

**Texas A&M International University**  
**University Graduate Council**  
**Meeting Minutes from October 24, 2024, Meeting**

**I. Call to order**

Dr. Lola Norris called the University Graduate Council meeting to order at 3:04 pm via Teams (virtual).

**II. Roll call**

Present: Pat Ábrego, Asligul Berkday, Jeff Brown, José Cardona López, Malynnda Dalton, Triana González, Paul Niemeyer, Jason Norris, Lola Norris (UGC Chair), Ángel Pacheco Paredes, Abhijit Patwardhan, Martha Salinas, Seth Sampson, Gloria Sánchez (alternate for Pat Ábrego), Lourdes Viloría, Haibo Wang, Anwen Yin.

Graduate School: Virginia Morales

Absent: Runchang Lin, Citlaly Palau

**Approval of minutes:** No minutes were available from the October 27, 2021, meeting.

Dr. Norris explained that no Graduate Council meetings were held in 2022-2023 and 2023-2024.

**III. Reports**

A. Dr. Lola Norris reported some updates to the UGC composition, such as the addition of an ex-officio member of eLearning since many of our graduate programs are now online. A discrepancy was noted in the status of the UGC chair, who appears as a full member in the *Faculty Handbook* and as an ex-officio member on the list of university committees. The same question was posed regarding the representative of the Library (ex-officio or not). Ms. Triana González and Dr. Lola Norris will investigate this and report at the next meeting.

B. A new development in the former A&M System-wide Pathways Student Research Symposium was shared. Dr. Lola Norris explained that the symposium originated as a showcase for graduate students' research and was held yearly at a different sister institution. Over time, the symposium allowed the inclusion of undergraduate research, and participation grew extensively. In Fall 2023, Pathways was paused because the A&M System graduate deans recognized that the conference had become too large and expensive. It was decided to bring the focus back to graduate students. A committee was formed of four graduate deans charged with developing a new version of the Pathways Symposium that focused on life after graduate school, career readiness, networking, etc. The inaugural Pathways to the Profession (P2P) Symposium is scheduled to take place in

Tarleton on February 3-4, 2025. Attendance will be limited to 7-10 students per institution. Details are still being worked out.

C. Information was shared on the status of TAMIU's own graduate and undergraduate student conference, the LBV Student Research Conference, which is also on hiatus. It was last held in Fall 2023. Dr. Lola Norris stated that due to leadership and personnel changes in various departments and colleges, it was decided to pause the conference to reorganize it to better align with our strategic plan and aspiration of attaining R2 status. Drs. Colleen Harris, Dean of the Killam Library, and James O'Meara, Dean of the College of Education, are the co-chairs of the committee to reimagine and reorganize the new TAMIU student research conference, which is expected to launch in April 2026.

D. Dr. Lola Norris reported that the TAMIU ARC (Advancing Research and Curriculum) grant was ending. A five-year Title V Department of Education grant, it was awarded to Drs. Jennifer Coronado and Ken Tobin to support first-year graduate success via graduate orientation, workshops, research boot camps, supplemental instruction, software availability, graduate writing consultation, etc. As current P.I., Dr. Tobin submitted a no-cost extension for an additional year. There are plans to write another Title V grant in Spring 2025, but we are waiting for more information and guidance.

#### **IV. New Business**

A. TAMIU has three categories of graduate faculty: full member, external member, and temporary member. Dr. Lola Norris stated that the full membership category was fine and needed no revision. However, the categories of temporary and external membership were somewhat confusing, and the definitions of these categories were not clearly delineated. In addition, faculty categories have changed since these graduate faculty statuses were created many years ago when we had mainly tenured, tenure-track, and adjunct faculty. We now have many faculty members who are full-time faculty on a fixed-term contract, such as instructional faculty, clinical faculty, etc. We also have many more adjuncts with doctoral degrees who teach in our online programs. Dr. Patwardhan mentioned that external graduate members used to be approved by the Graduate Council. Dr. Lola Norris explained that the external category could be problematic and recommended that we consider changing the names of the two categories and updating the descriptions. She would like to look at other institutions and present more options at the next meeting. Dr. Vilorina agreed that this would be a good idea. The committee members agreed via vote to table this discussion until Dr. Lola Norris could do some more research and provide more information at the next meeting. The item was tabled.

B. Thesis and dissertation deadlines are posted on the TAMIU website for the academic year. Dr. Lola Norris explained that these deadlines are necessary to facilitate the timely review process of the thesis/dissertation manuscripts and the completion of other processes before graduation. In a few cases, thesis/dissertation defenses have occurred after the deadline or between semesters. This makes the review process of the

thesis/dissertation problematic. Dr. Lola Norris stated that students who defend in-between semesters may not receive services from the committee members, the writing consultant, or other offices as they are no longer registered.

The topic was discussed extensively, and several council members asked questions and proposed solutions. Dr. Viloría agreed that students should be registered in the semester in which they defend. Dr. Cardona asked if students should only defend in long semesters as faculty may not be available during the summer to schedule a defense. Registrar Triana González explained that students may defend in the summer but need to be registered. There are four graduation dates per year (May, July, August, and December). Students who complete their thesis/dissertation and are cleared for graduation outside these dates may request a letter of completion but will not receive a diploma until after the official graduation date. Ms. Gonzalez also stated that it is very important to observe the deadline so that the Registrar's Office can receive the proper documentation in a timely manner and can list the student as graduating. If students are not registered, they cannot be tracked. Defending and submitting paperwork after the deadline delays and complicates the process. It is a cleaner and easier process if deadlines are observed.

Dr. Brown recommended that instead of requiring the students to be registered in the semester in which they defend, we could require them to be registered in the semester in which they graduate. Dr. Lola Norris asked if a student defending in December a day before the deadline will be allowed to graduate in December. Since the manuscript revision and other processes will not be completed in time, the answer was "no." That student would graduate in the next semester. It was stated that deadlines are there for a reason and should not be circumvented. Dr. Viloría asked how any of this would affect international students. Dr. Lola Norris will gather more information and present it at the next meeting.

#### **V. Announcements and Other Business**

Dr. Lola Norris inquired if Council members preferred to meet in person or virtually at the next meeting. Most members preferred a virtual meeting, but some wanted a face-to-face meeting or were ok with either format. Dr. Norris would like to call another meeting in three weeks, in November. It will be a virtual meeting. Perhaps a face-to-face meeting can be scheduled for the Spring 2025 semester

#### **VI. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 3:55 pm.