**YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY**

**Graduate Council Meeting Minutes**

**Meeting date: September 25, 2024 @ 4:00 pm**

**TEAMS**

Attending: Douglas Genna, Chair, Patrick J. Bateman, Kendra Fowler, Weiqing Ge, Sal Sanders, Constantin Virgil Solomon, Wendy Thomas, Angie Urmson Jeffries, Andrea Richard-Graduate Student Advisory Council Representative

Excused: Joseph Carucci, Lauren Cummins, J. Paul Louth, Jake Protivnak

Douglas Genna called the Graduate Council meeting to order at 4:03 PM

1. Doug reported that the April 2024 Graduate Council meeting minutes were approved via evote. (7 approved, 1 abstain)
2. Doug welcomed the new Council members: Wendy Thomas-Nursing, Weiqing Ge-Graduate Studies in Health and Rehabilitation Sciences and Andrea Richard-Graduate Student Advisory Council Representative. The new members introduced themselves.
3. Committee Chair reports
   1. Admission and Appeals Committee Chair: J. Paul Louth

Paul had a department meeting so Angie read the report on his behalf:

The Admission and Appeals Committee heard 5 appeals of the Graduate College Scholarship since our last meeting. These appeals were due to under enrollment in their last term prior to graduation.   These appeals of scholarship were approved and the scholarships were reinstated.

The Committee received 12 appeals of academic suspension since the last meeting. Ten of these appeals were approved based on program support and two were denied.

* 1. Exceptions Chair: Sal Sanders

Sal reviewed the exceptions report included at the end of minutes.

1. Grad Council Chair/Committee Chair Nomination for 2024-25
   1. Graduate Council Chair:

Doug Genna agreed to serve in role.

* 1. Graduate Council Secretary:

Kendra Fowler agreed to serve in role.

* 1. Admission and Appeals Committee Chair:

Paul Louth agreed via email to serve in role.

* 1. Graduate Curriculum Chair: Nomination:

Constantin Virgil Solomon agreed to serve in role

* 1. Exceptions Chair-Sal Sanders

Per policy, Dean Sal Sanders will serve in this role.

* 1. Grievance Chair Nomination:

This nomination was tabled until the next meeting.

1. Past precedence in scholarship appeals. Approval of scholarship appeals that committee has considered and approved for students that need not come back to the committee for future consideration such asunder-enrolled final term, restoring after previously holding an assistantship, etc. -Paul Louth

Sal explained that he is now administering the Graduate Scholarship and in doing so he has noticed that there have been several scholarship appeals sent to the Admission and Appeals committee due to low enrollment in a students’ last semester or due to course availability and also the reinstatement of the scholarship after a GA appointment has been terminated. The Admission and Appeals committee are asking that a scholarship appeal for these reasons be approved automatically. This will allow the scholarship to be restored without delay. The motion was made to automatically approve appeals due to low enrollment the last semester of program, low enrollment due to course availability or reinstatement of scholarship after a GA is terminated. Motion passed.

1. Pass grades for transfer credit. Consider passing as acceptable for transfer of credit when an institution does not issue letter grades (such as A, B, C, D, F).-Sal Sanders

Our current policy states transfer courses must have a grade A or B earned. However, there are some schools that award only pass and fail grades. Sal is asking that pass grades be transferred if the institution only awards pass/fail grades. It was clarified that a student who chooses to take a grade Pass/Fail but the school offers letter grades would not be permitted. Motion: Permit Pass (P) grades for transfer credit when the institution offers only Pass/Fail grades. Motion passed.

1. Revision of Academic Standard

Current Policy: Any student in non-degree status whose cumulative grade point average drops below the minimum (3.0) will be prohibited from enrolling in further graduate coursework. This is negatively impacting our certificate students.

Our academic standard policy is a disadvantage for non-degree students. Currently, certificate students are admitted non-degree. The group discussed granting certificate students the same standard as regular students. The group recognized the increased number of certificate programs and students pursuing and the importance of creating a fair standard.

Motion: Amended Proposed policy: After the completion of 9 semester hours, students in a certificate program or admitted non-degree who have been designated “not in good standing” at any time in the program will be academically suspended if any subsequent semester GPA is below 3.0.

Motion passed.

1. Use of software to identify plagiarized personal statements in admission applications-Doug Genna

Dr. Genna reported that his program has noticed that the personal essays for GA applications appear blatantly similar. He spoke with the students involved about the concern. Going forward, he asked if this was something that the admission staff could evaluate with a plagiarism tracker. Discussion involved the role of AI which will not be flagged by a plagiarism tracker. The Council understands that the admission staff is very short staffed and struggling to complete reviews as timely as possible. Sal said if a plagiarism tracker could be built into the admission software that would be helpful, but evaluating is problematic as it is difficult to prove plagiarism as the format wording of essays can be innocently similar. He added that our goal is to admit qualified students. Sal offered that faculty can use ithenticate to check personal essays but this will likely not identify AI generated documents.

1. Consider adding the following committee expectations to the dissertation and thesis advisor expectations document-Sal Sanders and Doug Genna

The Graduate College has written thesis/dissertation advisor expectations, but we did not have expectations for thesis/dissertation committee members. So, Doug and Sal drafted the below. Council reviewed the expectations and requested adding a statement regarding the need to notify the Graduate College with an updated form if the committee changes. Further discussion included authorship, editing does not necessarily mean authorship on the publication. This may not be something that Graduate Council should dictate but rather should be between the committee members to decide. It was decided that the committee exceptions would be sent for further review and evote.

Below is the proposed expectations:

The thesis or dissertation committee consists of a minimum of three members (including the advisor) who hold appropriate graduate faculty status for their committee role. The committee shares expertise and provides guidance for the thesis/dissertation and is responsible for approving the quality of the scholarly work including the defense, adherence to the particular style manual, and the quality, syntax, spelling, and punctuation used in the thesis or dissertation. While the written thesis or dissertation is one outcome of the committee and student’s work, the ultimate outcome of the thesis and dissertation process is a competent and confident scholar/researcher.

**Duties of the committee members include the following:**

1. Providing appropriate edits and comments on the final thesis/defense draft
2. Providing scholarly suggestions to the student and advisor for project direction, development, and/or analysis.
3. Attending any committee related meetings
4. Attending the thesis/dissertation defense
5. Approving the final thesis/dissertation manuscript.

**Note: these duties are standard across all committees and disciplines. Participation on a thesis committee does not by default grant the faculty members of the committee authorship of any published work relating to the thesis/dissertation work. Any authorship attributions for scholarly publication or intellectual property must fall within the defined ethical guidelines of the respective discipline.**

1. Dean’s Comments

Sal thanked everyone for the continual growth in graduate enrollment. Faculty have been doing a great job with their programs. Our admission numbers were slightly less this year but our overall enrollment was up, so students are being successful and our retention of students is good.

Sal announced that he will be retiring as of December 31st. He said that structural changes will take place. The group shared that Sal will be missed as he is a great advocate for graduate students and working on council is a pleasure largely because of Sal’s role. Sal invited to group to send any policies that need to be reviewed/changed in the next few meetings.

1. Comments/Information from Council Members – All members are invited to share information or request input.

Virgil shared that there will be a meeting later this week to discuss moving the PhD in Materials Science under the Rayen Engineering School. Currently, the Materials Science program does not sit within a program so faculty are interdisciplinary across STEM. There may not be faculty within Engineering to teach all of the courses. Concerns were voiced that faculty are leaving and there are not enough people to teach these courses. Instead of attracting new faculty, a decision to move the program to engineering may not be a good choice, as engineering faculty are already struggling to cover the courses. Sal said that this was the first he heard of this move. Sal asked that Virgil keep him informed of what happens at the meeting. He also offered to follow up if there are further concerns after the meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 5:07

**Exceptions Committee Report to Graduate Council for our meeting in September 2024**

Committee Membership:

Dr. Sal Sanders, Chairperson

Dr. Virgil Solomon

Dr. Doug Genna

1) Members of the Graduate Council Exceptions Committee considered a request for an exception to our policy requiring a “B” or higher grade for transfer credit.

The committee has unanimously approved an exception to our policy requiring a B grade or higher for a course to transfer to YSU. Rationale: Since graduate courses are not provided A and B grades by the College of Pharmacy at the Northeast Ohio Medical University (NEOMED), the committee has agreed to permit the transfer of credits (within our current limits) for courses where the applicant’s performance was evaluated as *Pass* (P) or better.

2) The members of the Graduate Council Exceptions Committee unanimously approved an exception to permit admission to the Ph.D. in Materials Science & Engineering program without submitting GRE scores for two applicants.

3) Member of the Graduate Council Exceptions Committee approved an exception to permit up to 15sh of transfer credit to apply toward fulfilling the degree requirements of the Master of Business Administration program at YSU. This one-time exception was approved because of this applicant’s unique situation caused by the closure of the university where she was studying.

4) A request submitted for an exception to the transfer policy to permit the transfer of more than 9 credit hours to be used to fulfill the requirements for a master’s degree being pursued by a student currently enrolled in our Ed.D. program was considered. After careful consideration, the members of this committee did not approve this request.

5) A request by an applicant, for an exception to the GRE requirement for admission to the Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership program at Youngstown State University was considered and was not approved.

Report submitted by Sal Sanders on 09/17/24.