

Graduate Council Meeting Minutes
January 13, 2016

Present: R. Adderley, R. Ager, A. Childress, M. Cunningham, K. Elfer, A. Enami, G. Didier, M. Herman, L. Pratt, P. Roberts, A. Robison, C. Rodning, B. Shay, L. Shi

Absent: C. Dunn, S. Grayson, K. Kwong, G. Morris, M. Vail

M. Cunningham called the meeting to order at 8:35 AM.

1. Approve Meeting Minutes from November.

R. Ager moves to approve the minutes. M. Herman seconds the motion. All approve.

2. Affordable Care Act and Graduate Students

Before the holiday break, WFMO sent out an email stating that all graduates needed to clock in and out within Kronos. Students on “services provided stipends” needed to clock hours in Kronos because the university needs a mechanism to track how many hours they work. The Provost’s Office, nor OGPS, received this information from WFMO prior to the release of the email.

Alysia Loshbaugh, Director of Financial Affairs and Special Projects in the Office of Academic Affairs, has nurtured a policy that benefits the university’s, as well as WFMO’s, needs. Per research into our peer institutions, as well as consulting with General Counsel, Alysia has found that it is not common practice for graduate students to clock in and out. Additionally, the Office of Assessment and Institutional Research sent out a survey to the AAU Data Exchange to see how our peers are addressing the issue. All responding AAU institutes treat students on stipends as exempt employees. With the full support of General Counsel, WFMO agreed to view the graduate students on stipend as exempt employees.

Graduate students on “services provided stipends” will be offered an employer-based insurance plan in addition to the student health care plan. If a student takes the employee-offered insurance policy, they are not eligible for their insurance subsidy from the school. If they want to take the Tulane plan, they need to have a one-on-one meeting with WFMO staff. It is not advised that graduates opt-in to the employer-based insurance plan, as it would cost approximately \$700 per month.

Graduate Students are not FTE (full-time equivalent) employees, as WFMO is waiting to see the results of the Fair Labor Standards Act before making that adjustment. General Counsel is interested in pursuing an FTE for graduate students, and A. Loshbaugh encourages Graduate Council involvement in setting these policies and standards. Regardless of their FTE status, graduates on tuition waivers are not allowed to work more than 20 hours as part of their services provided.

R. Adderley brings up that in SLA, graduate status may change between semesters: a student may teach a course in the fall semester and then have no duties in the spring.

One way to set timelines would be to use adjuncts as a baseline; 9.25 hours are approximately how many hours are 'worked' per 3-credit course load. While there is no set number for graduates, the adjunct rate may be a starting point.

L. Sui asks if there will be an hourly pay schedule for students; M. Cunningham says no, we will not, but we need to track them for ACA purposes. To this point, M. Cunningham requests that Graduate Council define what graduate development is, so that students can differentiate between hours worked and hours spent towards academic development.

A. Enami asks, "What happens if a student hits the 30 hour work week?" A. Loshbaugh says that, with the university offering the employee insurance option, nothing will happen at this time. However, if other labor changes occur, such as the Fair Labor Standards Act, there may be repercussions if a student works over 30 hours.

L. Sui asks how full-time summer internships with a separate employer impact a student's status. Those hours are not "Tulane hours," and have no impact on Tulane insurance or labor policies.

M. Herman moves to vote on the policy; all vote in approval. No abstentions, no disapprovals.

3. The Interdisciplinary Masters in SSE

SSE faculty voted on this interdisciplinary master's in fall 2015.

M. Cunningham calls to vote; all vote in favor to approve the new Interdisciplinary Masters.

4. Postdocs: Competitive Postdoc Salaries

In anticipation of the Fair Labor Standards Act, all employees being paid under \$50,000 will no longer be exempt employees. The Primate Center went to the Office of Research, WFMO, and OGPS, to ask if they can increase the salaries of their postdocs if they have the funds available in their account. This has been approved for the Primate Center.

Postdoc salaries vary per discipline and school. M. Cunningham will discuss with the schools as to what a postdoc salary standard should be. However, based on NIH minimums, these rates are still under \$50,000. Many national groups are working with the Department of Labor to see how this will impact postdoc salaries.

The current policy at Tulane is: if you have the funds to increase their salary and your funding agency is okay with the increase, there is no reason not to increase their salary.

The NIH standard is close to the FLSA minimum, but is not quite at that threshold. NIH will start requiring postdoc positions on a postdoc repository to ensure that there are fair methods for hiring.

5. Summary of CGS conference

M. Cunningham invites the Graduate Council to the Council of Southern Graduate Schools, which will be held February 18-21 in Charlotte, North Carolina.

M. Cunningham adjourns the meeting at 9:21 AM.