GRADUATE COUNCIL MINUTES

Wednesday, September 23, 2026, 2:00 p.m. STV 401

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 2:01 p.m. by Claudia Petrescu, Associate Vice President for Graduate Education & Internationalization Initiatives

MEMBERS PRESENT

Membership/Student Development Committee:	Qi Zhang, Susan Chen, Sarah Smelser, Anna Smith
Curriculum Committee:	Mary Dyck, Melisa Oresky, Beth MacDonald, Scott Pierce
Research Committee:	Justin Turner, Kevin Meyer
Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee:	Miranda Lin, Greg Braswell, Kirsten Clerkin, H. Sally Xie
Graduate Students:	Nick Stulga

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MEMBERS ABSENT

Membership/Student Development Committee:	
Curriculum Committee:	Eric Peterson
Research Committee:	Chang Su-Russell, Xing (Clara) Wang
Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee:	Mona Bahl, Claire Lieberman
Graduate Students:	

Also present:	Boris Escalona, Graduate Faculty Services Coordinator

Approval of Minutes

Mary Dyck moved to approve minutes of April 22, 2026; Melissa Oresky seconded. All approved except Sarah Smeiser, who abstained.

Welcome to New Members and Presentation – Updates

External Enrollment Environment

- Discussion covered visa access, duration-of-status litigation, OPT costs, CPT eligibility, and declining international enrollment.
- Members discussed whether declining deferrals indicate students are choosing other countries or abandoning enrollment plans.
- Benchmarking showed competitive pressure across Illinois institutions and a need for stronger graduate enrollment data.

Recruitment and Admissions

- The Gradbird Guaratentee pilot program is expanding from six programs to nearly 90% of graduate programs.
- Proposed elements include a 3.25 GPA threshold, expedited review, and eligibility for a $1,000 scholarship for students who accept to be part of the pilot by December 15.

- Members identified delayed application review, decentralized processes, and limited spring admissions as barriers.

Organizational Restructuring

- Functions will be divided among OIE, the Graduate School, and Graduate and International Enrollment Management.
- Enrollment management will combine admission teams, add recruitment and marketing capacity, and develop an enrollment plan.
- A future Graduate School Director role is expected to focus beyond administrative tasks on working with AVP on curriculum, development, strategy, and academic-unit engagement.

Student Success and Policy

- **Kristin** and **Justin** are developing frameworks for retention, graduate student success, curriculum updates, and accelerated programs.
- Proposed work includes AI education, mentoring, doctoral funding, dissertation fellowships, faculty recognition, policy review, bylaws, transfer rules, and graduate faculty status.

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Council Priorities

- Members discussed improving the council's strategic role, supporting master's students, and analyzing graduate coordinator duties and compensation.
- The council will identify a process to work on analyzing and updating policies

Adjournment

a. Meeting adjourned at 3:05 p.m.

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