

UNL Graduate Council Minutes
October 6, 2022
Location: Zoom
2:30 to 5 pm

Attending: Jennifer Clarke, Andrew Donesky, Venn Jemkur, Adam Houston, Xu Li, Laura Munoz, Elizabeth Niehaus, Maria Marron, and Brenda Wristen. Dean Debra Hope presiding.

1. Consultation with Heath Tuttle, UNL Chief Information Officer, about EM16.

Heath Tuttle joined the meeting to answer questions about EM16 <https://nebraska.edu/-/media/unca/docs/offices-and-policies/policies/executive-memorandum/policy-for-responsible-use-of-university-computers-and-information-systems.pdf>, the new policies regarding use of university computers and information systems. These minutes include highlights of the discussion and links provided by CIO Tuttle, not a verbatim report. CIO Tuttle indicated that yearly ITS training will be available on Bridge, University owned machines will be managed with new software, everyone who has not already done so needs to transition to using their UNL email address for university business, students will need to use only UNL email addresses in MyRed.

In response to questions from the Graduate Council, CIO Tuttle indicated that the University will not be monitoring content on anyone's computers. The management software system will handle tasks such as software updates and operating system vulnerabilities. The software is Jamf (MAC) <https://www.jamf.com>, SCCM (Windows) <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/system-center>

Other discussion included discussion of the Standards language and whether some policies are vague, the importance of guaranteeing that highly sensitive research data is protected, including promised protections of human subject research, and how personally owned devices will be handled. CIO Tuttle provided the following links to address some of these issues: <https://its.nebraska.edu/policies-processes/responsible-use-of-university-computers-and-information-systems/standards>
<https://its.nebraska.edu/-/media/projects/its/docs/policy-standards/its-19-security-of-personally-owned-devices-standard.pdf>

2. Approval of Minutes from September 1, 2022 meeting.

Move to approve, second. Unanimous.

3. Discussion of policy on Academic Residency

<https://catalog.unl.edu/graduate-professional/policies/academic-program-requirements/>
Dean Hope initiated a discussion of the academic residency policy to inform potential policy change proposals that OGS is considering. No policy changes were voted on at this meeting.

Academic Residency Policy was added 1967-1968 to ensure that each doctoral program is reasonably compact, continuous, and cohesive, and that a substantial portion is done under close supervision by the University. This typically is fulfilled now as most students take 9 credits

in their first three semesters. The policy does not state the credits must be taken on-campus (in residence) or at what stage in their academic program this must be completed.

Concerns with the current policy have been raised by students. Council members voiced concern that the Policy is confusing and would be in favor of cutting it. The only thing the policy affects is the governance of the completion of the doctoral degree. Financial aid is based on enrollment while in a degree seeking program so removing the policy will not affect it. Online degrees would benefit from the flexibility removing this policy affords.

One implication of removing the policy, especially post-COVID, is that students may want to do their doctorate off campus entirely off campus. Individual programs could make restrictions. If the policy is removed, all departmental graduate student handbooks will need to be updated.

4. Discussion of policy on complete academic record (during admission)

Dean Hope initiated a discussion of the complete academic record policy to inform potential policy change proposals that OGS is considering. No policy changes were voted on at this meeting.

Would faculty like official transcripts of all coursework taken by prospective students, including degree completion, and when do faculty want them?

Council members discussed the timing of the receipt of transcripts for admission consideration. A complete record of all institutions attended would be beneficial at the front end. Once admitted students need to provide an official transcript. Current policy states students need to show all credit earned as part of their complete record by official transcripts from each institution. Unofficial transcripts are used during the application review process. After the student accepts admission, they must provide official transcripts from each institution attended. One member stated they were in favor of expediting the process.

Questions on how often are the grades get included or is it just the credit? Council stated they need grades as part of the picture when making decisions. One option could be that institution with 12 hours or fewer and grades reported would not require official transcripts from the non-degree institution. Many supported the use of unofficial transcripts, as long as they can be backed up at some time with official transcripts. Some felt some prospective students wait till the last minute to apply and by accepting the unofficial transcript we would create more openings for students to apply.

Fewer transcript requirements would increase efficiency in OGS but it is important to get programs the information they need. Perhaps an option could be developed for programs to indicate what transcripts they need beyond a minimum standard through some sort of drop-down menu.

5. Discussion and Vote of English language proficiency using Duolingo.

During COVID the English proficiency policy for admissions was amended to accept Duolingo temporarily as ETS was not able to keep up during pandemic. Duolingo is considerably less expensive. Dean Hope proposed to continue accepting the test until December 2023 to gain further GPA data for students who have taken the Duolingo Test in place of other traditional language tests such as the TOEFL or the IELTS.

Assistant Dean Alisha Hanshaw presented information regarding Duolingo. It cost \$45.00 and tests different elements. Scores met minimum - same rate. Students were more likely to accept and more likely to be admitted. The average GPA for students (90 in the two years) was 3.6 with those doing Duolingo. The average GPA for these students for their first term is 3.75.

Information on score comparisons between TOEFL, IELTS, and Duolingo can be found on <https://englishtest.duolingo.com/scores>

Council in favor of keeping Duolingo through December 2023.

6. Discussion of procedures for student appeals.

Dean Hope discussed the options for student appeals after termination. She reviewed recent experiences with the use of an initial subset of three Graduate Council members. She reminded members that the Graduate Dean is to be neutral. Students sometimes provide documentation which can be voluminous. Is there an opinion that the student to be given a chance to attend the appeal consideration and, by doing so, the program as well? Dean Hope asked for ideas and feedback.

The general consensus was that it should go to the full Council and any influence of the Dean would be diluted. The Council is to be neutral as well. The Council discussed pros and cons of the student or program appearing at the Council meeting with extended discussion of maintaining fairness in the procedures. It was stated that the burden lies on the student to give a concise summary to the council and various methods to help guide the student to do this were discussed.

7. Discussion of email to Graduate Faculty regarding Handbook vote.

Dean Hope asked the Council if they wanted to create a letter to go out to the Full Graduate Faculty prior to the vote at the end of October showing their support for the revised Graduate College Policy Handbook. The Council was agreeable to creating a letter and there was discussion on what the letter would include.

The Council stated they would edit and provide a letter. They requested the letter to go out to all faculty members, not just voting-eligible Graduate Faculty.

Dean Hope indicated a copy of the full revised Handbook with changes highlighted would be provided as part of the voting process.

8. Any needed curriculum discussions.

Eva Bachman advised the Council to please look at the queue of courses needing reviewed. There was a request to have L.J. McElvray come to Council to discussion ALEC 804. He has agreed to do so.

9. Graduate Student Assembly Report.

Andrew Donesky, President, GSA reported a Health Insurance- Student Health Insurance Satisfaction Survey was being distributed. This was created in partnership between Central Administration Insurance Office, Graduate Student Assembly and OGS. The survey will go to everyone on the health insurance across all 4 campuses – mostly international undergraduate and graduate and professional students. It is being run by Bureau of Sociological Research.

Mr. Donesky also discussed the status of two other GSA focus items. First, the assistantship stipends- he met or is meeting with all the College Deans. He is working with the Housing Taskforce on graduate student housing – especially for family/married student housing.

10. Announcements

Dean Hope provided the following announcements:

- a. Graduate Fall Enrollment on census day is down compared to last year and 5 and 10 year bench marks. This is attributable, in part, to lack of enrollment of continuing students and cuts across all colleges.
- b. Expected December Graduation numbers are down, which is not surprising given the large recent graduations.
- c. Assistant Vice Chancellor for Digital and Online Learning Search is underway. Dean Hope is on the search committee given a large focus will be at the graduate and professional level.
- d. Microsoft Teams groups for Graduate Chairs, Support Staff, and Associate Deans have been implemented by the Office of Graduate Studies to facilitate communication.
- e. New WebFocus reports to be available in the coming months that will allow programs to access data about current students more easily and help with retention of students.

Eva Bachman announced there will be a Support Staff Information session on October 13, 2022 beginning at 11:00am. It will be delivered via a hybrid option.

Meeting adjourned: Time 5:04pm

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Cordonier, Administrative Coordinator