

UNL Graduate Council Minutes
September 5, 2019
206 Seaton Hall
2:30 p.m.

Present: Jennifer Clarke, Christina Falci, Geoff Friesen, Rhonda Fuelberth, Adam Houston, Tony Juritsch, Laurie Lee, Yusong Li, Shawn Ratcliff, and Kara Viesca. Dean Tim Carr presided.

Dean Carr welcomed the Council and reviewed the Graduate Council role for the Graduate College and the University.

Approval of Minutes from April 18, 2019

Motion was made to accepted minutes as written. Motion passed.

Report on Summer 2019 email ballots

- Specialization name change within PhD in Engineering. The Council approved name change to “Computer Engineering - Electrical and Computer Engineering.” Approval notice was sent to the department on May 2, 2019.
- CIP code change (MS degree in Mechanized Systems Management). The program requested the change of CIP code to be more in line with what the master’s degree represented. The Council voted to approved and forwarded to Renee Batman on July 2, 2019.

Consent agenda – new course proposals

Dr. Carr reviewed the process for new members. Eva will make available to the Council members PDF files of the requests and syllabi for review. If there are courses on the consent agenda that are not brought forward to the main agenda for discussion, they will be considered approved. When reviewing courses, the Council is looking for rigor and essential elements that are consistent with graduate education. Syllabi must include all components required by the UNL Syllabus Policy.

Five courses on the consent agenda were brought forward for discussion:

- CDEV 834 – Concerns were raised about the plan for the length of the course. It appeared to be shorter than the normal 15-week expectation. The Council requested to have a schedule of weekly topics and that the learning objectives need to be strengthened. Eva will contact the department for a revised syllabus. Tabled.
- CHME 371/871 – The graduate tie-in is unusual at these two levels and requires clearer rationale for the tie-in. Differentiation, academic expectations and objectives between the junior level course and the graduate course are stated, but the Council requests clearer distinction given the 300/800 tie-in. Motion to approve, pending revisions and final review by Dean Carr. Motion passed.
- STAT 878 – Syllabus had essential components, but would benefit by having learning objectives and academic expectations. Motion to approve, pending revisions and final review by Dean Carr. Motion passed.

- STAT 886 Question raised whether this was a new course. It was previously taught as a special topics course. Motion to approve; motion passed.
- STAT 986 No concerns were raised. Motion to approve; motion passed.

Proposed specializations in Music

The School of Music is requesting the creation of 55 specializations in the MM (28), DMA (24) and PhD (3) degree programs that reflect the curriculum, course work and expectations historically offered as “areas of study.” Each specialization is an exact copy of each area of study, with the intent to formalize these areas so that they appear on the graduate application and the students’ transcripts. Alisha Hanshaw and Eva Bachman worked closely with Glenn Nierman to create each proposed specialization. The Council members reviewed each specialization. A motion was made to approve the specializations as a group. Motion passed.

Proposed specializations in Art

As with Music specializations, the School of Art, Art History & Design is requesting the creation of specializations in six “areas of study.” No change in curriculum, course work or academic expectations is being proposed. Motion was made to approve the specializations as a group. Motion passed.

Proposed specialization in Human Resource Management (MBA degree)

The College of Business currently offers a graduate certificate in Human Resource Management. The certificate requires four courses. The proposed specialization in Human Resource Management will require three courses, sharing the same two courses as the certificate and drawing from the same electives list. CoB wishes to have the flexibility of having both the certificate and the MBA specialization for target audiences. Motion was made to approve the specialization. Motion passed.

Review of doctoral degree requirements

Dean Carr asked the Council to review doctoral degree requirements in view of concerns that some departments require peer-reviewed publications (or submission of manuscripts) before allowing students to schedule their final oral examination. Dean Carr recently queried the BTAA graduate deans on the topic; none reported having a “publications requirement” on their campuses.

Current doctoral requirements as stated in the Graduate Catalog do not include the requirement to submit and/or publish peer-reviewed articles. The Graduate Catalog states the following: “Prepare a dissertation (for PhD or EdD) or doctoral document (for AuD or DMA), pass a final examination (defense), and submit the approved final version to the University.”

The question was raised of what latitude do departments have above this requirement (e.g., 3rd-year paper before proceeding in the program). Council members reiterated that all academic requirements should be tied to courses and anchored in graduate credit. Departments run the risk of turning over the job of graduate faculty to outside third parties beyond the University, such as journal editors who make the decisions of whether to publish. The authority to evaluate the quality of the dissertation is given to the graduate faculty. The critical decision of whether the dissertation is ready to defend rests with the student’s supervisory committee.

This does preclude graduate programs from articulating the expectation that a quality dissertation should yield peer-reviewed publications. Departments have the latitude to include in their graduate handbooks a statement that doctoral work should be publishable. In fact, many graduate students have indeed submitted manuscripts and published articles prior to defending their dissertation. This should be encouraged, but it cannot be a requirement such that students unable to publish prior to the final exam date would be prohibited from defending their dissertation and graduating.

The Graduate Council supports including a clarifying statement in the Graduate Catalog on this topic. Dean Carr will draft a statement and present to the Council at the next meeting for consideration.

Review policy on retroactively awarding degrees and certificates

The Office of Graduate Studies occasionally receives requests from students who have earned a graduate degree from UNL wishing to get a “lesser” degree or certificate because they completed the course work while earning the primary degree. In other words, they argue that they “did the work along the way.”

The Graduate Catalog states the following: “No graduate credits from a graduate degree previously awarded at any institution, including UNL, will be accepted toward a subsequent master’s program.” However, it does not address the situation in which a master’s degree recipient wishes to have a graduate certificate since they completed the course requirements for the certificate while earning the master’s degree.

The Graduate Council encouraged Dean Carr to draft a clarifying statement for the Council to review at the next meeting.

Review policy on concurrent degrees

Dean Carr reviewed the current policy on concurrent degrees, emphasizing that it lacked clarity. He presented the following additional explanation of current policy for the Council to consider:

Coordinated Dual Degree Programs: Established dual degree programs shall appear as a single application on the Graduate Application for Admission. With the required approval, credit hours may be shared between both degrees. Specific courses to be shared must be identified at the time coordinated programs are established. Coordinated programs result in the conferral of two degrees. Both diplomas must be awarded in the same commencement term if credit hours are shared. (NOTE: Some coordinated dual degree programs were initially established using the term “joint” degree programs. UNL continues to use the terms synonymously.)

Independent Concurrent Degrees: Pursuit of two unrelated graduate degrees requires two separate applications and two application fees. Application to each degree program need not occur in the same term. Each degree program is administered independently of each other; however, approval by each Graduate Program Committee and the Dean(s) for Graduate Studies is required. Credit hours may be shared between both degrees. Specific courses to be shared must be identified at the time of approval. Completion of requirements for independent concurrent degrees results in the conferral of two degrees. Both diplomas must be awarded in the same commencement term if credit hours are shared.

After a brief discussion, a motion was made to approve the expanded description of concurrent degrees for inclusion in the Graduate Catalog. Motion passed.

Graduate Student Assembly Report

Nothing to report

Meeting adjourned - 5:03 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Eva Bachman, Ph.D.