

Graduate Group Chairs Meeting
Wednesday, August 19, 2020
10:30 A.M. – 11:30 A.M. | Zoom

Meeting Minutes

Graduate Group Chairs Present: Chris Amemiya, Irene Beattie, Anita Bhappu, YangQuan Chien, Chi-Chun Chien, Martha Conklin, Courtenay Conrad, Justin Cook, Kevin Dawson, Christine Isborn, Sarah Kurtz, Roummel Marcia, Shawn Newsam, Paul Smaldino, Jan Wallander
Erin Hestir (Graduate Council Vice-Chair)

Graduate Division Staff Present: Asmeret Berhe, Eric Cannon, Jesus Cisneros, Ashley Eagleson, Cassie Gunter, Heath Jackson, Chris Kello, Jennifer Quiralte, Jessica Ventura

Announcements

1. Reminders (Jessica Ventura) – 5 min

- Graduate Recruitment Marketing Materials Review due Friday, August 21.
- Confirmation of your program's application due date and GRE requirement due Friday, August 21.
- Official AY 2020-21 Graduate Faculty List Review due Monday, August 24

Agenda

1. Introduction of New Graduate Group Chairs & Graduate Council Vice Chair (All) – 5 min

- YangQuan Chen, Mechanical Engineering
- Chih-Chun Chien, Physics
- Christine Isborn, Chemistry & Chemical Biology
- Shawn Newsam, Electrical Engineering & Computer Science
- Paul Smaldino, Cognitive & Information Sciences
- Erin Hestir, Graduate Council Vice Chair

2. Dean's Updates & Discussion Items (Interim Dean Kello & Graduate Division) – 25 min

- GROW – Incoming Graduate Students
 - We received several questions from students regarding issues accessing their current health coverage. Due to a file feed issue, many plans are showing up as inactive. We are working with AHP to resolve this concern and will put out a communication once we have more information.
 - We received several questions from students about an email from the UCM Bookstore regarding a \$500 credit offered by Follett. Please inform students this is not a credit – Follett is simply allowing students to bill their textbooks and course materials to their student accounts, instead of paying out-of-pocket. These funds will need to be repaid if used.
 - Additional questions or concerns can be referred to gradresources@ucmerced.edu.
- Fall Graduate Professional Development Course / Seminar Series

- We will offer our [GEARS](#) graduate professional development one-credit [course](#) taught remotely by Interim Associate Dean Asmeret Asefaw Berhe, on Tuesdays from 1:30-2:45 p.m. Any graduate student can enroll in, or attend the course. Seminar topics will be posted in advance through the [Graduate Weekly Digest](#), which is emailed each Monday.
- Annual Student Progress Reports to Finish from Last Year
 - Interim Dean Kello reminded chairs to submit their Annual Student Progress Reports to graddean@ucmerced.edu if they hadn't already done so. If students are not making satisfactory progress, please also send a copy of their improvement plan.
- New Process for Annual Student Progress Reports This Year
 - We are looking into a new system using Excel Sheets, Box, and a bit of manual data entry, to standardize the form and process for Annual Student Progress Reports. This is still being built out, but we plan to have a demo available for feedback in the coming months.
 - Anita Bhappu suggested the use of Qualtrics as an alternative solution – Graduate Division will look into this option.
- Graduate Group Operational and Student Budgets
 - Operational budgets will go out by the end of August. If your graduate group needs to start spending now, please do not exceed the usual allotment.
 - USAP amounts for each graduate group will go out by the end of September. Budgets are anticipated to be very similar to last year's amounts, with some variation due to changes in enrollment numbers across groups, but this cannot be determined until after the Census.
- Search Engine Optimization
 - The recruitment team is working with Excelerate to optimize all graduate program websites. This will allow us to come up higher in the rankings when searched for on Google or other search engine platforms by respective students. We expect to pilot this sometime early next week and if, after the 2-month trial period we notice a drastic increase in site visits, we will look at making a long-term commitment.
- GradEXCEL Peer Mentor Program
 - We have modified the GradEXCEL peer mentor program to operate remotely and help our new students acclimate to graduate school by connecting them through small groups of peers and mentors. The program is run through our Graduate Resource Center and will provide remote tutoring for graduate writing and statistics, as well as online resources for graduate fellowships. A fall tutoring schedule will go out shortly.
- PhD Admissions Management (Interim Dean Kello)
 - Item tabled until next meeting.

Action Item: Interim Associate Dean Berhe will email chairs a copy of the updated Fall 2020 Professional Development Seminar Syllabus to be shared with graduate students and faculty.

Action Item: The recruitment team will reach out to chairs in the next week to begin scheduling one-on-one meetings to review graduate group websites.

Action Item: Graduate Division will send the call for peer mentor nominations in the next 2 weeks.

3. Graduate Council Vice Chair's Report (Erin Hestir) – 10 min

- Graduate Council is working with the Graduate Division to create a calendar that combines items from both areas, with clearly stated deadlines, color-coordinating whose deadlines they are and, who needs to take action.
- Graduate Council has identified the Graduate Groups whose P&Ps need to be provided or updated. Note: The P&P template has been redesigned to be more user friendly.
- Graduate Council would like to utilize the monthly Graduate Group Chairs' Meetings to empower and assist chairs with taking more active and proactive roles in the management of their graduate groups.

Action Item: Assistant Dean Cisneros & Naoko Kada will coordinate and have a draft Events & Deadlines Calendar ready to share with Graduate Group Chairs by August 31.

Action Item: Graduate Council will communicate with the Graduate Group Chairs whose P&Ps need to be submitted this Academic Year in accordance with the Academic Calendar, after its first meeting on August 31.

4. Soliciting Nominations for NASEM Studies (Sarah Kurtz) – 5 min

- Sarah Kurtz has been asked to nominate people from 14 different studies to serve on committees for NASEM studies. These committees provide no funding, but instead offer the unique chance to interact with leaders across the country. While this is a rather large ask, we hope to identify a small number of UCM faculty who are 1.) already tenured and who would represent UCM in a very professional way; 2.) who would welcome a service opportunity at a national level.

Action Item: Chairs to email Sarah Kurtz names and disciplines of faculty they would like to nominate for this opportunity.

5. Other Business (All) – 10 min

- Required COVID Testing for Graduate Students
 - Interim Dean Kello confirmed that given the campus's phased reopening of research facilities, testing and screening of all faculty, post-docs, graduate students and staff who work in the buildings will need to take place. No one will be allowed to work at a campus facility without being tested. Further guidance to go out to the campus community later today.

The meeting adjourned at 11:32 A.M.