

MINUTES OF THE GRADUATE COMMITTEE
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FRESNO
5200 N. Barton Ave. M/S ML 34
Fresno, CA 93740-8014

Tuesday, August 25, 2020

Members Present: Maritere Lopez (chair), Jim Marshall (ex-officio), Aaron Hoskins, Balaji Seth, Deborah Walker, Kevin Capehart, David Lent, Reva Sias, Theresa Taliaferro (observer)

Members Absent: None

Guests: None

The Zoom meeting was called to order by Chair Lopez at 2pm.

The members of the committee introduced themselves. The following new members were welcomed: Reva Sias (representing the College of Arts & Humanities), Aaron Hoskins (representing the Lyles College of Engineering), and Balaji Sethuramasamyraja (representing the Jordan College of Agricultural Sciences and Technology).

Chair Lopez briefly discussed how the committee tries to be organized and efficient. Labor is divided for program reviews and other activities. The responsibility for note-taking rotates among the committee members, for example.

I. MSC: Approval of Minutes from May 12, 2020

II. MSC: Approval of the agenda

III. Updates & Announcements

- Dean Marshall noted that almost all (about 95%) of Fresno State students are taking their courses online this Fall 2020 semester due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. He recognized that everyone is already well aware of that, but he emphasized to the committee that many of the students who are taking in-person courses are graduate students. Graduate courses that could not be delivered virtually in the most effective way were approved for in-person instruction. Psychological therapy, nursing, kinesiology, and art and design were cited as examples of graduate programs with at least some in-person courses.

- Dean Marshall announced that the university is extending the temporary policy implemented at the end of Spring 2020 that allowed students to take a course for “Credit / No Credit” rather than a letter grade. As with last semester, graduate students can receive “Credit” for a letter grade of “B” or better, they automatically receive “No Credit” for a letter grade of “F,” and they can apply/petition to receive “No Credit” for a letter grade of “C” or “D.” Also as with last semester, departments or programs can apply for some courses to be excluded from that policy if the switch to “Credit / No Credit” would affect accreditation or credentialing.
- Dean Marshall kept the details limited, but he announced that 25 cases of cheating (in the form of collaboration between students on responses to an assessment) were exposed in one unnamed graduate program at the end of last semester after the switch to virtual instruction. Dean Marshall noted that many faculty remain concerned about fair and equitable assessment in an online environment.
- Not all temporary policies from last semester are being extended, however. Dean Marshall announced that, unlike last semester, for both graduates and undergraduates, probation and disqualification rules are back to normal. Last semester, a temporary policy was in place whereby no one was placed on probation or disqualified. That temporary policy was enacted out of empathy for students, although it ultimately does not serve the interest of a student to continue in a program for which they are not meeting the academic standards required for graduation.
- The following questions arose in response to Dean Marshall’s announcements.
 - In terms of the “Credit / No Credit” policy: Chair Lopez asked for clarification of the policy. Dean Marshall emphasized that, for both last semester and again this semester, it is only *undergraduate* students, not graduate students, who can receive “Credit” for a grade of “C.” Dean Marshall also stated that, in determining which letter grades could be converted into credit for undergraduates and graduates, the administration looked at standards of other institutions and our own standards for a student to stay in good standing.
 - For that same policy, Dr. Walker asked whether the university will be providing any guidance on how to handle students who opted for the “Credit / No Credit” option last semester or may opt for it this semester in terms of any issues that may arise with skills or competencies. Dean Marshall said he did not expect any university-level guidance. Decisions in terms of re-teaching or make-up work will need to be made at the departmental or program level.
 - In terms of the issues with cheating in an online environment: Chair Lopez asked whether cheating and plagiarism training could be required for graduate students.

Dean Marshall noted that, if a student is suspected of cheating or plagiarism, then it is only the Office of Student Conduct that can impose a “penalty” such as requiring a student to take training. That said, all students can be required to take training. Students are required to complete harassment training, for example. This committee could initiate a proposal to the Senate to have graduate students take a Cheating and Plagiarism training, given that this committee is a subcommittee of the Senate and graduate policy is under its purview. Chair Lopez plans to add a discussion of such a proposal to the agenda for an upcoming committee meeting.

- Dr. Lent asked whether the university will be providing any financial relief for graduate students who relied on university infrastructure (such as labs) that became unavailable last semester and may still have limited access to that infrastructure.
- Dean Marshall recognized that it was an issue with graduate students in several fields (some Ag students missed a planting season, for example), but said the university has no plans to address that issue. Dean Marshall did note that a low-residency model for the university was adopted for the Fall semester to try to address access to necessary infrastructure. Dean Marshall also suggested students could apply to the “Good Samaritan Fund” through the Health Center, although such funding is only provided on a case-by-case basis in the case of “severe”/“dire” needs.
- Chair Lopez announced the decision, made over the summer, to extend into the Fall semester the substitution of Duolingo tests in lieu of the TOEFL for international applicants. There were no objections to that decision from the committee. Chair Lopez noted that, if current conditions persist, then a further extension of that substitution into the Spring semester would seem to be appropriate and can be taken up by the committee later this semester.
 - Dean Marshall noted that many graduate admission tests have been suspended. He also suggested that some programs may use the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) General Test suspension as an opportunity to reconsider whether it should be reinstated even when such tests become feasible again. Some tests are becoming feasible again; the general GRE General Test can now be taken from home, for example. Some tests still cannot be taken at home, however; the GRE Mathematics Subject Test cannot be taken at home, for example.
 - Chair Lopez noted for the benefit of the new members that, in recent years before the Covid-19 pandemic, several programs have asked this committee to waive the GRE requirement and this committee has approved those requests.

IV. Upcoming action item docket and timeline

Chair Lopez reminded the committee that we had begun preliminary work on our program review for the Master of Science in Industrial Technology, but we ultimately requested additional materials that were not included in the report they submitted.

Program Review Coordinator Theresa Taliaferro (in attendance) expected to receive those materials from Industrial Technology by September 16th or sooner. Chair Lopez noted that, once the committee receives those requested materials, our program review will recommence. For the benefit of new committee members, Chair Lopez clarified that the committee's process for a Program Review is to distribute the reports to committee members (now through our Shared Google Drive) for them to review the documents and generate questions, the committee meets to finalize a set of questions, and then the committee invites the program's representatives to discuss their program and answer the questions that our committee prepared.

Chair Lopez noted that Nursing, Public Administration, and Business should all be submitting their program review materials this semester.

V. CR/NC option extension

Chair Lopez and Dean Marshall brought it to the committee's attention that, as a university policy for graduate students, there is a limit on the amount of Credit units (as in Credit / No Credit rather than a letter grade) that can count towards a graduate degree. Dean Marshall said that it's six units for most programs and it's a policy that could be waived or relaxed. Dean Marshall noted that, with the options provided by the university for taking courses for Credit / No Credit in the Fall and Spring 2020 semesters, some graduate students may hit that limit. To avoid having to deal with individual students appealing to lift that restriction, Dean Marshall advocated for waiving or relaxing that policy.

Dr. Lent asked whether the committee was considering a relaxed policy with a higher number of credits allowed. Dean Marshall suggested that it could be complicated by the fact that different programs have a different total number of units to graduate. Dr. Walker suggested the relaxed limit could be a percentage of the total units. Dr. Capehart asked whether the committee could allow individual programs to decide. Chair Lopez and Dean Marshall noted it could become quite complicated for advisors and the registrar's office to deal with that many possible cases. The question of whether the waiver or relaxation should apply to a semester, an academic year, or other period was also raised.

After that discussion, a motion was made to approve a waiver of the limit on Credit rather than letter grade units that can be counted towards a degree for the Fall 2020 semester. The

motion passed with one member (the representative of the College of Science and Mathematics) abstaining.

VI. Graduate Curriculum Subcommittee appointments

The Graduate Committee appoints members to the Graduate Curriculum Subcommittee. The terms of four of last year's members have ended. Two faculty would like to be reappointed. Chair Lopez endorsed their reappointment. Two positions need to be filled. Based on an expression of interest, Chair Lopez endorsed Arun Nambiar to be the new Jordan College of Agricultural Sciences and Technology representative. Dr. J. Ashley Foster was also endorsed as the representative for the College of Arts and Humanities as long as she continues to be interested in the position. A motion to appoint those people (including Dr. Foster, conditional on her interest to be appointed as such) was unanimously approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 3pm.

The next scheduled meeting of the University Graduate Committee is Tuesday, Sept 8, 2020, at 2pm.

9/8/20202 Agenda

- I. Approval of minutes for 8/25/2020
- II. Approval of Agenda
- III. Announcements
- IV. Preliminary Discussion: Industrial Technology Program Review