



# Graduate Council Meeting Minutes

September 12, 2019

2:00 - 3:30 pm

Madison Union 404

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## I. Graduate School Survey

John Burgess provided the Graduate Council members a Graduate Education Program Survey. Mr. Burgess gave Graduate Council members an opportunity to complete the form and requested that committee members submit completed forms to Carla Breeden at the end of the meeting. It was decided that Carla Breeden will email the form to the Graduate Council members so that absentee members can provide information and those present additional time for form completion.

## II. Introductions

John Burgess introduced new Graduate School staff members, Mr. Boris Escalona Berbetty, Director of Graduate Student Financial Services and Ms. Karris Atkins, Finance and Data Manager. Mr. Burgess shared that Ms. Laura Ryman will serve as the Interim Assistant Dean for Student Services. Ms. Ryman will also be responsible for the oversight of the Graduate Faculty Approvals process.

## III. Approval of Graduate Council Meeting Minutes

Upon motion by Karen Ford, seconded by Julie Wallace-Carr, the April 4 Graduate Council meeting minutes and May 10 Graduate Retreat minutes were unanimously approved.

## IV. Introduction and Ratification of Executive Committee Members

Upon motion by Roshna Wunderlich, seconded by Brooks Hefner, it was decided by unanimous vote that the ratification of the Executive Committee will be conducted via e-Vote, prior to the October 10 Program Director Assembly meeting.

## V. State of Graduate Education at JMU

John Burgess stated the graduate education has seen a lot of traction over the summer and that an affirmation statement was unanimously approved by the Deans. Mr. Burgess reported that Academic Council would like to have a Strategic Plan for graduate education by the end of the Fall 2019 semester. He also indicated that the Graduate School seeks to be an advocate and requested that graduate council members contact him meet for in-person meetings or send him an email with topics that they would like to have represented at the Academic Council. Mr. Burgess stated that the October 10 Program Director assembly will focus on Marketing to increase enrollment. Mr. Burgess shared that he had met with Tim Miller where food insecurities were discussed and the yield from this meeting is that a graduate student meal plan is under discussion. Mr. Burgess also indicated that talks for graduate student housing are progressing with prices and unit sizes being discussed based off of the Political Science model in D.C.



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## VI. THRIVE:

John Burgess stated that with support from David Owusu-Ansah's office that a multi-faceted program, THRIVE, was created for graduate students, led by two doctoral students in the Counseling and Psychology Program, Ms. Briana Gaines and Ms. Brittany Williams. Mr. Burgess shared that THRIVE focuses on issues that are not solely academic related such as graduate students experiencing cultural isolation in their programs. Mr. Burgess introduced Ms. Briana Gaines. Brian Gaines shared that their office in Madison Hall is a tangible and real place where graduate students can come and be who they are. Ms. Gaines reiterated that this is important if you are the only person of color in the room. Ms. Gaines reported that to date that the new program had 20 graduate students from various graduate programs. Ms. Gaines stated that mentorship would be a key component of the new program and is what graduate students are seeking. Another important item for graduate students is creating an inclusive environment in the classroom, creating a safe space at the beginning of class. Ms. Gaines reported to date that six affinity groups had been created and asked the Graduate Council members to support THRIVE by promoting this in their colleges and classroom.

## VII. GSA Report

John Burgess reported that the GSA had their first meeting on September 2 with other 30 graduate students in attendance and that. Mr. Burgess also stated the GSA hosted a successful tailgate party at the first home football game on September 7.

## VIII. Discussion Items

1. A significant initiative for the Graduate School this academic year is the revision and consolidation of the graduate policies into a single document reflected in the Graduate Catalog. The Executive Committee will be working with TGS to shape the revised policies document for ratification by the Graduate Council. Elements of the policies will be worked on it phases over the course of the Fall and early Spring semester towards the goal of an approved document by the academic year.

2. International Admissions and 3-year Degrees

Dr. Michael Stoloff stated that to facilitate admissions applications from international students, applicants who completed prior degrees from international institutions may submit unofficial documentation of prior coursework in English with their initial application. Students are being encouraged, but not required, to submit formal credential evaluations with their initial application. Programs can request formal credential evaluations if they feel they are needed. TGS has expanded the list of companies students can use to obtain their credential evaluations.

In addition, applicants are no longer required to submit financial documents with their applications; financial documents will first be needed after students are admitted when they apply for a visa. Support from graduate assistantships offered to the student can be included on financial documents when applying for a visa. Dr. Stoloff requested the graduate council to refer to the new procedures for international applicants that were distributed with the September 12 Graduate Council meeting materials.



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In other discussion, Dr. Stoloff also clarified that international students enrolled in online programs cannot get a student visa because they do not have to be in the United States to complete these programs. Graduate Council members pointed out that the high cost of health insurance is an impediment to international student enrollment at JMU. Dr. Stoloff requested that Mr. Boris Escalona Berbetty investigate health insurance costs and options including expanded Medicaid and the Affordable Care Act options as used by the Strategic Leadership.

### 3. Curriculum Committee Role

Dr. Stoloff discussed the role of the Graduate Council Curriculum Committee and the process overview for 2019-2020. Kristi Shackelford requested that she be added as a non-voting member of this committee, and he agreed to add her.

#### i. Ratification of Graduate Council Curriculum Committee Members

Upon motion by Karen Ford, seconded by Hossain Heydari, it was decided by unanimous vote that the ratification of the Curriculum Committee will be conducted via e-Vote, prior to the October 10 Program Director Assembly meeting.