

1 Meeting Minutes of the Graduate Council

2  
3 April 11, 2017

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5 Members Present: D. Baker (MKHP), D. Bellar (KNES), H. Damico (CODI), Mark DeWitt  
6 (MUS), M. Farmer-Kaiser (ex-officio member), A. Fekih (ELEE), E. Habib (CIVE), D.  
7 Harrington (NURS), K. Hermann-Turner (COUE), R. Hernandez (CHEE), H. Hurst (NURS), M.  
8 Kightley (ENGL), J. Lemoine (NURS), A. Magidin (MATH), K. McClung (ARCH), D. Olivier  
9 (EDFL), C. Parker (HIST), C. Ratliff (ENGL), C. Roche-Wallace (MUS), D. Stevens (MGMT),  
10 M. Young (PhD ALSS)

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12 Members Absent: J. Albert (BIOL), P. Das (ECON), S. Gawronski (GSO), C. Richter (GEOL),  
13 K. Smith (ARCH), W. Xu (CHEM)

14  
15 Guest Present: John Tetnowski (Chair of the University Committee for Graduate Student Success  
16 and Retention)

17  
18 H. Hurst called the meeting to order at 2:04.

19  
20 H. Hurst asked adjust the order of the agenda to accommodate the scheduling needs of our guest,  
21 Dr. John Tetnowski. All were agreeable.

22  
23 J. Tetnowski thanked the Council for the opportunity to speak on behalf of the University  
24 Committee on Graduate Student Success and Retention. While the Committee's annual report to  
25 the Council would be coming next month, he explained that a policy recommendation had come  
26 forth from the Committee that he, and the other members of the Committee, hoped the Council  
27 would consider it prior to the end of this academic year. This policy recommendation provided to  
28 the Council proposes the creation of a policy that would allow graduate students, in very specific  
29 instances, to request an official leave of absence for up to one year. The goal of the policy is,  
30 first, to provide the opportunity for graduate student to "stop out" with thoughtful intention and  
31 notification to the University (i.e., chair, graduate coordinator/program, Graduate School,  
32 Registrar's Office) and, second, to make it easier for a "stopped out" student to return. J.  
33 Tetnowski explained that the policy recommendation comes as a result of exit survey findings  
34 and a review of similar policies at other institutions, including those in Louisiana as well as peers  
35 and aspirational peers. Further, he indicated that the intent was to introduce the recommendation  
36 and take questions with the hope that members of the Council would then take it back to their  
37 departments to discuss and, if agreeable, come back in May to consider formally. After J.  
38 Tetnowski presented the proposal, H. Hurst opened the floor for questions. Members of the  
39 Council posed several questions for clarification and discussion ensued. D. Stevens asked if the  
40 leave of absence was always for one year. J. Tetnowski stated that the leave policy proposed  
41 allowing for a period of not to exceed one year. D. Harrington asked if this would require a  
42 change of catalog. M. Farmer-Kaiser explained that the intention was to "stop the clock" so they  
43 would come back as they left off with the same catalog and without having to reapply, which  
44 would dictate a change of catalog. J. Tetnowski indicated that the Committee would make  
45 revision to clarify this intention in the proposed policy. K. Hermann-Turner asked about the  
46 impact of "W" policies on students granted a leave of absence mid-semester. J. Tetnowski

1 pointed to the proposed policy’s passage that states: “An approved leave of absence does not  
2 automatically cancel any registrations. If a graduate student is registered/enrolled for the  
3 semester(s) included in the approved leave, they must cancel the registration(s) and/or formally  
4 withdraw from courses. Failure to do so will result in assessment of tuition/fees and assigned  
5 grades for the course(s).” Discussion continued centered upon the proposed acceptable reasons,  
6 which included medical reasons, family necessity or dependent care, and/or military service but  
7 not financial hardship. The Council also questioned whether the University allowed graduate  
8 students to pay a nominal fee to stay ABD without having to enroll formally; presently, the  
9 University does not provide such an opportunity but rather requires continuous enrollment. The  
10 Council also discussed whether this policy might be abused by students attempting to write their  
11 dissertations and/or make progress toward degree without paying tuition as well as ways to  
12 combat such potential abuses. J. Tetnowski emphasized the important role to be played by those  
13 involved in the approval process; he also reminded the Council of the policy’s statement that  
14 eliminates access to University faculty, facilities, resources, or services (with the exception of  
15 email) to students on approved leave of absence. M. Farmer-Kaiser added that the policy states  
16 the student cannot complete any degree requirements while on official leave. Additional points  
17 of discussion focused on considerations of the impact that an approved leave of absence would  
18 have on funding, VISAs, and financial aid. After much discussion, H. Hurst asked Council  
19 members to take the policy back to their departments for review. She also suggested that they  
20 contact J. Tetnowski with any comments or suggestions for revision. H. Hurst thanked J.  
21 Tetnowski for his time and he departed the meeting.

22  
23 Before continuing with the agenda as printed, H. Hurst explained that members of the Council  
24 had been provided the formal charges of the two ad hoc committees, which had been promised at  
25 the March meeting.

26  
27 H. Hurst continued with the agenda as printed and asked if anyone had any corrections or  
28 additions to the March 14, 2017 meeting minutes. J. Lemoine ask for clarification about the  
29 Curriculum Committee report, indicating that she had provided a verbal report at the March  
30 meeting. C. Ratliff indicated that she was marked present and was actually at a conference and  
31 did not attend. Motion made to accept the March minutes, as amended with these changes.  
32 Motion carried.

### 33 34 **Announcements**

35  
36 H. Hurst presented to the Council applicants to candidacy. She asked if there was a reason some  
37 Nursing students indicated FNP and some Nursing; it was concluded the degree program  
38 identified was dependent upon how the student completed the Application to Candidacy form.  
39 Motion made to accept the Applicants to Candidacy report. Motion carried.

40  
41 H. Hurst provided an update on the Grand Marshals invitations for the Spring and Summer  
42 commencements. She reported that Claire Foret has accepted the Council’s invitation to serve as  
43 Grand Marshal for the Spring commencement General Assembly ceremony. She further reported  
44 that, unfortunately, the faculty member invited to serve in this capacity for the Summer  
45 commencement had declined. The Council agreed upon another faculty member to invite to  
46 serve in this capacity at the Summer Commencement and directed M. Farmer-Kaiser to extend

1 the invitation and report back at the May meeting.

2  
3 H. Hurst asked for an update on Provost Approval of Outstanding Senior Catalog Change. M.  
4 Farmer-Kaiser indicated they were still waiting for approval.

5  
6 Finally, H. Hurst reminded members of the Council that elections for college representatives  
7 would be taking place prior to our next meeting and, at the next meeting, members of the  
8 Council would elect a new chairperson. M. Farmer-Kaiser indicated that a call for nominations  
9 already had been sent out to members of the Graduate Faculty; she also reported that, this year,  
10 we would be electing a member from each academic college with a graduate program. She and  
11 H. Hurst asked members to encourage people to consider running for election.

## 12 13 **Committee reports**

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15 Student Appeals – no report

16  
17 Curriculum – J. Lemoine presented the written report. She also asked members of the Council to  
18 remind their various constituencies to submit course change/creation forms as soon as possible as  
19 the Committee will end its work for the academic year shortly. Motion made to accept the report  
20 as submitted. Motion carried.

21  
22 Fellowships – H. Hurst summarized the fellowship report, which had been submitted by Jeanne  
23 Cartier and provided to members of the Council prior to the meeting. Motion made to accept the  
24 report as submitted. Motion carried.

25  
26 Graduate Faculty Membership – Committee report submitted by William Ferguson, not present.  
27 The report was submitted as two parts, with the first (submitted by the Graduate School on  
28 behalf of Dr. Ferguson) including recommendations for appointment of 19 applicants that  
29 received unanimous support from their three college review entities at the level to which they  
30 applied (and thus not requiring review by the Graduate Faculty Membership Committee) and the  
31 second, a report from the Committee that offered recommendations for the 7 applications it  
32 reviewed and additional policy-related points for consideration by the Council.

33  
34 The Council acted on the Committee report in multiple motions. Motion made to accept the 19  
35 appointment recommendations that contained no discrepancies among the three college review  
36 entities (as presented in the report submitted by the Graduate School on behalf of W. Ferguson).  
37 Motion seconded and passed unanimously. The Council then turned its attention to the second  
38 report (as submitted by W. Ferguson) that addressed the remaining 7 applications. Discussion  
39 centered in particular on the Committee's recommendation to "table (could not act upon)" one  
40 application because "the College has neither specific departmental, nor generalizable College,  
41 guidelines currently in place that could be readily applied to the applicant." M. Farmer-Kaiser  
42 reported that the College in question is presently working to revise its criteria but that the process  
43 is not yet complete. Members of the Council debated what options it had for action on this  
44 application, especially in light of technology failures that prevented the Council from reviewing  
45 the applicant's CV and recommendations from the three college review entities. Motion made to  
46 table a decision on this application until the May meeting. Motion carried. Motion made to

1 accept the recommendations of the Committee on the six remaining applicants. Motion carried  
2 unaniously.

### 3 4 **Old Business**

5  
6 H. Hurst invited M. Kightley to present the report from the Ad Hoc Committee on Non-Thesis  
7 Master's Degree Minimum Credit Requirement Policy. M Kightley began by thanking the other  
8 members of the committee—D. Baker, K. Hermann-Turner, and K. McClung—for their work  
9 and the Graduate School for gathering several data requests. He continued by reviewing the  
10 committee's charge, which was to make a formal recommendation on whether to maintain our  
11 current minimum credit requirement of 33 semester hours for non-thesis Master's degree  
12 requirements or to reduce this requirement to 30 semester hours as permitted by the UL System  
13 Board Bylaws and Rules. The committee, he reported, considered the policies of identified peer  
14 and Louisiana institutions as well as consulted with UL Lafayette Graduate Coordinators and the  
15 Dean of the Graduate School. He proceeded by using the written report to highlight the  
16 committee's key findings, both from the peer benchmarking and consultation with Graduate  
17 Coordinators, for the Council. Continuing, he presented the committee's conclusions, which  
18 included: (1) Minimums of either 30 or 33 total hours for a non-thesis Master's degree would be  
19 within the norms for universities of our stature and location; (2) While reducing our minimum  
20 total hours for a non-thesis Master's degree to 30 would reduce our university to the lower edge  
21 of our peer range, it would also bring our university closer in line with the majority of these peer  
22 institutions, whether local (57%) or even aspirational (70%); (3) While there is the possibility of  
23 eroding rigor, the likelihood of this is low for the foreseeable future; moreover, this erosion  
24 could not progress any further due to UL System requirements; and (4) The advantages to certain  
25 programs and to certain student constituencies could be significant. Finally, he reported the  
26 committee's formal recommendation: The committee therefore formally recommends that the  
27 Graduate Council reduce the University's current minimum credit requirements from 33 to 30  
28 semester hours of coursework for non-thesis Master's degree programs. Discussion ensued with  
29 questions and comments focused, generally, on concerns about whether this change would erode  
30 rigor in our Master's programs; what institutional pressures might exist to reduce degree  
31 requirements as a way to increase the number of completers; whether there should be a  
32 difference between the number of semester hours required for thesis vs. non-thesis tracks; the  
33 various accreditation and program review requirements in place to ensure quality programs; and  
34 the difference that three hours can make in recruiting applicants who are considering both cost  
35 and time to degree. M. Kightley emphasized, ultimately, that the recommendation of the  
36 committee does not affect the ability of individual programs to set higher minimums for their  
37 degree programs. Motion made to accept the recommendation of the committee. Motion carried  
38 unaniously. M. Farmer-Kaiser thanked the members of the committee for their important,  
39 thorough work.

### 40 41 **New Business**

42  
43 H. Hurst asked the Dean of the Graduate School to provide a brief report on 2017 Graduate  
44 Student Appreciation Week activities. M. Farmer-Kaiser thanked everyone for encouraging  
45 students to participate and for volunteering to attend events and to judge the various research  
46 competitions. Events started on Sunday evening and continued through Friday afternoon. While

1 some events were not as well attended as we had hoped, others had strong—if not record-  
2 setting—participation. The Etiquette Dinner, for example, initially had great registration but bad  
3 weather resulted in lower attendance. The Theater Delta presentations on mentoring for faculty  
4 and students were incredibly well received and important offerings, but they were not well  
5 attended. The Doctoral Candidacy Recognition Ceremony was the highlight of the week with  
6 nearly 100 people in attendance. Dr. Taylor Sloey, a UL alumna gave the keynote address,  
7 “From ABD to OMG to PHD,” which was outstanding. Dr. Savoie participated in the event even  
8 though he had to leave early to attend the Honors Convocation the same night. (We will take care  
9 to avoid overlapping with such important events in the future.) The Graduate School “Facebook  
10 Live” feeds covering the two “Lunch and Learn” workshops and the 3MT Finals allowed us to  
11 reach an audience beyond those who attended in person—so far we reached over 1,000 views  
12 with these three videos. The Research Showcase, which included the 3MT competition as well as  
13 paper and poster competitions, awarded over \$4,000 in prize money. Perhaps more important, we  
14 had 86 participants, the largest number of participants ever. H. Hurst thanked Dean Farmer-  
15 Kaiser and her staff for all their work during that week. D. Olivier stated that the cakes were a  
16 nice touch as well. M. Farmer-Kaiser made sure to give praise to the SGA for this addition to  
17 Graduate Student Appreciation Week, as it was the SGA graduate student president who came  
18 up with the idea and convinced SGA to fund it; the Graduate School merely helped deliver the  
19 cakes to individual departments that had graduate programs. H. Hurst extended many thanks to  
20 SGA for that contribution.

21

22 The meeting was adjourned at 3:35