

Graduate Council Meeting

Monday, September 8, 2025 ~ 3:00 – 4:00 pm

AD-148

MINUTES

PRESIDING: Terrence Deak, Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

STAFF: Joshua Reno, Mohamadreza Babaei, Courtney Ignarri, Kim Yousey-Elsener (recorder)

PRESENT: Prabhu Anil Bhor, Pegor Aynajian, Christopher Bartlette, David Bisaha, Heather Bragg, Heidi Ewen, Samiksha Gaur, Guy German, Debjit Gupta, Yetrib Hathout, Michael Jacobson, Yvonne Johnston, Karen Jones, Hyejung Kim, Loretta Mason-Williams, Matthew McConn, Vladimir Nikulin, Andreas Pape, Jeffrey Pietras, Josh Reno, Joseph Roth, Nicole Rouhana, Hiroki Sayama, Rosko Tzolov, Cihan Uzmanoglu, Katherine Wander, Sara Wozniak, Tao Zhang, Ning Zhou

ABSENT: Judith DeLuca, Carl Lipo, Jacqueline McGinley, Aravind Prakash, Kevin Seeber, Pamela Smart

GUEST: Kathy Brunt

Call to Order:

Dr. Reno called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

1. Minutes of Meeting on April 7, 2025

Dr. Reno asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the meeting held on April 7, 2025. It was noted there was an error in the spelling of Sharon Bryant's name. A member made a motion to approve the minutes with the noted correction and another member seconded. All were in favor and none were opposed. The minutes of the meeting were approved with the one correction.

2. Welcome and Introductions

- a. **Welcome** - Dean Deak welcomed everyone and gave an overview of the meeting schedule for this year. The bylaws were amended to implement staggered two-year terms for both Graduate Director Representatives and Faculty Representative, which ensures not all representatives rotate off at the same time. To effectuate this change, some members have agreed to stay on for one additional year. Dean Deak views graduate council as providing important guidance regarding the policies and processes for the diverse needs of the graduate programs. Its job is to help keep the Graduate School focused on supporting our graduate students.
- b. **Introduction of New Graduate School Team Members** - Dean Deak updated everyone

on the busy summer of hiring in the graduate school. Four new people have started this summer.

- i. Josh Reno is the new Associate Dean of the Graduate School. Josh is trying to meet with every elected officer on the Graduate Council. If you'd like to meet, he is available
- ii. Mohamadreza Babaee is the new Assistant Dean for Graduate Student Success. Mohamadreza comes from Indiana University. He oversees graduate student initiatives with a special focus on time to degree
- iii. Kim Yousey-Elsener is the new Assistant Dean for Academic Affairs. Kim comes from the Higher Education and Student Affairs program in CCPA. She works on all things, data, policy and governance.
- iv. Elise Thornley is the new Student Services Specialist. Coming from the Library. Elise handles any student-specific needs and requests.

3. Report from the Dean

- a. **Graduate Student Stipends:** Good news about graduate student stipends. We were waiting for the GSEU contract to be settled, now that it is complete, the stipends can be raised.
 - i. Still waiting on information from the NYS Comptroller about the total costs to the institution for the new GSEU contract. We know it included one-time signing bonuses for new hires moving forward (\$1,500, full-time, \$750 part-time), as well as retroactive raises. Once the contract has been implemented at the NY State level, we will receive more information
 - ii. Then starting January 1, 2026, the new base stipend for all PhD GA/TAs will be \$25,000
 1. Impacts any student that is making less than \$25,000 in January
 2. Discipline based stipends are being eliminated. This will be the same base stipend for all PhD programs
 3. Affects anyone who joins and starts a PhD program in January as well as those starting in Fall 2026
 4. An email will be sent to chairs and graduate directors this week
 5. This is an enormous commitment for the campus, and we are grateful to the senior administration for being supportive of this
 6. It is hoped that another adjustment will be made in a year or two. We will continue to monitor what that might look like.
- b. **Time to degree:** As a reminder, last year we sent a letter to any student who was outside of the 5-year rule (5 years after matriculation to ABD and 5 years after ABD to graduate). 125 letters were sent to individuals who are in violation of one of these parameters. That has created a lot of one-on-one cases that we are working through. We are working on exceptions while also maintaining some boundaries.
 - i. December 2025 deadline - Any student outside of the ABD rule was given until December 2025. Many of these students have dropped off, are on track and ok, or have asked for a LOA. Consistent with our LOA policy, we have not been approving a LOA as a reason/means of extending the deadlines.

- ii. May 2026 deadline - Any student who has been ABD more than 5 years has a deadline of May 2026 to defend. If they are not able to complete with 14 months notice, they will most likely be severed. We need these students to finish so they can move on.
- iii. Considering a change from 5-year rules to 4-year rules. We are doing some research on national standards and will have the conversation in a future meeting. We will then add mechanisms for success in order to achieve the goals, such as support for summer research, dissertation writing, workshops, etc. Suggests for additional support that came from a discussion by the Council:
 - 1. Do we offer dissertation support in evenings or on weekends to support part-time students? - Working on it
 - 2. Do we offer dissertation writing bootcamps? - Currently offering a mixture of group sessions on Zoom, in person, and one-on-one tutoring. Also considering proposal writing workshops
 - 3. Do we have data regarding where they are falling behind? - Most of that happens at the program level. Have office space available to help them focus/write/comps
 - 4. Our policies currently do not distinguish between full-time and part-time. Do we need that? - Open for discussion
 - 5. Another nuance is regarding medical LOA. Does that stop the clock?
 - 6. How are we measuring TTD? Can we measure by semesters? - Currently being measured by academic units (Fall/Spring are .5 and Winter/Summer are .25). Also looking at Survey of Earned Doctorates that tracks three variations of time to degree. These are being considered as well. Calendar year based on student report 1) time since bachelor's degree; 2) time since starting graduate degree; 3) time since matriculating in doctorate program
 - 7. When can we have access to this data? - We are preparing program review packets now and hope to have a dashboard available to departments by the end of this academic year.

- 4. Provost Summer Doctoral Fellowship (PSDF) Change:** Dr. Deak reported that the PSDF is being changed to a tool to support deep dive into research and scholarship for doctoral students. Instead of being a recruitment strategy, it will be a tool to use to help doctoral students towards strengthening the impact of dissertation work and improving time to degree
- a. Past model \$4,000 with \$1,000 match from department with a 4-year commitment, roughly filling 50 or a \$500k. Students who have started the PSDF will be grandfathered
 - b. New model - Competition award to those with ABD status. Applicants will need to supply a clear plan with milestones and a mentor signing off on plan. The amount will be \$5,000 or more. This will support those who are done with proposal to launch into their research without other summer duties. Not departmentalized, open to the whole campus every year. Will be for one summer. We will start with around 20 for the first year, building to 80-100 as we phase out the old program
 - c. What is the right amount to pay them for the summer? Is \$5,000 enough? Is \$7,000 better?

- d. Discussion - What are other other critical parameters for a summer fellowship?
 - i. Timing - Students will need to know well ahead of planning summer funding. Awards by February so they can plan for the summer
 - ii. Intended to be carve-out time so students should not be teaching but focused on getting the work done to speed up dissertation process
 - 1. How will we take into account the fact that students will need to make enough money over the summer to cover their living expenses, so they may also need to work in labs or other things?
 - iii. Processing applications: How are we going to decide who gets the fellowship? There could be a large amount of applications. Too many for a graduate council committee to review. Should we add a layer so that departments select first and then go to committee (similar to excellence awards)? Having an earlier college review will help narrow things down for a graduate council review
 - iv. Include in the call specific information on what a successful application is:
 - 1. Multiplier effect of time-to-degree
 - 2. Clear milestones that are achievable
 - 3. Mentorship support
 - 4. Look-back reporting to evaluate the success of the program
- e. The Graduate School will work on getting a process in place so that graduate council can eventually provide more feedback. We will learn a lot as we go into next year.

5. Subcommittee Assignments and Obligations: Dr. Reno presented committee assignments. Dr. Yousey-Elsener will be in touch soon to start scheduling meetings. Everyone is expected to meet at least once and then as needed.

- a. Academic Standards Committee - Meets as needed
- b. Diversity Committee - February reviews (Clark Fellowships)
- c. Professional Development Committee - November, March, and July reviews (Excellence awards, Distinguished Dissertations)
- d. Budget Advisory Committee - November, April, and July reviews (Travel Grants)
- e. Grievance Committee - Meets as needed
- f. Strategic Planning Committee - revitalizing this committee - Under review

6. Location of Graduate Council Meetings: Dr. Reno advised that we will be holding one graduate council meeting per semester at one of the campuses off main campus. The next meeting held on October 6 will be at the University Downtown Center campus. Details regarding parking and room location will be provided prior to the meeting.

There being no further business, Dr. Deak asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. A member made a motion and another member seconded the motion. All were in favor and none were

opposed. The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 p.m.

*****Next Meeting: October 6, 2025, 3:00-4:00 pm*****

NOTE: Location is the University Downtown Center Campus