Colorado School of Mines – GRADUATE COUNCIL MEETING AGENDA

January 31, 2024, 4:00 – 5:00 pm, via Zoom

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**Attendees:**

**Voting Members**: 24 total (16 - majority needed for quorum). Quorum was present.

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

**Other Regular Attendees and Guests**

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

**Special Guest(s):** Cadi Gillette

**Welcome** Soutir Bandyopadhyay

**Briefings and Information Items**

*Office of Graduate Studies* Tim Barbari

Rick sent a posting for my job last Friday and it came out before an announcement was sent out by the provost. I told Rick back in October that I was going to step down for the Dean’s job at the end of the academic year to give him enough time to do an external search if he wanted to. After the first of the year, it was decided that there would be an internal search so he will send an announcement of my stepping down later.

**Continued Business**

**1.1 Elimination of 4xx Courses of Graduate Credit** Tim Barbari

We are still receiving CIM submission for cross-listing, so I appreciate departments getting a head start on the process. I’ve had conversations with various members of the council about cross-listing across departments. One example that came to my attention was PHGN422, which is an undergraduate elective course, but is also among a list of electives for the Nuclear Engineering program. We’ve been discussing the idea that something could be an upper-level undergraduate course for a Physics major yet be graduate content for an interdisciplinary program that is taking on students from a few different programs. The Registrar is fine with that. We talked a little bit about that in the past, so I think we are going to be open to that general concept. There is a limitation in that if it happened to be a combined student coming from Physics. It would not satisfy the double counting criteria because the content is undergraduate for the Physics major.

**Comment:** Physics will cross-list as PHGN522.

**Question:** I had a question regarding cost analysis. Have you done a cost analysis? Is that what the motivation is from? We don’t have enough faculty to support moving to graduate level courses. Does this require changing content moving from 400-level to 500-level?

**Answer:** This would require changing content to match graduate credit. The primary motivation is from our accreditor, HLC. I have shared some email exchanges I had with our HLC liaison in the previous meeting which can be found on Canvas. One of the reasons why many institutions cross list courses is because they do not have the faculty resources to have separate sections of both a 400 version and a 500 version. We have a number of those cross-listed courses already on the books at Mines that are already handled this way. The differentiator is having something for the graduate level that the 400-verson students are not doing or something that adds graduate level content to the 500-level version of the cross-listed course but meet at the same time. It is less about more homework, and more about a deeper level that you might expect a graduate student to be able to do. An example might be graduate students taking a homework problem of their choice and writing a literature review.

**Comment:** The GP standard practice is in a cross-listed class, the graduate course would have an explicitly stated component that is extra work such as a term project. I think we need to be cognizant of the need to meet the requirements for undergraduate ABET. We feel the easiest method is to keep 400/500 courses listed then in the syllabus have extra that is required for the graduate course that stated the different grading.

**Comment:** This is an excellent summary of what would be best practice. Having the cross-listed version allows you to grade the graduate and undergraduate students separately. If there is additional work like a term paper or research paper, you can weigh that differently for the graduate students.

**Question:** Is this no longer an option since this is a required change from HLC, regardless of council’s vote?

**Answer:** That seemed to be the messaging I received from our HLC liaison. We know that even though this wasn’t picked up when they visited us last that other universities in the area have. It is in a document they call their “accepted practices.”

**Question:** What are we going to 4+1 students? Will the 400-level courses not count towards that?

**Answer:** Currently, the catalog states that a student can only substitute graduate level courses for undergraduate requirements and then double count them. The catalog language is taken verbatim from the HLC documentation on course substitution for combined accelerated programs. This is where advising plays a huge role, and CASA has been on top of this. If there’s a cross-listed course and someone is interested in the graduate program, we need to ask students early on (sophomore/junior year) what their plans are and if they would want to do a combined program. Over time, we will develop combined course maps and notify students early of 500-level courses that they could potentially use as electives for their undergraduate degree.

**Question:** My understanding was the HLC included in their language that their requirement is that at least 50% of a graduate degree must be courses taken at the graduate level. They never mentioned at the undergraduate level. Most programs have never been in violation of more than nine credits at the 400 level. That might explain why HLC did not call attention to us being in violation because for a 30-credit degree, the limit is nine credits of 400 level anyway. I am looking for clarification as I did not hear that HLC is saying no 400-level or undergraduate classes can be counted. For interdisciplinary programs, I do think there is a challenge for some of our transfer students coming from community colleges and expecting them to know within a year if they want to take 500-level courses in preparation for graduate school. At the junior year, they are still adjusting to Mines and not always thinking about graduate school at that time. Lastly, I thought that if an undergraduate took too many courses at the graduate level, there may be a financial aid impact. One of the things that we do when advising combined students who are on financial aid is always talk to them about making sure there is no implication to their financial aid for what they are planning. If there are only 500-level courses as an option, does that potentially put students with federal financial aid at risk?

**Answer:** Yes, it does put their financial aid at risk. We must be compliant with federal financial aid guidelines and so we get dinged on a regular basis because they see us giving undergraduate federal loans to students who are taking graduate level courses. In the past, we would have them flipped to GR. When students are in the combined program and they are taking mostly graduate credit, they will have federal financial aid pulled back. That is one of the risks associated with being in that program. If you review the email exchange that I shared with HLC, I did address clarification on what is meant by “at least 50% of a graduate program must be courses that are designed as graduate courses.” The remaining 50% should be cross-listed 400/500-level courses, but the student would still be taking the 500-level version of that cross-listed course. Double counted courses at the 500-level are always counted as UG first. The issue we are trying to fix is when we have allowed students to take other things in addition to the 500 or double counted courses and have been coding them as undergraduate. The Registrar communicates by email to all combined students at the start of every semester of what the rules are in terms of the counting and the financial aid issues.

**Comment:** We find that many students do not understand the Registrar email and so they come to faculty for clarification. Could we get a memo from OGS stating how this is supposed to work?

**Comment:** I will share the email with Graduate Council and draft a memo based on that and receive feedback on how we can better word the email and make it easier to understand. OGS also receives those questions from students about the Registrar emails.

When this change gets approved, the biggest challenge will not be updating the current wording but making sure that every program catalog page within departments has language removed regarding 400-level courses counting towards a graduate degree. These will also all need to be changed at the same time to prevent any discrepancies. I’ve shared a list of 400-level courses that have at least 2-3 graduate students in them, and we will fill in where we already know the cross-lists are existing, which are in the catalog but not in the schedule of courses, and which are already in CIM. We would then ask each department what their plan is – do you want to elevate the course? Do you want to create a 500-level? After discussion with Brandon in Faculty Senate, our plan was to streamline the process so that we are adding additional work to an existing course that had been accepted for graduate credit, not creating a new course. As an interim solution, we may reference other pages/documents/handbooks if we cannot get these changes submitted in time for catalog publication.

**Comment:** Part of the reason why deadlines are so early, especially for program changes, is because of the process it goes through which takes several weeks of review. It’s typically two meetings for council approval. If we all agree, we can make program changes replacing 400-level course with a corresponding 500-level course as an administrative change and bulk approve them. Doing this may extend the deadline for program changes to the end of February. Based on previous extensions and exceptions that have been made for the catalog in previous years, I see no reason why that would be a problem from an administrative perspective.

**Comment:** This is a suggestion that the Registrar had in mind as this would be more of an administrative change than an academic/curricular change. I am trying to find a way for us to process these while also respecting faculty governance in terms of getting information about what this looks like as a change since it could impact more than one department.

**Question:** One concern is for graduate students that use the 400-level courses to stretch themselves into a new area, and they’re not totally confident in their abilities to enroll in the 500-level courses. We see that sometimes in our upper-level courses in HASS, especially among international students, where they take an elective that is different than their background. They may be nervous that they are not going to be able to hit the level of writing that is expected in graduate courses so they will often turn to the 400-level courses as a warm-up to learn the material without having grad level reading and writing expectations. I worry that in that scenario, the opportunity for more flexibility for those students would go away. I’m wondering if there is anything that can get built into the system that gives students a little bit of space to try a different area, or is there a way students could have a pass/fail opportunity in these courses?

**Answer:** A possible solution may be for the student to enroll in a 500-level independent study. As part of the independent study, they would go to the 400-level course to get up the learning curve on a subject area/matter and then have an additional assignment to deepen understanding at the graduate level.

**Question:** We have at least two courses (one in Data Science and the other in Renewable Energy) that is offered as a 400-level course in Electrical Engineering. However, we have a lot of graduate students from AES and Space Resources who take these courses for graduate level credit. What could we do in those situations?

**Answer**: A solution may be to use the SYGN prefix for courses that could be used as graduate credit (ex. SYGN5XX/MATH455). The content wouldn’t change but it would notify that the course is graduate level for some and undergraduate for program-specific students.

**Question:** Last year, we were concerned about giving students enough of a transition period so we put a statement in the catalog about combined students with graduate admit terms between fall 2023 and spring 2025 can use the old policy. Are you going to have the same statement in the 2024-2025 catalog?

**Answer:** Yes, we will probably leave something like that in there, but will differ slightly to refer to the course exception form.

**Comment:** When you propose new wording for this statement, it needs to be in your proposal document as well.

**Comment:** I will update that as I will be revising the proposal to include cross-listing 400/500 courses that have two different prefixes.

**Adjourn**

Next meeting: February 7, 2024, 4:00-5:00 via Zoom. Please send all agenda items to Soutir Bandyopadhyay ([sbandyopadhyay@mines.edu](mailto:sbandyopadhyay@mines.edu)) and Kristeen Serracino ([kristeen.serracino@mines.edu](mailto:kristeen.serracino@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 Minutes** – January 24, 2024 Soutir Bandyopadhyay