



Graduate Faculty Council (GFC) Meeting Agenda
3:00 pm to 5:00 pm – Wednesday, September 25th, 2024
Virtual meeting via WebEx

Date: 25th of September 2024, 3:00 pm-5:00 pm

Location: Virtual meeting via WebEx

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

Attendees: Adam Adler, Mohamad Alkadry, Mary Anne Amalaradjou (*Moderator*), David Atkin, Fakhreddin Azimi, Kristin Berghoff, Mary Bernstein (*Ex-Officio, Associate Dean*), Deborah Bolnick, Karen Bresciano (*Ex-Officio, Assistant Dean*), Daniel Burkey, Lindsay Butler, Kirstie Cope-Farrar, Jack Corcoran (*Ex-Officio, Recording Secretary*), Jose Cruz (*Ex-Officio*), Sarita Fellows, Rodolfo Fernandez, Mary Fischer, Neal Glaviano, Preston Green, Alexandra Hain, Thomas Hayes, Ashley Helton, Annette Jakubisin-Konicki (*Ex-Officio*), Michael Kaplan, Magdalena Kaufmann, Tiffany Kelley, Todd Kravet, Noah Kravette (*GSS Parliamentarian*), Barbara Kream (*Ex-Officio, Associate Dean*), Wai Hong (Kevin) Lo, Jacqueline Loss, Yangchao Luo, Michael Lynes, Charles Mahoney, Betsy McCoach, Andrew Moiseff (*Ex-Officio*), Julian Norato, William Ouimet, Sohyun Park, Dan Pejril, Eugene Pinkhassik, Heather Read, Chadwick Rittenhouse, Beth Russell, Kurt Schwenk, Farhed Shah, Leslie Shor (*Ex-Officio, Dean & Chair*), Helena Silva, Ron Squibbs, Luyi Sun, Helen Swede, Judith Thorpe, Charles Towe, Carlos Trallero, Nathaniel Trumbull, Andrew Wiemer, Elsio Wunder, Ping Zhang, Yuping Zhang, Jackie Kai Zhao

Absent: Dorothea Anagnostopoulos (*Ex-Officio*), Vasilis Chousionis, Thomas Craemer, Hannah Dostal, Monty Escabi, Meg Feely, Alain Frogley (*Ex-Officio*), Julie Granger, Travis Grosser, Kyle Hadden (*Ex-Officio*), Scott Harding (*Ex-Officio*), Michael Hren, David Richards, Alexander Russell, Prabhakar Singh, Aditya Tadinada, Lynne Tirrell, Ioulia (Julia) Valla (*Ex-Officio*), Kumar Venkitanarayanan (*Ex-Officio*), Randall Walikonis, Molly Waring, Xinyu Zhao

Guests: Anna Mae Duane, Lauren Schlesselman

1. The meeting is called to order at 3:01 pm.
2. Presented for voting: Approval of the Minutes from the April 24th, 2024, meeting.
 - a. A motion to approve is made by Andrew Wiemer and seconded by Mary Anne Amalaradjou. The minutes are approved with a majority vote by the Graduate Faculty Council.
3. Report from the Graduate Student Senate (GSS):
 - a. Noah Kravette, the new parliamentarian for the GSS, announced that they will be holding elections today to fill executive board vacancies. Additionally, he reported that he and other senate members plan to review and rewrite the GSS Constitution during this academic year to revise ambiguities and cut out problematic wording.
4. Old Business
 - a. Mentorship Training Update: Associate Dean Bernstein gave an update regarding the recently implemented mentorship training requirement for all faculty who do not hold a graduate faculty appointment. It was reported that 44 out of 48 eligible brand-new faculty to the University have signed up, and the training will be expanded to more current faculty soon.
5. New Business
 - a. Proposed Bylaws Revision Re. use of 3/4xxx Courses on Graduate Plans of Study (Part 1)
 - i. **Current by-laws language (Section II. B.):**

Graduate certificate programs consist entirely of graduate courses (those numbered 5000 or above). Post-baccalaureate certificate programs consist either entirely of undergraduate courses (those numbered 1000-4999) or of a mixture of undergraduate and graduate courses. A certificate can be earned either as a “stand-alone” certificate (without simultaneous enrollment in a degree program) or while simultaneously pursuing a graduate degree. A certificate itself is not a degree. In addition, admission to a certificate program does not guarantee admission to a related degree program.
 - ii. **Proposed by-laws language (Section II. B.):**

Graduate certificate programs consist entirely of graduate courses (those numbered 5000 or above). Sixth Year certificates follow the requirements set forth for master’s degrees. Post-baccalaureate certificate programs consist either entirely of undergraduate courses (those numbered 1000-4999) or of a mixture of undergraduate and graduate courses. A certificate can be earned either as a “stand-alone” certificate (without simultaneous enrollment in a degree program) or while simultaneously pursuing a graduate degree. A certificate itself is not a degree. In addition, admission to a certificate program does not guarantee admission to a related degree program.

iii. **Clean by-laws language (Section II. B.):**

Graduate certificate programs consist entirely of graduate courses (those numbered 5000 or above). Sixth Year certificates follow the requirements set forth for master's degrees. Post-baccalaureate certificate programs consist either entirely of undergraduate courses (those numbered 1000-4999) or of a mixture of undergraduate and graduate courses. A certificate can be earned either as a "stand-alone" certificate (without simultaneous enrollment in a degree program) or while simultaneously pursuing a graduate degree. A certificate itself is not a degree. In addition, admission to a certificate program does not guarantee admission to a related degree program.

b. Proposed Bylaws Revision Re. use of 3/4xxx Courses on Graduate Plans of Study (Part 2)

i. **Current by-laws language (Section VII. A.e):**

Certificate programs: Graduate certificate programs typically consist of 12 to 15 credits of required coursework. In a small number of cases where detailed justification has been provided, a certificate program may require as few as nine credits. Students in certificate programs may include on the final certificate Plan of Study up to six credits of advanced coursework taken at the University of Connecticut either as an undergraduate or a non-degree student. However, some certificates (such as Sixth Year certificates and some Post-Master's and Post-Baccalaureate certificates) require 30 or more credits. For those certificates, the requirements set forth in Section VII for master's degrees will apply.

ii. **Proposed by-laws language (Section VII. A.e):**

Certificate programs: Graduate certificate programs typically consist of 12 to 15 credits of required coursework. In a small number of cases where detailed justification has been provided, a certificate program may require as few as nine credits. Students in certificate programs may include on the final certificate Plan of Study up to six credits of advanced (*5000 level or above*) coursework taken at the University of Connecticut either as an undergraduate or a non-degree student. However, some certificates (such as Sixth Year certificates and some Post-Master's and Post-Baccalaureate certificates) require 30 or more credits. For those certificates, the requirements set forth in Section VII for master's degrees will apply.

iii. **Clean by-laws language (Section VII. A.e):**

iv. Certificate programs: Graduate certificate programs typically consist of 12 to 15 credits of required coursework. In a small number of cases where detailed justification has been provided, a certificate program may require as few as nine credits. Students in certificate programs may include on the final certificate Plan of Study up to six credits of advanced (5000 level or above) coursework taken at the University of Connecticut either as an undergraduate or a non-degree student. However, some certificates (such as Sixth Year certificates and some Post-Master's and Post-Baccalaureate

certificates) require 30 or more credits. For those certificates, the requirements set forth in Section VII for master's degrees will apply.

c. Proposed Bylaws Revision Re. use of 3/4xxx Courses on Graduate Plans of Study (Part 3)

i. **Current by-laws language (Section VII. A.f):**

The courses used by a student to complete all requirements for graduate degrees and graduate certificates shall consist largely of courses at the 5000 level or above. A limited number of credits at the 3000 or 4000 level (not more than six) may be used to meet requirements for graduate degrees. However, courses in the subject area UNIV cannot be used on a graduate plan of study.

ii. **Proposed by-laws language (Section VII. A.f):**

In order to meet the appropriate learning outcomes for the level of study,
~~The courses used by a student to complete all requirements for graduate degrees and graduate certificates shall~~ *must* consist largely of courses at the 5000 level or above. UConn undergraduate students participating in accelerated degree programs may not count 3000 or 4000 level courses toward their graduate plan of study. For all other graduate students, when needed for foundational or remedial training, no more than six ~~A limited number of credits at the 3000 or 4000 level (not more than six)~~ may be used to meet requirements for graduate degrees. ~~However, e~~No courses in the subject area UNIV cannot be used on a graduate plan of study for any student.

iii. **Clean by-laws language (Section VII. A.f):**

In order to meet the appropriate learning outcomes for the level of study, the courses used by a student to complete all requirements for graduate degrees must consist largely of courses at the 5000 level or above. UConn undergraduate students participating in accelerated degree programs may not count 3000 or 4000 level courses toward their graduate plan of study. For all other graduate students, when needed for foundational or remedial training, no more than six credits at the 3000 or 4000 level may be used to meet requirements for graduate degrees. No courses in the subject area UNIV can be used on a graduate plan of study for any student.

There was some discussion from members of the council asking for clarification on this change and questioned whether it was a necessary or useful alteration to the by-laws. Associate Dean Bernstein ensured that the language change would avoid future issues of conferring degrees and wouldn't restrict students in any way, deeming it a necessary adjustment. The rationale is that graduate and undergraduate classes have different learning objectives and this change would be consistent NECHE standard while preserving the discretion of graduate programs to ensure that students not educated at UConn can take additional foundational or remedial courses as needed.

6. Announcements

a. Revised Admission Disclosure Statement

- i. Dean Shor informed the council of the new Admissions Disclosure below; edits were made to clarify behaviors to applicants that will result in potential restrictions from applying to The Graduate School in the future.

“I certify that the information submitted in this application is true and correct to the best of my knowledge. I further understand that submission of false or misleading information, omission of required information, or certain behavior including harassing, threatening, or intimidating University employees involved in the admission process, may result in denial, revocation of an admission offer, and/or restriction to my ability to apply to The Graduate School in the future.

Upon admission, this application may also be used for purposes such as the awarding of graduate assistantship placements, advisor changes or other statuses associated with enrollment at the University of Connecticut.

Additionally, I know that a criminal background check is needed for some programs. I understand that certain types of convictions may make clinical and/ or field placements impossible, which may impede the ability to complete the program. I know that I may contact the university's case manager if I have questions about background checks or drug screens.

clinicalcasemanager@uconn.edu (860) 486-9283.”

- b. Timely Topics for Graduate Students
 - i. Assistant Dean Bresciano gave an update regarding the new Timely Topics Graduate Student Track and encouraged faculty to spread the word regarding this semester’s upcoming presentations.
- c. New Advisor Resignation Form
 - i. Assistant Dean Bresciano also discussed the new Major Advisor Resignation Form and let the GFC know that it requires Department Head and/or Program Director acknowledgement to assist in finding a new advisor for the student or propose an alternate path forward.
- d. Upcoming Collective Bargaining: call for input from constituencies
 - i. Dean Shor reminded council members that the current UAW-GEU contract will expire on June 30th, 2026, and bargaining for a new contract will likely commence beginning Fall 2025. She promoted Labor Relations will be collecting feedback to prepare for this process.

7. Discussion Items

- a. Proposed Graduation requirement Re. first outcomes survey
 - i. Dean Shor exclaimed that there is no good data collection method for finding out where our graduate students are placed after they leave UConn. There is an upcoming initiative titled the “President’s Survey”

that works to fill this gap, but Dean Shor announced that she planned to use this as a framework to expand on a potential graduation requirement for graduate students in order to build this pool of data. The purpose includes formulating career outcomes from programs, strategic planning, accreditation, and potential revenue from alumni donors.

- ii. Some members of the GFC expressed that their departments already conduct surveys such as the one outlined above and expressed some concern that duplication of this data may not be helpful. Dean Shor encouraged these members to share their methods of engaging with their students to refine a more centralized, formal procedure.
- iii. Other discussions occurred regarding students feeling more connected with their department rather than the University as a whole, and how that would be navigated in such a broad survey. The ideal solution is to tailor specific outcomes to each department, but it was noted that this initiative is still being workshopped.

b. Educational Assessment Process – Graduate Programs

- i. Lauren Schlesselman from the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) presented on the new initiative to better review and assess graduate programs at the University. Currently, a pilot program has been done with a majority of undergraduate and some graduate programs who do not have another external accrediting body outside of NECHE, the New England Council for Higher Education. The current pilot looks at each program and defines program-specific learning objectives, mapped courses and assessment measures to the objectives, defines key performance indicators (KPIs), develops a plan for which each objective will be assessed on a yearly basis, and submits an annual report on findings.
- ii. Schlesselman, in collaboration with Dean Shor and The Graduate School, plan to expand this assessment process to graduate programs with the following timeline:
 - 1. Convene task force on Graduate Program Assessment by October 15th, 2024.
 - 2. Develop task force work plan by December 15th, 2024.
 - 3. Work on initiatives throughout the 2025 calendar year.
 - 4. Implement processes moving into the 2026 calendar year.
 - 5. Contribute to the next NECHE review report scheduled for Spring 2026.
- iii. Both Schlesselman and Dean Shor urged programs who were part of the pilot run of assessment tools to hold off on their current processes and welcomed them to be part of the task force to deliver hands-on knowledge and experience of what has and has not worked for their programs thus far.

c. Future of Grad School Fellowships

- i. Dean Shor announced to the GFC that The Graduate School is discontinuing the Harriott, Jorgensen, and Crandall Fellowships that have

been dispersed to approximately 20 incoming graduate students each year in order to free up staff time to allot for more graduate programming opportunities, as well as rework the currently allocated fellowship money into a new strategic plan that promotes holistic student success, expands research impacts, and powers a thriving Connecticut. Dean Shor elaborated on each broader initiative to discuss ideas within them that The Graduate School would prioritize moving forward.

1. Promoting Holistic Student Success: provide need-based loans or grants to graduate students, continue to expand on The Graduate School's programming effort for both graduate students and postdoctoral associates, and incentivize graduate programs to adopt best practices, including universal mentor training, strong academic advising, annual performance reviews, and more professional development training opportunities.
 2. Expanding Research Impact: capitalize on existing areas of strength, such as the Humanities Institute and Human Rights Institute, build capacity with new interdisciplinary collaborations to provide new avenues for external graduate student support, and invest in the growth of graduate search at all regional campuses.
 3. Powering a Thriving Connecticut: incentivize community and corporate partnerships, promote internships, translational projects, and community-engaged scholarship, and prioritize benefits to under-served communities.
- ii. Multiple members of the council expressed both support and hesitation towards the proposed plan. Some were alarmed and stated that they used the prior fellowship system to recruit competitive candidates, who will now be lost to other nearby institutions who can provide them with more support. Others were concerned that students in their disciplines would not be able to appropriately fit into the new interdisciplinary structure that was proposed, and feared their students would be left behind. Dean Shor vowed to include all perspectives through this new process and wants to curate a system that will work for everyone.
8. A motion to adjourn was made by Mohamad Alkadry and seconded by Chadwick Rittenhouse. The Graduate Faculty Council meeting adjourned at 5:20 pm. The next GFC meeting is scheduled for October 23rd, 2024.