GRADUATE COUNCIL MINUTES

Thursday, October 8, 2026 – CMCT 241

PRESENT: Naheed Abdulrahim, Sharon Campbell, Ngan Chau, Jonathan Dettman, Bree Dority, Janet Graham, Jessica Hample, Philip Lai, Bryton Neck, Yipeng Sui, Erin Sweeney, Laurinda Weisse, Linda Van Ingen, Grace Fuchser, Brenton Keesee, Megan Goeke, Linda Johnson and Megan Adkins

ABSENT: Angela Hollman, Christopher Strickland, Narindra Ranaivo,

ZOOM: Whitney Schneider-Cline

I. Approval of the September 10, 2026, Amended Minutes – approved via email.

II. Graduate Studies Report

A. *New Program and Certificate Updates*
Discussion was held regarding new programs and certificates included on the agenda for the Board of Regents meeting held in Kearney. The proposal for Kinesiology and Sport Sciences would eliminate the Sport Management emphasis and establish a standalone Master's degree in Sport Management housed within the College of Business and Technology.

B. *Collaboration with NU Campus Graduate/Online*
Adkins shared about a meeting she had with all NU Graduate deans. One topic was barriers to intercampus collaborations. Discussion was held regarding collaboration among the University of Nebraska campuses and the barriers that may impact inter-campus collaboration. These challenges are not limited to graduate programs but affect various areas across the University system. A draft document outlining potential barriers was shared with the Council.

Dean Adkins asked Council members to review the document and provide feedback on any challenges or issues they have experienced with inter-campus collaboration within their programs. Some of the barriers identified include differences in tuition rates, fees, and other policies and procedures across campuses.

Dean Adkins encouraged Council members to discuss these challenges with their Graduate Program Chairs (GPCs) and department chairs and provide detailed feedback in the draft document by the end of October. The more detailed the information provided, the more beneficial the document will be in identifying and addressing these barriers. The completed document will be forwarded to the University of Nebraska system at the beginning of November.

C. *Differential tuition*
Discussion was held regarding tuition rates for various graduate programs on campus, including differences in tuition rates and the reasons for those differences. The Senior Vice Chancellor has been meeting with Deans to discuss opportunities for programs to consider differentiated tuition rates that better align with market demand while highlighting the value and benefits of pursuing a graduate degree at UNK.

Information was shared with the Council to take back to their Graduate Program Chairs (GPCs) and department chairs for further discussion regarding what would best meet the needs of their programs and students. Any proposed tuition changes must be submitted by January 2027. The process requires time and careful consideration to ensure that tuition rates meet student needs while also addressing the necessary financial and administrative requirements.

Council members were encouraged to discuss these opportunities with their GPCs and department chairs and include this topic on their November meeting agendas.

Modality definitions - Discussion was held regarding course modality definitions, and a list of the different modalities available to students was shared with the Council. These definitions are intended to help students better understand the format and delivery method of the courses in which they are enrolling. Currently, fully in-person and fully online courses are the most familiar modalities. Blended courses are another option, with a requirement that 75% of the coursework be delivered asynchronously. However, the existing definitions do not adequately represent all courses being offered. New definitions are being developed to include hybrid course options and better reflect the various instructional formats available to students. Faculty Senate is to be looking at these definitions and making recommendations.

D. *Graduate Hooder & Student Gonfalonier*

Dean Adkins asked Council members to work with their respective deans, department chairs, and Graduate Program Chairs (GPCs) to identify a faculty member from their college to serve as a Graduate Hooder for winter commencement. Nominees must hold Graduate Faculty status but may be selected from any department within the college. Each college is asked to nominate one individual, and the Graduate Studies office will identify an additional individual to serve in this role. Dean Adkins shared the council members should talk to Heather to be provided past hooders from their college to help identify potential new representatives. Nominations should be submitted to Heather by November 1.

Council members were asked to work with their deans, department chairs, and Graduate Program Chairs (GPCs) to identify graduating students who would be interested in and available to serve as Student Gonfaloniers during winter commencement. Nominations should be submitted to Heather by November 1.

Graduation - Summer

Dean Adkins reminded the Council that summer commencement will no longer be held at UNK. Graduate students were notified of this decision through the Graduate Studies newsletter. A hand full of students have reached out to express their disappointment and concerns regarding this change. The decision to discontinue summer commencement was made by the Chancellor's leadership team.

Communication regarding this decision has been distributed to students. Council members were informed that if students express concerns or request additional information, the University Communications and Marketing team, under the direction of Todd Gottula, along with the Chancellor's leadership team, has developed information explaining the rationale behind the decision in which can be shared. This information is available to assist faculty and staff but Dean Adkins encouraged the council to share with their colleagues they should prepare personalized responses to students who have questions or concerns to ensure the student recognizes our commitment and understanding.

E. *UNK Advance - microcredentials*

Megan Goeke shared with the Council that the official launch date for any student, undergraduate or graduate taking an online course, to have access to a suite of UNK Advance microcredentialing courses is October 21, 2026. It was emphasized that UNK Advance is not intended to replace any for-credit courses or required program coursework but rather to provide complementary educational opportunities for students. These microcredentials could be utilized as assignments in courses, or taken independently by a student. Upon successful completion of designated courses, students may earn verified micro-credential badge that can be added to their LinkedIn profiles and resumes to showcase their skills and accomplishments.

Megan also shared that the platform offers opportunities for students in education programs who are required to complete a human relations course, along with general education and career development opportunities, including job search resources. Each course will clearly identify the estimated time required for completion, allowing students to select opportunities that best fit their schedules. All courses are offered fully online and asynchronously, giving students the flexibility to start, stop, and complete coursework at their own pace. These opportunities are available to both undergraduate and graduate students, including those enrolled in online programs.

III. Committee Reports

A. Policy & Planning Committee – no report

B. Academic Programs Committee -

Program Changes

New Business:
For Graduate Council Action – motion to approve this new program by Sweeney/Graham. Motion carried.

Program Name	**Purpose**	**Recommendation**
PE-MAE: Kinesiology and Sport Sciences, Master of Arts in Education	Update to program as result of Sport Management program moving to CBT.	Approve

For Graduate Council Action – motion to approve by Campbell/Dority. Motion carried.

Program Name	**Purpose**	**Recommendation**
SPPATH-MSE: Speech/Language Pathology, Master of Science in Education	Adding a recurring footnote to clarify expectations on a specified series of courses: Students pursuing the Speech/Language Pathology MSE will be required to earn a grade of B or better in order to earn credit towards their program.	Approve
Supplemental Endorsement in Computer Science, Graduate	New program proposal. This program is being developed to meet the needs of Nebraska high school teachers seeking certification to teach computer science.	Approve
Supplemental Endorsement in Information Technology, Graduate	The IT Supplemental Endorsement already exists in the graduate catalog, but it is hidden on the bottom of the Learning, Design, and Tech MS degree. Since this supplemental endorsement can be done alongside of multiple MS degrees, we are putting it forward for the regular catalog list.	Approve

4+1 Program

New Business:
For Graduate Council Action – motion to approve by Dority/Chau. Motion carried.

Program Name	Purpose	Recommendation
Masters in Business Administration (MBA)	New 4+1 Program	Approve

Certificates

New Business:
For Graduate Council Action – motion to approve by Dettman/Dority. Motion carried.

Certificate Name	Purpose	Recommendation
Graduate Certificate in Clinical Mental Health Counseling	The Graduate Certificate in Clinical Mental Health Counseling provides advanced training for school psychologists seeking to strengthen their understanding and support of mental health to align with current educational and community needs and expectations. The program is designed to develop school psychologists into effective mental health counselors.	Approve
Leadership in Rural Health Graduate Certificate	The purpose of the proposed Leadership in Rural Health Graduate Certificate is to provide professionals and graduate students with foundational education in health care business, management, and leadership.	Approve

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
CYBR 815P: Healthcare Informatics & Technology	New course proposal.	Approve
ECON 810P: Health Economics	Updating the course title with the terminology most commonly used in the economics discipline.	Approve

CDIS 861: Practicum in Speech/Language Pathology	Updating course description to more accurately explain grading for this course.	Approve
CDIS 862: Practicum in Speech/Language Pathology	Updating course description to more accurately explain grading for this course.	Approve
CDIS 863: Practicum in Speech/Language Pathology	Updating course description to more accurately explain grading for this course.	Approve
CDIS 864: Practicum in Speech/Language Pathology	Updating course description to more accurately explain grading for this course.	Approve
CDIS 892: Internship (Pediatric)	Updating course description to more accurately explain grading for this course.	Approve
CDIS 893: Internship (Schools for NE Teacher Certification)	Updating course description to more accurately explain grading for this course.	Approve
CDIS 894: Internship (Clinical)	Updating course description to more accurately explain grading for this course.	Approve
CDIS 897: Internship (Schools out-of-state)	Update course description to clearly reflect grading practices for this course.	Approve
CSP 892: Internship in Clinical Mental Health Counseling	Update to prerequisites and course description. Minor syllabus revisions needed.	Approve with minor revisions
ENG 853A: Literature of American Realism	Update to catalog description, learning objectives.	Approve

C. Faculty & Student Affairs Committee – The Committee had a Graduate Faculty Nomination to approve for the Criminal Justice department.

IV. Other Business

A. Graduate Faculty Status

Dean Adkins shared with the Council that the Graduate Faculty Associate designation has not been widely utilized on campus. Dean Adkins is currently working with the Senior Vice Chancellor to explore the definition and potential use of this designation. This designation could apply to adjunct or faculty members who hold a Ph.D. and have professional experience in their respective fields. Establishing this designation could help streamline the approval process and reduce the amount of paperwork required. Discussions are ongoing, and additional work is needed to further define and establish the designation.

B. Graduate processes and efficiency.

The Graduate Studies Office continues to work toward digitizing graduate processes and improving efficiencies. Efforts are underway to transition paper-based forms and approval processes to DocuSign to streamline workflows, reduce paperwork, and improve overall efficiency.

The Office of Graduate Studies and Academic Innovation has been notified that they will be relocating to West Center. The relocation will be a gradual process, as some construction and renovations will need to be completed before the move can take place.

C. Graduate Admissions

Linda Johnson shared updates with the Council regarding Graduate Admissions. Effective September 8, 2026, all new graduate applications from Iran must be reviewed by the Export Control Office within Central Administration. Graduate Admissions is working with CollegeNET, the university's application software provider, to address the application fee process. Currently, applicants are required to pay an application fee when submitting an application; however, the university is not permitted to collect application fees from applicants in Iran. Work is underway with CollegeNET to address this issue. Linda noted that this change is expected to have minimal impact on Graduate Admissions, as the number of applicants from Iran is relatively small.

Linda also discussed concerns regarding fraudulent graduate applications. Several fraudulent applications have been identified, including one during the current term that progressed through the admission process and received approval from the academic department. The application was returned to Graduate Admissions, where concerns were identified. The IT Department has developed a method to help verify applicants by identifying how and where individuals are authenticating their accounts. In this particular case, the applicant indicated they were residing in Colorado; however, the account was being authenticated from Kenya. Graduate Admissions was able to contact the Financial Aid Office before financial aid was disbursed to the individual, which had been scheduled for that same day.

Linda shared that additional protocols and verification procedures have been implemented to help identify fraudulent applications and protect the integrity of the admissions process. These procedures involve several manual verification steps to help ensure that applicants are legitimate students before moving forward in the admission process.

D. Graduate Assistant Allocation

Dean Adkins shared a document with the Council outlining the Graduate Assistant (GA) allocations for 2027–2029. Dean Adkins worked collaboratively with the college deans and Senior Vice Chancellor to review several factors when determining allocation decisions. These factors included graduate program enrollment, overall program size, the number of GA positions reduced in the previous year, the number of GAs returning for a second year, and faculty capacity and the need for GA support. An additional nine GA positions were eliminated this year. Notification of the GA allocations would be completed within the next week.

E. Graduate Program Chair Compensation

A draft of the Graduate Program Chair (GPC) compensation plan was shared with the Council for the 2026–2027 academic year. As part of the proposed plan, GPCs would be required to complete Universal Design for Learning (UDL) training. Those who have previously completed any training would not be required to complete it again. The proposed compensation plan will be presented to the SVCAA within the next few weeks with the hope of implementation beginning January, 2027.

F. Access Alliance

Dean Adkins shared a short document with the Council providing an overview of the Access Alliance grant, which is being led by Maha Younes. The document highlighted the work completed to date and the various groups involved in the project. Although the grant does not directly fund graduate programs or graduate-related activities, it provides an opportunity for Graduate Studies to remain involved and have a voice in the discussions and initiatives taking place. The document was shared for informational purposes to keep Council members informed of the ongoing work and collaboration among the different groups participating in the project.

Action Items-Due Nov 1

- Each college Graduate Council members needs to nominate a Hooder for winter commencement
- Each college Graduate Council members needs to nominate a student gonfalonier

A motion to adjournment was completed by Schneider-Cline

Respectfully submitted,
Heather Rhinehart