

USA Graduate Council Meeting Minutes
10/24/22 @ 3 PM
Faculty Club



Members Present: Eric Loomis, Mark Taylor, Gwendolyn Pennywell, Debra Chapman, James Stefurak, Robert Cloutier, Leigh Minchew, Ben Lee, Blair Saale, Aishwarya Prakash, David Woolverton, Joyce Pittman, Haley Mullinax, Todd Andel, Edmund Spencer, Harold Pardue, Lorene Flanders, Norma Jean Tanner, Ashley Suggs, Heather Nix, DeAnna Cobb

Guests: Ashley Gibson, Avery Robinson, Jaclyn Bunch, Neil Schwarz, Raj Chaudhury, Tammy Vance

Agenda and materials distributed prior to the meeting.

1. **Minutes from prior meeting** (Pardue): Motioned, seconded, approved.
2. **Graduate Dean's Report** (Pardue): The Graduate School was not affected by budget cuts for this year, unlike the previous budget cut. The USA Foundation funding covers a significant portion of the graduate assistant stipends. We do not have an endowment source yet, however, the university is alert to potential sources. The Council was reminded that Graduate Assistant stipends should be written into grant applications if possible. If any program will be awarded a grant mid semester, please let us know and the Graduate School will cover the Graduate Assistant cost until grant funding is available. Mainly, our budget is pass through and the Graduate School Dean serves as a steward. Harold Pardue also serves as Chair of the Alabama Graduate Deans and this body has agreed to allow other institutions recruit at their home institution for programs they do not offer. Targeted fairs may prove more effective than the standard graduate school fairs. Institutions are no longer reviewing ACHE proposals for program duplication; however, ACHE does address this issue. GA stipends are a bit lower here than at other institutions. A competitive amount of \$24G was suggested as the rate for GA's covered by grant funding.

Ashley Gibson was introduced for an ACHE update. She disbursed a handout. Six programs were approved in Fall 2022, including one graduate level program, M.S. in Biomedical Sciences. Three programs are being proposed for the December ACHE meeting, two are graduate level (Doctor of Occupational Therapy and Applied Statistics Graduate Certificate). Four programs were deleted, mainly due to COVID impacts, at the September ACHE meeting, with one addition, Electrical and Computer Engineering track to Systems Engineering Ph.D. program. Ashley reminded the Council members on Graduate Assistant due dates for their applications and the multi department approval process was briefly described. The Fall semester was negatively impacted by the SACS review. Exempting the GA's from the drop deadline is a time-consuming manual process with no personnel available to do it. Robert Cloutier asked if the due dates could be extended for GA's however, this would negatively impact filling a class.

Eric Loomis proposed that the CAF subcommittee that reviews graduate level curriculum action forms review new programs, certificates, tracks, and concentrations as well, so the timing of their meetings could better serve institutional deadlines, as the Graduate Council only meets twice per academic year. **Motioned, seconded approved.**

3. **SLATE** (Tanner)-Norma Jean Tanner reported that Admissions has not received much negative feedback from the SLATE application process. Applications are coming in every day, council members were encouraged to log into SLATE to familiarize themselves with the process. Tammy Vance was introduced as the new Academic Records supervisor. Please contact Norma Jean if you need to be included in emails about your program's application processes, or if you should be the primary program contact, etc. If a student wants to change programs after applying, let Norma Jean know for domestic applicants and Heather Nix know for international applicants. Different program application deadlines can be arranged upon request. Application fee waivers can be set up as well, but applicants may share the code is a drawback. Many international applicants request fee waivers due to the disparity between their home country's dollar value and the US dollar value. However, if

they cannot pay the application fee, how will they be able to afford to get to Mobile, etc.? Also, part of the application fee covers marketing funds as well. An international student has been hired to welcome international applicants, answer questions, and nudge any applicants who have not completed the application process.

4. **GSA Organization and role in the Graduate Council (Woolverton)**-David Woolverton was introduced and serves as the President of the GSA. This is a student led and student founded independent organization with no institutional association. The GSA is a campus-wide outreach to make graduate student voices heard. The GSA will identify graduate student needs, such as an increase in stipends for example. The GSA wants to be a part of the administrative decision-making process on behalf of graduate students at large. Housing/accommodations is a current need. Tres Stefurak agreed that housing is a critical need and the advising process needs improvement as well. Satisfied graduate students lead to higher retention rates and would help South become a more successful institution. Currently, it is not feasible to have the same organizational set up as the undergrad student association, but this is a potential goal. A neutral physical office location on campus is being sought. The GSA is working towards representation from all graduate level programs. David was advised to talk with Dr. Mike Mitchell regarding GSA needs and to work with the current graduate student representative on the Council. A \$1 fee added to the application fee for graduate students was suggested as a source of funding for the GSA.
5. **New Program Review Ph.D. in Exercise Science and Performance Nutrition (Schwarz)**-Neil Schwarz presented this new program. It includes broad-based knowledge of subject matter, ability to identify outcomes, design effective research, design safe programs, advance lab skills, research interventions, communicate results, effective presentation and teaching. Student interest was in part determined by students who were not interested in our master's program since we didn't offer a Ph.D. program. Surveys conducted indicated a high level of interest. Gray Assoc. indicated high percentiles. The closest competition is hundreds of miles away so we will have a central location. The Ph.D. program will support the master's level program and student enrollment is expected to increase. The Ph.D. program will lead to increased research, funding, grants, etc. This is a 60 credit hour program with a master's degree required. 18 hours can be transferred. Faculty is already in place. ENRG branding is in place. No additional funds will be required. Will have GA positions available with a health insurance option. **Motioned, seconded, approved.**
6. **New Program Concentration in MPA (Bunch)**-Jaclyn Bunch serves as the coordinator for the MPA program, which is one of the oldest programs at South, 40 years, and one of the most successful with steady growth in enrollment. MPA currently offers a concentration in Healthcare Administration and Geographic Information Technology. MPA is adding a 3rd concentration in Criminal Justice. Online and in person attendance available. A high level of student interest was identified. At this point, the courses are cross-listed but as growth occurs additional faculty will be needed. Student interest in research has led to greater faculty productivity in research. Electives are structured so that overlap will not be an issue. **Motioned, seconded, approved.**
7. Due to lack of time remaining, the **Bulletin review** agenda item will be covered via email.
8. **Turnitin compliance and the Student Research Agreement form (Pardue)**-Harold Pardue mentioned the need of proof that Turnitin or a similar program was performed by the student's committee chair. As our graduate students' theses and dissertations are uploaded to ProQuest, we need to definitively ensure that due diligence for plagiarism is completed. A screenshot of the originality report was suggested to turn in with the T/D submission form. The current process for Turnitin is felt to be clunky and Dr. Chaudhury was questioned about how to streamline the process. Suggestions will be emailed to council members. The student research form presenter cancelled. This item is tabled.
9. **New Graduate Faculty category (Pardue)**-A new category was suggested for retired faculty still active in research at South. Emeritus status exists at other institutions, but would require additional approval steps. Proposed that retired faculty remain in whatever status they were in at the time of retirement. Harold Pardue will email revised guidelines.

10. **High Flex Instruction for graduate programs** (Stefurak)-Other institutions (Troy is an in-state example) offer zoom instruction for students and there is a high level of interest from graduate students in this option. Many graduate students work full time and the option of zoom would be convenient and remove the need for commuting. Several council members seconded that this option would immediately increase enrollment opportunities in their respective programs, both from individual students and industry interested in setting up this option for their employees. The main issue is lack of coding for this type of instruction. Proposed that face to face cost be the same as zoom participation. ACHE would have to approve this option of instruction. Would only be for identified courses, not at large. A caveat would be that international students are limited in the amount of courses they can take that are not face to face (50%). Harold Pardue to discuss this option with the Provost.

11. Meeting adjourned due to time constraints.