

GRADUATE SCHOOL EFFORTS 2019-2020

(5/4/2020)

The Graduate School went through a temporary leadership change. On November 4, 2019, Marnie Saunders was appointed Acting Dean. Brief highlights for the year, are provided below.

- I. **COVID-19 Response:** Much of this Spring has been focused on monitoring and responding to the COVID-19 situation. As of this writing, the following decisions have been made:

English proficiency for meeting admissions requirements: Allowing Duolingo (DET) to be used for demonstrating English proficiency for graduate admissions. We are requiring a previously UA utilized score of 115.

Committee signatures during social distancing: Allowing an email written by the faculty chair of the student's committee noting completion of the proposal/defense/signature page in lieu of obtaining committee signatures.

Extended graduation deadlines: Extending graduation deadlines to assist graduate students with Spring graduation.

Spring Graduation 2020:

5/1/2020 (from 4/1/2020) – last day to apply for graduation

5/29/2020 at 5pm (from 4/17/2020) – last day to upload thesis/dissertation to OhioLink

(Currently discussing options with the Registrar to extend Summer deadlines)

Support of Pass/Fail Credit/Non-credit grading: We will support the decisions of the programs with the content expertise.

Graduate assistant communications: We have sent multiple emails to students to inform them of our intent to continue to honor the TA stipends and all GA remission that has been committed this semester (Spring 2020). We have informed students that they need to report to their supervisor (eg research advisor, undergrad course instructor) for assignment and that the TAs need to help their course instructor in any way they can as instruction transitions to online delivery. We have sent messages in an attempt to encourage and support all current graduate students.

Graduate student recruitment and 2/5 year timeframes: The Colleges utilizing TAs can (for fall 2020) make the decision to either support continuing students beyond the 2/5 year timeframe or new students.

Note: Eligible PhD students must use the [Full-Time Enrollment Exception Request Form](#), and eligible international PhD students must additionally complete the [Request to Be Considered Full Time With Less than 9 Credit Hours Form](#).

Graduate assistant contract deadlines extended: We have extended our Fall 2020 contract deadlines as follows: 8/7/2020 (from 5/31/2020) – last day to submit Fall 2020 GA contracts requesting stipend and/or tuition support from the Graduate School for Fall 2020 – IC recommends holding to 5/31 for Internationals.

We continue to monitor the situation and are working closely with the Provost and Chancellor's Council on Graduate Studies (CCGS) graduate school deans to make timely and supportive decisions.

Sesquicentennial update:

The Graduate School was to be showcased in April as part of the Sesquicentennial. Given the COVID-19 situation, all events were cancelled. There is the potential to reschedule some of them for later this fall. An ABJ ad went out and our waiving of the app fee for the week of 4/6 resulted in 115 applications, 61 of them from UA.

II. Graduate Council Updates:

Accelerating Degrees: The Accelerated Degree Pathway was further detailed this year. The pathway and documents were developed with the support and input of Graduate Council. In addition, the Registrar, Bursar and Financial Aid Offices were consulted to ensure the pathway enables tracking and appropriate tuition rates and financial aid to be applied. In April, the BOT approved the pathway and the Provost approved a 5-yr trial for eight, dean-recommended programs; yearly reviews will be conducted to determine the financial implications. Programs in the trial include: Civil and Mechanical Engineering; Computer Science; Mathematics; Statistics, Speech Language Pathology/Audiology; Accounting; and, MTax.

Curriculum Committee

The curriculum committee continues to move proposals through the system. As of 4/20, 75 curriculum proposals have been approved by this committee.

Membership Committee

The membership committee continues to review graduate faculty credentials. As of 4/20, 62 graduate faculty memberships have been approved by this committee.

Student Policies Committee

Graduate Student Leave Guidelines: With the support of Graduate Council and its Student Policies Committee, we worked to develop guidelines for graduate student leave. The document outlines practical guidelines for supporting students taking an academic leave. Additionally, the implications for graduate assistants are addressed. The guideline will be placed in the graduate assistant handbook and posted to the website.

III. Recruitment Update:

- Advertisement focusing on graduate education in Akron Beacon Journal 3/29/2020
- Waived application fee for week of 4/6-4/10 – 114 applicants took advantage of it; students informed 3/31 and 4/7 via Zipmail; website updated; included in ABJ advertisement
- Contacting grad students in good academic standing not currently enrolled
- Working with Career Service to participate in the regional, fall grad school fair-a-van
- Started a recruitment focus group for self-pay programs – planning a fall visit day around data science and computer degree (undergrad and grad) offerings
- Contacted via phone about 60 local, admitted applicants summer/fall 2020 to extend a welcome and encourage them to attend UA – we will continue this effort when the time is appropriate
- Website overhaul is in final stages – we will go online as soon as possible
 - With help of Grad Council, many student names were sent to University Communications and Marketing for showcasing during the month of April (various forms of social media)

IV. New Initiatives:

President's Strategic Awards: With the support of the Provost and Graduate Council, we implemented these awards. The awards are used to recruit new graduate students into self-pay programs. The awards provide 6 hours of tuition remission for the fall and spring semester of year 1. The students are selected based upon their ability to contribute in ways that align with the strategic working groups focus, as well as, recruitment, retention and enrollment. Currently 9 awards are anticipated that will support areas related to Mental Health, Marketing, Communications (Social Media), Career Services and Diversity.

Signage: Signage was added to the Graduate School door and entranceway walls.

Respectfully submitted,

Marnie M Saunders, PhD