SMU

Office of Research and Graduate Studies

Minutes of the Graduate Council
February 13, 2020

Members in Attendance:

Amy Freund, Kevin Hofeditz, Alan Itkin, Renee McDonald, Daniel Millimet (left early), Anthony Petrosino, James E. Quick, Dinesh Rajan, Paul Yovanoff
Ex officio members: Suku Nair, Heather Shaw

Members Not in Attendance:

Mark Chancey, Duncan MacFarlane, Johannes Tausch

Business:

- **Announcement from Provost ad interim Peter Moore:** Dr. Moore announced that James E. Quick would be the Inaugural Dean of the Moody School of Graduate and Advanced Studies and that Dr. Quick would retain his position as Associate Provost for Research for at least the coming academic year. Dr. Quick explained that the goal is still to split the Associate Provost for Research and Moody School Dean positions into two separate positions in the future. Having Dr. Quick occupy both positions for now, though, will allow the Moody School to spend funds from the Moody Foundation gift on fellowships and other priorities in the first year. Dr. Moore also explained that the Moody School is meant to provide oversight of graduate programs across SMU, and that this is in line with the Graduate School Task Force Report, whose recommendations the gift was intended by the Moody Foundation to realize. Dr. Moore departed at the conclusion of the discussion of this item.

- **Approval of the minutes of the December 12 meeting:** A motion was made to approve the minutes of the December 12 Graduate Council meeting. The motion was seconded and approved by all present members of the Graduate Council.

- **Proposed administrative functions of the Moody School of Graduate and Advanced Studies:** Dr. Quick emphasized that, although the Moody School will provide oversight, it is meant to function collaboratively with other schools and units to ensure the success of graduate students and programs. The Moody School will be tasked with maintaining consistent standards and providing data that allow for improvements in graduate education at SMU. The goal is not to impose inappropriate uniformity, since programs and disciplines vary widely, and the Graduate Council will assist in ensuring that the oversight is designed to be appropriate and flexible.

  Dr. Itkin presented a chart (see accompanying PowerPoint slide 4) comparing the role of the graduate school in admissions processes for Ph.D. applicants at peer and aspirational peer institutions. As Dr. Itkin explained, at almost all of these institutions, the graduate school does the final review of applications recommended by their programs for admission and ensures that admitted applicants meet university standards. At some schools (e.g. Notre Dame and Wake Forest)

the graduate school plays a more active role in selecting Ph.D. applicants for admission, while at one school, NYU, the graduate school plays no role in the process. Dr. Itkin presented a revised proposal for the Moody School's role in the Ph.D. admissions process (PowerPoint slide 5). The Graduate Council discussed the timeframe for the Moody School's review of applications: The proposal provided the Moody School two business days to complete their review of applications. The Council members felt, after discussion, that this should be revised to maintain a goal of review within two business days but to allow for a maximum of five business days for review. The Council members also discussed the provision in the revised proposal for the Graduate Council to make the final decision on an applicant when the home school Dean and the Moody School Dean are not in agreement about whether the applicant should be admitted. The Graduate Council agreed that this was a good way to prevent a future Dean from exercising too much control over what is intended to be a faculty-driven process. A motion was made to approve the proposal for the Moody School's role in Ph.D. admissions. The motion was seconded and approved by all present members of the Graduate Council.

The Graduate Council discussed the other aspects of the proposal for the administrative functions of the Moody School with regards to Ph.D. students (PowerPoint slides 6-10). There were no major objections to these proposals, but the Council agreed to vote on them at the next meeting to allow all members time to review, provide final input, and vote.

- **Postdoctoral appointments:** Dr. Itkin presented the "Resolution to Finalize a Postdoctoral Scholar Appointment Policy" (slides 13-14), which had been shared with the Graduate Council before the meeting. The resolution was drafted by Council members Drs. Itkin, McDonald, Quick, and Rajan. It is intended to speed up the postdoctoral hiring process and to ensure that it responds to the different kind of work postdocs do at SMU. Dr. Nair shared concerns raised by the Faculty Senate Committee on Research and Graduate Education, which he chairs, about the proposal—in particular, that the statement that "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" was confusing. Dr. Itkin shared some comments from Mark Chancey, not present at the meeting, expressing concern that the current proposal did not adequately account for the differences in postdoctoral positions in the humanities. The Council agreed to change the language of the proposal to make it more inclusive of postdoctoral positions in the humanities, to make it clear that postdoctoral positions are "time-limited" rather than "temporary" positions in the usual sense, and to improve clarity more generally. A motion was made to approve the resolution with the agreed upon changes. The motion was seconded and approved by all present members of the Graduate Council.

- **Final transcript deadlines for matriculating graduate students:** Dr. Itkin explained the issues that have arisen around this item: the fact that Dedman graduate students are not allowed to matriculate until final official transcripts are received slows down onboarding processes, including financial aid and health insurance enrollment. Council Members were asked to share how the requirement that matriculating graduate students submit final official transcripts is handled in their schools. Except in the Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences, graduate students matriculating

in the fall are permitted to enroll in fall classes but are not permitted to enroll for the spring until final official transcripts have been received. In the Meadows School of the Arts, matriculating students have a hold put on their spring enrollment if transcripts are not received by September 15. It was agreed that the Graduate Council would develop a general policy on final transcript deadlines for graduate students modeled on the one in the Meadows School of the Arts.

- **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 23-24). 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 25-30). Finally, he presented a proposal for a new responsible conduct of research training program at SMU (slide 31). Graduate Council members voiced no objections to the proposal, and they agreed that faculty involvement in responsible conduct of research training was an important goal. The Graduate Council decided to discuss this further and hold a vote on the proposal at the next meeting.

- **Other items:** The Graduate Council discussed what constitutes a quorum and agreed to decide on that in the future, with general agreement that 50% of the voting members of the Council + one additional member of the Council in attendance was a good norm to follow. Dr. McDonald proposed that Graduate Council meetings be extended to two hours, and the Graduate Council members were in favor of this change, schedules permitting. Dean Quick requested that Graduate Council members do an additional piece of "homework" before the next meeting: Graduate Council members should come to the next meeting prepared with their own thoughts and the thoughts of their colleagues on how the Graduate Council members should be selected in future and what the composition of the Graduate Council should be. Dr. Nair mentioned that the Faculty Senate Committee on Research and Graduate Education recommended a 50/50 mix of appointed and elected faculty members on the Council.

- Meeting adjourned.

Graduate Council Meeting

World Changers Shaped Here

SMU

February 13, 2020, 9:00-10:30am

Perkins Administration Building 311

February 13, 2020, 9:00-10:30am, Perkins Administration Building 311

1. Approval of the minutes of the December 12 meeting
2. Proposed administrative functions of the Moody School of Graduate and Advanced Studies with regards to Ph.D. students
3. Postdoctoral appointments
4. Final transcript deadlines for matriculating graduate students
5. Responsible conduct of research training
6. Other items

Administrative Functions of Moody School

Comparison of the Role of the Graduate School in Admissions Process at Peers/Aspirational Peers

Graduate school	Who performs the final review of graduate applications and releases the offer of admission?	Who evaluates the quality of applicants and recommends applicants for admission?	How is adherence to university admissions standards ensured?	What role does the graduate school play in graduate admissions?
Vanderbilt University Graduate School	The Graduate School	Department	The Graduate School reviews all applications before release of the offer of admission. If standards are not met, the department must petition the Graduate School Associate Dean.	Final review of applications and release of offers; ensures university standards.
University of Notre Dame Graduate School	The Graduate School	Department, although the Graduate School Associate Dean can overturn department decisions (very rare)	The Graduate School reviews all applications before release of the offer of admission. If standards are not met, the department must petition the Graduate School Associate Dean.	Final review of applications and release of offers; ensures university standards; can overturn departmental admissions decisions.
University of Southern California Graduate School	The Graduate Admissions Office	Department	The Graduate Admissions Office reviews all applications before release of the admission offer. If an exception is found, they flag it and send it back to the department so they can petition the Graduate School Dean, who makes the final decision.	Review of petitions in the case of exceptions to university admissions standards.
Wake Forest University Graduate School of Arts and Sciences	The Graduate School of Arts & Sciences	The Graduate School makes the final decision, but acts on recommendations from departments.	There are not hard and fast minimum scores or GPAs, but GSAS ensures the quality of applications by reviewing all applications and making the final decision on admissions.	Review of applications; review of petitions from department in case the application has questionable elements.
Brandeis University Graduate School of Arts & Sciences	The Graduate School of Arts & Sciences	Department	For TOEFL/IELTS, GSAS reviews before the department and denies applicants who don't meet standards. There are no minimum GRE scores. The Graduate School performs the final review to ensure that correct and valid materials are present.	Final review of applications; ensures university standards.
Boston University Graduate School of Arts & Sciences	The Graduate School of Arts & Sciences	Department	GSAS reviews applications before release of the offer of admission. If an applicant does not meet the TOEFL requirement, the department can request a waiver from GSAS. GSAS reviews the request and decides on the TOEFL waiver.	Final review of applications; ensures language exam criteria are met.
New York University Graduate School of Arts & Sciences	Department	Department	The department is tasked with ensuring this.	GSAS plays no formal role in admissions.

Notes:	Green=the graduate school plays an important role	Red=the department performs this function alone	Yellow=another entity performs this function or departments and the graduate school collaborate on this role

Proposal (revisions in red)

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.
- 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 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.

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.

Postdoctoral Appointments

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

Whereas candidates qualified to support a faculty researcher in this way are often limited to a very few recent doctoral graduates who studied under close colleagues of the faculty researcher at other universities; and

Whereas postdoctoral appointments are temporary 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.

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/

Final Transcript Deadlines for Matriculating Students

Summary and Questions

- Currently, for Dedman graduate students, final official transcripts from prior credit-granting institutions must be turned in before a student's record can be activated in my.smu.
- That means that students may not enroll in classes or receive financial aid until final official transcripts have been received and processed.
- In some cases, ORGS waives the requirement and puts a hold on spring enrollment for students who aren't able to have final official transcripts submitted before the beginning of the fall semester.
- How do other schools handle this?
- Should we change policies to allow students to register for fall (but not spring) without final official transcripts?

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