

Graduate Council Meeting Minutes

January 14, 2026

M. Cunningham, J. O'Brien-Brown, R. Chavez, I. Emond, S. Meadows, D. Shantz, A. Schumacher, S. Berry, S. Bernhard, A. Anagnost, D. Omerbasic, K. Andrinopoulos, M. Kohler, G. Morris, D. Lowell, L. Lukkarila, C. Stieber, A. West, V. Subramaniam, S. Montes, A. Ruzsinszky, C. Beasley

1. Meeting called at 8:31
2. Approval of December Minutes, motioned by S. Bernhard, seconded by D. Shantz
3. Announcements
 - a. Program proposals and major changes must reach the Grad Council stage in CIM by the first Wednesday of the month. Email notice to Mike and Jennifer is greatly appreciated.
 - b. New programs and significant changes must have all approvals by early spring to be included in next year's catalog.
 - c. Upcoming Meeting dates
 - i. February 11
 - ii. March 11 – in person with PhD reviewers, Boggs 600
 - d. 3 Minute Thesis – January 27 at 3:30 in Kendall Cram
 - e. NSF-NIH survey
4. WSPH
 - a. MS in Biostatistics – vote
 - i. Standalone MS and 4+1 program is proposed
 - ii. Why is “health” not in the title? School kept the name broad since it is not limited to students who have a health background. Focusing on the intersection of public health and other fields/systems.
 - iii. WSPH might want to recruit undergrads from departments in other schools, and don't want to imply that it is clinical or biomedical. The courses and descriptions include a lot of health related classes, which they feel is sufficient to convey that this is a public health degree.
 - iv. What are the expected career outcomes? This could be used for government, research, crime and violence, EPA, actuarial work, insurance, anything that requires forecasting for health issues.
 - v. Question about how this is distinct from other data-based programs. Perhaps it could be handled with more explanation in the description versus changing the name.
 - vi. How distinct is this from the biostatistics program? This is for building models from data. Bioinformatics is more related to analyzing DNA or

small structures within the body versus this being related to systems and broader issues.

- vii. 4+1 talks about students having 9 credit hours coming in. Only 6 can be shared, so students would need to have at least 123 credits before graduating with their bachelor's degree.
- viii. Most 4+1 degrees don't have summer courses, so should this be referred to as an accelerated master's degree? K. Andrinopoulos said they have not had a problem with summer enrollments, M. Cunningham asked that they provide some information about those enrollments as we do not currently have any 4+1 programs that start in the summer.
- ix. Advising is very important. The shared and extra courses involved in the degree have to be processed before the bachelor's is conferred. There are both advising issues, to make sure the student knows how this should work, and then someone in the dean's office should submit a ticket to indicate which courses are meant to point to which degree
- x. Vote, 14 in favor, 1 opposed, motion passed.

5. Policy on Holistic Admissions

- a. Need rubrics for departments to assess things like statements, grades, coursework, extracurriculars.
- b. Each program/school can require exams, including the GRE, but they still need to determine how it is included within the overall assessment of an applicant.
- c. TSSW wants to be able to gauge non-cognitive skills such as conscientiousness and resilience. This document is not necessarily meant to be adopted wholesale, but each unit should be developing something of their own. Programs need to be developing metrics of what they think would make a strong applicant and publish this on their websites. This could be research experience, public service, grades, etc. Could be an essay prompt about addressing adversity to capture the information TSSW wants, for instance.
- d. Representatives can/should share the draft with their schools. The big addition right now is that there should be rubrics for evaluations. S. Bernhard asked for sample rubrics if any departments have them and are willing to share. Please send them to J. O'Brien-Brown if departments have something to share.
- e. Rubrics are not always very precise, and need to be refined over time. The process for using the rubric should also be considered to try to make admissions more consistent.
- f. We will vote next month on whether we require holistic admissions for departments that have gone GRE optional (should we require it in general?)
- g. Anything published on websites needs to be kept up to date.

6. Background checks

- a. If you have ideas of how this should be done, please reach out to J. O'Brien-Brown.
 - b. Major questions about when this can be done.
 - c. If there are things that mean that a student can't get licensed, that should be posted on the program's website.
 - d. SoPA is concerned that if it's posted it might lead to students not applying (chilling effect).
 - e. SLA grad students almost all have to teach, so we need to know if someone can't be around minors, for instance. That may fall into the realm of things that should be posted on websites.
7. Meeting adjourned at 9:30 motioned by C. Beasley, seconded by S. Bernhard