

Colorado School of Mines – GRADUATE COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
[October 4, 2023], 4:00 – 5:00 pm, via Zoom

Attendees:

Voting Members: 23 total (12 - majority needed for quorum). Quorum was present

P	Soutir Bandyopadhyay (Chair)	P	Danielle Ostendorf (LB)	P	Andy Osborne (NSE)	P	Owen Hildreth (ME)
	Adrienne Marshall (HSE)	P	Bettina Voelker (CH)	P	Jaeheon Lee (MN)	P	Jared Carbone (EB)
P	Yaoguo Li (GP)		Juan Lucena (EDS)	P	Jim Ranville (GC)	P	Pejman Tahmasebi (PE)
P	Suveen Mathaudhu (MME)	P	Zhexuan Gong (PH)		Ryan Venturelli (GE)	P	Dong Chen (CS)
P	Adrienne C. Kroepsch (HASS)	P	Nikki Farnsworth (CBE)	P	Rena Zhu (GSG)	P	Reza Hedayat (CEE)
			Yamuna Phal (EE)	P	Gabriel Walton (UCTE)		

Other Regular Attendees and Guests

P	Tim Barbari (OGS)		Carolyn Freedman (OGS)		Jenny Briggs (OGS)	P	Vibhuti Dave (UG)
	Wendy Adams (HNRS)		D. Scott Heath (RO)	P	Paul Myskiw (RO)		Roxane Aungst (OGS)
P	Sam Spiegel (Mines Online)		Suzanne Beach (Payne)		Jen Gagne (Grad Admissions)		Kendra Stansbury (RO)
	Jon Johnson (Mines Online)		Atef Elsherbeni (EE)		Richard Krahenbuhl (GP)	P	Valerie Holt (AES)

Special Guest(s): Renee Falconer, Jeff Ackerman

Welcome

Soutir Bandyopadhyay

Briefings and Information Items

Office of Graduate Studies

Tim Barbari

Nothing to report, there will be more updates for the following meeting.

Registrar's Office

Paul Myskiw

Update on the Program Assistant position: We brought three candidates to campus, while they are all good candidates it comes down to fit at this time. We will hopefully make an offer in the next week or two.

Graduate Student Government

Rena Zhu

GSG is hosting their own town hall soon. It is one of the events that started last year and since then we have collected a lot of feedback from the student body.

Continuing Business

Continue discussion on the "Absenteeism" policy & process

Vibhuti Dave

Only here to listen to the feedback from the departments to take back to the committee.

- **Comment:** There is ambiguity on what it means for the student to be abusing the self-service program/short-term illness. It is hard to advise the student and is hard for the student to know if they are abusing or not. We may need some guidance, what does this mean? If a faculty member notices that there is a pattern that is established (it only happens before an exam, or it always happens on a Friday) that would be something that would need to be investigated. The way the current policy is written, if a excused absence is granted then the faculty must provide a makeup assignment and an opportunity for the student to do the makeup.
- **Question:** In the current policy isn't the hurdle for an excused absence higher? The only thing

that is not being vetted is a short-term illness due to the change in policy at the doctors office post-covid.

- **Question:** How big of a problem is absenteeism and were these just isolated incidents? The biggest issue was mostly in the UG level courses with multi-section coordinated classes where the enrollments are extremely high and students we're missing a lot of work, or and especially they're missing lab work that was kind of not possible to make up. We needed to somehow, help faculty and give them flexibility on when they can make up versus when there can be a dropped grade, and the other thing like I mentioned before is that we needed to also address the fact that faculty were in violation of the current policy which legal would say you can't do. If it says that you must provide makeup, then you need to provide it.
- **Question:** Is it ok for professors to have language in their syllabus about their specific pedagogical situation. If something cannot be recreated, then that is where a dropped grad would come in.

Discussion on Program Change: Master's in Data Science

Doug Nychka

- **Question:** It has been said there are not enough faculty to teach the three courses in statistics that would then be shifted to online only as there are not enough faculty to teach online and in-person. Does this provide a superior learning experience for our students? I am not sure if it provides a better or worse learning experience. Sam believes that the online and in-person modalities provide a similar experience and online even gives more flexibility to our students. We have run 530 as an online course from the beginning of the course so we have already been offering statistics classes online.
- **Question:** I have heard reports that residential students have been forced to take online courses for the Data Science program that was rolled out and then the course wasn't available, so they had to delay graduation or register for courses that don't support their degree to remain eligible for financial assistance. When we are rolling out courses, Grad council had historically considered is do we have the staffing resources to teach this course? And we should be considering the same thing with these online programs. Ultimately, are we sacrificing the experience to make money? Mines has always prided ourselves on providing the experience that students want.

We would like to offer 2 sections (1 online, 1 residential) but we are not able to currently. We have the budget for online programs to be able to support adjunct professors to either teach the class or free up a faculty to teach it. The Deans and Department Heads have made the commitment to provide support as best as they can. Depending on the number of students in the programs and classes. There are resources to help in teaching all of these courses.

- **Comment:** I was also going to bring up the adjunct option because (in math in particular) we are very concerned about how many adjuncts are teaching the classes and I hesitate to propose that as a solution since adjuncts are not faculty. We agree, and in our accreditation package we said that more than 50% of courses would be by faculty. The adjuncts are just a transition piece until the number of students grows to support full-time faculty.
- **Question:** Should in-person students be paying that price and is the administration adequately supporting your department and this program and providing the resources you need – which it does not sound like they are? Adjuncts are not necessarily of lower quality. There is one adjunct who is an expert in her field and is 1 of only 2 in the world. She is qualified to teach a graduate level course. We currently have one model where the online section is taught by an adjunct and

the residential program is taught by a faculty acting as a supervisor so there is more oversight, and we could offer the two sections.

- **Comment:** There does seem to be concern across campus about this issue and we need to work with Faculty Senate and the administration to see what their commitment is to be addressing this. This discussion needs to involve the provost and John Bradford – we could go on here, but we need to find a better way to address these concerns.

New Business

GSG Proposal for leave for students on RA contracts

Rena Zhu

*Slides will be available in Canvas.

GSG is the Mines Graduate Student Government and really covers all aspects of grad life. The written proposal includes two main ideas:

1. Paid leave for grad students on an RA contract for personal/mental health
 - a. Due to the flexible nature of research, the schedule changes from student to student and even week to week. The current policy states that grad students can do so during major holiday breaks when the campus is closed or negotiate with their advisor.
 - b. We are paid sick leave.
2. Ombuds Officer who specifically serves grad students.
 - a. The Ombuds Director will be faculty and there is no discussion to have one for the grad students.
 - b. Current advisor-advisee conflicts are taken to the department head or the OSG office.

It is common at other Universities for grad students that are serving as research assistants, to have two weeks of paid leave (either in a lump sum or accrued) Similar to what we do with our post-docs that accrue personal leave at the rate of 6 2/3 hours per month which works out to be 80 hours. We wouldn't want to do something better than what the post-docs are receiving but comparable would be good.

- **Question:** What do granting agencies allow this? Granting agencies always refer to the University policy and there are already plenty of universities that are doing this.
- **Question:** Do graduate students on contract fill out timesheets? Do post-docs? Post-docs do not submit timesheets, they are treated as regular employees with a modified leave schedule. There are some hourly RAs, and our graduate students are on contract for all 12 months of the year and are no different than a full-time post-doc student.

There are some advisors out there that do not allow their students to take breaks or vacation and insist they work year-round.

The Mines150 objective does include recruiting more grad students and if we do not improve this aspect of grad student life at Mines then it will be hard to attract good grad students.

Discussion on updating Senate bylaws:

Owen Hildreth

"Changes in delivery are part of the Graduate Council's purview."

The question is what is considered a substantive change that needs to be voted and approved by the grad council and do the bylaws need to change or be updated to reflect the process?

There is no change necessary to the Senate bylaws as it already states that Graduate Council approves any changes to programs and curriculum. We have already been delegated the responsibility to evaluate

the curriculum for online modalities.

A typo would not be considered as something to be voted and approved on. As it would simply be correcting the record to be true.

- **Question:** According to the bylaws is a change in modality a modified degree program? If the answer is yes, then everything will roll through grad council like it does for everything else. The decision needs to be made clear to all parties.

The current bylaws are too vague and leave room for interpretation. Last year a program was offered online, and people were upset that it did not go through the council for approval. However, if you make the language more finite then it does not allow the flexibility you would need as the course, council, faculty, and university evolves. There needs to be a middle ground without being completely pigeonholed. Additional discussion can be had in future meetings.

Adjourn

Soutir Bandyopadhyay

Next meeting: [October 18, 2023], 4:00-5:00 pm via Zoom. Please send all agenda items to Soutir Bandyopadhyay (sbandyopadhyay@mines.edu) 1 week in advance.

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

2.1 **Approval of Previous Minutes** – [September 20, 2023]

Soutir Bandyopadhyay