

Graduate Council Meeting

Monday, February 3, 2025 ~ 3:30 – 4:30 pm

AD-148

MINUTES

PRESIDING: Terrence Deak, Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

STAFF: Andreas Pape, Courtney Ignarri, Erica Sausner, Ellen Tilden, and
Ann Marie Kellogg (recorder)

PRESENT: Alex Jobial, Pegor Aynajian, Brad Cannon, Praseeda Gopinath, Yetrib Hathout, Norah Henry, Michael Jacobson, Yvonne Johnston, Kyoung-Don Kang, Loretta Mason-Williams, Matt McConn, Suzanne McLeod, Vladimir Nikulin, Nicole Rouhana, Hiroki Sayama, Nicole Sirju-Johnson, Sarah Wexler, Yakubu Alhassan Zakaria, Tao Zhang

ABSENT: Niyazi Bodur, Sharon Bryant, Brad Cannon, Sungdai Cho, Judith Deluca, Pamela Stewart Fahs, Carl Lipo, Jacqueline McGinley, Anjani Praneet Meruvu, Josh Reno, Jillian Sandy, Steven Schwartz, David Werner

Call to Order:

Dr. Pape called the meeting to order at 3:30 p.m.

1. Minutes of Meeting on December 2, 2024

Dr. Pape asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the meeting held on December 2. A member made a motion and another member seconded. All were in favor and none were opposed. The minutes of the meeting were approved as written.

2. Committee Reports

- a. Academic Standards Committee – met on December 16, 2024
 - From Economics, Dr. Wenya Wang was approved to serve on a dissertation committee. This decision is to be reviewed by this subcommittee as she is not tenure track.
- b. Budget/Grievance Committee – did not meet
 - \$25K in Travel Grants has been awarded to 26 doctoral students
- c. Diversity Committee – did not meet
- d. Professional Development Committee – met on December 13, 2024
 - Excellence Award recipients have been selected. Eighteen of 24 Research nominees will receive an award; 11 of 20 Teaching nominees will receive an award; and six of ten Service/Outreach nominees will receive an award.

3. Report from the Dean

Dean Deak shared a PowerPoint presentation on enrollment trends that he recently presented to SOG (Senior Officers Group) and SOG+. The presentation included the most recent data released by the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) of overall trends from 2013-2023. The presentation also included Binghamton University enrollment trends from 2015-2025 for Master's and PhD programs. Master's programs have shown an overall increase, while PhD programs have been flat or trended downward. It should be noted that the Clinical and Professional Doctorates show a steady increase. These programs, however, are not considered research-based doctorates and are therefore not counted in the NSF Survey of Earned Doctorates, which forms one of the major ranking systems for doctoral programs.

Dean Deak also discussed strategies to attract the best and brightest students, including issues relating to stipend levels and their variation across disciplines, as well as time-to-degree. Benchmarks necessary to become a member of the American Association of Universities (AAU) were also discussed. Its membership includes 69 universities in the United States and two in Canada. AAU members are on the leading edge of innovation, scholarship, and research and among the most prestigious research institutions nationwide. Currently, of the four SUNY University Centers, Stony Brook and Buffalo are members. In order to be accepted into membership, a number of goals will need to be met, namely a substantial increase in the number of PhDs conferred. Binghamton's 10-year average annual PhDs conferred is currently at 152. For membership, we need to raise the number by at least 50%, but more likely higher (~300 PhD conferrals annually).

Dean Deak discussed doctoral stipends. Stipends are an invaluable tool that can be used in recruiting doctoral students. Currently, Binghamton is tied with Albany in offering the lowest non-STEM stipends at \$21,000. Strategies for addressing stipend competitiveness were discussed, including consideration of the stipend term (9 vs 12 month) and differences in stipend levels across disciplines.

Graduate Education at Binghamton has many strengths as well as challenges to overcome in moving forward, and Dean Deak looks forward to working with Graduate Council in moving forward.

4. Clark Fellowship Update

Dr. Pape reported that the new Clark Fellowship enrollment was rolled out. The nomination process has been revised significantly from previous years. Departments are encouraged to read the webpage carefully: <https://www.binghamton.edu/grad-school/awards-honors/clark-fellowship.html>.

The single deadline for submitting nominations is February 15, 2025, for priority funding. The new process is now completely separate from the Slate admissions process.

To aid with this transition, the Graduate School is holding an informational session for Graduate Directors and departmental staff who may be interested on Monday, February 10, from 12-12:30 pm on Zoom: <https://binghamton.zoom.us/j/93823219647?pwd=eaD8ELyL971O3p6dEujvJMWyhusNuc.1>. All are welcome to attend.

Although the rollout has been successful, the past few weeks have been tumultuous due to the new executive orders. Legal counsel has been consulted and have advised that there are no changes at this point. The University will comply with the executive orders and will look to SUNY Central for guidance as the landscape changes.

5. Potential Interruptions from Emerging Executive Orders

Dean Deak reported that with the new government administration there has been a high level of concern regarding research grants, many of which are funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF). Most NSF grants have a diversity component. A federal judge has temporarily blocked an effort to pause federal payments for grants and other programs to ensure that federal agencies, states and other organizations that receive money from the federal government continue to receive funds. Concerns were recognized, and our main approach will be to help reassure and support individuals who are affected by sudden or unanticipated changes as best as we can.

6. Graduate Council Committee Reorganization

Dr. Pape presented some considerations for changes to the Graduate Council bylaws that will be reviewed and discussed by the Academic Standards Committee. The permanent and ongoing responsibilities of Graduate Council subcommittees need some reformatting and changes to their charge to meet the current needs of the campus and how Graduate School operations have changed over the past decade. Once discussed by the Academic Standards committee, recommendations will come back to the full Graduate Council for vote.

7. Changes to Graduate Consultants for Academic Year 2025-2026

Dr. Pape introduced a proposal to replace the two current Academic Writing Consultant positions with a Graduate Assistant who would focus specifically on dissertation writing. The position would be funded with both tuition and a stipend, work 20 hours per week, and include holding regular times for writing support as well as one-on-one workshops. The demand for the coding and statistical consultants has not been as great as expected. The question was raised as to whether AI would replace the need for consultants. Broader conversations are needed regarding the ethics of AI and how it can be a useful tool; however, there still appears to be a strong need for dissertation writing support among doctoral students.

New Business:

The Graduate School is now on LinkedIn. All are invited to join.

The Graduate School now has a membership in the National Postdoctoral Association.

There being no further business, Dr. Pape asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. A member made a motion and another member seconded the motion. All were in favor and none were opposed. The meeting was adjourned at 4:34 p.m.

*****Next Meeting: Monday, March 3, 2025 ~ 3:30-4:30 p.m. ~ AD-148*****