**GRADUATE COUNCIL**

**FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY**

**ANNUAL REPORT 2012-2013**

**CHAIR: FRED BLEVENS**

**MAY 22, 2013**

Fred Blevens (SJMC) served again as chair, Elizabeth Cramer (Education) as vice chair and Adis Beesting (Library) as recording secretary. Other members included Winifred (Elysse) Newman (Architecture & The Arts); Misak Sargsian and Laura De Carli (Arts & Sciences); Karlene Cousin (Business); Kang K Yen (Engineering); Mary Tanke (Hospitality); Matthew Mirow (Law); Rita Mukhopadhyay (Medicine); Iveris Martinez (Alternate, Medicine); Dennis McCarthy (CNHS); Alok Deoraj (Public Health); Lidia Kos (UGS, *ex-officio)*; and Svetlana Tyutina (Student Representative, *ex-officio)*

Six bulletins were published & available online during 2012-2013.The bulletins included a variety of items including requests for the approval of new graduate degrees, tracks, and majors. In addition, the bulletins included proposals for unit specific admission requirements and degree program changes. The Council once again worked closely with the Curriculum Committee, regularly holding joint hearings on issues under the purview of both bodies. Chair Blevens and the Chair of the Curriculum Committee, Hamid Shahid, met regularly and discussed each bulletin carefully. They often were assisted by UGS Associate Dean Lidia Kos.

At its organizational meeting on September 18, 2012, the Council re-elected Fred Blevens as its chair, Elizabeth Cramer as vice chair, and Adis Beesting as recording secretary. The Council heard a report from Lidia Kos, who was updating the Graduate Catalog and revamping the UGS website. She also announced plans for the development of best practices and procedures for Graduate Program Directors.

On October 12, 2012, the Council met in joint hearing with the University Curriculum Committee to consider and approve the [New Graduate Track: Curatorial Practice](http://facultysenate.fiu.edu/bulletins/Bulletins12_13/b1/docs/h5.pdf); the [New Graduate Degree Program: Professional Science Master’s in Forensic Science](http://facultysenate.fiu.edu/bulletins/Bulletins12_13/b1/docs/h6.pdf); and the [New Graduate Degree Program: PSM in Medical Physics](http://facultysenate.fiu.edu/bulletins/Bulletins12_13/b1/docs/h7.pdf).

Chair Blevens asked the Council if members thought that online degree programs should undergo review by the Curriculum Committee and Graduate Council, a discussion that kicked off a yearlong examination of the issue and the first attempts at formulating guidelines for the Council’s review.

At its Bulletin 2 joint session with UCC on November 16, 2012, the Council heard its first proposal for a completely online Ph.D. program. The [New Graduate Degree Program:  International Crime and Justice](http://facultysenate.fiu.edu/bulletins/Bulletins12_13/b2/docs/h10.pdf) provoked serious concerns from Council and Committee members. Those concerns included the lack of a residency requirement, which is not a university policy at this time, the background screening of applicants, the lack of a sufficient component in pedagogy, and the integrity of assessment. Several members questioned the overall quality of online programs, pointing out that the proposal used the online Capella University and Nova Southeastern as comparables. There were concerns that the unit from SIPA had not reached out to the College of Law and that the proposal did not adequately establish a community of scholars environment that’s so important to Ph.D. programs. The Council and Committee entertained a motion to table the proposal, which passed unanimously. Chair Blevens advised the unit to work with Law to strengthen the program and come back with an in-person degree that includes online classes. The unit was advised that a proposal for an online program probably would not be successful until the Council develops guidelines for review.

The Council and Committee also considered a proposal in the Masters in Liberal Studies for a [New Graduate Track:  Philosophy](http://facultysenate.fiu.edu/bulletins/Bulletins12_13/b2/docs/h11.pdf). There were no issues or concerns raised, so a motion to approve the track was approved unanimously.

The council, meeting unilaterally, approved a request from CNHS to add a GRE requirement as part of its request to [Establish Unit-Specific Graduate Admission Standards](http://facultysenate.fiu.edu/bulletins/Bulletins12_13/b2/docs/h12.pdf)in Occupational Therapy. The Council then reaffirmed its previously agreed practice of not holding hearings on petitions that seek to increase admission standards in units. A proposal for[Changes to a Graduate Degree Program:  Biomedical Engineering](http://facultysenate.fiu.edu/bulletins/Bulletins12_13/b2/docs/h13.pdf)was tabled in a unanimous vote when no representative from the department appeared to present the proposal.

At Bulletin 3 hearings on January 18, 2013, the Council and Committee again took up the tabled [New Graduate Degree Program:  International Crime and Justice](http://facultysenate.fiu.edu/bulletins/Bulletins12_13/b2/docs/h10.pdf). Members focused on the same issues raised in the first presentation of the proposal. Petitioners did include some collaborative language with Law and added an optional elective on pedagogy. SIPA Director John Stack and A&S Dean Ken Furton spoke in support of the proposal, noting that other universities are speeding ahead of FIU in online offerings.

A motion to approve subject to the modifications that were stated by presenters concerning the curriculum and also subject to University requirements that will be established by the appropriate bodies for the proposal was moved and failed in both the Council and Committee. A motion to table the proposal subject to the establishment of policies and procedures of online Ph.D. programs by the appropriate bodies was moved and approved unanimously.

The Council unilaterally considered a proposal to [Establish Unit-Specific Graduate Admission Standards](http://facultysenate.fiu.edu/bulletins/Bulletins12_13/b2/docs/h12.pdf)for the music education program in the College Architecture and the Arts. The unit asked to replace its GRE requirement – the only one remaining in all music master’s programs – with a screening matrix that includesletters of recommendation, an interview, a 1,000-word essay on a specific topic and a video clip demonstrating the ability to teach in the classroom. Students in the program already are certified in Florida to teach and data show that these standards better predict success in the program after the first semester.

A motion to recommend the proposal was moved and unanimously approved by the Graduate Council.

The Council convened a policy meeting on Monday, January 28, 2013 to consider requests from the University Graduate School to change policies on conditional admissions and how the GPA requirement is calculated.

The first change would limit conditional admits to 10 percent of the cohort in each unit, which would be enabled to make its own decisions on admissions to master’s programs without petitioning UGS for those selected for conditional admission. Such a change would be consistent with most SUS institutions and UGS agreed to monitor the number of conditional admits per program per School/College. Programs with fewer than 10 students may admit one student conditionally without petition. The Council voted unanimously to recommend Senate approval of the policy change.

The second proposal would base the GPA requirement on the overall undergraduate average rather than the last 60 hours. UGS says such a change would ease the processing of applications. Member expressed concerns about impact and asked UGS Associate Dean Kos to report on effects and to survey Graduate Program Directors to assess their views. The Council voted unanimously to table the proposal, pending results of the research.

The Council also heard AD Kos report on online Ph.D. programs. She said there is only one fully online program in Florida, that at the University of Florida, and that many of those researched, including Berkeley and Yale, have residency requirements. Council members expressed concerns about national security issues, especially for international students, and whether there were SACS concerns about specific requirements (apparently there are none). The Council resolved to consider a number of issues in the future: residency, training in pedagogy, research, national security, assessment, and online proctoring of proposals and defenses.

Bulletin 4 joint hearings were conducted on Friday, February 22, 2013. The Council and Committee considered the [New Graduate Major: Environmental Policy and Management](http://facultysenate.fiu.edu/bulletins/Bulletins12_13/b4/docs/h3.pdf)in the College of Arts and Sciences. The only major concern was whether students could replicate this degree, a cost-plus program, could be replicated by taking all the same courses in the cheaper existing tuition program. The Council and Committee agreed that any dilution of one program by the other would be a problem to be resolved by the unit. A motion to recommend the program to Senate was approved unanimously by the Council and Committee.

The College of Business presented petitions to change unit-specific admission standards for master’s degrees in finance, real estate, international business, MIS, and the International MBA. The College asserted that changing the requirements would allow the various units to screen candidates in our dual-degree programs by using the admission criteria of the home universities. These changes would apply only to students from partner Universities that are already enrolled in graduate level coursework at their home institutions, which already been reviewed and pre-selected by our partner institution. The Council unanimously approved a motion to consider all the proposals as one and then unanimously recommended approval to the Senate.

On February 25, 2013, the Council met in a policy session to hear more details on the change in the GPA requirement for admission. AD Kos presented data and specifics, and then the Council defeated a motion to recommend the changes to the Senate. Members expressed concerns about the effects on various programs. Laura De Carli, Rita Mukhopadhyay, and Karlene Cousins agree to work with AD Kos to review additional data.

The Council unanimously approved a recommendation to the Senate that online proposals be put on hold until the UGC and UCC can develop criteria to consider them. It stated:

“The Senate endorses recommendations of the University Curriculum Committee and the University Graduate Council that no online programs on the graduate level be considered until those two committees develop criteria to evaluate proposed programs with the same scrutiny applied to in-person graduate programs. This includes all requests to convert in-person graduate programs to online delivery.” That motion was tabled by the Steering Committee after protestation from the Provost, but it later was moved to the agenda and approved in April with an amendment mandating that UGC and UCC complete work on the criteria by the first Senate meeting in October.

The Council agreed to move forward with attempts to establish criteria for considering proposals for online doctoral programs. A schedule was established to collaborate on the criteria with a first deadline of April 3, after which the Council and Curriculum Committee would discuss the first draft after Bulletin hearings on April 5.

Joint hearings on April 5 considered a number of petitions, the first being the [New Graduate Degree Program: PhD in Linguistics](http://facultysenate.fiu.edu/bulletins/Bulletins12_13/b5/docs/h8.pdf), a proposal from the College of Arts and Sciences that brings together the departments of English, Modern Languages, Psychology, and Speech Pathology. The proposal focused on bilingualism, psycholinguistics, and bio-linguistics.

(Prior to this meeting, the Provost informed Chair Blevens that he had heard complaint(s) that we were “excluding” people from our meetings, in violation of the state’s open-meetings laws. The Chair explained that that, in fact, had never happened and that the Council and UCC had been following decades-long practice of conducting deliberations in executive session. A review of the law and consultation with attorneys associated with open-meetings/records laws confirmed that this practice was, at best, questionable and probably a violation. The hearings should be open, but the Council is entitled to “close” the hearing for deliberations, during which petitioners and audience members cannot participate unless asked to do so. Chair Blevens, speaking only on behalf of the UGC, agreed that all sessions, including deliberations, should be open. This prompted a change in process for hearings, requiring that the Council formally “close” the hearing to deliberate.)

A motion to close the hearing was moved and unanimously approved by the Graduate Council & Curriculum Committee. Then, a motion to recommend that the Senate approve the Ph.D. in Linguistics was moved and unanimously approved by the Council and Committee.

Meeting unilaterally, the Council considered a petition to [Establish Unit-Specific Graduate Admissions Standards](http://facultysenate.fiu.edu/bulletins/Bulletins12_13/b5/docs/h9.pdf) from the School of Journalism and Mass Communication. The unit was seeking to use a floating GRE score from cohort to cohort to control admission numbers, stabilize teaching loads, and preserve academic standards in the program.

A motion to close the hearing was moved and unanimously approved by the Graduate Council. Then a motion to recommend Senate approval was moved and unanimously approved.

After the hearing, the Council and Committee convened a joint meeting to discuss the draft of the criteria for proposed online doctoral programs. Concerns were expressed about the number of teaching courses required (9-hours); “on-site” experimental work; and definition of the term residency (“physical presence”). UCC members were invited to join the Council’s business meeting on April 15.

At that meeting, UGS withdrew the proposal to change the GPA requirement from the last 60 hours to overall. UGS said the task of measuring the effect on each program would be too onerous.

The Council also discussed the Steering Committee’s decision to table the motion to establish a moratorium on online proposals until criteria can be developed. Several strategies were discussed and the Council decided to schedule a meeting with the Provost and representatives from University College. Invitations were issued and accept by Susan Clemmons of University College and Provost Wartzok to attend the next meeting on Wednesday, April 24 at Noon.

The April 24 policy meeting was called to consider a motion that the Senate again endorse UGC’s and UCC’s wishes to halt online program proposals until criteria can be developed. The Council agreed that there were two issues at hand. The first was the treatment of online master’s curricula as independent of the Senate curriculum process and the second being the lack of any guidelines for considering proposals for online doctoral programs.

In addition, by request of the Provost, the Council agreed to conduct an off-cycle hearing to consider petitions to realign the nursing master’s tracks as standalone programs. This was in response to the Board of Governors’s objections to how the programs were structured, a situation that threatened the future of the programs and the students enrolled in them.

The hearing by the Council and the Curriculum Committee was opened. Provost Warzok explained the dilemma and a brief discussion period ensued. The hearings then were closed and the Council and Committee conducted brief joint deliberations, after which both bodies unanimously recommended that the Senate approve the changes.

Discussion of the doctoral criteria focused on moving from “requirements” to “guidelines,” allowing units more flexibility in adapting their programs to standards. Members expressed concerns about recommending residency requirements for online programs when the university itself has no such policy for on-campus degrees. There was lengthy discussion about designing guidelines that could be applied to research degrees – Ph.D. and Ed.D. – AND professional practice doctorates.

A number of motions were approved to alter language in the draft.

Finally, UGC and UCC unanimously moved for Senate approval of the following motion:

“The Senate endorses recommendations of the University Curriculum Committee and the University Graduate Council that all online programs on the graduate level be reviewed by the same processes and by the same standards as in-person programs. This endorsement affects proposals to convert in-person programs to online (market and tuition based) and all new program proposals as well as changes to existing programs, which are otherwise grandfathered. The endorsement extends to all academic units and any on- or off-campus parties seeking to create curriculum at Florida International University.”

The rationale for the motion, as previously discussed, is to bring all curricula, including online, under the purview of the Senate and to bring the governance system in compliance with SAACS standards that stipulate faculty as custodians of the curriculum.

As the year ended, the Council still was attempting to finalize guidelines for online doctoral programs.

Chair Blevens would like to thank all members of the Council for handling a remarkable workload this year. It’s the most activity we’ve seen in years. We also thank the wonderful representation of Lidia Kos from UGS.