

UNL Graduate Council Agenda  
September 4, 2025  
Location: Zoom  
3:15 p.m.

**Attending:** Rochelle Dalla, Christopher Bilder, Tom Kubick, Elizabeth Niehaus, Michelle Harvey, Can Vuran, Venn Jemkur and Alejandra Vasquez. Dean Hope presiding. Eva Bachman and Jason Carmichael from Graduate Studies.

1. **Approval of minutes from meeting held on May 1, 2025:** Motion to approve minutes, seconded, and unanimously approved. Three abstained.
2. **Introduction of new Graduate Council members – Michelle Harvey and Can Vuran.**
3. **Documentation of Vote to Rename the Specialization in Creative Writing** – Following an email vote, the proposal to rename the specialization in creative writing to the Ervin and Loretta Krause Specialization in Creative Writing was approved on August 20, 2025 with a vote of 7 yes, 1 no, and 2 not voting.
4. **Proposal for Additional Options for English Proficiency (change in policy):** Dean Hope provided background regarding different tests accepted for English proficiency standards and UNL's approval of the Duolingo test through December 2025, which provides an opportunity to reflect on next steps and determine acceptable standards going forward. Dr. Alisha Hanshaw joined the meeting to discuss upcoming changes to TOEFL scoring that will align with the international standard of measurement known as the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). She shared a table defining the CEFR levels of proficiency and associate test score ranges for various English language proficiency tests. Discussion followed about what level of language proficiency is acceptable for UNL graduate students and whether to accept scores from additional testing options. Concerns were voiced about current minimum scores set by the Graduate College policy as some students have been ill-equipped to communicate and thrive in their graduate programs despite available resources. Discussed that minimum score is for all programs but that individual programs could have a higher requirement if their faculty felt this was appropriate. The Graduate Council requested that Dean Hope and Dr. Hanshaw return next month with data on how many of UNL applicants and admitted students achieve various scores to better understand the impact on enrollment of raising the minimum score for admission. A vote to change the policy was tabled to a later meeting.
5. **EVC Mark Button – discuss budget reduction processes related to graduate programs:** EVC Button was unable to attend, but Dean Hope shared his talking points.
  - a. Any graduate degrees proposed for deletion will come to a vote by the Graduate Council following the public comment period. The Graduate Council can recommend changes to proposed deletions, but the Board of Regents is responsible for the final decision on any program deletions. The Graduate Council's vote will then be elevated to the Executive Graduate Council for a vote, before passing to the Board of Regents. For any students in programs that are eliminated, the university remains committed to ensuring they complete their educational goals. Also, a plan will be developed to communicate with all those who have applied to discontinued programs.

- b. Discussion followed. It was noted that no details have been provided on teach-out plans for students in programs that get cut. Also considered was the importance of documenting the rationale for the Graduate Council's votes on proposed program deletions, particularly if the Graduate Council votes not to delete a program. It was also discussed that members of Graduate Council are welcome to attend and participate in any of the public hearings during the APC process.
  - c. The Graduate Council agreed to hold a special meeting to review budget reduction issues on October 16, 2025.
6. **Curriculum Discussion:** None.
7. **Graduate Student Assembly Report:** President Jemkur reported. Earlier this week GSA held their first meeting and inauguration. This year GSA is planning to host more social and professional development events to forge connections across campus with the hope of reaching as many graduate students as possible rather than just a small subset of the graduate student population. Also, GSA has launched the Chancellor's Graduate Research travel grant that is currently accepting applications from students. GSA will be hosting a welcome back event in two weeks.
8. **Announcements:**
  - a. In August, OGS hosted the annual Graduate Resource Fair. This year's event was a positive launch to the fall semester with over six-hundred students in attendance and over fifty booths from campus partners. Music, along with visits from Lil' Red and Herbie Husker made for a fun atmosphere in which to welcome graduate students.
  - b. As reminder, the *Graduate Report* is OGS's weekly newsletter sent by email on Wednesdays to communicate events, information, and resources available for graduate students. Dean Hope encouraged the council to regularly peruse this to stay up to date on important communications from OGS.

Meeting adjourned at 4:35 pm  
Respectfully submitted,  
Jason Carmichael