

Graduate Council Meeting Summary

Tuesday, October 22, 2019

1:00-2:30 PM

Perkins Administration Building 311

Graduate Council Committee Members

(x) In attendance

Mark Chancey – Dedman I		Daniel Millimet – Dedman II	x
Amy Freund - Meadows		Anthony Petrosino - Simmons	x
Kevin Hofeditz - Meadows	x	James E. Quick - ORGS	x
Alan Itkin - ORGS	x	Dinesh Rajan - Lyle	x
Duncan MacFarlane - Lyle	x	Johannes Tausch – Dedman III	x
Renee McDonald - Dedman	x	Paul Yovanoff - Simmons	x

Introductions and Charge of the Graduate Council:

Dean Quick opened with introductions of Council members and a welcome to the new member, Tony Petrosino. Dr. Petrosino is representing the Simmons School, where he is Associate Dean for Research and Outreach and Professor in the Department of Teaching and Learning.

Dean Quick reviewed the charge of the Graduate Council and described what the committee has accomplished to date:

The Council has developed key policies that currently appear in the Graduate Office section of the Graduate Catalog. These policies lay the groundwork for defining the role and responsibilities of the graduate school. The Graduate Council was also instrumental in developing the Ph.D. Health Insurance Program, which covers individual premium costs on the student plan for Ph.D. students. The Council established criteria by which eligibility for the health insurance coverage is determined.

Dean Quick also explained why we have not formally announced the launch of SMU's graduate school: A development effort is underway. Dean Quick stated that he was not able to provide more information on the development effort at this point, but he said that he hoped to be able to report more on this effort by the beginning of next semester. Nevertheless, Dean Quick emphasized that we are moving forward with the plan to implement a graduate school at SMU and that the formation of the Graduate Council and the initial policies drafted by the Council represent the first steps in this process. Dean Quick also said that the Council's work last semester was instrumental to the development effort, because, together with the Task Force report, it demonstrated that SMU was serious about doing what was necessary to make the graduate school a success.

Update on Implementation of Graduate School (Dean Quick):

Dean Quick said that one of the primary tasks of the Council this year is laying out a plan for the composition of future Graduate Councils and the selection of its members. This will be delayed, however, until the outcome of the development effort is clear.

Agenda Items for 2019-20:

Dean Quick and Assistant Dean Itkin previewed these items for the Council.

Slide 4 of the presentation also located in Box

- Responsible conduct of research training for doctoral and master's students
- Administrative responsibilities of Graduate School with regard to Ph.D. students
- Classification of postdoctoral scholars and postdoc appointment process
- Regular assessment of Ph.D. students' progress by their programs
- Graduate students taking classes in schools besides their program's school
- Ph.D. dissertation committee membership, including policies for external reviewers and committee members who leave SMU
- Final transcript and other document requirements for incoming graduate students
- The collection and maintenance of Ph.D. career outcomes data
- Processes for selecting Graduate Council members in 2020-21 and beyond
- Processes for graduate student appeals and composition of a committee to review such appeals
- Teaching Assistant training
- Plan for removing 0-credit hour full-time status courses from Ph.D. programs



Administrative Functions of the Graduate School with Regards to Ph.D. Students:

Assistant Dean Itkin gave an overview of the plan in the Task Force Report for the establishment of the graduate school. The next step in implementing this plan will be to determine what responsibilities the graduate school will have for Ph.D. students outside of Dedman College. ORGS handles most administrative functions for Ph.D. students in Dedman College. What functions would the graduate school take on as it engages the other Ph.D. students?

Assistant Dean Itkin talked about the current responsibilities of ORGS for all Ph.D. students, including those in Lyle, Meadows and Simmons: new student orientation; candidacy reception and certificates; graduation luncheon and spring graduation dinner students; student life events and professional development workshops (Assistant Dean Itkin mentioned that attendance of these workshops has been good this year); offering and administering University Ph.D. and Mustang Fellowships to attract and support excellent and diverse Ph.D. students. ORGS also works with ISSS on international graduate student paperwork.

Assistant Dean Itkin talked about the responsibilities of ORGS for Dedman graduate students: final review of Ph.D. applications and release of the offer letter signed by Dean Quick, checking for application completion and fulfillment of requirements in the catalog, reaching out to Dedman for more information about incomplete applications or ones that do not meet requirements; review of Registrar forms and coordination with Registrar on student records; approval of advancement to candidacy forms; review of leave requests; review of timeline extension requests (advancement to candidacy, degree completion, etc.), coordinating with departments on these requests; dissertation formatting guidance and formatting checks, approving publication of final versions of dissertations in SMU Scholar; approval of graduation and collection of graduation surveys; funding and administration of Dean's Dissertation Fellowships, which give students a year of service-free funding to complete their dissertations.

There was discussion about the graduate school taking on these functions for Ph.D. students outside of Dedman College, and the question was raised how the transition would work, since school staff

currently handle most of these responsibilities. The lack of operational details provided caused concern for whether the office, in its expanded role, would provide an adequate level of service, particularly in time sensitive tasks. Dean Quick said that, rather than providing operational details for the Council's approval, it was part of the Council's role to deliberate and determine operational details. Dean Quick suggested that Council members research how these functions are handled in their schools before the next meeting so that operational details could then be fleshed out with Council members' input.

Responsible Conduct of Research:

Dean Quick explained that responsible conduct of research training for graduate students is overseen by both sides of ORGS—graduate studies and research—because this training is a requirement of the federal agencies that provide research grants. Currently, SMU Ph.D. students funded on federal grants attend a one-day (8-hour) seminar led by the Assistant Dean of Graduate Studies and the Assistant Vice President for Research Integrity and Operations. Faculty are not involved, but video vignettes from SMU faculty are shown during the seminar. Master's students funded on federal grants do online CITI training. No credit appears on students' transcripts for this training. ORGS has added milestones on transcripts for students who did the training in Spring '19. Dean Quick mentioned that a for-credit responsible conduct of research course was not approved by the Dedman Graduate Council in the past. Dean Quick stated that going forward this responsibility should fall to the graduate school, and that faculty should be involved in the course. The course should provide a fundamental understanding of federal expectations on responsible conduct of research, but should also include components tailored to different disciplines. Dean Quick said that in formulating policies on this issue, the Council needs to put in place a mechanism for tracking completion of the requirement. Dean Quick also said that the Council needs to address the question, who has to complete this training. We have so far restricted the requirement to students receiving federal funding, but should we be doing this for graduate students in general—all Ph.D. students, master's students? We should definitely include postdocs, since federal requirements apply to them.

[Slides 13- 14 of the presentation also located in Box](#)

NIH Requirements

- "NIH requires that all trainees, fellows, participants, and scholars receiving support through any NIH training, career development award (individual or institutional), research education grant, and dissertation research grant must receive instruction in responsible conduct of research."
- Training must include in-person component.
- Training must be for at least 8 hours. It is recommended that this be spread out.
- Training should address a set of prescribed topics (conflict of interest, authorship, etc.)
- Training should involve faculty.
- Training should occur at all career stages and at least once every four years.
- Source: Update on the Requirement for Instruction in the Responsible Conduct of Research: <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/not-od-10-019.html>



NSF Requirements

- Requires that institutions “have a plan in place to provide appropriate training and oversight in the responsible and ethical conduct of research to undergraduates, graduate students, and postdoctoral researchers who will be supported by NSF to conduct research.”
- Requires that institutions certify this on each proposal.
- Does not prescribe any form that RCR training must take.
- Source: Proposal and Award Policies and Procedures Guide:
https://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/pappg19_1/index.jsp

Assistant Dean Itkin provided a comparison of how several schools are providing responsible conduct of research training. Duke University, for example, only does in-person training. All Ph.D. students do six hours of training at orientation and three two-hour elective seminars— 12 hours total (School of Medicine Ph.D. students do more). Master’s students do four hours of training at orientation and one two-hour elective (six hours total). Faculty can propose elective courses; departments can also propose to have a course or seminar they already offer carry RCR credit (only up to two hours of RCR credit).

Assistant Dean Itkin also went through responsible conduct of research training programs and requirements at Vanderbilt, Notre Dame, and Northwestern (see slides 17-19 in the accompanying PowerPoint presentation)

Assistant Dean Itkin went through some key takeaways: 1) SMU is not currently following NIH requirements and recommendations— in particular on faculty participation, training for scholars at all levels (including postdocs), and in spreading training out over multiple sessions; 2) we are behind aspirational peers in only making NSF-funded students do the training and in not following the NIH requirements and recommendations; 3) we don’t have accurate records of students who have done training; 4) SMU’s current training is “one size fits all”— all students get the same training, regardless of discipline.

Assistant Dean Itkin talked about possible policies and procedures for responsible conduct of research training which the Graduate Council might recommend: requiring that all Ph.D. students and postdocs do 8 hours of in-person training in their first year; having Ph.D. students and postdocs do a four-hour core course (led by ORGS) plus two two-hour faculty-led electives spread across their first year and requiring master’s students on federal grants to do the same; recruiting and compensating faculty in different disciplines to develop electives; adding the training as a course on students’ transcripts. We are currently getting this onto students’ transcripts as a milestone, but having a class for which students register and receive credit would ensure more accurate records.

Postdoctoral Appointments (Introduction by Associate Provost Patty Alvey):

This has some urgency to it because of some anticipated postdoctoral appointments. Dean Quick stated that the Graduate School Taskforce had recommended that postdocs fall under the purview of the graduate school to facilitate postdoctoral hiring and manage support services for postdocs. There are currently pressing issues, though, concerning whether postdocs should be allowed to teach, and if so, how much. Perhaps “postdoc” is not the right category for some of these positions.

The Council needs to define a postdoctoral position, with an understanding of what constraints exist if they are to continue being staff positions. Dean Quick stated that he favors the Vanderbilt model in which you have faculty, staff, and postdocs as a third kind of position with specific policies applicable to them.

Associate Provost Patty Alvey provided information on federal standards for postdoctoral appointments. The NSF sees these positions as primarily for training in research or scholarship, working under the supervision of a senior scholar within the institution. Associate Provost Alvey stated that our current way of managing postdocs as staff came about because of our HR System. Associate Provost Alvey mentioned what we have to demonstrate to our accreditors that we have a sufficient number of faculty to fulfill curriculum design, development, evaluation, teaching, identification and assessment of learning outcomes, student advising, research and creative activity, and institutional committees in professional service. Associate Provost Alvey stated that we may supplement our core faculty by a judicious assignment of professional staff, part-time faculty and part-time teaching assistants if they qualify. Associate Provost Alvey also stated that one issue is tracking research costs—can we report postdocs teaching as research effort to federal agencies?

The committee asked whether postdocs should be able to teach a small load. It was suggested that there should be some ability to teach. Associate Provost Alvey agreed that, if this is a training position, then the opportunity to teach should be provided if it is helpful to the postdoc. Dean Quick asked what steps need to be taken now? We definitely need to modify how postdocs are classified at SMU. The taskforce recommended that there is an oversight role for the graduate school, but the immediate need for the Council is to go back to HR and to advocate for a definition of postdocs as a separate kind of position from faculty and staff. Dean Quick said the Vanderbilt model is the best one to follow. Hiring of postdocs at Vanderbilt is done based on the availability of funds, and the positions are understood to be temporary and contingent on funds. We need to go to bring in HR to talk about this. Associate Provost Alvey agreed with Dean Quick that postdocs should not be coded as faculty, because it becomes very critical how we count faculty.

Dean Quick suggested that the Council should consider how to define a postdoc, but that we should move forward with a plan to classify them as a separate kind of position from faculty and staff. He stated that postdocs teaching is not unusual at many universities, and that it is appropriate for postdocs to teach for their professional development.

Action item: **

- On administrative responsibilities of the graduate school: Dean Quick asked that the Council come prepared at the next meeting to explain how their units handle these responsibilities.

Other Items:

- The Council will continue to discuss this meeting's main items (administrative responsibilities of the graduate school, responsible conduct of research, and postdoc appointments), and will discuss the selection of future Graduate Councils next semester.

Meeting adjourned at 2:30pm

Box link: <https://smu.box.com/s/yt8z3pldogyvb0j5ms6yrxbc0wujha1h>

Submitted by Karen Wray