

Graduate Council
Minutes
President's Conference Room, 1/2800
February 28, 2017

Attendance: Alloway, Bruey, Caswell, Christie, Johnson T., Kantner, Pascale, Provost, Zoellner.

Dr. Kantner called the meeting to order at 12:15 pm by welcoming the members of the Graduate Council.

He began by publicizing again that Research Week activities are continuing to be developed. Applications are now open and Council members were urged to encourage their graduate students to apply for the symposium portion of the SOARS event, which is conducted on the Friday of Research Week. As was mentioned last month, The Graduate School will send a select group to participate in the Statewide Graduate Research Symposium, which will take place in Tampa (USF) a week later.

As the first agenda item on the schedule, Dr. Kantner looked to approve the January 2017 Council Meeting Minutes. However, the required quorum was not present at the meeting, so Dr. Kantner suggested that the Council members review the draft January minutes on the website below and that the document be approved at some point in the future:

https://www.unf.edu/graduateschool/about/graduate_council/council_minutes.aspx

Dr. Kantner announced that there were three agenda items to be discussed today and the Council members were provided with handouts for each.

The first item covered was the "Award of Posthumous Graduate Degrees Policy" (handout), which was a topic previously discussed at the last Graduate Council meeting. As a review, this policy was first drafted by the Graduate Council in 2011, but had not been advanced through all the necessary stages to actually be finalized as an official policy. At the January Graduate Council meeting, a quorum to accept the 2011 drafted language of the policy was achieved and Dr. Kantner moved the proposal forward to the Deans for the next level of approval. Several Deans suggested adding a parallel "in memoriam" degree option, which is also offered under the undergraduate posthumous degree policy. The "in memoriam" option recognizes students who perhaps started a program at UNF or in some other way were affiliated with the university, but had not advanced far enough to have been awarded a degree per the terms of the policy. Dr. Kantner pointed out the wording for the "in memoriam" option has been added to the draft policy (handout). Because there was no quorum at this meeting, Dr. Kantner suggested sending the draft out by email to review and vote on.

The second item on the agenda, which has been a topic of discussion for some time now, was the "Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy". This policy recognizes the program GPA as the academic criterion for determining satisfactory academic progress. It is different than the financial aid federally regulatory defined academic standing policy, which is based upon the entire graduate GPA, regardless of how many different degrees a person has completed or the number of programs started but never concluded. The purpose of the "Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy" is to pinpoint what would be relevant to make a student reach a probationary status on an academic level. Therefore, the decision was to focus on the program GPA that the student is enrolled in at any particular time. Because The Graduate School took ownership of a process that had previously been managed by Enrollment Services and the Registrar's Office, there were no mechanisms in place to automatically define and generate emails for students, who are on academic probation or eligible for suspension by the terms that The Graduate School has set. At the last Graduate Council Meeting, Dr. Kantner proposed that The Graduate School would assume the responsibility of identifying those students that meet the policy definition of academic probation (Those eligible for suspension will be included on that list as well). That information will be shared with the Program Directors. They could respond back if additional students needed to be added based off of their own (perhaps) more rigorous standards and The Graduate School would then send out email notifications to all the students on the list.

Looking for assistance in crafting the standard email message that will be sent to students, Dr. Kantner provided Council members with the email message (handout) that the Registrar's Office previously sent to students on probation. Some members responded by recommending adding text that specifies the length of time of the probation; changing the reference to "cumulative UNF Graduate GPA of 3.0 or higher" to "Program Graduate GPA..."; and reworking the statement which touches on tutoring and workshop availability for students at any level. Dr. Kantner commented that this email will not be sent out until the end of semester, so there is still enough time to further tweak the wording in the email and he would welcome any other recommendations in the coming weeks.

The last item on the agenda (two handouts provided), concerned the subject of continuous enrollment while students are completing their thesis and dissertations. This subject was also briefly mentioned at the last Graduate Council meeting. While researching the practices at other universities, Dr. Kantner discovered a UWF document dated 2010 (first handout). He noted that UNF conspicuously stands out as the only listed Florida school without a policy. He followed this comment by asking Council members if they thought that UNF should even have a policy. Currently, many programs have different expectations or they have their own policies concerning whether a student needs to be enrolled while they are working on their thesis or dissertation. In the second handout, Dr. Kantner compiled some updated information from Peer/Aspirant Institutions. The typical standard appears to be to require students to be registered for a minimum of one credit hour a

semester, while they are completing a thesis and they also need to be registered when they file their thesis during the term they graduate. The most liberal scenarios only required that a student be enrolled within the semester they graduate. The more stringent policies necessitate that a student be enrolled every semester up to as many as three hours, depending on the types of resources they need. Dr. Kantner stated that he is open to any decision, but also noted that for students that are not required to enroll every semester, there is always the risk that they lose their active status and they would then need to reapply to finish their work. As a result, in some ways it is in the student's best interest to continue to be enrolled because they can maintain their active status. While they are enrolled, they would still have access to the library and other resources on campus, which can assist them in the completion of their requirements.

A free-ranging discussion ensued among the attendees, with several council members relaying some of their different departmental policies and personal experiences. One of the primary concerns was the added costs that students might incur, if they were required to pay for an additional one to three credit hours to finish their work. Options such as zero credit, project credit or a special lower tuition credit were mentioned as a possibility to alleviate the financial burden. Dr. Bruey described a current History Department proposal which would provide a one semester grace period, followed by the requirement for a student to register for the number of credits needed to finish.

Dr Kantner commented that the one thing that seems consistent among all the various university policies listed in the handouts is that they do require that a student be registered in his/her last semester. Like some of the other Council members, he has also observed that students often only needed a few more weeks following the end of the term to complete their work. Dr. Kantner then went on to ask the Council members if they thought having to pay for additional credits could work as an incentive to finish sooner and conversely, if they thought not having a policy might encourage students to take their time to finish.

Pointing out the limited number of students that actually would be affected, one of the council members suggested creating a mechanism to create a waiver. Dr. Kantner responded by saying that this could be a possibility. He added that some of the other universities have a leave of absence option (although this is mostly for doctoral students). Dr. Kantner commented that he is not opposed to waivers and leave of absences, but he thinks this will likely lead to a greater amount of customization and will increase the workload for everyone, with little positive change. He is also not sure that this should be advertised as an option, because all policies can be waived anyway.

From the spirited discussion that was generated, Dr. Kantner concluded that the Committee members would prefer to have some sort of policy on this topic and proposed putting together a framework policy by the next meeting. He added that the Provost also of the opinion that a policy should be created. After a question was

posed about the effect of a Graduate School Policy on Department policies, Dr. Kantner replied that The Graduate School policy would state the minimum requirements and Departments could have the option to set a more rigorous standard.

There were no further issues raised by the Graduate Council members and the meeting adjourned at 1:15 pm.