

MINUTES

Commission on Graduate and Professional Studies and Policies

September 17, 2025

3:30PM

Zoom

Present: Renee LeClair (presiding), Aaron Bond, Kiri Goldbeck DeBose, Nicole Holt, Ioannis Koutromanos, Leslie LaConte, Cayce Myers, Phil Nelson, Kayla Robertson, Molly Ryan, Jill Sible, Kaylee South, Brian Strahm, Aimee Surprenant, Kwok Tsang, Tyler Walters, Jerald Walz, Meng Zhu

Absent: Kirk Cameron, Veronica van Montfrans

Guests: Janice Austin, John Chappell, Katie Drinkwater Gregg, Barbara Hoopes, April Myers, Lauren Surface

Renee called the meeting to order at 3:32pm. A quorum was present.

1. Adoption of Agenda

A motion was made and seconded to adopt the agenda. Motion carried.

2. Announcement of approval and posting of minutes of April 16th, 2025

Renee noted that these minutes have been voted on electronically and can be publicly accessed on the Governance Website: governance.vt.edu

3. New Business

Revision of graduate policy about the last day of classes

Aimee presented the item for initial discussion. Currently, course withdrawal/resignation for graduate students is allowed only prior to the Friday of the last week of classes for the semester. The undergraduate policy is the last day to apply for W grade is the last day of classes. Most of the time, these deadlines fall close together, but we run into cases where they are off by a day, which causes confusion. We would like to harmonize with the undergraduate calendar and will propose to vote on this issue at the next meeting of the commission.

Inclusion and Diversity Requirement

President Sands has repealed the graduate student Inclusion and Diversity requirement, originally established through CGSP 2017-18A. This action follows the directions of the Board of Visitors. Because the original resolution passed through governance, the University Council Cabinet has requested a new resolution affirming the President's decision. The Faculty Senate drafted this resolution, and a final version will be prepared for discussion in CGPS&P before moving through the formal governance process.

Request for Extended Leave of Absence from Pamplin College of Business

A request for an exception to the current graduate leave of absence policy, seeking to allow students to extend their leave for up to three years without going through the readmission process. The current policy limits leave to one year before readmission is required. Commission members suggested rather than granting a single college exception, the issue should be considered in the context of university-wide policy to ensure equity across program. **DAP will take up this issue.**

Graduate School Appeal Process Timeline

There is a lack of specified timelines in the graduate student appeals process, unlike the clearly defined timelines within the Graduate Honor Code. The Graduate school would like to propose specific timelines for this process. **DAP will take up this issue to discuss what specific timelines would make sense.**

Request to Revise Language in Graduate School Electronic Signature System

Ashley Reichelmann (Sociology) asked the commission to look at the wording in the Graduate School Electronic Signature System for approving finals. Right now, it says, "I approve of this final oral defense schedule for this student, and I will read the thesis prior to the final defense" but it used to indicate agreement that the document was ready for defense. The suggestion is to separate these into two clear acknowledgments, since scheduling a defense requires committee approval before the defense itself. Although this situation doesn't happen often, it can be significant when committee members disagree. **DAP will take up this issue.**

- Suggested revision: I approve of this student's final oral defense scheduling. I will either select Yes or No. I also confirm that I will read this student's thesis prior to the defense.

4. Reports

- Graduate Student Appeals – Aimee Surprenant: During the summer, the Graduate School received five academic appeals from students across five departments in three colleges. The appeals included four dismissal cases and one academic record update. Two appeals committees were convened to handle the workload. One student record update was partially granted, and the student's record was updated. Three students were reinstated. One appeal was denied, resulting in permanent dismissal.
- Graduate School – Aimee Surprenant: The Graduate School Strategic Plan is under final review; the Provost has received the report but has not formally accepted it. A procedure for student complaints regarding supervisor interactions is being developed and will go through governance. Fall enrollment is slightly down by 200 students, mostly master's and international students. Planning for potential funding support to mitigate is still underway.
- Degrees and Academic Progress (DAP) – Jerald Walz: DAP develops and/or reviews policy proposals, drafts resolutions, and brings them to the commission for discussion and approval. Volunteers are sought, especially faculty, to contribute to this work. Funding models for new PGP's are still evolving.
- Non-thesis Coursework Only Master's Committee (NTCO) – Barbara Hoopes: This committee was formed two years ago to address policy and procedural issues unique to non-thesis, course-only programs. Membership includes commission and non-commission representatives. The committee welcomes additional participants with an interest in non-thesis program policies.

- Graduate Honor System – Molly Ryan: For the 2024-25 year there were 22 total cases, 18 resolved through facilitated discussion, 4 through preliminary review. Out of the 18 cases found responsible, 17 of them received standard penalties while 1 was dismissible. Educational events and panelist training continue.
- University Libraries – Kiri Goldbeck DeBose: Research Tools for Graduate Students Workshop series is ongoing. See session details here: <https://guides.lib.vt.edu/gradworkshops/upcoming>
- Faculty Senate – Phil Nelson: The Board of Visitors has asked the university to model potential growth in enrollment, both undergraduate and graduate, though there is no set timeline or firm target yet. The President also noted that a small percentage of research funding has been affected by external pressures.
- Board of Visitors – Katie Drinkwater Gregg: There will be a meeting in late September to review Athletics funding, with the next full BOV meeting in November.
- AP Faculty Senate – Aaron Bond: None to report.
- Staff Senate – Kayla Robertson: None to report.
- University Council – Renee LeClair: All commissions presented their workplans at the first meeting.
- Commission on Undergraduate Studies and Policies (CUSP) – Jill Sible: CUSP goals include identifying barriers to student success, implementing Banner Cloud system, revising university text messaging policy, enforcing foreign language admission requirements, and exploring a two-day fall break. The DEI and identity/equity requirements for general education curriculum are under review.

Other Items

- As a result of CGPS&P Resolution 2024-25C, the following changes were made to the Graduate Catalog:
- GHS Constitution update: <https://graduateschool.vt.edu/academics/expectations/graduate-honor-system/ghs-constitution.html>
- Graduate Catalog update: Added new language in General Policies & Financial Information section regarding restrictions on relationships between GA, GTA, GRAs and students under their supervision: <https://catalog.vt.edu/graduate/general-policies-financial-information/#financialinformationtext>

5. Announcements

From Aimee Surprenant: I would like to formally express our thanks and appreciation for Rose's many years of service to the Graduate Honor System. She started out as a panelist in 2019 and participated in numerous preliminary and review panels before becoming an associate chair in 2021 and then chair in 2022. During your three years as chair, she presided over more than 90 cases, communicating with students and faculty; managing correspondence and case tracking; scheduling and facilitating review panel hearings; training panelists and facilitators; and presenting at orientations and other educational and outreach events.

She has been a highly effective leader: focused, thoughtful, well organized, and reliable. Her calm demeanor and problem-solving approach put highly stressed participants of GHS cases at ease as they came to realize that they can trust the system to work fairly. She worked tirelessly to promote academic integrity and showed by example the importance of taking civic responsibility. The GHS is stronger for all the committed students and faculty members who dedicate their time to it, and she took that to the next level by serving in this leadership role.

6. Adjournment

There being no further business, a motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 4:42pm.