

The University of Akron
Minutes of Graduate Council
October 21, 2019

The Graduate Council met on Monday, October 21, 2019, in Student Union, Room 310. Dean Chand Midha presided. Present were Dr. Wondimu Ahmed, Ms. Heather Blake, Dr. John Goodell, Dr. Christine Graor, Dr. Gary Holliday, Dr. Sadhan Jana, Dr. Scott Palasik, Dr. Alex Povitsky, Dr. Jina Sang, Dr. Martha Santos, Associate Dean Marnie Saunders, Dr. Andrea Snell, and Ms. Amanda Stefin.

GC Members Absent with Notice: Dr. Amanda Booher, Dr. George Chase, Dr. Todd Gaffke, Dr. Francesco Renna, and Dr. Adam Smith

GC Members Absent: Dr. Travis Hreno

Call to Order

Dean Midha called the meeting to order at 9:10 a.m.

Roll Call

Heather Blake recorded the attendance of those present.

Remarks – Dean Midha

Dean Midha stated that in the absence of a quorum no motions or voting will occur. The meeting convened with discussion only.

Dean Midha said that President Miller has been visiting the colleges and has attended the Council of Deans meeting. Faculty Senate and University Council have addressed three-year action plans. Revisions to such are due by November 1. A committee will, then, be formed to develop a strategic plan. Summer 2020 is the target date to have a strategic plan in place. Dean Midha stated that President Miller has expressed his support of graduate education and research.

Ms. Stefin stated that President Miller had met with graduate students in polymer science and polymer engineering and students were able to ask questions about funding, program cuts, and the possibility to reverse some of the program changes of the last year. She mentioned that from the graduate student perspective, it was encouraging to have a conversation with president Miller.

Dean Midha stated that he recently attended the IUC Provosts Committee Meeting in Columbus at which the TechCred initiative was discussed. Tech Cred is a state-sponsored program in which employers are reimbursed by the state for technology credentials earned by their employees. Businesses in all industries identify universities and community colleges that will effectively meet the needs of their employees and apply for reimbursement for credentialing of employees. If the state approves the application the business will be reimbursed up to \$2,000 per credential. The employer pays the costs of tuition and books for employees.

Dr. Jana inquired whether TechCred is for both undergraduate and graduate students.

Dean Midha responded that it is up to the employer to decide. He stated that he provided this information on the Senate floor and wanted to make Graduate Council aware of it as well if they are not already. Matt Akers in the Office of the President has reached out to the college deans.

Committee Reports

Graduate Faculty Membership Committee – Dr. Holliday said that the committee reviewed and approved 20 applications for graduate faculty membership. Each applicant met the minimum criteria for the category for which he/she applied. In the absence of a quorum Dr. Holliday requested an email vote on these applications. Council members present supported voting electronically on the graduate faculty applications.

Dr. Holliday suggested that Graduate Council members go back to their departments and recommend revision of their graduate faculty membership criteria to include Categories I, II, and III.

Overlap Policy – Defining Exceptionally Well-Prepared Students

Associate Dean Saunders stated that ODHE has approved double-counting of up to nine graduate credit hours for accelerated undergraduate/graduate degree programs. Only exceptionally well-prepared students will be admitted to an accelerated degree program. As such, it is necessary to define exceptionally well-prepared.

Dr. Povitsky questioned if students who have already graduated are eligible.

Associate Dean Saunders responded that the program is for current students.

Dean Midha stated that graduate programs require a minimum of 30 distinctive credit hours.

Associate Dean Saunders said that undergraduate seniors are permitted to take up to 12 graduate credits and count them toward a graduate degree if they are not being counted toward the undergraduate degree.

Dr. Snell asked for clarification on the policy permitting undergraduate seniors to take 12 graduate credits and count toward a graduate program.

Dr. Jana asked if undergraduate seniors are permitted to take only 500-level courses, or are 600-level courses permitted as well?

Associate Dean Saunders replied that undergraduate seniors can take 500- or 600-level course and count them toward the undergraduate or graduate degree.

Dr. Graor inquired if there will be an application that students must complete for the accelerated degree program.

Associate Dean Saunders distributed a draft accelerated program application. She stated that students apply during their junior year and will be coded as undergraduates in their senior year so as not to disrupt their financial aid. Students apply to graduate school during their senior year.

Dr. Snell questioned at what point students are in this program. It is not very clear to students whether they are in the graduate program. There needs to be very clear guidelines, so that faculty members can have conversations with students about the program.

Dr. Graor suggested having a statement on the application that indicates admission is not guaranteed.

Dean Midha indicated that with the new policy undergraduate students will pay undergraduate tuition for the graduate courses they are taking as part of the accelerated program.

Dr. Santos mentioned that students in the Department of History's accelerated program have lost financial aid, so it is good to know that with this policy the coding by the Office of the Registrar has been ironed out.

Ms. Stefin suggested explaining what accelerated degree program means for students.

Dr. Santos indicated that in the Department of History the program is referred to as BA/MA, so students know they are earning more than one degree.

Dean Midha stated that it may be helpful how other institutions are referring to these programs. The state has approved students taking nine graduate credit hours and counting them toward both the bachelor's and master's degrees. These credits may be in more than one department.

Dr. Jana stated that the undergraduate program adviser and department chair need to be involved.

Associate Dean Saunders stated that students must apply to something, and students applying to an accelerated degree program must be exceptionally well-qualified.

Dean Midha requested members of Graduate Council assist in determining the appropriate grade point average for exceptionally well-prepared students.

Dr. Povitsky suggested a cumulative grade point average of 3.3.

Dr. Snell agreed a 3.3 is a good start as it gives departments an idea of what students to target, and the discipline can have a higher standard if they so choose.

Associate Dean Saunders stated that the recommendation of 3.3 cumulative grade point average will be circulated to the entire Graduate Council membership for an email vote.

Meeting adjourned at 10:05 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Martha Santos
Secretary