

**The University of Akron**  
**Minutes of Graduate Council**  
**February 27, 2017**

The Graduate Council met on Monday, February 27, 2017, in the Student Union, Room 310. Dean Chand Midha presided. Present were Dr. Philip Allen, Associate Dean Charles Beneke, Heather Blake, Dr. Marcus Braga-Alves, Karen Caldwell, Dr. Gary Holliday, Dr. Qetler Jensrud, Dr. Ronald Otterstetter, Dr. Judit Puskas, Dr. Martha Santos, Dr. Shivakumar Sastry, Dr. John Senko, Dr. James Steiger, Dr. Harvey Sterns, Dr. Baffour Takyi, Dr. Margaret Tung, President Matthew Wilson, and Dr. Nicole Zacharia.

GC Members Absent with Notice: Dr. Amanda Booher and Dr. Andrew Thomas

GC Members Absent: Marina Pelemis

**Call to Order**

Dean Midha called the meeting to order at 12:15 p.m.

**Roll Call**

Heather Blake recorded the attendance of those present.

**Approval of Minutes**

Dr. Puskas made a motion to approve the minutes of the January 30, 2017 meeting.

Dr. Jensrud seconded the motion.

Minutes from the January 30, 2017 meeting of Graduate Council were unanimously approved.

**Remarks – Dean Midha**

Dean Midha thanked the members of Graduate Council for their help in making recommendations for budget savings. The University is currently dealing with a challenging budget situation. Efforts are being made to provide for cost savings to avoid non-voluntary separations.

Dean Midha stated that on February 24 there was a two hour Council of Deans meeting at which the Provost allocated monies for stipends and tuition remission for the entering master's class for Fall 2017. Continuing master's students will receive tuition awards and stipends if they have not completed all requirements for their degrees and have not exceeded the limits established by the Graduate School. Master's students who have completed all degree requirements will receive a letter in the coming days notifying them that they have completed the necessary requirements and will no longer be funded.

Dean Midha said that doctoral programs will not be affected. He is in touch with the OBR in Columbus to determine how many credit hours students should enroll in each semester. Dean Midha stated that he will keep everyone informed as he receives this information. He shared that at The Ohio State University once a student becomes a doctoral student he/she is only required to enroll in three credits.

Dr. Midha stated that the graduate assistantship contracts are currently being revised. Ms. Caldwell is currently working on that. Duties of teaching assistants must be defined on the contracts, and if a graduate assistant is providing service in more than one department both departments need to sign the contract.

Finally, Dean Midha mentioned that the curriculum committee has been given the task of looking into the Department of Management's request reclassify its Supply Chain Management as a STEM program. The main reason for doing this is to help the international students get the STEM Extension for OPT since this is an attractive recruitment tool that is used by other departments. There are a few examples, such as Case, in Ohio where the Supply Chain program is classified as a STEM program. While our colleagues in CBA feel they have met all the criteria required for classification as a STEM program, the Graduate School must now check to see if the curriculum offered in CBA is similar to what is offered at Case and other institutions. It is also important that the courses are designated accurately to maximize SSI yield for UA.

## **Committee Reports**

Curriculum Committee – Dr. Allen presented a log of 18 proposals as reviewed and approved by the committee: A&S-COMMUN-16-18998, EDUC-CURR-14-9246, EDUC-CURR-16-17257, EDUC-CURR-16-18187, EDUC-CURR-16-19169, EDUC-CURR-16-19196, EDUC-CURR-16-19198, EDUC-CURR-16-19232, CHP-NURIN-16-18374, CHP-NURIN-16-18774, CHP-NURIN-16-19356, CHP-SOCIAL-16-18679, CHP-SOCIAL-16-18680, CHP-SOCIAL-16-18681, CHP-SOCIAL-16-18682, CHP-SOCIAL-16-18683, CHP-SOCIAL-16-18686, and CHP-SOCIAL-16-18687. Approved by Council.

Membership Committee – Dr. Takyi presented a log of 13 graduate faculty applications that were reviewed and approved by the committee. Approved by Council.

Erin Makarius  
Ernian Pan  
Michael Shott  
John Huss

Kate Budd  
Gary Doll  
James Sperling

Hazel Barton  
Atef F. Saleeb  
Travis M.R. Hreno

Xiaosheng Gao  
Kathleen Endres  
Eric Sotnak

### **Remarks – President Wilson**

President Wilson expressed his gratitude to the members of Graduate Council for their efforts in developing recommendation regarding graduate assistantship funding. On Friday, February 24 an email was sent to all graduate students about assistantship funding. It should have only been sent master's students and was unfortunately sent to a larger group; the issue was corrected soon after.

President Wilson stated that we need to find ways to be creative to provide funding opportunities for students yet maintain cost savings. These ways could be offering small scholarships or reframing programs to make them more attractive to students. He mentioned the Akron Guarantee Scholarship that was just announced. The more students who opt in to the scholarship the more we save.

President Wilson expressed that this is a challenging time for the University. This year the University had to take an \$18 million draw on its bank account, and next year the deficit will be bigger. There has been a downturn in enrollment, and the University is competing with other institutions. He wants to make every effort to help the University recover financially.

President Wilson invited questions from the members of Graduate Council.

Dr. Puskas thanked the leadership and the members of the Graduate Council subcommittee for their communication. She stated that communication is very important, and said that she'd like to see more connection and communication to the faculty.

Dr. Zacharia said that while current communication efforts are good she questioned what the University was messaging to the outside world. President Wilson responded that the University has been receiving positive press, and that's been helpful. He said that the transformation plan has provided the community assurance that the University is working to address its current challenges. Dr. Sastry suggested that a three or four point talking card that faculty can take to conferences may be a good way of getting the University's message out.

Dr. Otterstetter mentioned that he has found people have a general understanding; however, do not know the details or background information, and sometimes information doesn't get relayed accurately. Dean Midha emphasized the importance of sharing information consistently and accurately to avoid any confusion. He stated that the Executive Committee of Graduate Council has developed clarifications on the recommendations made regarding assistantships and given them to the Provost for distribution to the deans. This will help clarify the recommendations and correct any misinformation that may be out there.

Dr. Puskas inquired about the use of post docs by the University. When the University uses post docs the benefit is 50% but 50% goes into a central pot. She noted that at The Ohio State University it is much less. President Wilson stated that the University treats post docs as employees, and pays their health insurance. OSU does not do this. The President shared that Nathan Mortimer has discussed this with Dean Eric Amis, and they were able to get it to 39%.

Dr. Steiger asked President Wilson where the next big savings is coming from. President Wilson responded that currently the University is holding positions. Positions are only being filled where absolutely necessary. There will be graduate assistantship savings, anticipated savings from buyouts, savings resulting from guaranteed scholarship opt-ins. If there is some increase in enrollment that will help offset some cost. President Wilson noted that the University anticipates having to draw on its bank account again next year. President Wilson stated that the University's ESPN package brings in more money as do the revenue games that are played each year. Most of the revenue generated by Athletics comes from football. As institutions are making efforts to save money Athletics is coming under attack. President Wilson said that at the MAC Conference Presidents Meeting on Athletics he asked his fellow University Presidents if there might be things that the institutions can do collectively. This will be discussed further at their May meeting. President Wilson also mentioned that there was a Buyout plan being worked on and there were savings expected from that plan. In the event the Buyout did not yield savings, one backup plan would be to consider consolidation of colleges such as Polymers with Engineering and Education with Health Professions. The administration is also examining a host of other options for savings with the intent to avoid involuntary separations.

Dr. Allen asked is a capital campaign may be a way to raise funds. President Wilson responded that this could be a possibility.

Dr. Takyi asked the President if he anticipates any difficulty bringing in new international students at this time. President Wilson said he is optimistic about bringing in new international students to the University. There are ways in which the University can offer instruction online and/or overseas.

President Wilson thanked Graduate Council for the opportunity to meet with them this afternoon.

Dean Midha closed the meeting by stating that the two page handout clarifying the recommendations made on graduate assistantship funding has been given to the Provost, and it should soon be sent to the deans, department chairs, and faculty.

Meeting adjourned at 1:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Shivakumar Sastry  
Secretary