



Graduate Faculty Council (GFC) Meeting Agenda  
3:00 to 5:00 – Wednesday, February 22nd, 2023  
Virtual meeting via WebEx

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Date: 22<sup>nd</sup> of February 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, Talia Bar, Mary Bernstein (*Ex-Officio*), Christopher Blesso, Deborah Bolnick, Karen Bresciano (*Ex-Officio*), Preston Britner, Jack Corcoran (*Ex-Officio*, *Recording Secretary*), Kirstie Cope-Ferrar, Jose Cruz, Jennifer Dineen, Valerie Duffy, Monty Escabi, Nathan Fiala, Victoria Ford Smith, Alexandra Freidus, Neal Glaviano, David Gregorio, Travis Grossner, Louis Hanzlik, Thomas Hayes, Ashley Helton, Kent Holsinger (*Ex-Officio*), Magdalena Kaufmann, Heejoo Kim, Todd Kravet, Barbara Kream (*Ex-Officio*), Nicole Landi, Jacqueline Loss, Elizabeth Mayerson, D. Betsy McCoach, Ovidiu Munteanu, Julian Norato, William Ouimet, Eugene Pinkhassik, Alexander Russell, Kurt Schwenk, Farhed Shah, Helena Silva, Judith Thorpe, Christine Tocchi, Nathaniel Trumbull, Penny Vlahos, Randall Walikonis, Andrew Wiemer, Suzanne Wilson, Alexander Woodward, Ping Zhang, Yuping Zhang, Xinyu Zhao

Absent: Fakhreddin Azimi, Heather Battaly, Zeljko Boskovic, Kelly Burke, Moustapha Diaby, Hannah Dostal, Niloy Dutta, David Embrick, Meg Feely, Julia Kuzovkina, Michael J. O'Neill, Dan Pejril, Gianna Raimondi (*Ex-Officio*), Diana Rios, Guillermo Risatti, Archana Sanjay, Leslie Shor (*Ex-Officio*), Prabhakar Singh, Tammie Spaulding, Matthew Stuber, Aditya Tadinada

Guests:

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1. The meeting is called to order at 3:03 pm.
2. Presented for voting: Approval of the Minutes from the January 25, 2023, meeting.

- a. A motion is made to approve the previous meeting's minutes by Andrew Wiemer. The motion is seconded by Kurt Schwenk. The minutes are approved unanimously.
- 3. Report from Graduate Student Senate
  - a. The Graduate Student Senate parliamentarian, Gianna Raimondi, was unable to attend the meeting, but Dean Holsinger acknowledged that a meeting between the senate, Dean Holsinger, and Vice Provost Anne D'alleva will be taking place later that evening to discuss the increase in graduate student fees.
- 4. Old Business:
  - a. Vote on 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.*

There were a few clarification questions asked by members of the council. Firstly, Neal Glaviano asked if this new language applied to master's thesis candidates as well. Associate Dean Bernstein answered that the above by-law changes only applied to Ph.D. dissertations. Secondly, Nathan Fiala expressed a concern relating to wanting to keep certain individuals out of a public defense due to potential harassment, which they had personally witnessed. Karen Bresciano stated that those issues are addressed in the student code, not within these by-laws. Finally, Andrew Wiemer asked for clarification on privacy and patent implications. Dean Holsinger said that information can still be restricted by candidate during their defense while being able to express the general premise relating to the proposal.

A vote is held for members of the Graduate Faculty Council, who approve the motion with a majority of the vote.

- b. 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 designee 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 designee 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.

After a discussion in the previous meeting about departmental differences in “director of graduate studies,” the wording was instead updated to “designee.” It was noted that there may be more language alterations in the future relating to different programs.

Andrew Wiemer asked for more information on what departments would have to do in specific cases where, for example, a student failed their general examination twice and would typically be dismissed thereafter. Karen Bresciano said that if those are the guidelines within a particular department, it would be considered as a reasonable effort by giving them another attempt in the first place, and that this new proposal ensures that departments understand who they are dismissing and why.

A vote is held for members of the Graduate Faculty Council, who approve the motion with a majority of the vote.

- c. 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.

d. 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...~~

- e. 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.
- f. 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.~~

g. 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 “g” were presented in conjunction for discussion and voting.

Talia Bar asked if this removable of language would open a possibility where a student could find themselves not able to seek out a complaint option. Karen Bresciano stated that the removal of this specific process wouldn’t lead that to scenario, and students are able to complain via other avenues.

A vote is held for members of the Graduate Faculty Council, who approve the motion with a majority of the vote.

5. New Business

- a. Proposed Bylaws Revision Re. Offers for Financial Support  
i. **Current Bylaws (Section IX A. c)**

*Section IX A.c. An acceptance given or left in force after April 15 commits the student not to accept another offer without first obtaining a written release from the institution to which a commitment has been made. Similarly, an offer by an institution after April 15 is conditional on presentation by the student of the written release from any previously accepted offer.*

- ii. **Proposed change in by-laws language:**

*Section IX A.c. An acceptance given or left in force after April 15 commits the student ~~not to accept another offer without first obtaining a written release from the institution to which a commitment has been made. Similarly, an offer by an institution after April 15 is conditional on presentation by the student of the written release from any previously accepted offer.~~ to first inform the program that they are withdrawing or resigning from the offer of financial support that they had previously accepted.*

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

*Section IX A.c. Section IX A.c. An acceptance given or left in force after April 15 commits the student to first inform the program that they are withdrawing or resigning from the offer of financial support that they had previously accepted.*

There are many sentiments expressed by members of the council that the April 15<sup>th</sup> resolution is very difficult for their respective programs for a number of reasons, including obtaining grant funding and the difficulty in replacing a prospective student in late April. Dean Holsinger stated that this practice has been in place for two to three decades and was intended to be used for the purpose of not allowing graduate schools to get into bidding wars.

Additionally, the university has agreed to follow this language as a part of its membership in the Council of Graduate Schools. If the Graduate Faculty Council didn't want to adopt this language, a withdrawal from the April 15<sup>th</sup>, date may be needed. Dean Holsinger planned to discuss this matter further with various members of the council who expressed difficulty with this date.

6. Discussion Item: Expectations for Graduate Faculty

- a. The members of the Graduate Faculty Council were presented with the following six broad expectations for graduate faculty and their departments:
  - i. Support the progress of their students toward a degree.
  - ii. Provide guidance to their students on scholarly, research, and creative practices and the ethics associated with such practices.
  - iii. Foster the professional and personal development of their students, including developing their skills in teaching and communication.
  - iv. Follow good practices in supervising assistantships and providing financial support.
  - v. Promote individual health and wellness.
  - vi. Build a sense of community and belonging among graduate students.

Dean Holsinger, Associate Dean Bernstein, and Mary Anne Amalaradjou emphasized that these set of guidelines were created to inform students as to what they should expect out of their mentor, as well as outline for faculty members how they should handle being an effective mentor. Additionally, it was said that underneath each of these broader categories, there will be more detailed information and resources to help support the mission of being an efficient mentor.

- b. Kurt Schwenk noted that anything written down could be abused or taken incorrectly, and the way the document currently reads can be interpreted by some as a mandate rather than a set of suggestions.
  - c. Suzanne Wilson stated that language used in this document may not be accurately depicting graduate education as the collective entity that it is, and rather comes off as a checklist of things advisors should do for students. Wilson further emphasizes that the relationship between a graduate student and their mentor is two-directional, and these set of expectations lack a concrete sense of how to evaluate a student.
  - d. Amalaradjou followed up with stating a student-centered document could also be in the works, but they wanted to focus on a set of guidelines for faculty first. Additionally, she noted that some of the suggestions from Wilson would fit appropriately in this student-centered set of expectations and would enhance the two-directional ideology mentioned above.
  - e. Dean Holsinger encouraged all members of the council to share the document with colleagues in their department to get as much feedback as possible to refine the document.
7. Announcements
    - a. Dean Holsinger noted that he will be communicating about the search for a doctoral speaker at the upcoming ceremony in May, and all faculty are encouraged to reach out to nominate a viable candidate.
  8. A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by William Ouimet and seconded by Preston Britner. The Graduate Faculty Council meeting adjourned at 4:27 pm.