BINGHAMTON UNIVERSITY
STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

The Graduate School

PO Box 6000
Binghamton, New York 13902-6000
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Graduate Council Meeting

Tuesday, April 7, 2026 ~ 3:00 – 4:00 pm
Couper Administration Building, AD-148

MINUTES

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

STAFF: Joshua Reno, Madhusudhan Govindaraju, Courtney Ignarri, Erica Sausner, Elise Thornley, Kim Yousey-Elsener, Ann Marie Kellogg (recorder)

PRESENT: David Bisaha, Heather Bragg, Kathleen Brunt, Heidi Ewen, Guy German, Debjit Gupta, Yetrib Hathout, Michael Jacobson, Yvonne Johnston, Loretta Mason-Williams, Matthew McConn, Jeffrey Pietras, Aravind Prakash, Nicole Rouhana, Hiroki Sayama, Kevin Seeber, Pamela Smart, Katherine Wander, Sara Wozniak, Tao Zhang

ABSENT: Prabhu Anil Bhor, Pegor Aynajian, Christopher Bartlette, Judith DeLuca, Samiksha Gaur, Carmen Jones, Hyejung Kim, Carl Lipo, Jacqueline McGinley, Vladimir Nikulin, Andreas Pape, Joseph Roth, Haley Thayer, Rosko Tzolov, Cihan Uzmanoglu, Ning Zhou

Call to Order:

Dr. Reno called the meeting to order at 3:01 p.m.

1. Minutes of Meeting on March 2, 2026

Dr. Reno asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the meeting held on March 2, 2026. A member made a motion to approve the minutes and another member seconded. All were in favor and none were opposed. The minutes of the meeting were approved as written.

2. Report from the Dean:

Dean Deak reported that it is dissertation and thesis season. Elise Thornley, Student Services Specialist in the Graduate School, will be offering online training and information sessions to assist with proper formatting.

This year's Doctoral hooding commencement ceremony will be held on Thursday, May 14, in the Anderson Center. The keynote speaker will be Dr. Chevelle Newsome, President of the Council of Graduate Schools.

The graduate admissions deadline for masters and PhDs is April 15.

a. Changes to Graduate Center for Professional Development

The Graduate Center for Professional Development and Postdoctoral Affairs has been split into two separate entities.

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The Graduate Center for Professional Development focuses on university-wide professional and career development, fostering teaching and mentoring excellence, and enriching the overall graduate and postdoc experience.

The Office of Postdoctoral Affairs welcomes postdocs to the Binghamton campus and continues to support them throughout their time here. Its goal is to connect to postdocs and support the development of a thriving postdoctoral community that fosters collegiality, community, and professional development.

b. Changes to Guide (membership, standing, certificates)
A review of Graduate School policies has been completed. The manual and academic guide were reviewed for redundancy and clarification. These policies were moved to the By-laws or Academic Guide and will be removed from the Manual to prevent conflicting information. There were only a few changes to policy, and these were reviewed and approved by the Academic Standards Committee. Most of the changes were simple clarifications.

c. Changes to the website (postdocs)
A new heading of Office of Postdoctoral Affairs has been added to the Graduate School website that provides information and resources specific to postdocs.

d. Strategic planning update
A draft of the President's new Strategic Plan is complete. Graduate education is prominently featured which will impact the work of Graduate Council.

e. Middle States curricular mapping
Curricular mapping is due with WEAVE at the end of July. If you need assistance, reach out to Kim Yousey-Elsener.

f. Survey on Assistantships
The Graduate School is launching an initiative to better understand the greatest needs of our graduate assistants supported by GA/TA positions. We want to understand the unique strategies you use to support your students and the challenges you face. The goal is to identify innovation and trends that allow us to better advocate for the doctoral community at an institutional level. We ask that the graduate directors for each program provide their perspective via the survey link by May 22.

g. Doctoral Transition Award
A one-time award to help incoming scholars focus on their research during their first weeks at Binghamton by bridging the gap before their first official paycheck. Payment will be made in the form of a one-time payment in the amount of $750. Incoming PhD students in research-based programs who have been awarded a doctoral assistantship (SUNY-funded GA/TA or RF-funded RPA) are eligible. Funds will be available in early August (or January) via physical check. To confirm enrollment, students must pick up their checks in person at the Graduate School after registering. Full details can be found at https://www.binghamton.edu/grad-school/cost-funding/doctoraltransitionaward.html

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3. **Subcommittee Updates**
   - **a.** Academic Standards Committee – met on March 17
   - **b.** Diversity Committee – met on March 18
   - **c.** Professional Development Committee – met on March 18, made distinguished dissertation, CGS and Chancellor's Award decisions
   - **d.** Budget Advisory Committee – did not meet
   - **e.** Grievance Committee – did not meet
   - **f.** Strategic Planning Committee – did not meet

4. **Graduate Council Elections**

Welcome to our new members for academic years 2026-2028:

a. New Graduate Director Representatives (graduate director caucus):
- Joshua (Josh) Felver, CCPA
- Shahrzad (Sherry) Towfighian, Watson

b. New Faculty Representatives (Tenured/Tenure-Track ballot vote):
- Kristen Prior, Harpur (Science and Mathematics)
- Elizabeth (Liz) Mellin, CCPA
- Yu David Liu, Watson
- Tony Davis, SoPPS

Thank you to those who served and whose terms expire at the end of the academic year:
- Prabhu Anil Bhor, GSO President
- Pegor Aynajian, Harpur (Science and Mathematics) Faculty Representative
- Samiksha Gaur, GSO Representative
- Loretta (Lucky) Mason-Williams, CCPA Faculty Representative
- Jacqueline (Jackie) McGinley, CCPA Graduate Director Representative
- Vladimir Nikulin, Watson Faculty Representative
- Hiroki Sayama, Watson Graduate Director Representative
- Hayley Thayer, GSO Representative
- Rosko Tzolov, GSO Representative
- Tao Zhang, SoPPS Faculty Representative

5. **Upcoming Deadlines:**
   - **a.** Thesis Submissions – May 6
   - **b.** Travel Awards – July 1

6. **Any Other Business:**

Dr. Sausner shared that a writing challenge was launched in the fall, which challenged participants to commit to writing 30 minutes per day. Fourteen signed up for the challenge at that time. It was relaunched after spring break and 55 signed up.

Dr. Ignarri provided an update on program proposals. Last year 20 proposals were approved, with five carrying over to the current academic year. In 2025-2026, the volume of submissions has nearly tripled (66 so far this year). Submissions include new program proposals,

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reregistration of existing programs, new combined, or deactivations/discontinuations of programs.

Dr. Yousey-Elsener reported that public-facing dashboards summarizing key metrics for all programs, enrollment, etc. are nearly complete and will be rolled out soon.

A new Graduate School communications schedule has been developed as follows:

	Graduate School Newsletter	**News and Notes**	**Dean's Messages**
Timing	Every other Wednesday	Every other Wednesday, alternating with the Newsletter	As necessary
Audience	Students, postdocs, faculty, and staff	Graduate Directors and Chairs	Graduate Directors and Chairs
Purpose	General updates and community news	Targeted internal notes	High-priority communiques from Dean

The Graduate School Newsletter and News and Notes will be sent via B-Engaged. If you unsubscribe, you will not receive any communications.

There being no further business, Dr. Reno asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. A member made a motion to adjourn and another member seconded. All were in favor and none were opposed. The meeting was adjourned at 3:48 p.m.

*****Next Meeting: September 2026 (date/time TBD)*****
Couper Administration Building, AD-148