

MINUTES OF THE GRADUATE COMMITTEE
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FRESNO
5241 N. Maple, M/S TA43
Fresno, California 93740-8027
Office of the Academic Senate Ext. 8-2743

October 5, 2021

Members Present: M. López (Chair), K. Capehart, A. Hoskins, D. Lent, G. Sharma, R. Sias, D. Walker, and J. Marshall (ex officio)

Member Excused: B. Sethuramasamyraja

The meeting was called to order at 2:02 PM by Chair López on Zoom.

- I. Minutes: MSC to revise and approve the Minutes of September 28, 2021
- II. Agenda: MSC to approve the Agenda for October 5, 2021
- III. Updates, Announcements, and Communications

Dean Marshall announced that the review committee evaluating candidates for the Interim Dean of Research & Graduate Studies position has now submitted their unranked list of viable candidates to the Provost, who'll take it to the President. We should know something very soon, Dean Marshall said.

Chair López has contacted Assistant Vice President of International Affairs, Dr. Sarah Lam, about our questions/concerns regarding the request by International Affairs to accept Duolingo permanently as another alternative to the other English language competency tests currently accepted by our university. This committee will return to that discussion when Dr. Lam responds (either asynchronously between our meetings or synchronously during an upcoming meeting) to the questions/concerns. We may pick up that discussion as early as next week.

Chair López also announced that we've now completed all the other business that was open. She sent out a memo about the Athletic Training program change proposal, most recently. There is no other upcoming business at least at this time. Chair López also announced that the committee will not be meeting on October 19th and potentially other future dates depending on whether there is new business to address.

Dr. Lent announced that there have been discussions among departments in the College of Science & Math and elsewhere about streamlining the processes involved with the existing Master's in Interdisciplinary Studies in order to offer degrees in established or emerging inter- or multi-disciplinary areas (such as neuroscience) that are expected to attract students on a consistent basis. If degrees in those areas prove viable, then they

could perhaps eventually go through the process of becoming their own official degrees (such as the Master of Science in Biotechnology that we already have) distinct from the Master's in Interdisciplinary Studies. The process could be streamlined by having a set curriculum and mentors, perhaps.

In response to Dr. Lent's announcement, Chair López noted that students need to form a committee with an advisor, identify a thesis topic, make sure that the courses they'll need to fulfill their degree will actually be offered, and come before our University Graduate Committee. Chair López suggested those processes could be streamlined by making them easier for students; a list of faculty members who would be well-suited to being advisors or committee members for thesis in certain areas could be put together, for example.

IV. Copy edits to APM 233

Following up on our earlier discussion of APM 233 vis-a-vis whether graduate students should be able to repeat undergraduate courses, the committee reviewed the suggested copy edit to APM 233 that Chair López put together based on our discussions. The committee reviewed those edits to ensure they were in line with the committee's earlier discussion. The committee voted unanimously to approve them. Chair López is now going to forward those suggested edits to the AP&P committee.

V. Discussion about Abbreviated Program Review of externally accredited programs

Chair López added this discussion item in response to a request from Dr. Capehart, who expressed concerns about the new Abbreviated Program Review for Nationally Accredited Programs implemented around the start of the Covid-19 pandemic and that is just beginning to see programs go through the new process. Dr. Capehart noted that, in the new process, the faculty elected to this committee are completely uninvolved and only a so-called "Graduate Program Review Officer", who in practice is simply the Dean of Research and Graduate Studies, is involved with it. Dr. Capehart expressed his belief that the current practice is not faculty governance and that members of this committee have a valuable perspective to offer programs, if only by offering another and perhaps a different perspective than national accreditors. Dr. Capehart used his Craig School of Business MBA program as an example of a program that was recently reaccredited and went through the abbreviated review process but would have nevertheless benefited from the committee's oversight and insights.

Chair López provided the institutional knowledge that, in the past, an older version of an abbreviated university program review for nationally accredited programs was installed because it was a lot to ask programs to go through a full review twice (once for the national accreditors and then again for the university). Chair López also noted that the university graduate committee was not consulted on implementation of the new version of the abbreviated review process, except when we were told we would be doing less work thanks to this new process. This new process essentially "takes the consultative process out of the consultative process."

Dean Marshall provided the institutional knowledge that the new abbreviated review process was implemented in response to a Provost's recommendation. The Provost made that recommendation based on some program coordinators' workload concerns and a "survey" by the Provost of what at least some other CSUs do. Some CSUs completely defer to the decisions of national accrediting agencies, Dean Marshall noted as an example of a more extreme policy that could have been implemented instead. Other changes with the new abbreviated university program review besides removing the university graduate committee from the review process (such that we are not provided with any information either in documentation or from a meeting with program representatives) are that programs no longer needed to use a template to try to map their accreditation self-study onto the university's requirements, which proved to be difficult for some programs, Dean Marshall noted. The new abbreviated program review still requires programs to provide an updated SOAP and analysis of enrollment trends, graduate rates, and achievement gaps.

Dr. Lent expressed the concern that a national accrediting agency is not necessarily assessing whether a program's policies are in line with its university's requirements. Dr. Sharma later noted that some accreditors may ask programs to submit "university audit processes" that demonstrate program policies are in line with university policies.

Dr. Walker echoed that this committee has an important role in providing oversight and insight into university policy through our reviews and interactions with programs. Important insights can come up in unexpected ways, Dr. Sharma noted.

Dr. Walker and Chair López also noted that this committee has taken on an important role in advocating for programs (such as advocating for additional lines and greater tenure density).

Chair López recognized that, under the old abbreviated program review, some programs did have difficulty completing the university template, but she argued, that may reflect the need for an expert to redesign the template to make it easier and more efficient for program coordinators rather than a need to eliminate the role of this committee in abbreviated program reviews.

Dean Marshall encouraged the committee to consider what they want from programs that have gone through a national accreditation review.

Dr. Lent suggested that the committee could get back into the process by being provided access to the less onerous materials being submitted under the new abbreviated review and then essentially putting the university program reviews for nationally accredited programs on this committee's consent calendar. We'd discuss the program if any members raised questions/concerns about the program. A mechanism to require more information if there are unanswered questions/concerns would also be needed, Dr. Lent suggested.

Dean Marshall asked whether we would want the same procedures for undergraduate programs and the Chair noted that wouldn't be under the purview of this committee to say.

The Chair suggested and the committee agreed that the conversation can be continued at our next meeting in order to finalize what if any recommendations/actions we may want to make in this regard, in addition to continued discussion of Duolingo if we hear from Dr. Lam.

VI. MSC to adjourn at 3:06 PM.

The next scheduled meeting of the University Graduate Committee is Tuesday, October 12, 2021, at 2:00 p.m. on Zoom.

Agenda for October 26, 2021

- I. Approval of the Minutes from October 5
- II. Approval of the Agenda for October 26
- III. Updates and Announcements
- IV. International Affairs request to add Duolingo, cont.
- V. Ed Leadership Program Change GRE
- VI. Program Review of externally accredited programs, cont.