

## MINUTES

### Commission on Graduate and Professional Studies and Policies

March 4, 2026

3:30 p.m.

Zoom

**Present** – Renée LeClair (presiding), Kiri Goldbeck DeBose, Nicole Holt, Kendyl Lewis, Joshua Neal, Phil Nelson, Kayla Robertson, Jill Sible, Kaylee South, Aimée Surprenant, Kwok Tsang, Jerald Walz

**Absent with Notice:** Molly Ryan

**Absent:** Aaron Bond, Kirk Cameron, Ioannis Koutromanos, Leslie LaConte, Veronica van Montfrans, Cayce Myers, Brian Strahm, Tyler Walters, Meng Zhu

**Guests:** Janice Austin, John Chappell, Catherine Cotrupi, Kevin Edgar, Katie Gregg, Matt Grice, Barbara Hoopes, William Huckle, Lori Rose

Renée called the meeting to order at 3:30 p.m. A quorum was present.

#### 1. Adoption of Agenda

A motion was made and seconded to adopt the agenda. Motion carried.

#### 2. Approval and posting of minutes of February 4, 2026

A motion was made and seconded to approve the February 4 minutes.

#### 3. Unfinished Business

##### Resolutions CGPSP 2025-26C, D, E

The expected first reading of these resolutions at Faculty Senate did not occur due to a canceled meeting. As a result, the items have not yet advanced to second reading. Discussion included feedback received from the Staff Senate and the AP Faculty Senate regarding revisions to Presidential Policy Memoranda and whether such changes fall within the commission's purview. Members noted that historically these policies have been addressed through shared governance processes.

#### 4. New Business

##### CGPSP 2025-26F

Janice Austin presented [Resolution CGPSP 2025-26F](#), developed in collaboration with Bill Huckle and Monica Gibson at the request of the Office of the Vice President for Policy and Governance. Their review found that most of the policy language already exists in the Graduate Catalog or other governance documents. The resolution proposes retiring redundant PPMs and formally recognizing the Graduate Catalog as the authoritative source for graduate education policies. A mapping document identifies where each PPM's content appears in the current catalog or other policy sources. The proposal does not change policy substance but consolidates governance documentation in a single location. The resolution received its first reading.

#### 5. Reports

- Graduate School Appeals – Aimée Surprenant: None at this time.

- Graduate School –Updates were shared regarding Graduate Education Week, which will include workshops, professional development programming, awards events, and the GPSS Research Symposium, with activities taking place in Blacksburg as well as Northern Virginia and Roanoke. Members were encouraged to participate and to donate used conference lanyards for reuse during the events.
- Degrees and Academic Progress – Jerald Walz: None at this time.
- NTCO GS Committee – Barbara Hoopes: A recent meeting of the NTCO Graduate Studies Committee included a roundtable discussion on trends in professional master’s programs. Programs reported continued interest in professional master’s and certificate offerings, while also noting challenges related to declining international applications. Recruitment strategies discussed included alumni outreach, targeted marketing, and accelerated undergraduate-to-graduate pathways.
- Graduate Honor System – Molly Ryan: None at this time.
- University Libraries – Kiri Goldbeck DeBose: The University Libraries are currently conducting several database trials and encouraged feedback to help inform future subscription decisions. More information can be found on their [website](#).
- Faculty Senate – Phil Nelson: Faculty were encouraged to volunteer as judges for the GPSS Research Symposium.
- Board of Visitors – Katie Gregg: Applications for the next student representatives to the Board of Visitors will close later in the week, and a tuition and fees listening session will be held prior to the Board’s April meeting.
- AP Faculty Senate – Aaron Bond: None at this time.
- Staff Senate – Kayla Robertson: None at this time.
- Commission on Undergraduate Studies and Policies – Jill Sible: None at this time.

## 6. Presentation

Dr. Bill Huckle, Associate Dean of the Graduate School, provided an overview of the Individualized Interdisciplinary PhD (IPhD) program, originally established in 2013. The program allows students to design individualized doctoral programs that combine coursework and faculty mentorship across multiple disciplines. The commission serves as the review body for proposals to enter the program. Two or three proposals are expected later this academic year, and additional information about the review process will be provided when those proposals are submitted. Dr. Huckle also shared program data, noting that 27 students have participated in the program since its inception, with 16 having completed their degrees and several others currently enrolled.

## 7. Other Items

- CGPSP 2025-26B has been approved. Renée reported that CGPSP 2025-26B, the resolution directing the commission to explore alternative curricular approaches following the cancellation of the Graduate School’s Inclusion and Diversity requirement, has been approved. The commission discussed next steps, including forming a working group to explore possible approaches and draft recommendations.
- The Commission discussed a request raised by Veronica van Montfrans regarding whether pass/fail coursework from professional programs should be eligible for transfer credit toward graduate degrees. Currently such requests are handled on a case-by-case basis by the Graduate School. The discussion noted that many professional programs use pass/fail grading systems without offering letter grades. The commission agreed to refer the issue to Degrees and Academic Progress for further review and possible policy recommendations.

- An issue raised through CFA concerns whether research and dissertation credits should include additional grading distinctions rather than the current evaluation system. The proposal suggests options such as high pass, pass, or low pass. The commission agreed that the topic warrants further discussion and referred it to DAP for consideration.
- A draft resolution under discussion in the Commission on Undergraduate Studies and Policies would establish guidelines for institutional text messaging, limiting messages to mission-critical communications, and allowing students to opt out. Members noted that communication patterns in graduate education often require timely coordination within research groups, fieldwork, and clinical settings, and emphasized that any policy should not unintentionally restrict faculty–graduate student communication.
- Janice Austin briefed the commission on upcoming Title II accessibility requirements, which will require university web content and publications to meet accessibility standards beginning April 24. The change has implications for electronic theses and dissertations (ETDs). The Graduate School, University Libraries, and TLOS are updating templates and guidance, and the Graduate School is considering requiring an accessibility report with final ETD submission. Members noted the potential impact on students and the need to allow sufficient time between the defense and final submission.

## **8. Announcements**

- Next meeting will be on March 18.
- Graduate Education Week is March 23-27. [View the full schedule of events](#)

## **9. Adjournment**

There being no further business, a motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 4:49 p.m.