

## Graduate Council Minutes

November 11, 2018

Attendance: Asai Asaithambi, Elissa Barr, Rob Haley, Osama Jadaan, David Jaeger, John Kantner, Chau Johnsen Kelly, Chris Leone, Holly Miller, Betsy Nies, Stephynie Perkins, Dawn Russell, Jennifer Spaulding-Givens, Tim Groulx, Bevin Livingston, James Churilla

Dr. Kantner called the meeting to order at 12:15 p.m. and reminded everyone that this would be the last scheduled meeting for this calendar year and the next meeting would be on January 10, 2019.

### ***Announcements:***

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

Dr. Kantner reminded everyone again that UNF's annual Research Week will be earlier than normal this Spring. Because of some calendar conflicts, the new dates will be April 1-8, 2019. In addition, due to some campus facility availability issues generated by the date change, SOARS will now be on Wednesday (April 3) rather than on a Friday, as it had been in the past. As usual, graduate students will be invited to present their posters at the SOARS event and the best entries will be selected to attend the State-wide Research Symposium on Wednesday April 17 and Thursday, April 18 at FIU in Miami. Dr. Kantner asked that the Graduate Council members encourage their graduate students to submit abstracts and participate in SOARS.

#### ➤ **Welcome Dekira Hemingway, Coordinator of Outreach & Recruiting**

Dr. Kantner introduced Dekira Hemingway, the Graduate School's new Coordinator of Outreach & Recruiting. Dekira arrived at UNF three weeks ago from South Carolina. In addition to holding both a bachelor's and master's degree in communication, she also has experience in university admissions, social media and has even worked at a local television station. Dr. Kantner commented that her skills, talent and expertise will be a great asset to the office and stressed that her main focus will be to assist the Graduate School and the graduate programs with any types of recruitment efforts such as advertising, social media projects and events planning.

### **Agenda Items**

#### ➤ **Approve October minutes**

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

### **Discussion Items**

➤ **Revised probation/suspension process**

Dr. Kantner mentioned that the Graduate School is working toward establishing more streamlined procedures for the probation and suspension of graduate students. It has been an ongoing process to recognize that graduate school students at UNF are a little different than undergraduates when it comes to things like monitoring their performance within a program, placing on probation and ultimately suspending and dismissing them. A couple of years ago, a new policy was put into place which focuses on program GPA, as opposed to level GPA, which is normally used to assess undergraduates. This was done because there had been a number of graduate students that started one program, then switched, and in some instances, even began several other programs. Level GPA would consider their entire graduate level performance at UNF. This was problematic because there were students who entered a new program and were immediately on probation, because they had not performed well in their previous area(s) of study. Conversely, there were students who started a program with a 4.0 GPA and could “coast along” in their studies. As a result, a policy was put in place to focus on the current program GPA.

Dr. Kantner pointed out that this policy has been managed manually in the past. He also mentioned that often programs receive an official automated notification with a list of potential suspension and dismissal names from the Registrar’s office and then might receive another list from the Graduate School with different names to consider. Dr. Kantner stated that the Graduate School is working to try to integrate this better, so it is not so complicated. Megan Kuehner has been spearheading this effort and the hope is that sometime in the next semester there will be an improved process implemented.

➤ **UNF+ Pathway Express Application**

Dr. Kantner began by saying that there is still debate about the official name, but for now this initiative is called UNF+ pathways. Essentially, this is a means of getting UNF graduates funneled into UNF’s graduate programs in a way that is simpler than the traditional application method. The hope is that this will provide undergraduates with more of an incentive to consider staying at UNF for a graduate degree.

Dr. Kantner referred everyone to the handout provided (UNF+ Bachelors-Masters Pathways 10/29/18). This sheet depicts both “accelerated” and “coordinated” pathways. The accelerated path allows rising seniors to begin graduate coursework that counts toward both their undergraduate and graduate hours. There are a few programs that have already gone through the Academic Programs Committee (APC) process to have this approved and are already executing it now, while several others are currently considering it.

Dr. Kantner mentioned that during the last Graduate Council meeting the idea of an express application for qualified undergraduates was discussed, whereby specific undergraduate programs would be “coordinated” with specific graduate programs. In those circumstances, the undergraduate students would apply without GRE scores, letters of

reference, or any other items that would normally be required of someone that is coming from outside UNF. An interested UNF student would sign-up without paying an application fee and be referred to the Program Directors for a decision, with only information that can be pulled from the transcripts. Program Directors can ask for more materials, but it is not something that the student has to formally submit via the Graduate School.

When asked a question, Dr. Kantner pointed out that the accelerated pathway is actually a process because students are starting to take graduate coursework while they are seniors. With the express application, students would not begin taking graduate courses until they finish their undergraduate degree.

Answering a follow-up question, Dr. Kantner stressed that it is up to the Program Director what requirements are required to enter the accelerated pathway. He explained that the door was not “opened wide” for accelerated students, because students are routed straight into graduate coursework and there is no guarantee that they will be successful. Because it also impacts their undergraduate progress, it is important to make sure that these are quality students.

When asked about cross-listing undergraduate- and graduate-level courses, Dr. Kantner emphasized that cross-listing is not discouraged, but that there are certain requirements that are needed to ensure that the graduate course is distinct from the undergraduate version. The issue is when there are undergraduates and graduates in the same classroom and they are basically doing the same work and yet one group is receiving undergraduate and the other graduate credit. That is what UNF is trying to manage, particularly because the university is undergoing Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) review and that is always an area that they focus on. There is still a need to allow for cross-listing in order for the accelerated pathway to work. The only restriction would be that students would not be allowed to take the undergraduate and graduate versions of a cross-listed course.

Responding to another question about how the express application would be applied to students that depart UNF and wish to return later, Dr. Kantner stated those students would need to apply through the traditional admission process. He added that the only caveat to that would be those students that are interested in cohort-based graduate programs. As an example, he described a scenario whereby a student graduates in the Fall term, and would not be able to enter school again until the next cohort, which begins the following Fall term. In that case it would be allowable to use the express application. It is envisioned that students have up to three consecutive semesters (including the Summer term) to take advantage of this process. After that, they would need to use the traditional application.

Dr. Kantner relayed that Program Directors will eventually be asked to identify which pathways they may be interested in using. He went on to say that there may be some programs like DPT that may not want to participate in this initiative at all. The goal is to get this implemented as soon as possible, because many students graduating in the Spring are already thinking about what they are going to do next year.

### ➤ UNF+ Pathway Scholarships

Before beginning this topic, Dr. Kantner was asked to explain why application to the accelerated pathway was more complex than for an express pathway. He explained that the accelerated pathway was more “complicated” because it admits undergraduates into graduate courses that cost four times as much as undergraduate classes, and there is no assurance that these students would actually be successful. The Graduate School wanted to ensure that the student has a really good chance to succeed. If students perform poorly, not only are they not able to matriculate into their graduate programs, but they also would have low grades on their undergraduate transcripts.

Dr. Kantner relayed, however, that the Graduate School believes that it has found a way to offset the cost for these accelerated students by working together with Enrollment Services and the Financial Aid Office. For those students enrolled in APC-approved formal programs, they would automatically have an increased financial aid cap for their cost of attendance. Previously, students were treated as if they were enrolling only in undergraduate coursework and therefore were charged the additional amount to complete graduate coursework. If they had already used all of their financial aid, it was very difficult to get additional financial aid to cover the higher graduate tuition.

In addition to raising their financial aid cap, Dr. Kantner announced that a scholarship will be implemented for the accelerated students, which will likely be \$750.00 per semester in their senior year. Students would be eligible up to that amount depending on their financial aid eligibility. Dr. Kantner commented that this initiative will now reduce some of the financial risk to students. Consequently, the Graduate School has already started examining ways to make the approval process less onerous. Dr. Kantner indicated that this scholarship (with the official name still to be determined) would likely be implemented soon. He reiterated that students need to be in an APC approved accelerated track to take advantage of this.

Dr. Kantner addressed another question about the coordinated/express pathways by explaining that, unlike the accelerated pathway where the curricula of the two programs have to be somewhat integrated, there is no formal curricula changes that are envisioned for the coordinated pathways. Nonetheless, programs might be thinking about the fact that their undergraduates are entering graduate school with a known undergraduate experience. How programs want to acknowledge that in their graduate curricula is up to them. Dr. Kantner suggested that one way to take advantage of this opportunity would be for the student to complete a senior project that could be envisioned as a pilot study for what might eventually become their master’s thesis. Dr. Kantner stressed that this is what the programs will need to decide; the Graduate School would not restrict it in any way.

Dr. Kantner introduced Megan Kuehner and Paige Lilley, who then provided a short presentation of some of the features of the draft website with the proposed express application form for coordinated pathways. Among the features shown, Megan pointed out

that on the website there is also a list of “Frequently Asked Questions” (FAQs) to guide students. Additionally, she mentioned that following this meeting, she would send a complete list of all of UNF’s undergraduate majors to the graduate programs, in order for each to decide if they would like to participate in the express application process and, if so, with which undergraduate majors they would like to be coordinated.

Megan stressed that the express application form captures only the most basic information needed from the student. After submission, the information comes to the Graduate School, where it will be checked if the student meets the minimum 3.25 GPA requirement. If everything is in order, a referral will be created and sent to the programs for a decision. When asked about the Graduate School setting the minimum 3.25 GPA requirement, Dr. Kantner stated that the Graduate School is trying to avoid customizing the form for each program and having to maintain a “shadow” website with all the different program requirements. He went on to say that programs are welcome to require and manage other requirements themselves.

When asked if this initiative may discourage students from other schools to apply, because they may perceive that UNF students are receiving preference, Dr. Kantner acknowledged that this was a good point and it will be interesting to see if this will be the case. He went on to say that the Graduate School’s experience has been that UNF has had a difficult time (financially) supporting other students coming from other schools. In the absence of more graduate assistantship money in order to recruit students from other places, the thought was to work harder to recruit internally. Currently, only about 4% of UNF’s students continue into UNF graduate programs, so there is a belief that there is still opportunity to grow in this area. If it turns out though that this is to the detriment of recruiting outside of UNF, then this initiative may need to be reconsidered.

In response to a question, Dr. Kantner confirmed that students would never need to take the GRE if they applied through the express application. If a program wants to require GRE scores, then they really need to be using the traditional mechanism. One of the attendees mentioned that the express application initiative was discussed in one of her classes and the positive feedback from the students was overwhelming. Students were elated about the idea of not having to take the GRE. The feedback received was that students dread having to take standardized tests. This was a combination of the money required to pay for the exam, the time preparing and the stress of needing to attain a certain score.

Dr. Kantner reassured another Graduate Council member that programs will always have the option to discontinue this initiative if they try it for a semester and it does not work for them. The intent is simply to provide another way to recruit students. Megan Kuehner added that some internal coding has been created that will help track students that are accepted through the express application. So, if programs are interested in seeing how students are faring compared to traditional applicants, that information could be provided.

Dr. Kantner stressed that UNF does not want to jeopardize the quality of the graduate programs, but there is a sense that there is a need for this. So, it will be tracked to ensure that quality graduate students are continued to be admitted.

Dr. Kantner concluded by saying that the Graduate School would be forwarding a request for programs to consider what pathways they would like to have listed on the website. The goal is to roll the express application out in the next three weeks and to be live by the Spring semester. He also mentioned that hopefully information about the scholarships for accelerated pathways to help offset the additional graduate course costs will be announced soon, as well.

### **Adjournment**

Dr. Kantner ended the meeting at 1:00 PM.