GRADUATE STUDIES COUNCIL

Minutes of 24 September 2026

Call to Order

The regular meeting of the Western Michigan University Faculty Senate Graduate Studies Council was called to order at 3 p.m. on 24 September in Walwood Hall-Bertha Davis Room 111W by Michael Harnar, chair.

Members Present: Stephanie Althoff, Upul Attanayake, Christine Byrd-Jacobs, Micky Carignano, Lisa DeChano-Cook, Kristhyna Fermin, Jennifer Fiore, Michael Harnar, Luis Jacabo Mejia, Cindy Linn, Meghann Meeusen, Larry Simon, Marcellis Zondag
Advisory Members Present: Carrie Cumming
Ex Officio: Laura Teichert
Guest(s): Malia Roberts, Graduate College

Quorum

A quorum was present with 11 members in attendance, of the six needed to establish a quorum.

Agenda

Byrd-Jacobs amended the agenda to include an update from the Graduate Student Association.
[***MOTION***] It was moved by Teichert, seconded by DeChano-Cook, to accept the agenda as amended. The motion carried unanimously.

Minutes

Simon amended the minutes related to officer elections to: It was moved by Simon, seconded by Linn, to elect Michael Harnar as Chair. It was moved by Simon, seconded

by Harnar, to elect Marcellis Zondag as vice chair. It was moved by Zondag, seconded by Simon, to elect Fiore as secretary.
[***MOTION***] It was moved by DeChano-Cook, seconded by Linn, to accept the minutes as amended. The motion carried unanimously.

Action Items
Chair Harnar presented the following curriculum proposals:

- Doctor of Philosophy in Spanish (SPND)
- Graduate Certificate Program – Nurse Education (NEDC)
- Graduate Certificate Program in Cultural and Environmental Heritage Management (CEHC)
- Health Administration (HADC)

[***MOTION***] It was moved by Zondag, seconded by Teichert, to accept the curriculum proposals as presented. With one abstention, the motion carried.

Chair Harnar presented the following curriculum proposals:

- Master of Arts in Sport Psychology (SPPM)

[MOTION] It was moved by Zondag, seconded by Teichert, to accept the Master of Arts in Sport Psychology (SPPM) once the letter from Evaluation, Measurement, and Research (EMR) is obtained. With one abstention, the motion carried.

Reports of Officers
Chair Harnar reported that the Graduate Studies Council (GSC) 2026-27 charges would be discussed later in the meeting.

Ex-Officio Teichert reported that Remzi Seker, Senior Vice President for Research and Innovation, attended the Faculty Senate Board Meeting and discussed WMU's movement towards Research 1 status. This is based on updates to the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education and research already being conducted at Western Michigan University (WMU), with a change anticipated in Spring 2028. Research directly relates to student success, with a focus on increasing opportunities at the undergraduate level.

Reports of University Representatives

Byrd-Jacobs provided the Graduate College report, which included a welcome social event held last weekend to build community, with more than 200 attendees. Online orientation was held for new Graduate Assistants and Research Assistants. The Graduate Writing Circle has also begun, with at least four students attending each session. Next week, the Graduate College will meet with Graduate Advisors to discuss upcoming changes, policies, and other important information. Graduate Advising Orientation for new Graduate Advisors covers key policies that will take effect in October. The deadline for the fall round of Research and Travel Grants is 6 October with the college offering session to support students with their applications.

DeChano-Cook did not provide the curriculum report.

Attanayake provided the College of Engineering Curriculum Committee report. It included the development of a report that includes a review of both undergraduate and graduate AI use and determines the best way to consolidate the information. The focus is not on creating new courses; rather, it is on how to integrate AI into existing courses. In relation it was noted that the Faculty Senate has a new Ad Hoc Academic Innovation and Foresight Committee that is looking for members. Additionally, there have been charges related to AI in almost all Faculty Senate councils and committees. The Office of Faculty Development has a learning community to support faculty in developing new courses with AI elements. A question was raised about whether the environmental sustainability impacts of AI use are being examined.

Jacabo Mejia provided updates from the Graduate Student Association. The first activities of the academic year included general assemblies, and GSA participated in the Graduate College welcome activities. The GSA has begun its award cycle for personal and Registered Student Organization (RSO) grants. The 3-minute thesis competition will be on 19 November. The Homecoming food drive will include a Canstruction event in Golds Valley on 10 October. The GSA will also be participating in the Sustainability Celebration and Basic Needs Fair.

Unfinished Business

Chair Harnar reviewed the Graduate Studies Council 2026-27 charges. The GSC will focus on charges #4 and #5 in the immediate future, with an emphasis on 5000 and 6000-level courses at the October GSC meeting. Members are asked to review 5000 and 6000-level courses across their respective colleges before the next meeting. It was recommended that USC take the lead in drafting the MOA related to the proposed changes in the grading scale.

Announcements

The library will host “Face Your Research Fears” on 30 October to help students develop basic research skills and to build community. The GSC members to disseminate details of the event to students. It was also announced that the WMU June commencement has been eliminated, and the spring commencement will be split between Friday and Saturday.

Adjournment

[***MOTION***] It was moved by DeChano-Cook, seconded by Zondag, to adjourn the meeting at 4:49 p.m. The motion carried unanimously. The Graduate Studies Council will next meet on 29 October 2026 via Webex at 3 p.m.

Approval

Submitted by Jennifer Fiore, Secretary
Minutes were approved on 29 October 2026.