. and Mustang Fellowships



Current Responsibilities of Graduate Studies for Dedman Graduate Students

- Final review of Ph.D. applications and release of offer letter signed by Dean Quick
- Review of Registrar forms (late drop/add, etc.) and coordination with Registrar
- Approval of advancement to candidacy form
- Review of leave requests
- Review of timeline extensions (advancement to candidacy, degree completion, etc.)
- Dissertation formatting guidance and checks
- Approval of graduation
- Collection of graduation surveys
- Dean's Dissertation Completion Fellowships



Postdoctoral Appointments



Topics Germane to Improving SMU's Postdoc Processes and Policies

- Onboarding of postdoctoral scholars
- Timeline for hiring postdocs– can PI's advertise positions before the grant is officially awarded?
- Advertising positions: who should approve this?
- Teaching: how are credentials vetted?
- Teaching: what limit is there on teaching load?
- Proper coding of positions as postdoctoral scholar, research associate, etc.
- Processes to deal with performance issues
- Length of appointments
- Salaries: minimum and range
- Others?



AAU Recommended Definition of a Postdoc

Postdoctoral appointees may be appointed by and affiliated with a department or other academic unit, center or institute authorized to make non-faculty research appointments. These appointees and appointments have the following attributes:

- The appointee was recently awarded a Ph.D. or equivalent doctorate (e.g. Sc.D., M.D.) in an appropriate field; and
- The appointment is temporary; and
- The appointment involves full-time research or scholarship; and
- The appointment is viewed as preparatory for a full-time academic or research career; and
- The appointment is not part of a clinical training program; and
- The appointee works under the supervision of a faculty member or a senior scholar; and
- The appointee has the freedom, and is expected, to publish the results of his or her research or scholarship, which were obtained during the period of the appointment. Postdoctoral appointments are distinct from those of students, staff, or faculty.



Vanderbilt University

- Postdoctoral Scholars are classified as their own type of employee, and have a set of benefits that is similar to but distinct from faculty and staff benefits.
- Postdoctoral Trainees (those funded on a federal training grant) have access to a health insurance plan through the same provider as for the graduate student health insurance plan; the department is billed for individual premiums for this plan.
- There are also distinct leave policies, including paid leave, parental leave, etc. Paid leave is reviewed and approved by the PI.
- Postdoctoral appointments are approved by the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs under the Dean of the Graduate School (PI recommends to Chair who recommends to School Dean's Office who recommend to OPA; appointment letter is signed by Dean of the Graduate School).
- Five year time limit on postdoctoral appointments. Reappointments on a yearly basis.
- Set a minimum salary of ~\$50k.
- Benefits website: <https://gradschool.vanderbilt.edu/postdoctoral/postdoctoral-scholars/index.php>



Notre Dame University

- Postdoctoral Scholars are classified as their own type of employee and have a set of benefits that is similar to but distinct from staff benefits.
- Dean of the Graduate School ultimately approves postdoctoral appointment (requests are sent by the department to the Office for Postdoctoral Scholars).
- Five year appointment limit at Notre Dame (six years including other institutions). Reappointments on a yearly basis.
- Postdoctoral scholars website: <https://postdocs.nd.edu/policies-procedures-guidelines/>
- Postdoctoral Scholars policy: https://postdocs.nd.edu/assets/132349/policy_for_postdoctoral_appointments_2014.pdf



Boston University

- Postdoctoral scholars who are employees are eligible for employee benefits.
- Non-employee postdocs (i.e. those on training grants and fellowships) have special health benefits.
- Five year limit on postdoctoral appointments (covers all appointments, if postdoc has multiple appointments at same university).
- Set a minimum salary of \$50,004.
- Office of Professional Development and Postdoctoral Affairs:
<https://www.bu.edu/postdocs/our-team/>
- Postdoctoral Scholars policy: <http://www.bu.edu/policies/postdoctoral-scholars/>



USC

- “All postdoctoral scholars will receive the same benefits package regardless of whether they are employed on a principal investigator’s grant, paid from a department account, or are recipients of an externally funded fellowship. The postdoctoral scholar benefits package is designed to closely match the benefits offered to faculty and staff and includes health, dental, vision, life, accidental death and dismemberment, short-term and long-term disability insurance plans.”
- Minimum salary set at \$50,004.
- School Deans appoint upon the recommendation of the department.
- Office of Postdoctoral Affairs website: <https://postdocs.usc.edu/>
- Postdoctoral Scholars Policy: <https://policy.usc.edu/postdoctoral-scholars/>



Postdocs at SMU

- In 2019, we reported 25 postdocs to NSF
- No standardized, formal postdoctoral appointment/reappointment process
- No tracking of postdoc success
- No services or resources specifically for postdocs
- No minimum salary
- No limit on reappointments
- Postdocs are classed as staff, receive staff benefits minus benefits assumed to be long-term



Possible Postdoctoral Scholar Policies

- Create a separate class of employee for postdocs– not faculty, not staff, not students– with specific benefit package
- Create a formal appointment and yearly reappointment process
- Include completion of Individual Development Plan with mentor in reappointment process (for example, through MyIDP: <https://myidp.sciencecareers.org/>)
- Limit postdoctoral appointments to five years at SMU
- In stage two of graduate school implementation hire a Director of Postdoctoral Affairs to provide services/resources to postdocs and oversee appointment/reappointment process

