
**GRADUATE STUDIES COUNCIL
Minutes of 29 January 2026**

Call to Order

The regular meeting of the Western Michigan University Faculty Senate Graduate Studies Council was called to order at 3:01 p.m. on 29 January 2026 via Webex by Marcellis Zondag, chair.

Members Present: Upul Attanayake, Claire Binford, Christine Byrd-Jacobs, Micky Carignano, Lisa DeChano-Cook, Jennifer Fiore, Peter Gustafson, Michael Harnar, Michelle Hrivnyak, Cindy Linn, Jessyca Olvera (substitute for Kristhyna Fermin); Larry Simon, Marcellis Zondag

Members Absent: Lori Gray

Advisory Member Present: Carrie Cumming

Ex Officio: Laura Teichert

Guest(s): Melia Roberts, Graduate College; Kelly McDonnell, CECP; Diana Berkshire Hearit, Graduate Award Specialist, Graduate College

Quorum

A quorum was present with 14 members of the nine required to establish a quorum.

Agenda

An amendment was made to include the Master of Arts in Special Education Clinical course proposal.

[MOTION] It was moved by Linn, seconded by Scott, to approve the agenda as amended. The motion carried unanimously.

Minutes

[MOTION] It was moved by DeChano-Cook, seconded by Scott, to accept the minutes from 11 December 2025 as presented. With 1 abstention, the motion carried.

New Business

Berkshire Hearit provided an overview of the InfoReady system that will be used by GSC members to review upcoming All University Graduate Awards. The GSC awards ceremony is scheduled for 13 April from 5 to 7 pm.

Chair Zondag established the Graduate Teaching Effectiveness Award subcommittees as follows:

- Research includes Harnar, Linn, Carignano, Attanayake, and Teichert
- Teaching includes Zondag, Fiore, Hrivnyak, Scott, and Gray

Chair Zondag opened the discussion on the curriculum proposal for a program name change of the Master of Arts in Special Education Clinical Teacher.

[MOTION] It was moved by Fiore, seconded by Teichert, to approve the proposal as presented. With 1 abstention, the motion carried.

Reports of Officers

Chair Zondag reported that the MOA regarding drop/withdrawal extension has been postponed.

Ex Officio Teichert reports that several MOAs are planned for voting at the February Faculty Senate meeting, including the graduate PLA MOA, which the GSC approved in December.

Reports of University Representatives

Dean Byrd-Jacobs provided the Graduate College report, including that the college is very busy during the spring semester. There are several initiatives, research and travel Grants, dissertation completion fellowship, Thurgood Marshall fellowship, and awarding those monies during the semester. The Graduate College submitted several Midwestern Association of Graduate Schools (MAGS) Teaching Excellence

award nominees. The 3-Minute Thesis competition will be held on 25 February, the Research Poster Day on 9 April, and the All-University Awards celebration on 13 April. Graduate student appreciation week is 6 to 10 April. Fall 2027 will be the 75th anniversary of graduate studies at WMU.

Curriculum Manager DeChano-Cook reiterated that several MOAs are up for a vote at the February Faculty Senate meeting.

Binford and Olvera provided the Graduate Student Association report which included that the 3-Minute Thesis scheduled for 25 February will include 10 presentations. The winner will represent WMU at the regional 3-Minute Thesis conference. The first GSA general assembly meeting will be held tomorrow with a mixer scheduled for next week. GSA is working on details for the GSC Gala, tentatively scheduled for 18 April.

Unfinished Business

Chair Zondag stated that the Prior Learning Assessment subcommittees had nothing to report. The Graduate Artificial Intelligence Use Policy subcommittee reported discussion is focused on the parameters and conceptual framework for the next steps. Zondag is to draft an interview protocol and suggest stakeholders for a fact-finding mission.

New Business

None.

Announcements

None.

Adjournment

[MOTION] It was moved by Scott, seconded by Linn, to adjourn the meeting at 3:54 p.m. The motion carried unanimously. The Graduate Studies Council will meet next on 26 February via Webex at 3 pm.

Approval

Submitted by Jennifer Fiore, Secretary

Minutes were approved on 26 February 2026.