

Graduate Council Meeting Minutes

Thursday, March 12, 2026 – Zoom

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Annette Barnes, DNP, MSN
Jennifer Bergner, MSME
Stephanie Bernhard, ENG
Joshua Bolton, PUBCOM
Yvonne Downie-Hanley, MBA
Maida Finch, EDD
James Fox, EDLD
Aston Gonzalez, HIST
Clifton Griffin, Dean of Graduate School
Allen Koehler, AVP Enrollment Management
Elizabeth Kressin, Registrar
Lauren McDermott, GIS
Stephen Oby, MSW
Jessica Scott, OGS
Christine Spillson, Fulton School Rep

Brian Stiegler, MED Higher ED

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Melissa Bugdal, At-Large Perdue School Rep
Eric Liebgold, BIO
Ruth Malone, CURRMED
Scott Mazzetti, HHPF
Heather Porter, Seidel Rep
Mark Shaffer, CHHS Rep
Ignaciyas Soosaipillai, CADR
Star Weaver, MAT

GUEST:

Farren Christ, GSC Rep

Holly Thompson, GSC

I. Call to Order – 3:31pm.

II. Good News

- H. Thompson – GSC hosted a game night at the President's house. There were 17 students. Introduced Farren Christ who is the incoming GSC President.
- S. Oby – Preparing for a succession plan as Dr. Oby will be cycling off as Grad Program Director.
- A. Barnes – Nursing is also working on a succession plan.

III. Minutes

- In February minutes, please indicate that there is interest in the role of Student Health in regards to immunization requirements for different departments.
- Pending that edit, minutes are unanimously approved.

IV. GC Update – A. Barnes

- There were no proposals to be reviewed.
- There was a motion by UCC to make revisions to the Curriculum Guide but GCC was not given the opportunity to review.
 - J. Fox asked motion to be postponed until GCC members could review.
 - GCC members will review and notify Grad Council.
 - J. Fox will take recommendations back to Faculty Senate.

V. Goal Planning for Next Year

- J. Bergner – Provided language for COLA adjustment for Grad Assistants.
 - Would like a breakdown of numbers by classification. Once we have that information, we can advocate for GA's in two steps:
 - 1. Increase stipend based on COLA
 - 2. Increase number of GA's
- C. Griffin – Should speak to the investment in Graduate Education
 - GA's have not been given COLA increases at same rate as other employees
 - No overall stipend increase in several years
 - Show decrease in number of GA's and speak to their value
 - GSC is a governance group and could put forth a joint memo with GC.
 - H. Thompson – Will bring this up at the next Consortium Meeting
 - B. Stiegler – GA's support undergrad students. Should be part of strategic plan.
- Next steps
 - J. Scott will provide that data to J. Bergner.
 - Draft of motion should be sent to GC for feedback.
 - H. Thompson will announce idea at next Consortium Meeting.
- J. Fox – J. Scott does a tremendous job for the Grad School and all programs but we need additional support for her and us.
 - C. Griffin – We're in the 9th month of trying to backfill Liz Geiger's position. There have been several conversations with Jessica Clark and Allen Koehler about someone in another SU position coming over to help.
 - A. Barnes – Should we do a program assessment of support for the Grad School? Was that information included in the Grad School proposal?
 - C. Griffin – Additional resources were not requested.
 - J. Fox – May need to do some peer school comparisons
 - J. Bergner – Graduate enrollment is expected to increase. Grad School should be given the resources to accomplish this.

VI. Strategic Planning – M. Finch

- M. Finch – Encouraged everyone to read it. If there is feedback, a meeting can be scheduled to discuss.
- B. Stiegler – The word “investment” is used often. Gives Grad Council power to request needs for graduate enrollment.
- C. Griffin – Has consulted with M. Diriker and there is belief that the graduate strategic plan can be married to the university plan. C. Griffin will look for opportunities where graduate education can find their place within goals.

VII. Provost Survey – Maida Finch

- A survey was sent to Grad Council faculty members regarding priorities related to the upcoming Provost.
- There were 11 responses.
- M. Finch will gather data and provide a report to Grad Council on findings.

VIII. GSC Remarks – H. Thompson

- Looking at feedback mechanisms. Need more honest and anonymous input from students on programs.
- Working on updating bylaws.
- Working with the Grad School to scheduled elections.
- Goal is for more collaboration with SGA, Staff Senate and Faculty Senate
- Items of Concern:
 - GA's would like the ability to purchase staff meal plans.
 - Would like mandatory fees to be due in the middle of the semester.
 - Parking Passes – Red passes cost students \$120 but only cost staff and faculty \$100.

IX. Dean's Remarks

- Grateful to J. Scott and Katelyn Ray, our Graduate Assistant for going above and beyond in the void left by Liz moving to another department.
- Between summer and fall applications, numbers are trending up.
- There are robust marketing efforts going on. Overall strategies for graduate programs and some specific targeting areas for certain programs.

X. Other Remarks

- J. Fox – Faculty Senate voted to change “academic probation” to “academic warning”.
 - C. Griffin – The Graduate School was notified of the change and due to the variety and complexities of the grad programs, it was decided to leave the grad language as is.
- M. Finch – Has an upcoming sabbatical and A. Barnes is cycling off. Members of GC should start to think about elections. Will need a Chair and Vice Chair.

Meeting was adjourned at 4:56 p.m.

Submitted by Jessica Scott