



Graduate Faculty Council (GFC) Meeting Agenda
3:00 to 5:00 – Wednesday, January 25th, 2023
Virtual meeting via WebEx

Date: 25th of January 2023, 3:00 PM-5:00 PM

Location: [Virtual meeting via WebEx](#)

Subject: Graduate Faculty Council of The Graduate School (GFC) meeting minutes

Attendees: Mary Anne Amalaradjou, Marina Astitha, David Atkin, Fakhreddin Azimi, Talia Bar, Mary Bernstein (*Ex-Officio*), Karen Bresciano (*Ex-Officio*), Preston Britner, Kelly Burke, Jack Corcoran (*Ex-Officio*, *Recording Secretary*), Kirstie Cope-Ferrar, Thomas Craemer, Jose Cruz, Moustapha Diaby, Kimberly Dodge-Kafka, Valerie Duffy, Meg Feely, Victoria Ford Smith, Neal Glaviano, David Gregorio, Travis Grossner, Louis Hanzlik, Thomas Hayes, Ashley Helton, Magdalena Kaufmann, Heejoo Kim, Todd Kravet, Barbara Kream (*Ex-Officio*), Nicole Landi, Jacqueline Loss, Elizabeth Mayerson, D. Betsy McCoach, Ovidiu Munteanu, Julian Norato, Michael J. O'Neill, Dan Pejril, Gianna Raimondi (*Ex-Officio*), Chadwick Rittenhouse, Alexander Russell, Kurt Schwenk, Leslie Shor (*Ex-Officio*), Helena Silva, Tammie Spaulding, Matthew Stuber, Judith Thorpe, Nathaniel Trumbull, Randall Walikonis, Andrew Wiemer, Suzanne Wilson, Ping Zhang, Yuping Zhang, Xinyu Zhao

Absent: Heather Battaly, Christopher Blesso, Deborah Bolnick, Hannah Dostal, Niloy Dutta, David Embrick, Monty Escabi, Nathan Fiala, Alexandra Freidus, Kent Holsinger (*Ex-Officio*), Julia Kuzovkina, William Ouimet, Eugene Pinkhassik, Diana Rios, Guillermo Risatti, Prabhakar Singh, Aditya Tadinada, Penny Vlahos, Alexander Woodward

Guests: Lesley Salafia

1. The meeting is called to order at 3:04 pm.
2. Presented for voting: Approval of the Minutes from the November 16th, 2022, meeting.

- a. A motion is made to approve the previous meeting's minutes by Valerie Duffy. The motion is seconded by Mary Anne Amalaradjou. The minutes are approved unanimously.
- 3. Report from the Graduate Student Senate.
 - a. Gianna Raimondi reported concerns from on behalf of many graduate students who were shocked by sudden student fee increases that they were not made aware of until they were implemented. Raimondi asked the faculty of the GFC if they were made aware of these fee increases before they went into effect, to which multiple members of the council stated they had no idea either. Karen Bresciano asks Raimondi what can be done to support the graduate students and provide full transparency moving forward. Raimondi stated that it would be helpful to know where to begin with the negotiation process to decrease these fees and proposed a potential energy crisis relief option to assist graduate students in their off campus living situations. Raimondi and Bresciano agree to meet further on this matter.
- 4. New Business:
 - a. Affirmative Action in Graduate Admissions (Senior Associate University Counsel, UConn, Lesley Salafia and Associate Dean Mary Bernstein)
 - i. Lesley Salafia from the Office of the General Counsel presented with Associate Dean Bernstein on the recent Supreme Court cases regarding the use of race in the college admissions process. Salafia outlined the extensive history of the use of race in higher education, discussing many court cases that have permitted this use, as long as it is in good faith, passes a strict scrutiny standard, and is used to promote and achieve diversity within an institution. Additionally, Salafia shared statistics regarding UConn's diversity standard, including the university's process of holistic review, and how it has provided many benefits to the student body as a collective, including the skill of adaptability and training a workforce that is able to understand and effectively work with a wide breadth of people.
 - ii. On October 31st, 2022, the U.S. Supreme Court heard cases involving Harvard University and the University of North Carolina, where the plaintiffs, the Students for Fair Admissions (SFFA) argue that previous court cases are no longer effective in today's climate, and that the constitution is "color blind." Furthermore, the Harvard University case specifically cites evidence of Asian-American discrimination in their admissions. Although the outcome is still unknown, all faculty should prepare for a change in current admissions practices.
 - iii. Though UConn's current use of holistic review is effective in providing equal opportunity for all applicants and considers a wide range of factors, Salafia stated that we must consider the impact of the Court's decision on our admissions procedures. UConn is considering what changes might be needed depending on the outcome of the Supreme Court decision.
 - iv. Questions arose regarding the potential impact of a ruling on scholarships and fellowships, and if so, would the university be able to give extra funding in order to increase diversity. Salafia stated that the ruling could

affect these current practices of scholarship management, and alternatives with regard to federal funding would be difficult to navigate; specifics will only be known once the ruling is made by the end of June 2023.

- v. Questions arose as to whether UConn could consider it its strategic planning how to make the incorporation of diversity and contribution to the welfare of disadvantaged areas part of its mission. Salafia stated that nothing currently prohibits that. All changes would have to comply with whatever the Court rules.
- vi. David Gregorio asked if the university is considering a redefinition of the way it outlines and promotes its way of incorporating and evaluating its civic responsibilities in order to bring in a more diverse and representative student body. Associate Dean Bernstein stated that this could fall into the new Office of Public Engagement.
- vii. Madgalena Kaufmann questioned how international applicants and students alike would be affected. Salafia stated that those reporting statistics are required by the Department of Education, which could change its reporting requirements after the decision. Additionally, Norato pointed out the absence of the Hispanic population in the argument, to which Salafia confirmed there was little to no mention during the October hearing, so it will be unknown how it factors into potential new laws.
- viii. Furthermore, Salafia reaffirmed that if changes are made, all departments will be provided with extensive guidance and workshops on how to navigate and process the change for the next admissions cycle.

b. Proposed Bylaws Revision Re. Public Defenses (Section VII K.c. & d.)

i. Current Bylaws Language (Section VII K.c. & d.):

Section VII K. c. The oral defense of the dissertation must be announced publicly at least two weeks prior to the date of the defense.

Section VII K. d. Not fewer than five members of the faculty, including all members of the candidate's advisory committee, must participate in the final examination, unless written approval for a lesser number has been secured in advance from the Dean of The Graduate School.

ii. Proposed change in by-laws language:

Insert new Section VII K. d. between existing sections (with appropriate renumbering)

Section VII K. d. The oral defense of the dissertation must be open to the public.

iii. Proposed new (clean) by-laws language:

Section VII K. d. The oral defense of the dissertation must be open to the public.

Andrew Wiemer asked why students are being punished for not having a present faculty member who doesn't show up to their dissertation defense. Associate Dean Bernstein stated that students are not being punished, as five committee members is the requirement that departments must follow.

- c. Proposed Bylaws Revision Re. Academic Dismissal (Section IV E)
 - i. **Current Bylaws Language (Section IV E b.):**

Section IV E. b. If at any time a student's academic performance, progress in a graduate degree program, or professional development and/or suitability is judged by the advisory committee to be unsatisfactory to the degree that dismissal is warranted, the advisory committee must submit its written recommendation that the student be dismissed on such grounds. A major advisor may submit a written recommendation for academic dismissal to The Graduate major advisor alone submits School on behalf of the entire advisory committee, indicating the specific judgment on which the advisory committee's recommendation is based. For a student who does not have an established advisory committee, the recommendation.

- ii. **Proposed Change in Bylaws Language (Section IV E b.):**

Section IV E. b. If at any time a student's academic performance, progress in a graduate degree program, or professional development and/or suitability is judged by the advisory committee to be unsatisfactory to the degree that dismissal is warranted, the advisory committee must submit its written recommendation **to The Graduate School** that the student be dismissed on such grounds. ~~A major advisor may submit a written recommendation for academic dismissal to The Graduate School on behalf of the entire advisory committee,~~ indicating the specific judgment on which the advisory committee's recommendation is based. For a student who does not have an established advisory committee, the major advisor alone submits the recommendation. **The department head or the director of graduate studies for the program in which the student is enrolled must endorse the recommendation of the committee and document the reasonable attempts that have been made to find the student a pathway to completion.**

- iii. **Proposed new (clean) by-laws language:**

Section IV E. b. If at any time a student's academic performance, progress in a graduate degree program, or professional development and/or suitability is judged by the advisory committee to be unsatisfactory to the

degree that dismissal is warranted, the advisory committee must submit its written recommendation to The Graduate School that the student be dismissed on such grounds, indicating the specific judgment on which the advisory committee's recommendation is based. For a student who does not have an established advisory committee, the major advisor alone submits the recommendation. The department head or the director of graduate studies for the program in which the student is enrolled must endorse the recommendation of the committee and document the reasonable attempts that have been made to find the student a pathway to completion.

d. Proposed Bylaws Revision Re. Appeals

i. **Current Bylaws Language (Section X. A. a. & b.):**

X. COMPLAINT, APPEAL, AND HEARING PROCEDURES

A. *General:*

- a. Attempts by all parties to resolve disputes are strongly encouraged before pursuing resolution through The Graduate School. Assistance with problem-solving and mediation toward resolution should be pursued at local levels (e.g., program, department, and/or school) or through the University Ombuds Office.
- b. In the event that a resolution is not reached following such good faith efforts or in the rare case where the actions or behaviors alleged in the dispute are thought to be sufficiently extreme that it would be unreasonable to attempt prior resolution, as an action of last resort a complaint or appeal may be filed with The Graduate School. To begin the formal dispute resolution process through The Graduate School, the Complainant will submit either a complaint or an appeal.

ii. **Proposed Change in Bylaws Language (Section X. A. a. & b.):**

X. ~~COMPLAINT~~, APPEAL, AND HEARING PROCEDURES

A. General:

- a. Attempts by all parties to resolve disputes are strongly encouraged before pursuing dismissal or termination (**see Section IV**) ~~resolution through The Graduate School~~. Assistance with problem-solving and mediation toward resolution should be pursued at local levels (e.g., program, department, and/or school) or through the University Ombuds Office.

b. In the event that a resolution is not reached following such good faith efforts, ~~or in the rare case where the actions or behaviors alleged in the dispute are thought to be sufficiently extreme that it would be unreasonable to attempt prior resolution, as an action of last resort an~~ **complaint or appeal may be filed with through the formal dispute resolution process of The Graduate School.** ~~To begin the formal dispute resolution process through The Graduate School, the Complainant will submit either a complaint or an appeal.~~

iii. Proposed new (clean) by-laws language (Section X. A. a. & b.):

X. APPEAL, AND HEARING PROCEDURES

A. General:

a. Attempts by all parties to resolve disputes are strongly encouraged before pursuing dismissal or termination (see Section IV). Assistance with problem-solving and mediation toward resolution should be pursued at local levels (e.g., program, department, and/or school) or through the University Ombuds Office.

b. In the event that a resolution is not reached following such good faith efforts, an appeal may be filed through the formal dispute resolution process of The Graduate School.

e. Proposed Bylaws Revision Delete “Filing A Complaint”

i. Current Bylaws Language (Section X. B):

B. Filing a Complaint:

- a. A graduate student may file a complaint with The Graduate School when the student believes that actions or behaviors governed by this procedure have occurred and when all good faith efforts to resolve the complaint either through direct communication with the individual(s) involved or through applicable procedures in the graduate program, department, school, or college, have failed. Categories of complaints to which this procedure applies include, but are not limited to the following:
 - a. Unfair application of policies:
 - b. A hostile environment: ...
 - c. Unfair decisions...
 - d. Interference or intimidation...

- b. To be addressed under this procedure, a complaint must be submitted using The Graduate School Complaint Form. The complaint form must include...
- c. Complaints to The Graduate School may not be filed anonymously...
- d. The complaint process will follow the guidelines
- e. Consistent with the University's Non-Retaliation Policy...

ii. Proposed Change in Bylaws Language (Section X. B):

~~B. Filing a Complaint:~~

- ~~a. A graduate student may file a complaint with The Graduate School when the student believes that actions or behaviors governed by this procedure have occurred and when all good faith efforts to resolve the complaint either through direct communication with the individual(s) involved or through applicable procedures in the graduate program, department, school, or college, have failed. Categories of complaints to which this procedure applies include, but are not limited to the following:~~
 - ~~a. Unfair application of policies:~~
 - ~~b. A hostile environment: ...~~
 - ~~c. Unfair decisions...~~
 - ~~d. Interference or intimidation...~~
- ~~b. To be addressed under this procedure, a complaint must be submitted using The Graduate School Complaint Form. The complaint form must include...~~
- ~~c. Complaints to The Graduate School may not be filed anonymously...~~
- ~~d. The complaint process will follow the guidelines~~
- ~~e. Consistent with the University's Non-Retaliation Policy...~~

f. Proposed Bylaws Revision Re. Hearing Procedure (remove term "complaint")

i. Current Bylaws Language (Section X. D. a. & b.):

D. Graduate School Hearing Procedure:

- a. When a student submits an appeal form or a complaint form, a staff member from The Graduate School will contact the person who submitted the form within two business days to discuss the hearing procedures, answer any questions, and collect any additional information. Information will then be forwarded to the Hearing Officer (an Associate/Assistant Dean of The Graduate School).

- b. The Hearing Officer will review the information submitted, may request additional clarification from either party, and will consider all relevant information in determining whether the case should be referred to a Hearing Committee (described below). In particular, evidence of “good faith effort” at mediation will be considered. Within 25 business days of the student submitting the written complaint/appeal, the Hearing Officer will determine whether the case should be referred to a Hearing Committee.

ii. Proposed Change in Bylaws Language (Section X. D. a. & b.):

D. Graduate School Hearing Procedure:

- a. When a student submits an appeal form ~~or a complaint form~~, a staff member from The Graduate School will contact the person who submitted the form within two business days to discuss the hearing procedures, answer any questions, and collect any additional information. Information will then be forwarded to the Hearing Officer (an Associate/Assistant Dean of The Graduate School).
- b. The Hearing Officer will review the information submitted, may request additional clarification from either party, and will consider all relevant information in determining whether the case should be referred to a Hearing Committee (described below). In particular, evidence of “good faith effort” at mediation will be considered. Within 25 business days of the student submitting the written ~~complaint/appeal~~, the Hearing Officer will determine whether the case should be referred to a Hearing Committee.

iii. Proposed new (clean) by-laws language (Section X. D. a. & b.):

D. Graduate School Hearing Procedure:

- a. When a student submits an appeal form, a staff member from The Graduate School will contact the person who submitted the form within two business days to discuss the hearing procedures, answer any questions, and collect any additional information. Information will then be forwarded to the Hearing Officer (an Associate/Assistant Dean of The Graduate School).
- b. The Hearing Officer will review the information submitted, may request additional clarification from either party, and will consider all relevant information in determining whether the case should be referred to a Hearing Committee (described below). In particular, evidence of “good faith effort” at mediation will be considered. Within 25 business days of the student submitting the written

appeal, the Hearing Officer will determine whether the case should be referred to a Hearing Committee.

g. Proposed Bylaws Revision Re. Hearing Procedure (Delete X.D.c.)

i. **Current Bylaws Language (Section X. D. c.):**

The following issues are not managed through The Graduate School Hearing Procedures and therefore will not be forwarded to a Hearing Committee: (1) belief of an error in grading, and (2) matters addressed by other existing University policies or procedures including, but not limited to, allegations of research misconduct on federally sponsored projects, conduct proscribed by the Student Code, harassment, complaints of retaliation and/or retaliation, employment matters, and conflicts of interest. The Hearing Officer with jurisdiction (Storrs or UConn Health) may at their sole discretion determine that a complaint or appeal falls under the jurisdiction of the Student Code, the Policy on Scholarly Integrity in Graduate Education and Research, the Policy Statement on Harassment, the Policy on Conflict of Interest in Research, or any other existing University policy that provides for resolution of complaints. Should the Hearing Officer determine that the complaint should be addressed through other procedures, the Hearing Officer will notify the parties involved and refer the complaint to the appropriate University officials.

ii. **Proposed Change in Bylaws Language (Section X. D. c.):**

~~The following issues are not managed through The Graduate School Hearing Procedures and therefore will not be forwarded to a Hearing Committee: (1) belief of an error in grading, and (2) matters addressed by other existing University policies or procedures including, but not limited to, allegations of research misconduct on federally sponsored projects, conduct proscribed by the Student Code, harassment, complaints of retaliation and/or retaliation, employment matters, and conflicts of interest. The Hearing Officer with jurisdiction (Storrs or UConn Health) may at their sole discretion determine that a complaint or appeal falls under the jurisdiction of the Student Code, the Policy on Scholarly Integrity in Graduate Education and Research, the Policy Statement on Harassment, the Policy on Conflict of Interest in Research, or any other existing University policy that provides for resolution of complaints. Should the Hearing Officer determine that the complaint should be addressed through other procedures, the Hearing Officer will notify the parties involved and refer the complaint to the appropriate University officials.~~

h. Proposed Bylaws Revision Re. Hearing Procedure

i. **Current Bylaws Language (Section X. D. d.):**

d. If the Hearing Officer decides not to convene a Hearing Committee, a rationale will be provided and the decision cannot be appealed. If a “good faith effort” was not shown, the Complainant will be encouraged to seek resolution through direct communication with the person(s) against whom the complaint is directed and/or through procedures available through the relevant graduate program, department, school or college, and university, as applicable. If these attempts at resolution fail, the Complainant may file a new complaint or appeal no sooner than 30 business days after the notice declining to convene a Hearing Committee was sent.

ii. Proposed Change in Bylaws Language (Section X. D. d.):

d. If the Hearing Officer decides not to convene a Hearing Committee, a rationale will be provided and the decision cannot be appealed. ~~If a “good faith effort” was not shown, the Complainant will be encouraged to seek resolution through direct communication with the person(s) against whom the complaint is directed and/or through procedures available through the relevant graduate program, department, school or college, and university, as applicable. If these attempts at resolution fail, the Complainant may file a new complaint or appeal no sooner than 30 business days after the notice declining to convene a Hearing Committee was sent.~~

iii. Proposed new (clean) by-laws language (Section X. D. d.):

d. If the Hearing Officer decides not to convene a Hearing Committee, a rationale will be provided and the decision cannot be appealed.

iv. Cleans up Language in Section X, X.D.e and g deletes “complaint,” X.D.k. corrects split infinitive.

Note: Items noted “c” through “h” were presented in conjunction for questions and discussion.

Karen Bresciano gave some additional context for why the above changes are being made. Firstly, it ensures that the department documented that it has made good faith efforts to help a student complete their program when the student is encountering challenges, information that would be needed for The Graduate School to respond to an appeal. Secondly, many complaints will now be taken up by the Office of Academic Integrity and very few complaints were ever filed with The Graduate School. The Graduate School is not an investigatory body and there are other avenues a student takes to file a complaint.

Marina Astitha asked Bresciano for clarification of how the complaint procedure has been used by The Graduate School in the past. Bresciano cited the only two examples in recent memory in which this complaint procedure was used. Bresciano reiterated that they will still advocate for students and do what is right

for them but want students to be able to utilize helpful resources to them, and this current complaint process isn't to their benefit.

D. Questions were raised regarding use of the term "Director of Graduate Studies" in the proposed bylaws. It was noted that terminology varies based on department. Additionally, Associate Dean Bernstein clarified that it is whoever oversees setting graduate policy within the department. GFC members requested terminology to reflect differences in how departments designate those in charge of graduate programs. Some suggested assessing what programs and departments currently define and consider as a Director of Graduate Studies.

5. Announcements:

- a. All changes in graduate courses anticipated for the 2023-2024 course catalog must be submitted to the Registrar's Office by Sunday, February 5th.
 - b. All pass/fail courses must be advisor approved and cannot count towards a student's GPA or be put on their plan of study unless it is pre-determined by the instructor in a program not under the purview of The Graduate School.
 - c. All courses graded on a satisfactory/unsatisfactory basis are approved by the Executive Committee, and they may be counted towards a student's plan of study, but not GPA.
6. A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Mary Anne Amalaradjou. The Graduate Faculty Council meeting adjourned at 4:38 pm.