

**University Graduate Committee Meeting Minutes Wednesday, February 21, 2024**

**3:00-5:00pm – Online Via Zoom**

**Members Present:**  Michael Amundson (History), Colleen Byron (Organizational Leadership), Joe Collentine (Spanish), Tiffany Cooke (Physician Assistant Studies), Mandy Dang (Business), Brooke de Heer (Criminology and Criminal Justice), Jared Duval (SICCS Graduate Programs), Catrin Edgeley (Forestry), Joshua Emery (Astronomy & Planetary Science), Visar Farhangi (Civil Engineering Construction Management and Environmental Engineering), Heidi Feigenbaum (Engineering-Mechanical), Slava Fofanov (SICCS), Jeff Foster (Biology), Nicole Hampton (Educational Specialties), Stephanie Hurst (Chemistry), Mahendra Joshi (MBA), Donna Lewis (Educational Leadership), Nanette Lopez (Interdisciplinary Health), Debbie Mariage (Office of Graduate and Professional Studies), Stephen Meserve (Politics and International Affairs ), Gabriel Montano (Applied Physics and Material Science), Gretchen McAllister (Teaching and Learning), Truong Nghiem (SICCS), Brettania O’Connor (Health Sciences), Michelle Parsons (Anthropology), Luke Plonsky (English), Natalie Randolph (Social Work), Sandra Stewart (Clinical Speech and Language Pathology), Jim Swift (Mathematics and Statistics), Nora Timmerman (Sustainable Communities), Ann Vert (Nursing & PL), Ugaya Wagle (Public Administration and PIA), Andy Walters (Psychological Sciences), Kyle Winfree (Chair)

**Members Absent:** John Fegyveresi (Climate Science & Solutions), Cesar Flores (College of International Education), Matthew Ford (Physical Therapy), Matthew Gidley (Biology), Marie-Christine Goodworth (PsyD), Ron Grady (Global Languages and Culture), Liza Holeski (Biology), Chelseigh Keene (Educational Psychology), Marcus Macktima (History), Leslie Mitchell (Academic Success Coordinator, CEIAS), Jose Moreno (Ethnic Studies), Gillian Porter (Occupational Therapy), Rich Rogers (Communication), Kerry Thompson (Provost Office), Franklin Vernon (Geography Planning and Recreation)

**Ex Officio:** Brittany Blanchard (Library), Kelly Janecek (Office of Graduate and Professional Studies/OGPS), Melinda Treml (Curriculum and Assessment) Maribeth Watwood (Vice Provost OGPS)

**Guest Speakers:** KT Thompson (University Ombuds), Laura Umphrey (University OmBuds), Ian Wischmeier (Registrar)

**UGC Chair Kyle Winfree welcomed everyone to the meeting and the meeting came to order at 3:02 pm MST.**

1. **Administrative Actions**
	1. November Meeting Minutes
		1. Motion to approve the UGC November 2023 meeting minutes as distributed was made by Ann Vert and seconded by Colleen Byron; **minutes were approved** (0 nay votes, 26 aye votes, 0 abstentions), via zoom chat box.
	2. Co-Chair Election Update
		1. Nicole Hampton has removed herself from the nomination, Natalie Randolph is now the sole candidate. The candidate has been asked to prepare a one-page (or less) statement responding to four prompts, and will also be asked to verbalize their statement for the committee at the March 27, 2024 meeting, and will be given five minutes to present followed by fifteen minutes for questions from the committee.
2. **General Discussion, Updates:**
	1. Ombuds Office Observations and Student Concerns
		1. Laura Umphrey and KT Thompson informed the committee that OmBuds is now renamed, University Ombuds, and can assist graduate students and faculty and offers both individual consultations and group facilitation/mediation. The University Ombud’s primary goal is to empower individuals to reach their full potential in the workplace and to promote a safe, equitable, and inclusive workplace.
		2. Laura Umphrey encouraged the committee to talk to their departments about establishing a handbook or code of conduct relating to guidelines for the advisor-graduate student relationship and establishing expectations for those different roles.
		3. The conversation continued with questions from the committee. Slava Fofanov asked for resources to point students to for problems they have with faculty. Brittany Blanchard suggested to research mentee-mentor contracts, where those involved can go over expectations and establish an open line of communication regarding their roles.
		4. The University Ombud’s office is reachable via their website at https://in.nau.edu/university-ombuds-program/ or at ombuds.office@nau.edu
	2. Concurrent Masters to Dual Degrees Policies and Processes Update
		1. Melinda Treml gave an update regarding the concurrent masters to dual degrees project. Melinda updated the committee that the current concurrent master's degree policy and practice is still in place, but the concurrent master's to dual degrees process is still in the works. Melinda mentioned complexities including technology, campus locations, and varying program fees.
		2. Melinda gave an expected start date for the Fall of 2025. The delay is due to new discovered nuances that need to be vetted.
3. **Policies under continued discussion**
	1. Satisfactory Academic Progress
		1. Melinda Treml gave updates to the satisfactory academic progress specifically for Ph.D. programs wherein students receive financial aid. PHD students with a lengthy dissertation process, may encounter issues with the federal government when assessing their “in progress” metric. Melinda encouraged the committee to start a conversation within their departments regarding faculty to assign passing grades to Ph.D. students when their dissertation process is extended, so there is documentation for the federal government that the student’s progress is still advancing.
		2. Committee members established that there could be many issues with this contract, such as issues with the business side as well as adding more work for instructors. Melinda referenced that the Federal Financial Aid office’s “Pace of Progress” and “Maximum units toward degree,” both have different requirements from the student, requiring a dual solution.
		3. Melinda asked the committee to continue to think about this process and to meet with her for any comments.
	2. Course Repeat, Graduate (Grade Replacement) Policy 100318; Interaction with the Academic Integrity Policy 100601
		1. Slava led this discussion. Suggestion to remove wording within the current policy. Previous discussion of these policies was focused on how the committee could not focus solely on 100318 without looking at 100601. Slava offered the discussion be led by deciding how to move forward with the proposed changes. Suggestions included creating a subcommittee to look directly at these policies and possibly bringing it to the academic standards committee for their review.
		2. Previous discussions were suggestive of having independent departments decide whether or not they want to have students repeat a maximum of six credits, but with possible new outlooks, there may be a call for an alternative. Kyle sent out a Zoom poll with four options for the question do you favor a change or no change in the current course repeat/grade replacement policy: No change and no replacement options, support changes in favor of replacement options, I am on the fence about this policy and a minor revision might be good, and I do not have an opinion. A majority of those who answered the poll voted in favor of replacement options, while a limited amount of people voted for no replacement options.
		3. A conversation ensued from the committee regarding the complexity of revisions for each department and program. Slava offered for the creation of a subcommittee to investigate this further. Committee members volunteered to participate in the subcommittee.
4. **Open Discussion:**
	1. “Grading Up”
		1. A suggestion submitted to the open discussion portion of the UGC meeting was a conversation regarding “Grading Up.” Grading up is the idea that graduate students can be awarded a better grade compared to an undergraduate. Kyle asked if any departments or programs have any “Grading Up” expectations.
		2. The UGC discussed the possible outcomes of awarding graduate students varying grades, what grade rankings mean, and the policy implications. The committee also discussed student pressures, expectations, and pressures related to grades and classes.
5. **OGPS Reports:**
	1. Vice Provost for Academic Programming and Graduate Studies, Maribeth Watwood:
		1. Maribeth gave updates on Dr. Pugliesi agreeing to continue serving as Provost and thanked her for her continued commitment to NAU.
		2. Maribeth gave an update on the 100% Career Ready project, stating that she is currently completing a summary of all the great work that has been completed. The Office of Graduate and Professional Studies will be offering summer stipends for faculty again this summer to continue the work.
		3. Maribeth mentioned that the Ombuds Office has submitted a current report for the last reporting quarter. One of the main comments was that graduate students worry about their relationships with their faculty mentors, an expressed fear of retribution, which is startling to Maribeth and anathema to everything that we all are working toward.
		4. Maribeth asked that any UGC members send in stories regarding graduating students who will be graduating this spring so the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies can promote their stories.
	2. Associate Vice Provost of the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies, Laura Bounds:
		1. Laura informed the UGC that the previous Thesis and Dissertation Writing Bootcamp on Friday, January 26th 8:30-12:00 via Zoom, had 35 attendees and was very successful.
		2. Laura reminded the UGC to sign up for UGC service.
		3. Laura gave an update on ***Entering Mentoring***. The Office of Graduate and Professional Studies has 21 CEFNS and CEIAS faculty in the ***Entering Mentoring*** graduate student research-focused cohort. This is offered in collaboration with the TLC & Cline Library*.* The curriculum was developed by the Center for the Improvement of Mentored Experiences in Research (CIMER), is an evidence-based, interactive approach designed to help mentors develop skills for engaging in productive, culturally responsive, research mentoring relationships—relationships that optimize the success of both mentors and mentees.
		4. The Graduate AAR phase 1 and 2 are live now. There are 48 GCERTS and Masters degrees in Phase 1 and 23 GCERTS, Masters, and Doctoral degrees in Phase 2. The Graduate AAR will be partnered with the POS until the processes have been fully transitioned. The recordings for previous Graduate AAR training are on the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies website.
		5. Laura reminded the UGC that the graduation deadline to be included in the commencement booklet is Thursday, February 15th.
		6. Laura asked the UGC to promote the upcoming Office of Graduate and Professional Studies, Presidential Fellowship, Quayle, and SGS scholarships to students. More information can be found on the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies website.
	3. Chair, Kyle Winfree
		1. Kyle asked the committee to email him with any points for discussion for the open discussion period of the UGC meeting.
6. Motion to Adjourn the meeting: Slava Fofanov moved to adjourn, seconded by Luke Plonsky.

**The meeting adjourned at: 5:04 p.m. MST.**