

**Texas A&M International University**  
**University Graduate Council (UGC)**  
**Meeting: Monday, April 14, 2025, 4:00-5:00 pm**

**Meeting Minutes**

**I. Call to Order**

Dr. Lola Norris called the virtual Teams meeting to order at 4:05 pm.

**II. Roll Call**

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

Graduate School: Virginia Morales

Absent: Runchang Lin, Citlaly Palau, Martha Salinas

**III. Approval of Minutes**

The minutes from the October 24, 2024, meeting had been sent via email prior to the present meeting. There were no corrections or additions. Dr. Vilorio made a motion to approve, and Dr. Sampson seconded. The members voted to approve the minutes as written.

**IV. Reports by Dr. Norris**

**A.** The inaugural Pathways to the Profession (P2P) Symposium was held at Tarleton State University on February 3 and 4, 2025. Eleven TAMIU graduate students (4 doctoral students from ARSSB, 7 master's students from COAS) participated. The students had been nominated by their programs. The focus of the symposium was the transition from graduate school to the workforce. The presentations and activities addressed career readiness, post-graduate success, effective communication, personal growth, leadership, financial literacy, innovative mindset, problem-solving, etc. TAMIU students participated actively and enjoyed the opportunities for networking with students from other A&M System schools.

**B.** The TAMIU Student Research Conference (formerly LBV Conference) committee met and discussed the mode (face-to-face, hybrid) as well as the selection process for student participation. Committee co-chairs are Dr. Colleen Harris and Dr. James O'Meara. The date for the conference is tentatively set for April 2026.

**C.** TAMIU ARC (Advancing Research and Curriculum) no-cost extension will end on September 30, 2025. Due to the current state of federal funding and the Department of Education, there are no immediate plans to write another Title V grant. The Graduate School will continue to use the videos and materials developed by the ARC team.

**D.** The Graduate School submitted a series of catalog updates for the 2025-2026 academic year. Most changes were minor revisions reflecting updates within various graduate programs. The general information section was also revised. A new section titled "Thesis and Dissertation Process" was created to provide guidance for students navigating these requirements. In compliance with THECB Directive 7.6, the language regarding the acceptance of university transcripts was modified to remove the restriction limiting acceptance to only regionally accredited institutions.

Dr. Vilorio asked about the composition of the Graduate Advisory Committee. Dr. Norris explained that more detailed information about this committee could be found in the Thesis Policy Manual.

## **V. Unfinished Business**

**A.** According to the *Faculty Handbook*, four members of the Graduate Council are ex officio: the graduate student representative, the representative from the Library, the University Registrar, and the Faculty Senate representative. The member of the eLearning Team needs to be added to this paragraph in the *Handbook*. The Graduate Dean is a voting member. These corrections need to be made to the university committee list as well as to the *Faculty Handbook*.

**B.** Dr. Norris presented a comparison of graduate faculty membership categories used by peer institutions, asserting that our current categories (full, external, and temporary members) no longer accurately reflect our faculty structure. She proposed a revision: maintain the full member category, but create new associate member, visiting, or temporary categories. Dr. Norris noted that the external member graduate category can lead to confusion, as it conflicts with the common use of "external member" to describe an individual from outside the discipline serving on a thesis or dissertation committee.

Dr. Berkday asked for clarification on associate members. Dr. Norris explains the proposed qualifications and duties of associate members as well as the other categories. It was agreed that Dr. Norris would provide a proposal with detailed qualifications and duties for all three proposed categories to further discuss and possibly vote at the next meeting.

**C.** Dr. Norris reported that the collaboration with Dr. Tobin, Associate Dean of COAS, has been successful, leading to much better student adherence to the thesis deadlines compared to past semesters. The Graduate School is also implementing a new process for the public announcement of all thesis and dissertation defenses. Spring 2025 will be busy for the new graduate writing consultant, as 16 to 18 possible thesis defenses are scheduled.

## **VI. New Business**

**A.** Dr. Norris proposed creating a one-credit-hour thesis continuation course for students who have finished Thesis I and II but haven't quite completed their defense, revision, or formatting. This approach, inspired by a sister institution's Graduate School-managed course, would allow students to petition the Graduate School to add the 1-SCH course to their schedule, significantly easing their financial burden. Since a one-credit structure already exists for ARSSB and COAS dissertations, this course would only apply to thesis students. Dr. Niemeyer spoke in favor of the proposal. Registrar Triana Valdez confirmed that students would be paying for 1-SCH, not for 3-SCH.

The proposal was voted on. Dr. Vilorio motioned for approval; Dr. Brown seconded. The motion carried successfully. Dr. Norris will now draft the specific course language and present it for final approval at the next meeting.

## **VII. Other Business**

There was no other business.

## **VIII. Announcements**

There were no announcements.

## **IX. Adjournment**

A motion to adjourn was made by Dr. Vilorio and seconded by Dr. Niemeyer. The meeting was officially adjourned at 4:58 pm.