

GRADUATE COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

April 21, 4:00 – 5:00 pm, via Zoom

Attendees:

Voting Members: 24 total (12 - majority needed for quorum). Quorum was present.

P	Neal Sullivan (Chair)	P	Amy Hitchner (LB)	P	Andy Osborne (NSE)	P	Owen Hildreth (ME)
P	Dave Benson (HSE)	P	Karin Leiderman (AMS)	P	Gabe Walton (UCT)	P	Ebru Bozdog (GP)
P	Juan Lucena (EDS)	P	Jim Ranville (GC)	A	Zhenzhen Yu (MME)	P	Geoff Brennecke (ML & MT)
P	Tulay Flamand (EB)	P	Danica Roth (GE)	P	Dejun Yang (CS)	P	Elizabeth Davis (HASS)
P	David Marr (CBE)	P	Maxwell Silver (GSG)	P	Luis Zerpa (PE)	P	*Reza Hedayat (CEE) proxy for Gabe Walton
P	Christine Morrison (CH)	P	Gongguo Tang (EE)	P	Jeremy Zimmerman (PH)	P	Jamal Rostami (MN)

Other Regular Attendees and Guests

A	Justin Bush (CEE)	P	Carolyn Freedman (OGS)	A	Jane Ko (AA)	A	Jennifer Veloff (Tref)
P	Tim Barbari (OGS)	A	Cassie Glenn (CEE)	P	Paul Myskiw (RO)	A	Denise Winn-Bower (PE)
A	Dorothy Cheng (CS,EE,ME)	A	Jennie Kenney (AA)	P	Mara Green (AA)	A	Lori Kester (EM)

Additional Guests: Brandon Dugan (GP), Tyler Pritchard (Sustainability at Mines), Lauren Poole (EHS)

Welcome

Neal Sullivan

Briefings and Information Items

Office of Graduate Studies

Tim Barbari

Barbari briefs Councilors on Faculty Senate's table of the Academic Probation Catalog change due to language and wordsmithing. Nuances around semester counting on probation with different academic standings; wording is the only change asked for. Senate will approve in the coming weeks.

Registrar's Office

Paul Myskiw

No updates.

Graduate Student Government

Maxwell Silver

No updates.

Classes Canceled for E-Days

Classes have been canceled for E-Days. Undergraduate courses are cancelled for eight days, the policy had not been official for graduate students. The policy has been changed to include graduate courses.

Council agrees with the policy inclusion of graduate courses as graduate students would like to participate in E-Days' festivities and this maintains consistency across campus. Undergraduates enrolled in 500-level courses will not miss course content or discussions.

No Curriculum Items for Council Review

Other Business

Finals Week and Review Day Policies

Proposal sent by Undergraduate Council Subcommittee on Student Workload and Guidance

Barbari makes note of the placement of the Finals Week and Review Day policies location being in the Faculty Policies and Procedures. The Faculty Handbook is suggested as an area for placement, but the location of the Handbook is difficult to locate.

The policy itself should be applicable to both undergraduate and graduate, Barbari suggests. The Undergraduate Council subcommittee will reach a consensus on where it should be placed, and will work with Senate committees on Handbook and the Policies and Procedures.

Discussion continues on placement and accessibility, Councilors make note of having not been aware of these policies. The current policies continue to reference Dead Week and Dead Day, this proposal is set to remove them and define finals workload.

Comment is made on these being made guidelines rather than policies to protect academic freedom of the instructor. The document outlines a method for students and instructors to discuss policy issues: instructor, department head, and appropriate dean if necessary.

Graduate Council chair requests Councilors bring these changes to their respective departments for feedback.

Campus Ombudsperson

Brandon Dugan

Conversation sparked for graduate student ombudsperson, Brandon Dugan representative from Faculty Senate ombudsperson committee

Interest for a campus ombudsperson office comes from students, faculty, and staff. Discussion was brought to the Provost who directed this to Faculty Senate where a subcommittee was created to look into the process.

The subcommittee is following the International Ombuds Association code of ethics to establish an independent office that is neutral, impartial, confidential, and informal. Anyone interested can go to this office to discuss options and resources; the ombudsman is not held to a binding decision and do not make any rulings; this individual provides guidance and impartial listening only.

A number of cases would come to this office including mentor/mentee issues, student/faculty issues, or systemic items on campus. Current discussion focuses on whether this individual should be faculty or an outside hire. Human Resources is a part of the Senate committee's discussions.

A large amount of education would be necessary; if a faculty member is presented with the position of ombudsperson this individual will complete ombuds training to understand the role and position and what their powers are. Consideration is made on what compensation would include: university credit, university service, buyout of course load, or budgetary compensation.

There is concern for a faculty member ombudsperson due to personal or biased connections when a student brings an issue to this office. The subcommittee is putting forward a model and proposal and understands that adjustments will need to be made in the future.

Suggestion is made for an independent contractor as ombudsperson; the focus group should develop a draft write-up and include both options for faculty and staff ombudsperson with pro/con discussions which can then be made as a recommendation. Student feedback includes an individual who is not a mandatory reporter.

Class Scheduling Letter

Christine Morrison

Tabled.

Sustainability Office

Tyler Pritchard and Lauren Poole

Tyler Pritchard presents on Sustainability Tracking, Assessment and Rating System (STARS) and a push for sustainability in academia

STARS goal is to collect a sustainability course inventory. Professors are polled and data is extrapolated from keywords within the course Catalog. The Sustainability Office would be willing to hold workshops to provide an effective academic pool.

The second goal is to collect a sustainability research inventory. Data would be confirmed by examining funding allocations and determine the proportion of employees working on sustainability research at Mines.

The final goal is to discuss an incentive program for sustainability. Pritchard outlines two examples from the University of Pennsylvania and West Chester University. The University of Pennsylvania provides incentives through pairing faculty with a “free” teaching assistant in sustainability courses who work a minimum of ten hours per week on course development, this teaching assistant would be financed through the Sustainability Office. West Chester university provides a two-day workshop that is considered professional development toward rewards and a \$500 stipend on syllabi for sustainability-based courses.

There are plans underway to develop policy around Mines donating furniture, accessing a recycling company or developing storage ideas.

Suggestion made to provide a CIM feature to include tracking of sustainability-based courses that fall in line with curricula which can be found [here](#).

Graduate Council Subcommittees

Advisor / Advisee Procedures and Recommendations

Tabled.

Stipends for Graduate Students

Barbari has communicated with the Budget Office on the recent history of Minimum Stipend Increases; historically the minimum stipend has increased 3% per year. The 20-21 Academic Year did not increase due to pandemic-based cuts. The current range for departments is \$24,720-\$30,000 creating a 21% gap.

Some departments have increased their stipend minimums to remain competitive with Mechanical Engineering and Metallurgy and Materials Engineering having the highest minimum annual stipend of \$30,000.

Barbari proposed to the Budget Office a more aggressive increase to improve department competitiveness against top universities. If a department is at the minimum, the stipend would increase 4% per year but not all programs will increase at 4%.

Question on whether different departments cover tuition and fees or expect students to pay those; Barbari states some departments have contracts that pay by the hour which does not include tuition and others do include tuition. Some students receive government sponsored funding.

Comment on MME's \$30,000 stipend: this is a target, faculty have the option to go above or below and remain flexible. Other universities have a standard that allows for variation depending on merit-based awards, passing a qualifying exam to receive a raise, or signing bonuses to attract top students.

Comment on equity in pay and closing this 21% gap is difficult for interdisciplinary programs. The gap creates a moral issue that affects team dynamics and is detrimental to work and projects. Students working on the same project side-by-side but housed in different departments will receive different pay.

Interdisciplinary Graduate Programs

Tabled.

Adjourn

Neal Sullivan

Consent Agenda The following proposals will not be discussed unless specifically requested by Council. With no objections, approval is implied and items will be processed accordingly.

- **Approval of Minutes** – April 7, 2021

Neal Sullivan