

GRADUATE COUNCIL MINUTES
Thursday, September 10, 2026 – CMCT 241

PRESENT: Naheed Abdulrahim, Sharon Campbell, Ngan Chau, Bree Dority, Janet Graham, Jessica Hample, Angela Hollman, Philip Lai, Bryton Neck, Whitney Schneider-Cline, Christopher Strickland, Yipeng Sui, Erin Sweeney, Laurinda Weisse, Brenton Keese, Megan Goeke, Linda Johnson and Megan Adkins

ABSENT: Melissa Wuellner, Grace Fuchser

I. Approval of the August 20, 2026, Amended Minutes – approved via email.

II. Graduate Studies Report

A. *GPC Compensation F27-28*

Discussion was held regarding revisions to the GPC Compensation Plan for the 2027–2028 academic year. Christopher Strickland, ADER for Graduate Studies and Academic Innovation, will lead efforts to review and update the plan.

The Council discussed the proposed faculty workload document currently under review by Faculty Senate and the Union. The document addresses faculty workload allocations related to teaching, service, and scholarship. It was noted that revisions to the GPC Compensation Plan may allow GPC responsibilities to be recognized as part of a faculty member's service workload, particularly given the current lack of funding available for direct GPC compensation.

The goal is to finalize the revised GPC Compensation Plan by Summer 2027 so that it may be implemented concurrently with the new faculty workload document.

B. *Graduate Recruitment, Enrollment, Retention*

Discussion was held regarding graduate recruitment, enrollment, and retention efforts. Tiffany Stoiber oversees marketing efforts for Graduate Studies and Academic Innovation (GSAI) and serves as the liaison between GSAI and University Communications and Marketing. Her role helps ensure that graduate programs are included in university-wide marketing discussions and that efforts are coordinated across campus.

Dean Adkins shared information regarding a report provided to the Senior Vice Chancellor outlining GSAI's recruitment efforts and return on investment. Discussion included the importance of continuing graduate recruitment activities, including recruitment events conducted by online advisors. It is important the graduate programs to receive appropriate consideration in university marketing, recruitment, and admissions efforts and emphasized the importance of consistent communication and coordination between graduate and undergraduate recruitment initiatives.

The recruitment report was shared with the Council for review. Enrollment information was shared with the council and discussion was had.

C. *Clifton Strengths – Graduate Advisors/Graduate Assistants*

Discussion was held regarding the implementation of CliftonStrengths for graduate students. The goal of CliftonStrengths is to help students recognize and intentionally apply their natural patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving to support both professional and personal growth.

It was noted that CliftonStrengths is being implemented differently for graduate students than for undergraduate students. Participation is voluntary for graduate students, and no fee is assessed to the students. Graduate students complete an assessment designed to support individuals who may already be established in their careers and are seeking continued professional development.

Graduate programs may choose to incorporate CliftonStrengths into their curriculum. GSAI currently has three CliftonStrengths coaches: Megan Goeke, Ashley Zikmund, and Jamila Bajalean. A few programs have begun incorporating these strengths including CDIS in Practicum I and TE 803 with Christine Fisher, who is a CliftonStrengths Certified Coach.

GSAI provides coaching and support to instructors implementing CliftonStrengths to assist them with effectively integrating CliftonStrengths into their courses. Funding for the graduate CliftonStrengths initiative is provided by GSAI. No additional fee has been added for graduate students to pay for CliftonStrengths. This is a pilot program so if there are ideas or better ways to implement, please reach out. Another group that has an opportunity for this is the GA's and the GA's mentors. There are two events scheduled.

D. *Graduate Assistant and Graduate Student Association*

Dean Adkins proposed revising the Graduate Assistant (GA) allocation process. She would like the Graduate Council to be involved in providing recommendations again this year, like last fall. The College Deans have also asked to be part of this process and decisions to ensure the GA is allocated to a program/area in greatest need. The SVCAA has prioritized teaching assistants as the top priority to continue to expand course offerings. Dean Adkins created a draft of new revisions that we would like the council to review and provide feedback on by September 24. This action item was later retracted after further discussion.

Members of the Faculty and Student Success Committee expressed that they did not want to serve as the lead group in recommending GA allocations. They felt uncomfortable making this decision, and felt that some of the time spent reviewing certain GA positions was wasted, since those submissions were not under consideration due to a variety of factors. The committee discussed alternative approaches to completing the allocation process, and the council requested that Dean Adkins determine the number of GAs allocated by area or college, consult with the college deans to evaluate the best placement locations, and then have the Graduate Council review the submitted proposals from that specific area/program to provide a recommendation on placement. Dean Adkins suggested bringing the GPCs into the GA discussion, and council members agreed to this. The GPC's could have an opportunity to have a voice in the decision-making process.

Dean Adkins brought up for discussion whether GA positions should be able to start in the spring or remain limited to fall starts, as has been the practice in the past. No recommendation was made by the council. She also raised concerns about ensuring GAs meet the required 20 hours per week, as a few positions this past year did not consistently meet that requirement. Additionally, Dean Adkins brought up the potential benefits of expanding GA opportunities to include online or HyFlex positions. The council determined that Online/HyFlex positions will be an option starting next year, with expanded duties explained in the GA request submission form for all groups putting forward a proposal.

Dean Adkins shared if anyone on the council has any other suggestions to please reach out.

E. *Graduation - Summer*

Dean Adkins shared UNK upper administration has decided to eliminate summer graduation ceremonies, explaining that while degrees will still be conferred and students can start work in August with their degrees, the celebration component has been removed. Administration is still deciding whether to allow graduates to walk in both spring and winter ceremonies. The Graduate hooding procedures have been reinstated for the fall and spring graduation ceremonies, after initial plans to remove them were shared.

III. Committee Reports

A. Policy & Planning Committee – no report
Committee I decided on a chair for the committee

B. Academic Programs Committee -

Program Changes

New Business:

For Graduate Council Action – motion to approve this new program by Sweeney/Dority. Motion carried.

Program Name	Purpose	Recommendation
BIOLOGY-MS : Biology, Master of Science	Proposed program changes would incorporate new three-course series and remove BIOL 880 as a single course.	Approve

For Graduate Council Action – motion to approve with minor changes for these two programs by Sweeney/Campbell. Motion carried.

Program Name	Purpose	Recommendation
SCELEM-MSE: School Counseling – Elementary (PK-8), Master of Science in Education	Reducing the number of credits from 43 to 36 which matches with NDE requirements. Changed the credit hours for CSP 893 – Internship I from 2 credits to 3 credits, which will serve as the primary internship course in the program.	Approve with Minor Changes
SCSEC-MSE: School Counseling – Secondary (7-12), Master of Science in Education	Reducing the number of credits from 43 to 36 which matches with NDE requirements. Changed the credit hours for CSP 893 – Internship I, which will serve as the primary internship course in the program.	Approve with Minor Changes

Course Changes

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

New Business:

Course # & Name	Purpose	Recommendation
CSP 893: Internship in School Counseling I	The course is being updated to meet the Nebraska Department of Education requirements for an internship experience, while aligning the program course credits	Approve

	to match the 36 credits required by NDE in both School Counseling - Secondary (7-12), Master of Science in Education and School Counseling - Elementary (PK-8), Master of Science in Education.	
TESE 879P: Understanding and Supporting Neurodiversity in the Classroom	The revised course broadens its focus from autism-specific content to a neurodiversity framework, which incorporates current research and emerging practices in special education. This expanded scope enables teacher candidates to understand and support a wider range of neurodevelopmental differences, such as autism, ADHD, dyslexia, and related learning profiles. The modification aligns the course more closely with inclusive education practices and equips future educators to support diverse learners in contemporary classrooms.	Approve
BIOL 849: Advanced Biological Statistics	This course is being redesigned to ensure students cover a core of advanced biostatistical methods but also allows graduate students flexibility to gain proficiency with other or more complex methods applicable to their field of study that were not part of the previously prescribed list in the catalog description and course objectives.	Approve
BIOL 880A: Seminar in Graduate Studies: Proposal	BIOL880 is a 1-credit course that students take three different semesters. Expectations have always differed for students between their first, second, and third times taking the course. We want to formalize the different expectations by designating the course as a series (BIOL880A, BIOL880B, and BIOL880C), similar to the current BIOL831A-F series. We feel this will make expectations clearer and provided more flexibility in when each is offered/taken that will benefit both students and faculty.	Approve
BIOL 880B: Seminar in Graduate Studies: Professionalism	BIOL880 is a 1-credit course that students take three different semesters. Expectations have always differed for students between their first, second, and	Approve

	third times taking the course. We want to formalize the different expectations by designating the course as a series (BIOL880A, BIOL880B, and BIOL880C), similar to the current BIOL831A-F series. We feel this will make expectations clearer and provided more flexibility in when each is offered/taken that will benefit both students and faculty.	
BIOL 880C: Seminar in Graduate Studies: Defense	BIOL880 is a 1-credit course that students take three different semesters. Expectations have always differed for students between their first, second, and third times taking the course. We want to formalize the different expectations by designating the course as a series (BIOL880A, BIOL880B, and BIOL880C), similar to the current BIOL831A-F series. We feel this will make expectations clearer and provided more flexibility in when each is offered/taken that will benefit both students and faculty.	Approve

C. Faculty & Student Affairs Committee –no report

IV. Other Business

- A. Dean Adkins shared that Graduate Studies has been asked to designate a representative to serve on Faculty Senate. It was suggested that current faculty who also serve on the Graduate Council could fill this role in a dual capacity. Dean Adkins will follow up to determine whether a Graduate Council member who already serves on Faculty Senate could fill this role, or whether a separate representative will be needed.
- B. Graduate Council – College level – CBT has moved to a committee that would benefit the college committee. In the past this was MBA GPC Committee but, because there are other programs, it was changed to College level. Nothing will change here.
- C. Graduate Student Yearly Evaluation. – Tiffany Stoiber will be working on a Graduate Student Yearly Evaluation as well as graduate program evaluations. More details will be coming on this.
- D. Executive Graduate Council Update (Sports Management) - Dean Adkins provided an update on the Sport Management New Master's program, which completed an external review with positive feedback and minor required changes being addressed by Rachel Silverman and Heather Meyer. The program needs to be resubmitted to the NU system soon to align with the catalog update timeline, with potential approval requiring up to 90 days and final catalog submission due in October for fall 2027 implementation.

Council members asked about the impact and timeline for the current KSS graduate program, given that Sport Management is going through changes, and whether they should still be submitting their revisions. Dean Adkins confirmed that yes, to meet the catalog deadline, the program changes need to be submitted by the next meeting. The changes can be pulled before the new catalog deadline if the Sport Management proposal is not fully approved by then.

Notification to the Graduate Council: Teacher Education is requesting a new subplan listed under Initial Certification for TCP students: Spanish K-12. (It does not need to be created under the endorsement subplan.)

A motion to adjournment was completed: Motion Hollman/Strickland

Respectfully submitted,
Heather Rhinehart