GRADUATE STUDIES COUNCIL

Minutes of 29 October 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 October 2026 via Webex by Michael Harnar, chair.

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

Quorum

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

Agenda

[***MOTION***] It was moved by Teichert, seconded by Linn, to accept the agenda as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

Minutes

[***MOTION***] It was moved by Linn, seconded by Teichert, to accept the 24 September 2026 minutes as distributed. The motion carried unanimously.
Attanayake joined the meeting at 3:05 p.m.

Action Items

[***MOTION***] It was moved by Zondag, seconded by Teichert, to approve the following curriculum proposals as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

- Doctor of Philosophy in Applied Economics (AECD)
- Master of Arts in English: Teaching (ENTM)
- Master of Science in Nursing (NURM)

Reports of Officers

Chair Harnar reported that Graduate Studies Council (GSC) members will receive more information regarding Charge #2 on academic integrity. This charge is being addressed in collaboration with the Undergraduate Studies Council (USC) and the Academic Concerns Council; however, an awareness campaign is also needed. An email from the Ad Hoc Artificial Intelligence Committee indicated that a subcommittee has been established to further explore the charge and requested that the other committees involved in the shared charge appoint a representative to participate.

Ex Officio Teichert did not provide a report.

Reports of University Representatives

Byrd-Jacobs provided the Graduate College report. It included that the Graduate College Research & Travel Grants are in the process of being distributed. A total of 57 travel grants and 18 research grants were awarded, with approximately $30,000 more spent on awards than in the previous year. This was made possible by funds remaining from last year. Although there will be no June commencement ceremony, students may still graduate in June. Master's and Specialist graduates will be invited to participate in the April ceremony, while June doctoral graduates will be invited to participate in the hooding ceremony in December. To help accommodate the transition year, the spring dissertation completion deadline has been extended by three weeks. The revised dates are expected to be posted next week. Byrd-Jacobs reported that all 15 public institutions of the Michigan Association of State Universities met the previous week. Enrollment data indicated that 10 of the 15 institutions experienced enrollment declines. Discussions focused on the impacts of financial aid and international student

enrollment. The Michigan State University Graduate Dean reported that 25% of doctoral programs did not admit new students. The potential impact of a 90-credit bachelor's degree was discussed, particularly regarding how the change could affect students' eligibility and ability to enroll in graduate programs.

DeChano-Cook did not provide a curriculum report.

Fermin provided the Graduate Student Association (GSA) report. The GSA held a food drive earlier this month, with all donations benefiting Montgomery Essential Needs. The GSA hosted a Silent Disco at the Student Center as part of Family Weekend. The next General Assembly meeting will be held on 13 November at the Student Center.
GSA is seeking a new Chief Justice, who will begin in January 2027 and oversee the organization’s adherence to its governing rules. The Three-Minute Thesis (3MT) competition will be held on 19 November, and the submission deadline has been extended. GSA has allocated $10,000 toward certifications, conferences, data collection, and Registered Student Organization (RSO) funding. The second funding cycle closes tomorrow at midnight.

McDonnell joined the meeting at 3:33 p.m.

Unfinished Business

Chair Harnar reported on council charge #4 regarding non-resident tuition for Graduate Assistants (GAs). WMU’s policy was compared with those of 36 peer institutions, including Mid-American Conference (MAC) institutions and other Michigan public universities. The review examined when GAs are hired and whether out-of-state GAs are charged resident or non-resident tuition rates. The data indicated that 32 of the 36 institutions either charge resident tuition rates for all GAs or provide a funding pool to cover the difference. This issue can affect the hiring of out-of-state candidates, as faculty members may be hesitant to place out-of-state GAs on grants due to the higher tuition costs. At most institutions, stipends are paid through a central funding pool, while tuition is covered by the Graduate College. WMU differs from this model because both the stipend and tuition are paid by the hiring unit. WMU's residency policy is established

when a student applies to a graduate program and does not change thereafter. Other institutions allow students to change their residency status. Of the 627 GAs employed this semester, 250 are classified as residents, while the majority are out-of-state or international students. Fifty-seven GAs are grant-funded, while the remaining positions are supported through GA allocations. Approximately half of all GAs are doctoral students. As a next step, Chair Harnar will forward the GSC's thoughts and feedback to the Campus Planning and Finance Council.

Chair Harnar reported on council charge #5 regarding 5000/6000-level courses. Council members reviewed data, which indicated that many mixed 5000-level courses enroll more undergraduate students than graduate students. The data also revealed significant differences across departments in whether graduate students are assigned distinct coursework. The GSC will need to establish a clear definition of graduate education. Discussion was held regarding a cross-listing of 4000- and 6000-level courses; however, not all of the deans support this option. Members suggested developing several potential solutions and outlining the pros and cons of each for further consideration.

New Business

None.

Announcements

None

Adjournment

[***MOTION***] It was moved by Simon, seconded by Teichert, to adjourn the meeting at 4:54 p.m. The motion carried unanimously. The Graduate Studies Council will meet next on 19 November 2026, in the Walwood Hall **–** Bertha Davis Room **–** 111W at 3 p.m.

Approval

Submitted by Jennifer Fiore, Secretary

Minutes were approved on 19 November 2026.