



Office of Research and Graduate Studies

**Minutes of the Graduate Council
March 4, 2020**

Members in Attendance:

Amy Freund (left early), Alan Itkin, Duncan MacFarlane, Renee McDonald, Daniel Millimet, Anthony Petrosino, James E. Quick, Dinesh Rajan, Paul Yovanoff

Ex officio members: Suku Nair (left early), Heather Shaw

Members Not in Attendance:

Kevin Hofeditz, Mark Chancey, Johannes Tausch

Business:

- **Approval of the minutes of the February 13 meeting:** Given that some of the members were absent, the Council discussed what constitutes a quorum for the Council. No resolution was reached, but the Council agreed to discuss this further at a future meeting and vote on it then. The Council agreed that no votes would be held at the present meeting. Instead, proposals presented to those in attendance would be revised with their input and then presented to the whole Council by email for a vote after the meeting.
- **Proposed administrative functions of the Moody School of Graduate and Advanced Studies:** The Council discussed the administrative role of the Moody School for current Ph.D. students (excluding its role in the admissions process; discussion of that item was concluded at the previous meeting). The discussion addressed the role of the Moody School in: review of Registrar forms, approval of candidacy, review of leave requests, review of timeline extensions for advancement to candidacy and graduation, dissertation guidance and checks, approval of graduation and collection of graduation surveys, awarding and disbursing dissertation completion fellowships, and working with ISSS to process international student and postdoc paperwork (see slides 8-13 in the accompanying PowerPoint).

Regarding dissertation guidance and checks, the Council agreed that the Moody School would perform formatting checks for Dedman and Simmons School Ph.D. programs starting in Fall 2020, but would not do so for Lyle or Meadows, because those schools have specific formatting requirements and review procedures tailored to the disciplines they represent. Regarding review of Registrar forms, the Council agreed that it was redundant and could slow administrative processes down to have two dean's offices provide approval. If the Council agrees that the Moody School should provide approval on these forms, then the Moody School should be the only dean's office to sign off. Regarding timelines for graduation, the Council agreed that clearer policies were needed in future for Ph.D. students who attend part time. The Graduate Council also discussed administrative approvals for new graduate programs and significant changes to graduate programs, included



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changing program CIP codes. Dr. Quick explained that, although the Graduate Council may be involved in these sorts of curriculum approvals in future years, for the foreseeable future the Educational Programs Committee would continue to perform this function for undergraduate and graduate programs.

- **University Ph.D. and Mustang Fellowship final ranking approval:** Dr. Itkin shared the ranking of nominees for these fellowships with the Council and explained how the rankings were produced. Accepted applicants to Ph.D. programs were nominated for these fellowships by their prospective departments. A committee consisting of those members of the Graduate Council who do not have administrative (dean) appointments provided individual ratings of the nominations using a rubric provided by the Office of Research and Graduate Studies and then met to review their evaluations and rank the nominees. Since Dr. Tausch was unable to attend the meeting, Dr. Zhong Lu, Professor of Earth Sciences, represented the Dedman College natural science departments at the nomination review meeting. Dr. Itkin explained that, using projections based on yields in previous years, there was enough funding to offer between 20-30 University Ph.D. Fellowships. The remaining nominees ranked in the top 30 would be waitlisted. For the Mustang Fellowship, five nominees would be offered the fellowship and two additional nominees waitlisted. The full Graduate Council was asked to review the ranking of nominees and to voice any objections. All present agreed that the rankings shared should be used as the basis for fellowship offers. Dr. Quick also mentioned that he planned to work to establish a task force to evaluate the issue of teaching assistant compensation, since this is an issue that has been raised by a number of faculty members.
- **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 19-20). 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 21-26). Finally, he presented a proposal for a new responsible conduct of research training program at SMU (slide 27). The committee agreed that the proposal to develop individual seminars tailored to different disciplines and areas of study would take significant time and resources. Dr. McDonald suggested that the Maguire Center for Ethics and Public Responsibility could be a good partner for developing seminars. Dr. MacFarlane asked if the CITI online responsible conduct of research training was still widely used and recognized as valid by institutions. He recommended that the Council also consider making this online training mandatory for master's and Ph.D. students. Dr. Quick proposed that the Council consider the original proposal and an additional one to make the CITI online training mandatory for graduate students as two separate proposals.
- **Regular assessment of Ph.D. students' progress by their programs:** This item was tabled for the next meeting.



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- **Procedures for Selecting Graduate Council members in academic year 2020-21 and beyond:** This item was tabled for the next meeting, but Dean Quick emphasized the importance of this item for the Council's consideration.
- Meeting adjourned.

Addendum: Proposals voted on by email

The following proposals were revised with input from the Graduate Council members present at the March 4 meeting. They were presented to the Council for vote online with a deadline for voting of March 23.

- **Review of Registrar Forms for Ph.D. Students:** Late add/drop and other Registrar forms that require a "school signature" will be forwarded by departments to the Moody School. The Assistant Dean of the Moody School will sign the form and forward it to the Registrar for processing.

10 votes in favor, 0 against, 2 did not vote. **The motion is approved.**

- **Approval of Candidacy for Ph.D. Students:** 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 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.

9 votes in favor, 1 against, 2 did not vote. **The motion is approved.**

- **Review of Leave Requests for Ph.D. Students:** 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.

10 votes in favor, 0 against, 2 did not vote. **The motion is approved.**

- **Review of Timeline Extensions for Advancement to Candidacy and Graduation for Ph.D. Students:** When a student is nearing the limit set in the catalog for advancement to candidacy



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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.

10 votes in favor, 0 against, 2 did not vote. **The motion is approved.**

- **Awarding and Disbursing Ph.D. Dissertation Completion Fellowships:** Dissertating students in all Ph.D. programs will be eligible for these awards.

9 votes in favor, 1 against, 2 did not vote. **The motion is approved.**

- **Working with ISSS to Process International Graduate 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.

10 votes in favor, 0 against, 2 did not vote. **The motion is approved.**

- **Dissertation Formatting Guidance and Checks for Ph.D. Students:** Lyle and Meadows 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 Education Ph.D. students' dissertations using the same standards currently used for Dedman Ph.D. students. The current Graduate Studies formatting guides will be revised to reflect the fact that they are used by all Ph.D. programs except for those in the Lyle School of Engineering.

9 votes in favor, 1 against, 2 did not vote. **The motion is approved.**

- **Approval of Graduation and Collection of Graduation Surveys for Ph.D. Students:** 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.

10 votes in favor, 0 against, 2 did not vote. **The motion is approved.**



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- **Responsible Conduct of Research Training for Graduate Students and Postdocs:** All Ph.D. students and postdocs will be required to do 8 hours of in-person training in their first year. Ph.D. students and postdocs will do a four-hour core course (led by ORGS) plus two two-hour faculty-led electives spread across their first year. Master's students funded on federal grants will be required to do the same as above. Other master's students in programs that require theses will be required to complete CITI online responsible conduct of research training in their first year. The Moody School will recruit and compensate faculty in different disciplines to develop electives relevant to research in their disciplines. Responsible Conduct of Research Training will be added as a 0-credit hour course on students' transcripts for those who have completed the in-person training.

After online discussion, this item is tabled until the next meeting.

- **Additional Responsible Conduct of Research Training 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.

After online discussion, this item is tabled until the next meeting.

Graduate Council Meeting

March 4, 2020, 1:00-2:50pm

Annette Caldwell Simmons Hall 208

World Changers
Shaped Here



SMU



March 4, 2020, 1:00-2:50pm, Annette Caldwell Simmons Hall 208

- Approval of the minutes of the February 13 meeting
- Proposed administrative functions of the Moody School of Graduate and Advanced Studies with regards to Ph.D. students after admission
- Ph.D. and Mustang Fellowship final rankings approval
- Final transcript deadlines for matriculating graduate students
- Responsible conduct of research training
- Regular assessment of Ph.D. students' progress by their programs
- Procedures for selecting Graduate Council members in academic year 2020-21 and beyond
- Other items



Approved at February 13 Meeting



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

- ~~Once review is completed at the school level, the application file of an applicant selected for admission will pass to the Moody School of Graduate and Advanced Studies in Slate (applicants whom a program has chosen to deny will continue to be processed as before: the denial decision will be released to the applicant without review by the Moody School). The Moody School's goal will be to complete review of all application files within two business days; the Moody School will guarantee review of application files within five business days. ~~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.~~
- Final review of applications and approval of applicants for admission are the responsibility of the Dean of the Moody School.
- In the few cases where there are questions, the Moody School Dean or their designate 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.
- In the case of disagreement on the final admission decision between the ~~academic school~~ Dean of the school that houses the program to which the applicant applied and the Moody School Dean, the Graduate Council will make the final decision.
- 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.
- The purpose of the Moody School's review will be to maintain university admission standards and, where exceptions to those standards are requested, to ensure that admitted applicants show promise for success in their academic programs. --



Whereas postdoctoral scholars play an important role in academic research, performing essential tasks in support of **research at SMU** while acquiring the expertise necessary to lead their own research projects and begin a faculty career; and

Whereas **postdoctoral scholars are often hired to support a specific research project at SMU, and** candidates qualified to support **such a research project** are often limited to a very few recent doctoral graduates who studied under close colleagues of **an SMU** faculty researcher at other universities; and

Whereas postdoctoral appointments are **time-limited** and not permanent positions; and

Whereas postdoctoral salaries are often paid out of grant monies that a funding agency has verified will be available for this purpose but which are not in hand prior to the initial postdoctoral hire date; and

Whereas time is often of the essence in postdoctoral hiring, because candidates may have offers from several faculty researchers at different universities; and

Whereas some postdoctoral scholars have teaching responsibilities that provide them with valuable experience for a faculty career in their field; therefore let it be

Resolved that the Graduate Council of SMU recommends the finalization of a university policy regarding postdoctoral appointments so that:



- a) Offers for postdoctoral positions can be initiated and made by a dean of any school, provided that funding is either in hand or the anticipated availability of funding for this purpose has been confirmed by the Office of Research; and
- b) An individual shall serve as a postdoctoral scholar at SMU for no more than five years in total; and
- c) Postdoctoral appointments shall be for no more than a one-year term, with the possibility of reappointment at the dean and faculty mentor's discretion at the end of each term up to the five-year limit; and
- d) Offers for postdoctoral positions made before verified funding is in hand will be made contingent upon the availability of funds; and
- e) Before making an offer for a postdoctoral position funded by a grant or other external source and before reappointing a postdoctoral scholar funded in this way, the dean will consult with the Office of Research to verify the anticipated availability of funds for this purpose; and
- f) Offers can be made prior to and contingent upon the results of a background check conducted by the Office of Human Resources and credential verification performed by the school dean's office; and
- g) Postdoctoral scholars will be appointed with the title "Postdoctoral Research Scholar," if teaching is not part of the prescribed duties of their appointment; and
- h) Postdoctoral scholars will be appointed with the title "Postdoctoral Research and Teaching Scholar," if teaching is part of the prescribed duties of their appointment.



Administrative Functions of Moody School



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 **and Meadows** 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.



Fellowship Ranking Final Approval



- Thank you to the committee for carefully reviewing and ranking the nominations!
- Spreadsheets are available in Box.
- Those ranked “1” are in the definite fund category.
- University Ph.D. Fellowship nominees ranked 20-30 may be offered a fellowship right away or may be waitlisted.
- Mustang Fellowship nominees ranked 6-7 will be waitlisted.
- Offers will not be made to University Ph.D. Fellowship nominees past 30.
- Offers will not be made to Mustang Fellowship nominees past 7.



Final Transcript Deadlines for Matriculating Students



Proposal:

- The following policy will be adopted for graduate admissions:
- Students matriculating in the fall term will be able to enroll in fall classes without having submitted final official transcripts for previous degree-granting institutions; they will, however, have to submit unofficial transcripts and verification of degree conferral for previous degrees
- If final official transcripts for a student matriculating in the fall term have not been received by **September 15**, a hold will be placed on the student's registration for the spring term
- The spring term registration hold will only be lifted once final official transcripts have been received



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



Regular Assessment of Ph.D. Student Progress

Presentation by Dr. Renee McDonald



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



Graduate Council Composition and Selection

