

Minutes

The Graduate Council

University of Oregon Senate Committee

April 23, 2025

10:00 pm – 12:00 pm

Zoom - <https://uoregon.zoom.us/j/92108719023>

Graduate Council Charge: The Graduate Council shall advise the Vice Provost for Graduate Studies on matters pertaining to graduate study at the University of Oregon.

Specifically, and in addition to its advisory role, the Graduate Council:

- (1) Establishes policies and regulations governing graduate study at the University of Oregon, and reviews and votes to approve changes or additions to such policies.
- (2) Reviews and votes to approve new graduate programs, revisions to degree requirements for existing graduate programs, and other changes to existing graduate programs, while ensuring highest standards for graduate education.
- (3) Reviews and makes recommendations to the Vice Provost for Graduate Studies on academic grievance appeals in accordance with the University's established grievance procedures.
- (4) Provides input and guidance to the Vice Provost for Graduate Studies on initiatives aimed at enhancing excellence, diversity, and access in graduate education.
- (5) Provides University administration and Unit leaders across campus with opinion and counsel on university affairs affecting graduate education and graduate students, including issues of equity in service to graduate students.

ATTENDEES

Council Members Present: Ron Bramhall (*ex officio*), Krista Chronister (*ex officio*), Erik Girvan, Bonnie Gutierrez (*ex officio*), Leigh Johnson, Gabriela Martinez, Ben McMorran, Kate Mills, Barbara Muraca, Jesus Ramos-Kittrell, Denita Strietelmeier (*ex officio*), Dean Walton (*ex officio*), Laura Wellman

Members Absent: John Beckerman, Sandra Boone, Jason Brown, Beth Harn, Maile Hutterer, Josh Snodgrass

Division of Graduate Studies Staff Present: Jered Nagel, Austin Bosworth

AGENDA

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The Graduate Council was called to order at 12:04pm.

Approval of March minutes (10:00-10:05)

- Request to add comment at end of minutes, Maile and Jesus make comment about programs existing for a revenue generating purpose and concerns around that
 - o “There was a comment at the end of the meeting about a concern over programs being offered with a focus on revenue. Proposals should also pay heed to other parameters, which include academic substance, competition over constituencies, among others.” – Jesus
 - Seconded amendment to March Minutes; Minutes will be amended and distributed once complete
 - Motion and vote to approve the March Minutes with the requested amendment, approved.
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Graduate Specialization in Quantum and Nanotechnology (10:05-10:45)

Continued discussion: **Courses are being reviewed by UOCC on Tuesday, 4/22. The proposed Quantum and Nanotechnology graduate specialization, housed within the Applied Physics master's program, is an innovative, industry-focused program that equips students with*

advanced skills in quantum science, nanofabrication, radio-frequency electronics, and cryogenic technology. Building on the success of the University of Oregon's nationally recognized Applied Physics Master's program, this specialization combines rigorous coursework, hands-on training, and a nine-month paid industry internship. It prepares graduates for high-demand careers in quantum computing, superconducting quantum circuits, nanoelectromechanical systems (NEMS), photonics, and advanced materials research.

Guests: Benjamin Aleman and Nik Zhelev

Questions

Page 12 – Related to recruitment, what changes are you expecting, what international student groups you have drawn on and would normally expect them to draw on?

- Bringing in 11 students this year, almost 100 applications from all over US and world; this year, that questions came up not just with international but domestic students about what to expect job-security wise
- We have one or two Oregonians in the cohort, one international student that will be enrolled this year
- Understanding that it may be difficult for international students to work in the industry due to residency restrictions, they did focus on domestic students
- The only international is a US permanent resident from the UK, so we won't have any this year
- Experience with an international student in the program this past year opened their eyes to difficulties with job-related aspect

In this rapidly changing economy, what kind of opportunities are there in quantum technologies for internships?

- That seems to be one of the few places the federal government is interested in continuing and funding further
- There has been a number of new, big programs announced – DOD Quantum Benchmark Initiative (?) announced millions in investments to improve the technologies and address challenges; no current cuts to the appropriated grant funds, first Quantum Initiative Act stayed funded and interest from federal government in passing more legislation
- Manufacturing possibility of moving to US would mean jobs in this field
- March American Business Society Conference – this field is having a major resurgence, clear from the events and presence of business interests

Do you anticipate in the next two years that we will be competing internally for students?

- Received more applications that Physics and Applied Semiconductors combined, doesn't see that going down, and expects to leverage the expertise the Physics faculty has
- How to Build a Microchip summer class at Knight Campus wants to double enrollment in the future, and their students could also participate in those programs and be a benefit to other programs

Are there any updates on formalizing the process of helping students secure an internship, who is the faculty helping the students and what is the process?

- The program funds itself as much as possible and has budget room for expanding staff to support students in securing an internship if needed
- Executive Director and faculty are working on helpful ways to increase faculty interaction with students in classes that spur the ability to make industry-valued work, network and secure opportunities

The new budget model moving around campus will not be affecting this program, correct?

- Correct, our GEs are paid for by us and not CAS, which is actually a help to CAS

Do you foresee any issues with students being able to pay for this program because it is to be expected students are taking out loans to pay for them?

- Their students are no different from any other student when it comes to the changes at the Department of Education; the difference for their students is that 6 months into the program, they'll have a job which is different from other students

How do you handle MOUs with internship sites and interns?

- Benjamin expresses gratitude to Krista Chronister and the Division of Graduate Studies in their collaboration of generating MOUs/understanding contracts from internship sites. Because this is their first year they are still working out the process, also mentions that some internships will not need MOUs, like in some Knight Campus cases
- There is one student currently working in the Air Force Lab, which has restrictions – but, the team he is working with is already published publicly which means his work can be discussed to a degree and the student still gets the support they need, and proper oversight over the work being done

Guests are thanked for their participation, and leave the meeting (10:40am).

Question – can the university accommodate the need for advanced labs, facilities, etc?

- Ben McMorran: Startup funds from VPRI were used in areas where shared use is possible with other programs and students

Motion to approve the Graduate Specialization in Quantum and Nanotechnology, seconded – approved by the Graduate Council at 10:47am. One abstention by Ben McMorran.

Academic Standing “Fresh Start” (10:45-11:15)

Currently, the academic standing of UO undergraduates carries over when they are admitted to a UO graduate program, and a formal request is required to override the former academic standing. We are proposing that this practice be eliminated so that academic standing automatically resets when a UO undergraduate is admitted as a graduate student.

Question regarding the timing of removing the academic standing until the student has fully completed their undergraduate degree and begins their graduate work.

- It was noted that undergraduate records are not currently changed and will not be changed in the future, this change would prevent academic standing from transferring over to their graduate record, but leave their undergraduate record intact
- In addition, making this change would align graduate students from other institutions and the UO, since academic standing issues do not follow graduate students from other schools but does affect UO undergraduate-to-graduate students currently

Question about students who take graduate courses as an undergraduate, does this change anything for those scenarios?

- No, undergraduate students who take graduate courses (either through an accelerated master’s program or as a one-off will still be able to transfer in those courses, assuming they pass them successfully.

Comment to the effect that this policy change makes sense so as not to punish an undergraduate student who navigated a difficult path in their studies by making those issues follow them into their graduate record, and may improve retention by reinforcing that UO students who choose UO for graduate study have a clean slate.

Motion to approve the “Fresh Start” for graduate students, seconded; approved unanimously with no abstentions at 11:05am.

Dissertation Committee Policy (11:15-11:45)

Proposed revisions include:

- *Revise terminology of chair and advisor to distinguish administrative and mentoring roles*
- *Broaden eligibility of career faculty*
- *Better define roles and responsibilities*
- *Codify existing 6-month rule into policy*
- *Include existing DEd and DMA policies*

Comment from Vice Provost Chronister on the pros and cons of this policy change:

- Pros: The expansion of career faculty eligibility to serve as a committee member is student-centered and allows students to benefit from the expertise of non-tenure-track faculty, many of whom are highly qualified but are not allowed to serve in the existing policy.
- Cons: Difficulty for those faculty who are on an annual contract or are evaluated by tenure-track faculty in a department head role to speak up in the committee context (the reasons the previous parameters were in place were to consider power dynamics and evaluation and honest feedback to the student)

Question if this policy change would affect career faculty members’ ability to serve as a committee member or as an advisor

- This policy change would increase eligibility of career/NTTF faculty to serve as advisor, since they already can serve on a dissertation committee, just not in the advisor role or the institutional representative

Comment regarding how each school may be different in how they handle which types of faculty can serve on dissertation committees and in which roles, example provided of SOJC does not allow non-PhD faculty to advise doctoral students, sit on committees or serve as chairs of dissertation committees.

- It is noted that there are two criteria: faculty must have a doctoral degree, and must be one of the classes of faculty mentioned, so this would rule out career faculty without a doctorate. While it's true that many career faculty would not be involved in graduate education or interested in serving on dissertation committees, this revised policy would open up eligibility for those times when they are.
- In addition, all of these policies would still go through the respective school and department when the actual assignment to the committee or as an advisor takes place, meaning that school-specific policies limiting doctoral involvement for faculty would still stand

Comment requesting that if there is not language in the policy specifying that school or department policies override this general university policy, that it is included

- Request acknowledged and that it is possible, similar to how satisfactory progress thresholds may be higher or more stringent than the Division of Graduate Studies' minimum requirements for certain schools/departments/programs

Comment recognizing that the current CBA is doing away with the distinction between career lecturers and career instructors being graduate vs undergraduate instruction, and that being specific about which classes of faculty will be eligible to serve is important as terms are updated and may not be an easy way to distinguish between faculty

Another comment supporting the idea of reducing power structures by implementing this policy, while allowing for each school/department to make decisions about who is eligible in their specific context

Another comment pointed out that the "Career" category as a blanket term still exists. Instructor and lecturer will be used only for Pro Tem moving forward

Comment regarding how dissertation advising would be recognized in the service of the career faculty doing the advising because it is a different allocation of effort to advise a PhD student than the service and teaching that a lot of this faculty currently do.

- It is noted that, unit policies will need to account for this if a unit wants to have a Career faculty member in this kind of role. The CBA also allows for individual job descriptions that deviate from unit policy baselines that could account for this.
- It is the hope that a faculty member will advocate for themselves and Department Heads will be dealing with issues of this nature as well

Comment recognizing the importance of distinguishing between bargained labor and academic policy. Some of the changes in the CBA will need to continue to be ironed out,

like that there are a number of Officers of Administration that have teaching duties that, according to the terms of the CBA, should not.

Comment pointing out the 6 month rule would have prevented a student in a previous scenario from graduating on time, and that the 6 month rule may have a negative effect in this way

- Exceptions are made to the 6 month rule for things described above
- Another member makes the comment that clarification around these policies would be a huge benefit to some faculty who are doing lots of PhD advising and hit departmental/institutional barriers

Comment requesting there be clarification, in the form of something like a memo, that specifies these issues of what duties should or should not be assigned to non-represented faculty at the university. Ensuring that the rights of those faculty who are not represented by a contract prevents exploitative practices against non-represented faculty.

- Another comment on this same topic mentioning the concerning possibility of the stepping down of a chair of a committee and forcing the 6 month rule could be a negative outcome for a student

On the 6 month rule, Vice Provost Chronister advises that the intent of the 6 month rule is to account for the majority of cases, reinforcing that the student needs to be working closely with a qualified member of faculty and have a rapport with them to be in the process of completing their dissertation. Exceptions do occur in situations of faculty conflict, etc. and those can be accounted for while keeping the policy in alignment with the majority of cases and their desired outcomes.

- Agreement from a member that language to the effect of, “Upon petitions, exceptions are possible” would be helpful. The member expressed some hesitation and trepidation about these policy changes as a whole and will deliberate on this and talk with trusted colleagues.
 - o They also expressed hesitation at how to handle situations where a faculty member may not hold a PhD but has sufficient experience and knowledge commensurate to a PhD

A final policy change was mentioned that will be included in the revised version next session, is a provision for when a committee chair leaves the university. The new policy will be that the chair can remain on the committee until the student graduates, but that a co-chair within the university be designated as well.

- Question: Is this taking into account if we no longer have TRP?
 - o Answer: The current policy does not consider a faculty member retired until they have completed TRP, so anyone on TRP is considered faculty. A more explicit policy could be enumerated regarding TRP, but the way the policy is currently written there is no consideration of TRP.

Another comment affirming the logic of the new policy, because under the current policy, someone who is considering retiring should avoid serving on dissertation committees because of the multi-year commitment in a scenario where they only have one year to complete the committee work if they choose to retire in the near future. The new policy provides more flexibility to those faculty.

The revisions to the Dissertation Committee policies was tabled until the next Graduate Council session.

International Student Concerns (11:45-12:00)

Discussion about issues affecting international graduate students at UO.

We still have 4 students who have received visa revocation notices; a response team led by ISSS goes into action

Information supporting staff and faculty on how to respond to law enforcement when on campus or asking for student information

ASUO has legal services that every student is entitled to, haven't included immigration historically but extended to referral due to situation

Links:

<https://innovationlawlab.org/programs/rapid-interventions/>

<https://asuolegal.org/home/>

ISSS is serving as point of contact for affected students and involving Division staff and departmental staff where appropriate.

Comment regarding frustration felt from university community members about the lack of a strong message from upper administration about these issues and what is being

done to protect these students and push back. The psychological and emotional trauma of the current events are having a serious toll on the community and the question is raised if anything can be said by upper administration in support, solidarity, etc.

- Another comment that international faculty and students are experienced with this type of trauma, because they come from other states where the rule of law and other laws are not respected, and they have experience with being dissidents and part of a persecuted class. Americans lack the experience in many respects that international community members have.
- Another comment also pointed out that the lack of an overarching, community-wide message around these issues does not mean significant work is not going into this issue. Significant university resources are going to address this, and often the lack of an overarching message has its own logical reasons.

ISSS asks that all international students who possess a green card reach out to them about their summer travel plans. Each student, country, and situation is different, but they want to support students in their travel and also have an idea of where the students are and their environment.

Another comment recognized that there is a UO Senate meeting next Wednesday at 3pm where issues like this will be discussed as well.

Graduate Council adjourned at 12:00pm.