

Graduate Council Meeting Minutes
April 13, 2016

Present: R. Ager, M. Cunningham, K. Elfer, A. Enami, A. Robison, and C. Rodning.

Absent: R. Adderley, A. Childress, G. Didier, C. Dunn, S. Grayson, M. Herman, K. Kwong, G. Morris, L. Pratt, P. Roberts, B. Shay, L. Shi, and M. Vail.

Invited Guests: Erica Woodley and Deborah Love

M. Cunningham calls the meeting to order at 8:45 A.M.

Agenda:

1. Approve Feb Meeting Minutes

This will be voted on via email as there were not enough graduate council members for a vote.

2. Erica Woodley + Deborah Love: Student Medical Leave

Federal law's Title IX policy requires that a student who takes a medical leave for pregnancy will need equivalent funding when she returns.

There are two types of medical leave at Tulane: voluntary and involuntary. The Office of Civil Rights has weighed in, and the university can only involuntarily withdraw a student if they are a continuous threat to the community. However, this has a high-threshold, and the Office of Civil Rights prefers that the university goes through the Conduct Process rather than have the university withdraw a student.

If faculty or staff notice issues or have concerns, use the Tulane Concern reporting system to report the student's behavior or conduct: <https://tulane.edu/concerns>

Faculty and administration **should not** request medical documentation, as it opens the department up to issues of discrimination. All documentation should be received from the Goldman Office of Disability Services. After a student leaves for medical leave, there is a re-entry process within Student Affairs that provides support for the student. Individual schools should not be determining medical leaves without knowledge and participation of the Student Health Center.

Retroactive withdrawals are typically used for students battling substance or alcohol abuse that may have impacted their work during their academic career.

If a student has taken a leave, what happens to their health insurance (especially if it is subsidized by the university)? The student health insurance does not end in the middle of a semester. Student Affairs would recommend continued coverage during a leave of absence for the student.

When students are on leave, does the clock (for time to degree) stop? E. Woodley says there is no uniform policy at the graduate level, though there is at the undergraduate level. Some graduate programs will require a reapplication after one semester, and Student Affairs feels that is punitive. The lack of uniformity makes it difficult for Student Affairs to advise the students, and recommends Graduate Council helps create a uniform policy for the majority of graduate students.

Graduate programs request so few medical leaves that Student Affairs is happy to have all requests referred to them for administration.

K. Elfer asks about external fellowships: E. Woodley shares that SRSS works directly with the fellowship granting organization to grant the student the needed medical leave. There have not been any cases where a graduate student has lost their external fellowship due to a medical leave.

M. Cunningham stated that the schools manage stipends, and not the departments or programs, so that in the event of medical leave, there is more flexibility in distributing that fellowship when the student returns.

A. Enami asks how many of these policies are in place where students can access them, especially international students who may have visa complications as a result of a medical leave. The process is documented online for students; this has been translated into many additional languages so that students do not have to read it in a second language. SRSS works very closely with OISS when they receive concerns from international students.

When departments are reviewing prospective student applications, if they address SRSS during the admissions processes, they can put support in place to help give incoming students any support needed to be successful.

Peer institutions have maternity and pregnancy policies; the law does not require a policy, but the practical effect means everyone is on board. OGPS will convene a Graduate Council sub-committee to address medical leave policies across the university.

OGPS may want to encourage exit-surveys for graduate students; work with OAIR to cultivate questions regarding health, medical leaves, satisfaction with academic career. This information can and should be shared with the departments, OIE, and SRSS. OGPS will invite Katie or Shawn from OAIR to talk to GSSA about the exit survey shared with graduating PhDs.

3. 2016-2017 External PhD Program Reviews:

The programs under review are Finance, Management, Political Development, and International Development. M. Cunningham motions that next year's PhD reviews be cancelled due to the new or suspended status of the programs. He proposes we use the time to plan our Master's internal program reviews.

As the DSW program has no accreditation body, it will need to be reviewed in the next cycle.

4. BOR/SREB Fellowships

OGPS received four BOR-SREB fellowships received to support underrepresented PhD students & they have been awarded: 2 – SSE; 1 – SLA; 1 –SOM

The last meeting will be May 11th to review the external PhD Review reports. G. Morris will write the summary and recommendations of graduate council for the Senior VP and Provost, M. Bernstein. The schools and departments will receive these and be able to respond to factual errors.