

---

**GRADUATE STUDIES COUNCIL  
Minutes of 26 February 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 26 February via Webex by Marcellis Zondag, Chair.

**Members Present:** Upul Attanayake, Christine Byrd-Jacobs, Micky Carignano, Lisa DeChano-Cook, Jennifer Fiore, Lori Gray, Michael Harnar, Michelle Hrivnyak, Cindy Linn, Marcellis Zondag

**Members Absent:** Peter Gustafson, Larry Simon

**Advisory Members Present:** Carrie Cumming

**Student Member Present:** Claire Binford

**Student Member Absent:** Jessyca Olvera

**Ex Officio:** Laura Teichert

**Guest(s):** Melia Roberts, Graduate College; Kelly McDonnell, CECF

**Quorum**

A quorum was present with nine of the 15 members needed to establish a quorum.

**Agenda**

The agenda was amended to include a discussion on 5000-level courses.

**[MOTION]** It was moved by DeChano-Cook, seconded by Hrivnyak, to accept the agenda as amended. The motion carried.

Attanayake, Harnar, Gray, Roberts, and Cummings joined the meeting at 3:03 p.m.

**Minutes**

**[MOTION]** It was moved by Attanayake, seconded by DeChano-Cook, to accept the minutes of 29 January 2026 meeting as presented. The motion carried.

**Reports of Officers**

Chair Zondag did not provide a report.

Ex Officio Teichert reported that on 13 February, the Faculty Senate Executive Board met with President Kavalhuna and discussed the need for faculty to be engaged in the university identity and strategic planning in the near future. The Executive Board, WSA, GSA, Board of Trustees members, and members of administration gathered for a retreat on shared governance.

**Reports of University Representatives**

Graduate College Dean Byrd-Jacobs' report included:

- All-University award nominations were collected and distributed to subcommittees for review by 18 March. The Graduate College is planning a recognition reception for award recipients, during which honorees will receive a commemorative plaque and graduation honor cords.
- The Graduate College is actively recruiting a new Doctoral Scholar and has extended the application deadline to 27 February to support a more inclusive and competitive applicant pool.
- Nominations for the Thurgood Marshall Award, as well as applications for Research and Travel Grants, have been received and forwarded for review.
- Graduate Research Day is scheduled for Thursday, 9 April. Faculty participation as judges is strongly encouraged to ensure equitable evaluation and to uphold the integrity of graduate research recognition processes.

Curriculum Manager DeChano-Cook did not provide a report.

Binford and Olvera provided the Graduate Student Association report, which included:

- GSA has completed one funding cycle, allocating more than \$15,000 to support graduate students. An increase in application volume was noted, indicating growing demand for financial assistance.
- GSA representatives participated in the shared governance retreat, highlighting the value of collaborative engagement with campus partners.
- Representatives attended a campus activities conference in Columbus, Ohio, to inform future programming efforts.
- The GSA Gala is scheduled for 17 April at the Fetzer Center, with capacity for 65 graduate students and one guest each.
- The Three-Minute Thesis (3MT) competition was held recently, with the first-place competitor advancing to the regional competition in Kansas City.

### **Unfinished Business**

Chair Zondag noted there are no updates from either the Prior Learning Assessment committee or the Graduate Artificial Intelligence Use Policy committee.

### **New Business**

DeChano-Cook provided an overview of 5000-level courses, noting that these courses permit enrollment by both undergraduate and graduate students but are not delivered consistently across the institution. In some cases, course expectations are identical for both levels, while in others, graduate students are assigned additional requirements. It was emphasized that graduate students must complete at least 50% of their coursework at the 6000-level to remain compliant with Higher Learning Commission standards. Discussion referenced the recently approved MOA-25/12: Establish Cross-Listed Courses Policy, which intersects with this issue, particularly where courses are cross-listed at the 4000- and 5000-levels.

Several options were suggested:

- Establish clearer definitions and expectations for 5000-level courses
- Eliminate the 5000-level designation
- Implement concurrently taught courses at distinct levels covering the same subject matter.

It was noted that compliance may be achieved either through graduate-only coursework or by documenting that graduate-level expectations and faculty qualifications are met within mixed-level courses. Concerns were raised regarding instructional load implications and administrative preferences related to concurrently taught courses. Cummings was asked to compile a list of courses with mixed undergraduate and graduate enrollment for review. GSC will subsequently develop a data collection strategy to better define the scope of the issue. Additionally, Byrd-Jacobs offered to share a 2016 comparative analysis of 5000-level courses, and consideration of approved course formats was identified as a necessary component of future review.

### **Announcements**

None.

### **Adjournment**

**[MOTION]** It was moved by DeChano-Cook, seconded by Linn, to adjourn the meeting at 3:53 p.m. The motion carried unanimously. The Graduate Studies Council will meet next on 26 March in the Bertha Davis Room of Walwood Hall at 3 p.m.

### **Approval**

Submitted by Jennifer Fiore, Secretary

Minutes were approved on 26 March 2026.