

Graduate Council Minutes

February 14, 2019

Attendance: Elissa Barr, Amy Bishop, Gaylord Candler, Thomas Caswell, Elizabeth Gregg, Osama Jadaan, David Jaeger, John Kantner, Ko Lee, Chris Leone, Holly Miller, Sarah Provost, Mohammad Rahman, Jennifer Spaulding-Givens

Dr. Kantner called the meeting to order at 12:15 p.m.

Announcements

- Research Week, April 1-8, 2019 (SOARS on 4/3)

Dr. Kantner opened his remarks by announcing again that the dates for Research Week will be earlier than usual and will take place from 1-8 April, 2019. SOARS, which is typically on Friday in the past, will be conducted on Wednesday this year. That day was selected in order to avoid some conflicts with spaces that were already reserved by other entities. Dr. Kantner commented that the Director of Undergraduate Research's departure from UNF in the coming weeks will also add an additional complication for all. As a result, the Graduate School Office will assist in some of the organization.

Dr. Kantner also pointed out that the graduate student submissions for SOARS has been very low thus far. He asked that the Council members encourage their students to submit abstracts for the competition. All the information needed is available on the SOARS website. As always, the best presentations will be nominated to move on to the state-wide Graduate Research Symposium at the end of April at Florida International University (FIU) in Miami. Travel costs and registration fees etc. will be funded by the Graduate School Office.

Dr. Kantner also mentioned that the Graduate School has boosted its social media presence over the last few months through the efforts of Dekira Hemmingway, the newest member of his staff. Dekira was introduced at the last Graduate Council meeting and has met with several staff members already. She will continue to be available as a resource for everyone in order to assist programs with advertising and social media efforts in the future.

Megan Kuehner took the opportunity to inform everyone that UNF will be hosting the Florida Undergraduate Research Conference (FURC) later this month. She went on to mention that if any programs would like to share something at that event they should contact the Graduate School. Dr. Kantner added that several hundred students usually participate in FURC and that the Graduate School would be hosting an information table, as well.

Agenda Items

➤ Approve November minutes

Dr. Kantner called for a motion to ratify the November 2018 minutes and they were unanimously approved by the Graduate Council members.

Discussion Items

➤ UNF+ Pathways updates

Dr. Kantner mentioned that during the November meeting a great deal of time was devoted to discussing UNF+ Pathways, which is the accelerated pathways for undergraduates to be quickly admitted to and begin work in graduate programs at UNF.

This is a major initiative that the President is pushing and he feels very strongly that this is one way UNF can make its mark on higher education. By offering easy pathways for UNF undergraduates to enter UNF graduate programs, a student has the chance to depart UNF with both a bachelor's and master's degree in hand. Dr. Kantner expressed his appreciation on how the programs have stepped up to accomplish this goal without jeopardizing the quality of UNF's education. He stressed that this initiative is considered an opportunity and not an entitlement for all of UNF's undergraduates.

Dr. Kantner reviewed again that there are two forms for these pathways. One is the accelerated pathway, which are for undergraduate and graduate programs which total more than 150 credit hours and can begin to double count some of those excessive credit hours toward both degree programs. Dr. Kantner mentioned that questions have been raised by some colleagues on whether there must be a restriction for a program combination of 150 credit hours. Some folks on campus have pointed to other Florida schools, which do not require the aggregate to be higher than 150 credit hours to allow double counting. He went on to say that this aspect is currently being investigated and will be revisited again after the SACS visit.

Dr. Kantner went on to say that we currently have three active programs under the accelerated mechanisms initiative and six other programs are looking at implementing this, as well. This is mostly for graduate programs that are more than 30 hours. However, there are some graduate programs, like engineering, that are considering this because their undergraduate programs are more than 120 credit hours.

Touching on the second pathway, Dr. Kantner stressed that express applications do not promise students that they can begin to enroll nor can they double count graduate course work when they are still undergraduates. However, it does allow for students to be referred to the program for an early decision without paying the application fee and having

to submit test scores, letters of recommendation and other items. Currently, 15 active graduate programs, drawing from almost 30 undergraduate programs to do this. Thus far, between these two different pathway mechanisms, UNF has 42 students at various stages of involvement. Dr. Kantner expressed his appreciation again for everyone's assistance in getting this up and running.

Dr. Kantner stated that the Graduate School will continue to explore financial support to help incentivize all undergraduates to stay at UNF for their graduate studies. The UNF+ Pathways scholarship has been established, which pays the difference between the graduate and the undergraduate tuition for those students on an accelerated pathway. As a result, if a student has started to take graduate courses early, they can pay the undergraduate rate.

In addition, the Graduate School is also looking at ways to help students to stay at UNF without being saddled with a tripling of their tuition rates. The goal is to have a concrete plan in place in the next few months. Dr. Kantner commented that UNF's graduate tuition rate is the second highest among state schools and there have been discussions at UNF about implementing a blanket reduction across the board. He also relayed that there is some pushback against this solution. Based off past experience, it is widely believed that if tuition is lowered, it would likely be impossible to ever raise the graduate rates again, regardless of inflation or other factors. Dr. Kantner pointed out that this is a reason why there is currently some special tuition rates for certain programs like nursing and some other more expensive programs. They are required to charge more to make it economically viable for the university.

Dr. Kantner remarked that the President is interested in rolling out the UNF+ Pathways as a marketing piece for recruiting high school students. He stressed that the idea is not to pre-approve high school students into graduate programs. Dr. Kantner commented that there are some schools with programs, like pharmacy, that recruit students out of high school. This places them on a five or six-year track to earn a pharmacy degree. UNF is not looking to do something like that. Instead, this initiative is being seen as a good way to brand the university. Good students can obtain a quality undergraduate education at UNF and if they maintain their quality performance, they will have an easy way to continue on and become a graduate student.

When asked about sending UNF representatives to recruit at high school math competitions and other events, Dr. Kantner passed on that UNF Enrollment Services is doing some of that already. He encouraged members to reach out to Enrollment Services if they become aware of such opportunities and added that they would probably be interested in providing their support.

➤ Certificate policy changes

Dr. Kantner provided the members with both a "clean" and a "marked-up" version of the draft Certificate Policy. He commented that these changes became necessary due to the growing number of certificate programs being proposed, as well as the adjustments that

were made to the transfer credit policy. Dr. Kantner believes that all of the policy changes suggested seem non-controversial and generally reflect the Graduate School's current practice.

Students who already have a graduate certificate can transfer in 12 credit hours from that certificate to a degree program at UNF. That would also include if they depart and return at some future date. Dr. Kantner stated that the only major change made to the document was that the Graduate Academic Learning Compact (GALC) requirement has been removed for certificate programs.

Dr. Candler pointed out a possible correction on the "clean" policy version and Dr. Kantner agreed to eliminate the third sentence in Paragraph II ("Furthermore, these programs must establish student learning outcomes and assess the extent to which students achieve these outcomes.").

Dr. Kantner explained that this is not to imply that there should be no concern about the learning outcomes for certificates. However, the sense was that there is already a lot of work being done with the GALCs. A great deal of effort goes into ensuring compliance with what accreditors want to see. Certificate programs are different, because SACS does not oversee them. The quality is attended to when the certificate program goes through the APC process in the first place and is not something that is ignored as an institution. However, since it was not really being done anyway, it was felt that adding the same level of scrutiny and review as the graduate programs was not necessary.

Dr. Candler provided some information to the members concerning the assessment process within his MPA certificate programs. Dr. Kantner followed up those comments by stating that there are no certificate programs that he can think of, which do not draw upon existing graduate coursework and are not part of a degree program that are being assessed already. Therefore, producing a whole new set of learning outcomes for certificate programs would seem like overkill.

Dr. Kantner then highlighted one more change on the bottom of the "marked-up" page (second paragraph of transfer credits). If a student returns to earn a certificate after receiving a master's/doctoral degree, it must be determined how many of those credit hours should be applied toward the certificate. To be consistent with what is done with the transfer credit policy (no more than 50 percent of the program that can be covered with transfer credits), the 50 percent threshold will be applied here, as well. As an example, if there is a Program with 12 credit hours, the student can return after having earned a master's degree and transfer six credit hours towards that certificate program.

Dr. Kantner called for a motion to accept the changes to the Graduate Certificate Program Policy and the motion was unanimously approved by the Graduate Council members.

➤ Graduate Council By-laws changes

Dr. Kantner stated that it was recently pointed out to the Graduate School that the Graduate Council By-laws were not consistent with some recent policy changes that were made. He went on to explain that the Graduate Council had decided that they did not want to review every graduate program before it could be implemented. Nor did they want to review all of the graduate faculty nominations and appointments. Policies were altered to reflect this, but the By-laws were never changed.

Dr. Kantner highlighted some proposed minor changes to the By-laws:

- Article II Section 1. Statement changed from “The Council is advised of...” to: “To that end, the Council has the authority to initiate new policies and changes to existing policies related to graduate education, and to review and approve new policies and revisions of existing policies initiated by other units, subject to Section 2 below.”
- Article III Section 1 (a). In line with the newly implemented Graduate Faculty Policy, which distinguishes between teaching and research graduate faculty, it was added that only research graduate faculty can be on the Graduate Council.
- Article III Section 1 (a). The word “school” in addition to “department” and some clarifying language around the number of Graduate Council members per college or department were added.
- Article III Section 2 (a). It was added that new members can now join the Graduate Council upon their appointment vice needing to wait until the fall semester.
- Appendix A: An update of all departments and schools that have graduate programs and therefore have a representative on the Graduate Council.

A short discussion ensued about some of the complications of how departments and schools, like the College of Business, are organized and how they are currently represented on the Graduate Council. Dr. Kantner acknowledged the concerns raised and pledged to look at this issue more closely and get back with the members on this again at another time.

➤ Issues with cross-level courses

Dr. Kantner opened this topic by explaining that issues with cross-level courses refer to those cases, where an undergraduate course and a graduate course are cross listed and they share the same classroom. This has been an issue for several years now. Because of concerns that UNF was not fully compliant, a few years ago a new policy was implemented. It stated that a separate syllabus needed to be established and that there must be demonstrably greater rigor for the graduate as compared to the undergraduate student.

After the policy was implemented, a process was established to review this (A syllabus is submitted and must be approved before it can be placed on the course schedule.).

Dr. Kantner went on to say that despite this process, the recent offsite review expressed concerns about the cross-listed courses. It was felt that the evidence that was put forth, which shows that the Graduate School is in compliance (graduate curricula having greater rigor than undergraduate curricula), was not sufficient and they wanted to see more.

Dr. Kantner passed on that as the Graduate School has attempted to assemble more information to provide to SACS in anticipation of the onsite review, which is coming up in 5-6 weeks. However, it seems like the information that was currently available to put forth would not be helpful. For example, the word “advanced” and “graduate” was added to essentially the exact same syllabus as the undergraduate version. Also, GLCs were basically AOCs with “graduate” or “advanced” annotated on them. The same sort of thing appears in the course descriptions in the course catalogs. There, a similar text appears in both graduate and undergraduate courses, with perhaps one or two words changed.

Dr. Kantner relayed that this is not necessarily a responsibility of the members and that he will also be speaking with the Deans and Chairs on this, as well. He expressed concern that UNF will not fare well when the onsite reviewers come and are able to ask for all information on graduate courses. In his opinion, some courses have been formally approved and the Graduate School feels comfortable with those. However, the issue will likely be more with the regular courses that get cross-listed, particularly those that are not special topic courses and are actually in the course catalog with nearly identical catalog descriptions.

Dr. Kantner commented that there is not much that can be done at this point before the onsite dates. However, moving forward, this will be an issue that the Graduate School will need to attend to and he asked for “any and all” assistance to make the necessary changes to meet the expected standards of course descriptions.

Adjournment

Dr. Kantner ended the meeting at 12:50 PM.