

**Graduate Assembly Meeting
Meeting Minutes from April 7, 2022**

Thursday, April 7, 2022
2:30 pm
Virtual via Teams

PRESIDING: Ali Abolmaali, Chair of the Graduate Assembly

MEMBERS ATTENDING: Kathryn Pole, Cynthia Kilpatrick, Robert Matthew Brothers, Mahmut Yasar, Yi Zhang, Jennifer Jie Zhang, Philip Baiden, Eusebius Small, Seyedali Abolmaali, Panos S. Shiakolas, Shawn Christensen, Alejandro Rodriguez, Leonidas Fegaras, Jacqueline L. Michael, Subhrangsu S Mandal, David A Jorgensen, Jinny Choi, Jiyeon Yoon

GUESTS ATTENDING: Sara Ridenour, Conroy E Kydd, Kimberly Tate, Kelli Sederavicius, Casey Graham Brown, Michael R. Roner, Allan Clay Clark, Kathryn Lea Hageman, Cory Forbes, Heather L. Snow, David M. Keller, John D. Gonzalez, Connie L. Fox, Gabriela Mustata Wilson

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS ATTENDING: James Grover, Rebecca J. Lewis, Amber M. K. Smallwood, Raymond L. Jackson, Teresa Taber Doughty

Call to Order - The meeting of the Graduate Assembly was called to order at 2:30 pm by Chair, Dr. Ali Abolmaali.

I. Members and Committees Introduced

Dr. Abolmaali mentioned the chairs of the following sub-committees.

- Committee on Graduate Students—Dr. Matthew Brothers
- Committee on Program Revision— Dr. Rebecca Mauldin
- Committee on Program Creation— Dr. Kathryn Pole

II. Consideration of Minutes

Minutes from February 10, 2022.

Dr. Shiakolas moved to approve minutes. Dr. Pole seconded the motion. The minutes were unanimously approved.

III. Dr. James Grover, Dean of Graduate School and Interim Vice President for Research

- Dr. Grover thanked everyone for their service on the committee this year; he also thanked members who will be rotating off for their full term of service, and he mentioned that he looked forward to working with members that will be serving next year again.
- Dr. Abolmaali confirmed with Dr. Grover that the meeting would end at 3:30 to allow time for Dr. Grover to conduct the elections for next year's Graduate Assembly officers.

IV. Graduate Student Council – Mr. Shane Wilson or representative

No one from the Graduate Student Council attended the meeting.

V. Old Business

1. Report from Committee on Program Creation--Dr. Kathryn Pole

- a. University of Dallas and UTA 4+1 MSEE Fast Track Program (College of Engineering)
Revisions have not yet been submitted, so this certificate is on hold.
- b. Fast Track Program for Master of Science in Marketing Research (College of Business)
Revisions have not yet been submitted, so this certificate is on hold.

2. Report from Committee on Graduate Students—Dr. Matthew Brothers

Status of Exit Survey for Master’s Students

- Doris Navarro from Dr. Lewis’s office created the survey in Question Pro. It was reviewed and modified in the last GA meeting.
- Dr. Brothers mentioned that per Ms. Navarro’s latest update, the assessment had been sent survey to the deans at the beginning of April with planned implementation for this summer.
- Dr. Brothers reminded the GA that the survey will be modified as needed in the future.
- Dr. Choi asked how the survey would be distributed. Dr. Brothers mentioned that it would be distributed university-wide when students applied for graduation. He also mentioned that different units could recommend modifications.
- Dr. Choi asked if the graduate advisor would be the contact. Dr. Lewis said students would receive a request to complete the survey as part of their graduation process—they receive an initial invitation and then reminders. She added that that is the way the undergraduate exit survey is done, and the response rate for that is quite high.
- Dr. Lewis mentioned that the survey will be sent to deans and assistant deans for feedback on things to “clean up” and for colleges to add questions that are program- and college-specific.
- Dr. Choi asked how results of the survey could be viewed. Dr. Lewis said they would be uploaded into Sharepoint for people with permissions, and the information is also sent directly to deans, every long semester. She also said that the information could be presented to the GA as well.

VI. New Business

1. Report from Committee on Program Creation: Dr. Kathryn Pole.

- a. Doctor of Philosophy in Curriculum and Instruction: Teaching and Learning (College of Education)
 - This is the first doctoral program for Curriculum and Instruction Department.
 - Sub-committee has reviewed it and recommended that it be approved pending the following.
 - i. Clarifying details that distinguish full-time from part-time students.
 - ii. A timeline to completion for students who are not full-time, aligned with the university’s rules on doctoral completion.
 - Dr. Small made a motion to approve the recommendations of the committee. The motion was seconded, and it passed unanimously.
- b. Graduate Certificate for Cyber-Physical Systems (College of Engineering)

- Sub-committee voted to approve it as written.
 - Dr. Shiakolas moved to accept the recommendations of the committee. Dr. Choi seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
- c. Graduate Certificate for Electric Propulsion (College of Engineering)
- Sub-committee voted to approve it as written.
 - Dr. Shiakolas moved to accept the recommendations of the committee. Dr. Choi seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
- d. Graduate Certificate for Design and Development of Regulated Medical Devices (College of Engineering)
- Sub-committee voted to approve it as written.
 - Dr. Shiakolas moved to accept the recommendations of the committee. Dr. Choi seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
- e. Graduate Certificate for Diversity and Equity in Public Health (College of Nursing and Health Innovation)
- The sub-committee voted to move it forward with the understanding that the faculty making the proposal confer with Social Work to ensure this program is different enough from Social Work recently-approved certificate.
 - Dr. Small moved to approve the recommendations of the sub-committee. Dr. Choi seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
- f. Graduate Certificate for Health Intelligence and Public Health Informatics (College of Nursing and Health Innovation)
- The sub-committee did not have enough time to review it.
 - Dr. Pole asked the GA whether to review it during the meeting with the whole Assembly or to do so via email after the meeting.
 - Dr. Abolmaali suggested that it be approved by email.
 - Dr. Grover agreed to that and mentioned that there is precedence.
 - Dr. Keller wanted to ensure that approving it by email would keep it on the current timeline so that it could be implemented for the upcoming academic year.
 - Dr. Abolmaali said that he would still handle the email approval of the certificate.
- g. Master of Science in Biomedical Sciences (College of Science)
- Sub-committee recommended the certificate be approved as written.
 - Dr. Shiakolas motioned to approve the recommendations of the committee. Dr. Christensen seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

2. Grade Replacement and Forgiveness Proposal for Graduate Programs: Dr. John Gonzalez, Chair, Department of Graduate Nursing

Dr. Gonzalez requested that the GA vote to adopt a permissive policy that allows for grade replacement and forgiveness because the department is actively looking to improve student progression to graduation and student retention. Currently, the department is moving to competency-based education, per the request of their accrediting body, and the grade replacement and forgiveness would align with that.

- Dr. Abolmaali asked how many courses could be forgiven under the proposed policy. Dr. Gonzalez said that hadn't been identified, but if the policy as is passed, the department would then decide the specific requirement.
- Dr. Abolmaali mentioned that at the undergraduate level, currently students could get forgiveness for up to 3 courses.
- Dr. Jackson mentioned that while grade forgiveness at the graduate level doesn't exist, graduate students can currently retake a course that they've received a D or F in, but that the grades of both courses would still be calculated into the GPA.
- Dr. Jackson also talked about the fact that many people have commented how difficult it is for graduate students to pull their GPA up to a level acceptable for graduation after receiving an F grade.
- Dr. Abolmaali clarified that Dr. Gonzalez's proposal would include grade forgiveness, meaning that the failing grade wouldn't be used in calculation of the GPA.
- Dr. Small asked how the lack of such a policy is affecting the Department of Graduate Nursing currently. Dr. Gonzalez responded that the faculty feels that grade forgiveness would be more aligned with competency-based education. Completion rates are around 70%; and a high number of students receiving Cs, Ds, Fs, are on probation or have been dismissed. Dr. Gonzalez provided a document showing the numbers and said that this was an opportunity to improve student progression and help improve student success. There is a variety of reasons these students are in this situation and they are trying to identify them and help these students.
- Dr. Small expressed concern that grade forgiveness would water-down student expectations. Dr. Gonzalez responded that he didn't believe that would be the case, but that grade forgiveness would allow students to reflect on what they've done and the opportunity to repeat the course. He reiterated Dr. Jackson's previous comment about the difficulty students have in pulling up their GPA once they have a failing grade.
- Dr. Michael mentioned that she understood the reservations committee members had, but wanted to speak in favor of the proposal with reservation. She said that most of department's learners were adults that had made an error in the past by not knowing when to drop a course to avoid carrying a low grade on their transcripts. This drags their GPA down and makes it difficult for them to progress even if they repeat the course. She said grade forgiveness would give students a

second chance to be successful, even if the GA decides it should only be allowed for one course. She pointed out that if they still earned a low grade on the second attempt, they would be “caught in the net”.

- Dr. Jackson pointed out that courses which result in a C grade are not repeatable under current policy and this touches into another policy on grades for credit.
- Dr. Abolmaali mentioned that the GA could choose to change that policy if it so chooses.
- Dr. Shiakolas asked how many courses and which courses (fundamental, electives) would be allowed under the grade forgiveness. He expressed concern that students might take the attitude that they can just retake a course if they don't do well. He also suggested that perhaps some of the problems students have could be mitigated by proper advising students when the appropriate time to take a course in their program would be. Maybe utilize technology for advising purposes.
- Dr. Michael responded that she agreed with Dr. Shiakolas' reservations, so she asked the Assembly if they would be more supportive of the proposal if it limited grade forgiveness to just one course or applied some restrictions, or if the Assembly felt that the proposal shouldn't move forward.
- Dr. Mandal expressed his reservations—he said that his department uses grades as a way of judging whether students should remain in a program, as a means of quality control and grade forgiveness would take that tool away.
- Dr. Jackson supported Dr. Shiakolas' point that advising may help in some cases because students do have the opportunity to withdraw from a course, with instructor permission, even after census. This means the student can retake a class without having a grade that negatively affects their GPA, so better guidance on the withdrawal policy may assist students in these situations.
- Dr. Jackson also expressed his concern about how a grade forgiveness policy would affect the enrollment policy that international students face: they're not allowed, per their visa, to take additional coursework. Dr. Jackson suggested that the International Office weigh in on this policy.
- Dr. Brothers asked how many students Dr. Gonzalez believed might be impacted. Dr. Gonzalez said that total enrollment is about 4500. Dr. Gonzalez also confirmed that many of the students are already practicing nurses.
- Dr. Christensen said that while he also had reservations, he was sympathetic to grade replacement for a D or F. He added that in his and other departments, faculty work hard to avoid giving Ds or Fs because they are aware of the negative consequences for students, so offering a single grade replacement could act as a warning for students while still avoiding those consequences. He supports allowing grade forgiveness for only one course, for a D or F, but not for a C grade.
- Dr. Abolmaali agreed with Dr. Christensen's point, and suggested that it be reviewed by the Graduate Students Sub-committee: single grade replacement for D or F grades only and with input from the International Office and related policies.

- Dr. Brothers motioned to accept Dr. Abolmaali's suggestion. Dr. Pole seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

3. Student Complaints Policy-Proposed Edits: Dr. Amber Smallwood, Assistant Vice Provost for Academic Planning and Policy; Katie Hageman, Chief of Staff Provost's Office; Dr. Rebecca Lewis, Assistant Vice Provost IER; and Heather Snow, Dean of Students

- Dr. Smallwood shared the result of a project in which each college shared a link or *url* that could then be linked back to the complaint page on the website of the Dean of Students.
- Dr. Smallwood provided some background to the project: The request was made through an Associate Deans meeting. This process led to a review of how student complaints are managed and routed internally which lead to a further examination of policies and processes. This review revealed that the language around complaints isn't used consistently nor is it consistent across platforms including HOP, catalog, and some university websites. The five-year SACS COC review is coming up, and a log of student complaints will need to be provided to SACS COC at that time. To be in compliance with the university's own policies, as well as those from SACS, what constitutes a formal or written student complaint needs to be defined.
- Dr. Smallwood presented some proposed edits to the HOP language, which had already been shared with the Undergraduate Assembly, Chairs, and Program Directors, and some of their input has already been incorporated. These edits will also be shared with Faculty Senate and Student Government (Academic Affairs). After all groups have had input, it will be shared again with all groups, via email, before presenting again to the HOP Revision Committee.
- The proposed revisions do not aim to change the processes, only to modify the language in order to define which complaints are governed by this policy or by others.
 - i. This policy would apply to non-grade academic complaints and non-academic complaints from students. Per feedback, a statement about grade grievances be added, but not change the existing processes around grade grievances.
 - ii. The proposed edits establish consistent language to differentiate between a complaint and a grievance vs. an appeal.
 - iii. The third proposed change is to clarify where complaints should begin, which is at the most local level, and clarified where final decisions reside.
 - iv. The final proposed edit is to clarify when a complaint will actually be heard or considered by the Dean of Students.
- Dr. Lewis also reviewed the changes on a document that she shared during the meeting and that is available in Teams under the files for the Graduate Assembly meeting.

- Dr. Abolmaali asked if a university-wide website for student complaints would be provided in the future. Dr. Lewis responded that it is being considered for non-grade, academic complaints only.
- Dr. Mandal asked if any of these processes should go into a syllabus. Dr. Lewis responded that Faculty Affairs could consider that, but that these proposed changes would be included in the catalog and on the Dean of Students website. Dr. Smallwood agreed.
- Dr. Jorgensen asked how departments and colleges could provide input. Dr. Smallwood responded that the document could be shared with the GA via email so that any members could provide feedback.
- Dr. Shiakolas asked if the document could also be shared with faculty or staff for their feedback too. Dr. Smallwood responded that that hadn't been planned, but it was a possibility. Dr. Lewis agreed with Dr. Smallwood, but highlighted that none of the current processes would be changed. Input could be provided by non-academic groups when the document goes to the HOP Review Committee.

4. Election of Graduate Assembly Chair, Chair Pro Tem, and Secretary for Academic Year 2022-2023 - Dr. James Grover, Dean of Graduate School and Interim Vice President for Research

- Dr. Grover requested that members put their votes in the chat even though it would not be anonymous. There were no objections.
- Dr. Grover announced one contested election, for Chair. The two candidates were Dr. Brothers and Dr. Pole. Dr. Grover requested a motion to close the nominations. Dr. Shiakolas motioned to close the nomination. Dr. Jorgensen seconded the motion. Dr. Grover called for votes in the chat. Ms. Ridenour announced the results: 3 votes for Dr. Brothers and 8 votes for Dr. Pole. Dr. Grover confirmed those numbers.
- Dr. Grover announced the vote for Chair Pro Tem. There was one nomination, Dr. Shiakolas. Dr. Small motioned to close the nominations. Dr. Pole seconded the motion. Dr. Grover requested members to vote to affirm in the chat. The members voted unanimously to affirm.
- Dr. Grover announced that there were no nominations for Secretary, so he opened the floor for nominations. Dr. Shiakolas nominated Dr. Brothers, but he declined because he had already been Secretary. Dr. Shiakolas nominated Dr. Small, but he declined because he will be rotating off GA. Dr. Abolmaali nominated Dr. Choi, but she declined because she will be rotating off. Dr. Abolmaali nominated Dr. Michael, but she was not present, so she couldn't accept. Dr. Pole tried to contact her via Teams. Ms. Ridenour also tried to contact her. Dr. Abolmaali suggested Dr. Mandal, but he also declined because he is rotating off. Dr. Pole asked if the Assembly could hold the nomination for Dr. Michael open until she could respond to it and then vote after that. Dr. Grover said that was fine although technically not allowed by HOP.

Dr. Shiakolas asked about having a special election if someone was elected but became unable to serve. Dr. Grover said Dr. Michael then could be elected, and if she is unable to serve, a special election could be held. He asked for someone to second her nomination. Dr. Pole seconded. Dr. Shiakolas motioned to close the nominations, and Dr. Choi seconded the motion. Dr. Grover called for a vote to affirm in the chat. The vote to affirm was unanimous.

5. Follow up regarding the Graduate Certificate in Diversity and Equity in Public Health (College of Nursing and Health Innovation)

- Dr. Pole updated the GA on the condition pertaining to this certificate (that the faculty making the proposal confer with Social Work to ensure this program is different enough from their recently-approved certificate.)
- The update from both the College of Nursing and the School of Social Work confirmed that there is no conflict because the certificate from the College of Nursing is a graduate certificate, and the certificate from Social Work is an undergraduate certificate.
- Dr. Pole suggested that in light of this information, the GA approve the graduate certificate and remove the corresponding condition.
- Dr. Jorgensen moved to approve the certificate. Dr. Shiakolas seconded the motion. The motion passed.

VII. Adjournment

- Dr. Abolmaali congratulated the new GA officers and thanked others for service.
- A motion was made to adjourn the meeting. It was seconded, and the motion passed.
- The meeting was adjourned at 4:56pm.

Teams Meeting:

- Chat feature should be used for questions or comments during meeting.
- The document of the discussed student complaints policy is available in the Graduate Assembly's meetings files in Teams.

Meeting Minutes Submitted by GA Secretary, Dr. Panos S. Shiakolas