

**The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga**  
**Graduate Council Minutes**  
**September 28, 2006**

Members Present: N. Alp, E. Bartoo, R. Briley, V. Bumphus, M. Colston, S. Davidson , S. Davis, J. Dumas, K. Gibbs, P. Guess, M. Long, J. McNair, E. Meagher, B. O’Leary, V. Petzko, C. Smith, J. Tucker, K. Turner

Members Absent: D. Edwards, E. Foster, J. Freeman

Ex-Officio Members Present: D. Arfken, S. Bellar, Y. Kilpatrick, T. Liedtka, B. Zielke

Ex-Officio Members Absent:

**Actions Taken**

**NO ACTIONABLE ITEMS**

**I. Call to Order, Introductions and Approval of the Minutes**

The meeting was called to order at 3:21 p.m. The minutes were approved unanimously.

**II. Introduction of At-Large Member**

Dr. Dumas introduced Dr. Valerie Radu, the at-large member appointed by Faculty Senate. Professor Radu is from the Social Work department, and she stated there are many requests for a Master’s of Social Work degree, which gives her reason to begin sitting on Graduate Council.

**III. Statute of Limitations for backdated withdrawal and candidacy**

Dr. Bellar distributed a memo that stated what the policies for back-dated withdrawals are for different universities in the state. Dr. Bellar explained that we operate very much like UTK. ETSU has a deadline of one academic year. TSU’s deadline is 30 days after grades are posted. Dr. Bellar also brought up a second issue that was not previously discussed: courses taken outside the normal timeline for acceptance on the candidacy form. She said that Graduate Council needs to discuss how late we are going allow classes to be counted toward a master’s degree. The standard timeframe for finishing a master’s degree is six years, but students have petitioned for 10 years or more. The

Graduate School's practice is to extend candidacy for a year, if approved by the program faculty. Beyond the seventh year, it's taken to the petitions committee.

Professor Turner asked if students are routinely asking for a backdated withdrawal for all classes or if it is piecemeal. Ms. Kilpatrick stated that it's a combination because most student situations are exceptions; medical withdrawals are common, but many cases happen where the student believes they've withdrawn from a class but it wasn't done officially. Dr. Arfken advised that the graduate school watches for students requesting backdated withdrawals in order to improve grades. Dr. Arfken said that most requests were tied to sickness, transfers, and etc.

Dr. O'Leary asked why Graduate Council is reviewing this process. He asked if there were an overwhelming number of petitions. Dr. Arfken explained that the reason for reviewing this and other processes on the Graduate Council "to do" list is, with the anticipated new student information system, it is important to review all procedures and see if they're being handled in the most appropriate and time effective way. Dr. Arfken also said that it is possible that Graduate Council will be fine with the way a process is handled and believe there is no action that needs to be taken. Graduate Council will be able to say, however, that all processes have been reviewed.

Ms. Kilpatrick mentioned that very often it is a crisis that pulls the student away and makes a backdated withdrawal necessary because the student has, understandably, dropped the ball. Dr. Bellar stated that TSU requires a notarized statement from a physician for a medical withdrawal. Dr. Petzko questioned the sense of putting a deadline on backdated withdrawal requests when everything is petitionable. Dr. Bellar stated that, if we have a policy with a deadline of a year or so, then only the director would need to review the withdrawal request. Then, if it's after the deadline, we need to take it to the full petition committee.

Dr. Briley said he would look to the administrative people with the burden and see what makes sense to them: what works in the best interest of student and also alleviates burden.

Dr. Petzko was asked to develop language for the one year deadline, including something along the lines of "the longer a student waits, the more the burden of proof is on the student." It was agreed that the language needs to state, that if the instructor involved with the classes in question is still here, we need to involve the instructor. Dr. Dumas said that for the next meeting Graduate Council needs a proposal.

#### **IV. Continuous Registration for Thesis/Dissertation**

Dr. Arfken opened this topic with the question, "Once a student enrolls in thesis/dissertation should he or she need to be continuously enrolled until graduation?" Currently, students must be continuously enrolled in each semester for thesis until they graduate, except for summer terms. However, if a student graduates in August, then the student must be enrolled that summer before their graduation. Dr. Arfken said one of the main reasons this requirement is in place is because students were asking faculty for

assistance on thesis work and receiving much support and using campus facilities, but were not registered. Dr. Arfken also added that continuous registration encourages people to progress toward graduation in a timelier manner; because students are paying for the class every semester, they have more of a financial reason to want to finish. Dr. Arfken reminded the Council that we do have a stop-out feature for students who need to stop working on their thesis for a period of time. Someone asked what happens if they don't ask for a stop-out. Can students get a backdated stop-out? Dr. Arfken said that very few have had issues with it; and, when it has come up, it has been practice to have the student register and pay for the missing thesis enrollment.

There was a bit of confusion about whether continuous registration was also a requirement for dissertation hours. After consulting the catalog, it was decided that doctoral students only have to be continuously registered for any courses, not dissertation hours. Dr. Dumas said that because he keeps hearing that the current language is working, so if the policy is not broken, let's not fix it. Dr. Dumas did, however, find a language issue in the catalog: where the catalog talks about doctoral continuous registration, it should say fall and spring as well.

#### **V. Curriculum Proposal Guidelines**

Yvonne passed out the procedures for submitting curriculum proposals and passed out a draft for a cover sheet for information items. There was a slight conversation about what types of process changes and course description changes needed to be information items and which need to be brought to the Council as a proposal.

#### **VI. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 4:34.

Respectfully submitted,

Kelly L. Pier, CPS  
Graduate School Secretary