

GRADUATE COUNCIL MINUTES
Thursday, March 12, 2026 – CMCT 241

PRESENT: Naheed Abdulrahim, Sharon Campbell, Ngan Chau, Bree Dority, Janet Graham, Mary Harner, Angela Hollman, Torsten Homberger, Christopher Strickland, Erin Sweeney, Frank Tenkorang, Doug Tillman, Laurinda Weisse, Melissa Wuellner, Emily Conrad, Mariana Paredes, Brenton Keese, Megan Adkins, and Linda Johnson

ABSENT: Whitney Schneider-Cline, Michelle Warren

I. Approval of the February 12, 2026, Amended Minutes – approved via email. Motion to approve the minutes by Graham/Wuellner.

II. Graduate Studies Report

Interim Dean:

A. HESA

Interim Dean Adkins reported that the HESA program will continue moving forward in the NU system for consideration of deletion. She noted that it has come to the attention of the administration that the MIAA and other entities may have a need for a degree similar to this program. Interim Dean Adkins also indicated that there has been discussion about revisiting the possibility of offering a higher education program in the future should there be sufficient interest and need.

B. Certificates

Discussion was held regarding the status of the certificates in the approval process. It was noted that the certificates have not yet left the campus level, as revisions are currently being completed. Once the revisions are finalized, the certificates will be forwarded to the Executive Graduate Council for a vote. The revisions are scheduled to be completed by March 30.

C. NU Foundation Fundraising

It was noted that Graduate Studies worked with the NU Foundation to designate the month of March as a fundraising month for graduate students. This effort is not intended to take away from programs that currently receive financial assistance. Rather, the focus is on identifying ways to support graduate students through scholarships and other forms of assistance.

D. Modality Definitions

It was noted that Graduate Studies and Academic Innovation are continuing to work through revisions to the definitions of online, hybrid, and blended course delivery. The revisions are currently being reviewed at the administrative level. No changes are expected to take effect until Fall 2027, as the revisions must move through multiple levels of review and approval. Once finalized, the updated definitions will be shared broadly.

Assistant Dean:

No report

Associate Dean Engagement and Retention:

Strickland reported that he has been exploring scholarship and grant funding opportunities for graduate students, with a focus on identifying options that could be applied more universally. He noted that several parameters are being considered, including eligibility requirements associated with certain grants and scholarships. For example, some funding opportunities require that graduate students do not hold outside employment, which are guidelines established by external entities rather than the institution. The goal is to gain a clearer understanding of these requirements and identify ways the institution can support graduate students in accessing available funding.

Strickland also reported on a project related to graduate assistant (GA) training and mentoring. He noted that he has met with learning designers to begin developing a training program for GAs and those who mentor them. The training is currently in development and will take time to complete, but progress is being made toward its implementation.

III. Committee Reports

A. Policy & Planning Committee –

The committee finalized the selection of the thesis awards, which will be publicly announced at Student Research Day on April 16.

The committee also reported that work is ongoing on the Graduate Faculty Status Policy, with continued consideration being given to revisions and policy details.

It was requested that the Appeal Policy be prepared and ready for review at the April meeting.

Interim Dean Adkins expressed appreciation to the Policy and Planning Committee for the significant time and effort devoted to reviewing the Graduate Faculty Status Policy. She noted that the committee has held meetings and engaged in discussions regarding expectations and the various levels associated with graduate faculty status. The group is working to move the process forward to ensure that faculty hires are prepared by the fall.

B. Academic Programs Committee –

Program Changes

Old Business:

For Graduate Council Action – motion to approve the revisions by Strickland/Tenkorang. Motion Carried

Program Name	Purpose	Recommendation
PE-MAE: Kinesiology and Sport Sciences, Master of Arts in Education	Since the Sport Management program is moving to CBT and creating their own master program, we must update our current master program to remove the Sport Administration option. We also plan to therefore create a health promotion emphasis in its place. Also note that the Core and Coaching & Sport Performance areas are being modified/updated.	Approve

Certificates -

For Graduate Council Action – motion to approve the new certificates by Wuellner/Graham. Motion carried.

Certificate Name	Purpose	Recommendation
World Language Teaching and Learning, Graduate Certificate	This graduate certificate provides relevant professional development to language instructors at all levels, allowing the SPAN MAE professional	Approve

	development course taught in English to serve all World Language teachers. The certificate also positions UNK to collaborate with UNO's graduate certificate in French to provide a French version of the SPAN MAE in the future.	
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New Business:

For Graduate Council Action – motion to approve by Graham/ Weisse – Motion Carried

Program Name	Nature of Request	Recommendation
ENGLISH-MA: English, Master of Arts	Want to add the proposed course, ENG 868: Topics in Shakespeare Studies, to the Literature focus and to Electives in the MA Program.	Approve
PEMSTR-MAE: Physical Education, Master of Arts in Education	Teacher Education Special Education program requested that we don't use TESE 867 and instead use TESE 880 in our program, so we are making that switch in the requirements of the Adapted Physical Education Emphasis. Also adding KSS 814 as an elective for the Pedagogy Emphasis.	Approve

For Graduate Council Action – motion to table this program for clarification by Wuellner/ Strickland – Motion Carried

Program Name	Nature of Request	Recommendation
SPED-MAE: Special Education, Master of Arts in Education	We are streamlining an Special Education post-baccalaureate educator certification option that leads to a Master's degree in Special Education. We are also clarifying/reordering our offerings to illustrate that concentrations can include a) initial educator certification/endorsements; b) additional certification/endorsements; or c) supplemental endorsements. Note that TE 883 is coming through workflow to remove TESE 881 as a prerequisite, resolving the hidden prereq issue.	Table for clarification

4 +1 Program - New

For Graduate Council Action – motion to approve the new certificates by Strickland/Chau. Motion carried.

Certificate Name	Purpose	Recommendation
Special Education 4+1	Creating an accelerated track for Special Ed undergrads for Special Ed master's generalist route.	Approve

Course Changes

For Graduate Council Information – the following courses have been approved, denied, or rolled back to the department by Committee II.

Old Business:

Course # & Name	Purpose	Recommendation
ENG 868: Topics in Shakespeare Studies	The Shakespeare courses we have offered as special topics courses have been very popular, so we want to create a course in Shakespeare Studies. This is a vast field in which students can explore a wide range of topics. Therefore, we want the course to be repeatable. Instructors will provide subtitles when offering this course so students can decide if the focus of the particular offering interests them. This structure parallels other courses we already have in our program, such as ENG 897A – Topics in Film Studies.	Approve

New Business:

Course # & Name	Purpose	Recommendation
BIOL 804: Evolution of Epidemics	This change is requested to make the course description more descriptive and better reflect the course content. From the Black Death to modern pandemics, plagues have repeatedly altered the course of human history, reshaping economics, ending wars, and redefining scientific understanding. This course examines the origins, evolution, and consequences of epidemic disease through a multidisciplinary lens integrating microbiology, history, and public health. Students investigate the pathogens behind	Approve with Minor Revisions

	major plagues, the evolutionary pressures that shape them, and how human activity such as urbanization, warfare, agriculture, and global travel drives disease emergence. By connecting past outbreaks to present challenges, students critically evaluate how epidemics arise, how they reshape civilizations, and the challenges involved in preventing future outbreaks.	
BIOL 811: Scientific Illustration	Making this course dormant. They do not plan to offer this course in the near future.	Approve
BIOL 820: Introduction to Graduate Study	Making this course dormant. This course is no longer required in the MS Biology program and they do not plan to offer it in the near future.	Approve
BIOL 832: Crane Ecology	Making this course dormant. They do not plan to offer this course in the near future.	Approve
BIOL 841: Virology	<p>This change is requested to make the course description more descriptive and better reflects the course content.</p> <p>This course explores the principles of modern virology, focusing on viral structure, replication strategies, and the processes by which viruses infect host cells and cause disease. Students examine the molecular and cellular mechanisms that drive viral pathogenesis and consider how viruses adapt in response to their hosts and environments. Emphasis is placed on understanding the dynamic interactions between viruses and host cells and the factors that influence viral emergence and spread. A solid background cell biology or biochemistry is recommended.</p>	Approve with Minor Revisions
BIOL 843: Cell Structure and Function	Removing course rotation from the catalog description to allow for flexibility when to offer the course.	Approve
BIOL 853: Genome Evolution	Making this course dormant. They do not plan to offer this course in the near future.	Approve

BIOL 854: Biological Application of GIS	Making this course dormant. They do not plan to offer this course in the near future.	Approve
BIOL 864: Genetics in Popular Culture	Making this course dormant. They do not plan to offer this course in the near future.	Approve
BIOL 869: Conversation of Birds and Mammals	Making this course dormant. They do not plan to offer this course in the near future.	Approve
BIOL 877: Writing in the Sciences	Making this course dormant. They do not plan to offer this course in the near future.	Approve
BIOL 886: Sexual Selection	Making this course dormant. They do not plan to offer this course in the near future.	Approve
IPD 803P: Design Studio IV	To create a seamless graduate education pathway for IPD students via the MBA 4+1 program (revisions in the works).	Approve with Minor Revisions
IPD 805P: Design Research Methods	To create a seamless graduate education pathway for IPD students via the MBA 4+1 program (revisions in the works).	Approve with Minor Revisions
IPD 807P: Design Senior Project	To create a seamless graduate education pathway for IPD students via the MBA 4+1 program (revisions in the works).	Approve with Minor Revisions
IPD 846P: Professional Practice for Design	To create a seamless graduate education pathway for IPD students via the MBA 4+1 program (revisions in the works).	Approve
MODL 875: Graduate Study Abroad	This MODL study abroad course will allow graduate students to earn credits for language and cultural immersion in languages other than Spanish - it will be an elective in a new graduate certificate in World Language Teaching and Learning	Approve
TESE 883: Intervention Strategies for Individuals with Behavioral & Emotional Disabilities	Removing the TESE 881 prerequisite (to resolve a hidden prerequisite issue in the SPED MAE program) and making a slight clarifying edit to the description.	Approve with Minor Revisions

C. Faculty & Student Affairs Committee –
No Report

IV. Other Business

Catalog Deadline – A reminder was provided that the final deadline to submit program and course changes in Courseleaf is Thursday, March 26 in order for items to be considered at the April 9th Graduate Council Meeting. Changes not submitted by the March 26 deadline will need to wait until the following year and will not be included in the upcoming Graduate Catalog.

V. Announcements

Graduate Council elections are underway. The deadline will be 5:00 PM on Monday, March 23. Final ballots will be sent out March 30 and are due back by Friday, April 3.

Student Research Day will take place on Thursday, April 16. Faculty and staff are encouraged to volunteer as judges to support and evaluate student presentations.

The committee was informed that nominations for the Reichenbach Scholarship are due by April 10, 2026. Each department may nominate one new graduate student and one returning graduate student by submitting the application form. The form has been distributed via email to the Graduate Program Committee (GPC), department chairs, and deans.

A motion to adjournment was completed: Motion Sweeney/ Homberger.

Respectfully submitted,
Heather Rhinehart