

Graduate Council Minutes

November 9, 2017

Attendance: Tiffany Baffour, Caswell, Thomas, Roger Eggen, Matthew Gilg, Rob Haley, Gerard Hogan, John Kantner, Chau Johnsen Kelly, Megan Kuehner, Sophie Maxis, Betsy Nies, Sherry Shaw, Murat Tiryakioglu, Tulika Varma, Brenda Vose, Richmond Wynn

Dr. Kantner called the meeting to order at 12:15 p.m. After welcoming the council members, he introduced Ruth Lopez, the Senior Director of the International Center. Ruth provided an overview on various aspects pertaining to international students attending graduate programs at UNF. Key points highlighted were:

The International Center works with both international and study abroad students. Her office also processes SAILS (Student Affairs International Learning Scholarship) applications, which essentially funds students on international experiences, whether it is a traditional study abroad or the presentation of a paper at a conference. If a program has any students who have been selected to present a paper at a conference abroad, they can apply for a scholarship to receive funding to attend.

International students possess two types of visas. The F1 visa is for a degree-seeking student. This would be a typical student applying for a Master's or Doctoral Program. The J1 visa is normally for an exchange or "short term" student that is at UNF for a semester or a year and is part of an exchange agreement with another foreign institution. UNF also has Fulbright Scholar students that fall under the J1 visa and are full degree seeking students. UNF currently has one such student studying in the graduate Psychology Program. UNF would be interested in bringing more Fulbright students to campus and council members/graduate programs were encouraged to pursue possible candidates.

There are 302 international students representing 66 different countries currently studying at UNF. The International Center would "love" to double that number. The top three countries are from Germany, Brazil and China. Council members were encouraged to provide the International Center with any special highlights about their particular program, so it can recruit and sell those to prospective students. If faculty members are travelling abroad, the International Center can also provide promotional materials to promote their programs.

The International Center currently has significant funding available for scholarships. It was stressed that funding is only available for "true" international students and that Green Card holders are not eligible. Scholarships consist of out of state tuition waivers. Depending on how much money is still available, this could likely be full-time nine credits per semester of out of state tuition waiver or \$5000 of out of state tuition waiver.

It is also possible to award Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) scholarships. This provides in-state tuition rates for international students from Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as non-international students from Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. This

scholarship only requires programs to commit \$500 of E&G funding a semester for the student's scholarship. Foundation monies are not authorized. The International Center also has some LAC money available and may be able to assist departments, if they do not have enough E&G funding in their budgets. The State Legislature's intent is that students with this scholarship will eventually return to their home country to build a relationship or connection with Florida. The key is that eligible students still possess residency ties to their own country.

The International Center must abide by strict visa/immigration laws for international students and the hope is that directors will take this into consideration when developing their programs. International applicants must be enrolled in full-time nine credit hour classes every fall and spring term and are normally required to attend on-campus classes (Ruth did note that one on-line class is authorized, if an international student is taking a full-time load.). There is some flexibility with the summer term, because this is considered a vacation period. However, if a student begins in the summer term, they must be in a full-time status. Waivers and scholarships carry over to the summer term.

Normally, international students needing visas cannot attend UNF for certificate programs, because they are not classified as full-time status programs. An exception to this would be if a special agreement has been created and approved. One such certificate program agreement already exists with Shangdong University in China.

International students are not authorized to participate in stand-alone internships unless it is in the catalog and is considered a part of the curriculum. The internship or practicum must depict that it is required for the program and be included in the credit hour requirement. In addition, this can only be completed in the second year of an academic program.

For any new programs that are developed, the International Center must work with the U.S. government to have immigration documents approved. Once the program has been approved and it is documented in the catalog, the final approval process can take anywhere from six weeks to six months.

In her closing remarks, Ruth referred council members to her handout. This included material, which provided additional study abroad information. In addition, she offered to assist departments that were looking to develop faculty led classes or embed overseas internships in their programs.

Following Ruth's presentation, Dr. Kantner introduced the first agenda item by asking the council members to approve the minutes from October's Graduate Council Meeting. All attendees approved the minutes.

The second item on the agenda was to discuss the continuous enrollment policy. Dr. Kantner commented that this is a common policy for many institutions to have on their books in order to encourage students to move along and finish their degree requirements. This topic was already touched on once during the October meeting. Copies of the draft

policy were provided to the council members. Dr. Kantner remarked that the updated version essentially is the same verbiage that was shared before, but it also includes some modifications that were recommended at the last meeting. Most notably, the policy would now focus more on thesis and dissertation credit hours. Students, who have finished all required course work, but are still working on their thesis or dissertation, would be required to be continuously enrolled until completion. If they are not enrolled, then they would lose their matriculated status and would need to reapply, if they wanted to resume their studies again sometime in the future. As had been requested by council members, the policy also includes the opportunity to request a leave of absence. Upon a recommendation by Megan Kuehner, an excerpt was also added to cap the number of times a student could request a leave of absence.

A comment was made about including “projects” in this policy. Dr. Kantner stated that there was a recommendation at the last meeting not to include this requirement. This was purposely removed, because the term “projects” can mean different things for different programs. Dr. Kantner suggested possibly adding language that suggests that programs can require continuous enrollment for other items if they wish to choose to do so.

Upon request, Dr. Kantner agreed to consider changing the name of the policy and adding language that would allow programs to establish continuous enrollment for projects and directed studies.

When asked about appeals, Dr. Kantner stated that individual program policies are technically not policies, but guidelines. He stressed that it would be important for programs to have a student appeal process documented in the program’s guidelines, so students can appeal directly to the program directors.

One of the council members suggested leaving a gray area in the policy for students that are delayed in completing all requirements through no fault of their own. A specific example cited was about a student that completed his thesis successfully, but still had some pending edits required by the department or dean, which could not be completed by the deadline. Dr. Kantner reiterated that according to the draft, students would need to be enrolled in the semester that they are officially graduating. This is intended to ensure that when students are using university resources, which includes the semester they are graduating, that they are enrolled at some level. There are a couple of things that The Graduate School is trying to implement in order to make it easier for students to finish in a timely fashion. Deadlines have been pushed as far out as possible, so students have more time to defend and revise their thesis or dissertation. In addition, The Graduate School will be revisiting and looking to streamline the laborious signature process. Dr. Kantner commented that there is really no way to close off all possibilities. Any policy can be waived for specific circumstances, which is currently done with some regularity. Any students that are really caught in having to wait to graduate through no fault of their own have an appeal process at their disposal.

Dr. Kantner relayed that there is also a financial aid piece, which also needs to be added to the policy. Students enrolled for only three hours, rather than the nine hours of full-time work, may not be able to apply for financial aid to cover their costs. The Graduate School

will work with the financial aid office to define full-time status for students who are finishing their thesis or dissertation. Dr. Kantner commented that UNF could define that however it wants. Typically, it is three credit hours for most institutions. He further clarified that if it is included in the policy, the financial aid office can disburse awards to those students as if they were in a full-time status. Dr. Kantner stated that this policy will be revisited again in the spring semester and took the opportunity to also remind the council members that there would be no meeting in December.

The third agenda item discussed was the Graduate Admissions Policy (handout provided). Dr. Kantner reviewed again that at the last meeting, it was agreed that the GRE verbal would be considered satisfactory evidence of English language proficiency for referring applications to program directors for admission decisions. That change will be made.

Today, Dr. Kantner was looking to touch on the highlighted area on the handout. This refers to the minimum admissions requirements. The current verbiage that is in the policy originally came from a state level regulation that was required for all the universities in the state system. Sometime ago the Board of Governors created a new regulation that stated that universities should create and enforce their own policies. As a result, UNF is no longer beholden to this language as it once was. Dr. Kantner provided some examples from other universities around the country: Cal Berkley - requires a 3.0 GPA for the entire undergraduate transcript; UCF - requires a 3.0 for all work attempted or 3.0 for upper division classes; University of Texas - requires a 3.0 for upper division classes; San Diego State - 2.85 minimum for the entire undergraduate degree. Penn State - no minimum (Their graduate school refers them to the program and they can follow their own established guidelines for the GPA.). Dr. Kantner commented that Penn State's model is not uncommon.

Dr. Kantner believes that the minimum GPA is not necessarily an issue, as long as it is reasonable. However, the 60 credit hours is somewhat problematic for The Graduate School, because students do not necessarily know which 60 credit hours to compute. As a result, they are often unable to figure out if they are even eligible to apply to UNF. In addition, in some cases, the last 60 credit hours can include many general education courses, which may not be relevant when making decisions regarding their future performance in a graduate program.

Dr. Kantner commented that it is very time consuming to calculate the last 60 credit hours before referring the file to the program directors. If The Graduate School had its druthers, it would choose to use the entire transcript GPA, which is already calculated on the transcript. Currently, many programs often make exceptions to the 3.0 GPA policy anyway. These exceptions must be reported to Institutional Research, which later reports that to the Board of Governors. Dr. Kantner then opened the floor for comments and a lively discussion ensued:

One recommendation was to have no minimum GPA. It was pointed out that for international applicants; evaluation agencies often use the GPA that is posted on

international transcripts without adjusting it to an equivalent U.S. scale. This practice can be unfavorable for international students.

Another council member felt uneasy with a no minimum policy at the university level. It was felt that if a program itself demanded a specific minimum in its guidelines, this could open the door for appeals. Dr. Kantner responded that he did not think this would be an issue because applicants cannot really appeal admissions decisions.

Dr. Kantner commented that he was not really in favor of having a no minimum GPA standard and went on to say that if we chose to eliminate the last 60 credit hours then he would recommend reducing the minimum GPA.

Some council members passed on that the overall GPA requirements and test scores are not necessarily a key tool for admission decisions in their programs. By using letters of reference, resumes etc. they are able to make a more holistic decision. Other council members felt strongly that keeping a minimum 3.0 GPA was an important indicator of success.

A major concern was raised by several council members that some programs will need to continue to keep the last 60 credit hours, because of existing accreditation policies. There was also anxiety that if The Graduate School would no longer calculate the admission GPA, the programs do not have the administrative resources or expertise to complete this task. In addition, it was mentioned that there was great potential that the consistency and accuracy of the calculations would suffer, if each program were to compute their own GPA.

Based on some of the input heard, Dr. Kantner stated that an option might be to move the 3.0 GPA requirement out of the UNF policy and have it embedded in the individual program guidelines. Dr. Kantner concluded that there still seems to be some interest in exploring the possibility of tweaking the admission GPA policy. As a result, he will continue to examine the policy and hopes to address this topic again in the spring.

The last item on the agenda was to discuss the posting of theses/dissertations to ProQuest. (formerly UMI). Dr. Kantner explained that theses/dissertations are normally posted to Digital Commons in the library for worldwide viewing, unless the student has placed an embargo on their work. He went on to say that the UNF Library is willing to take on the task of uploading older digital theses/dissertations so that the products of UNF graduate programs would be available and searchable through Proquest. He stressed that the student will retain the same rights for the document as before. He added that it is not expected that this would incur any additional costs and that students would still have the possibility of placing an embargo on their work if desired. Besides Digital Commons, using Proquest would provide another point of access to their scholarly work. Dr. Kantner asked if there were any concerns in exploring this option. There were no objections from the council members to move forward on this initiative.

Before finishing, Dr. Kantner made a quick comment about the ongoing national tax reform discussions. He mentioned that one proposed version would make waivers taxable, as if

they were normal income. Dr. Kantner stated that UNF is following the developments closely and will keep everyone informed on decisions and implications as they emerge.

Dr. Kantner ended the meeting at 1:15 p.m.