GRADUATE COUNCIL
Faculty Senate
MINUTES
Thursday, October 15, 2026, 2:30 PM
Graduate School Conference Room, RH 2215

PRESENT: Jill Smucker, Liz Cali, Mindy Dilley, Jeff Manuel (guest), Mary Frazier, Kyong-Sup Yoon, Beidi Qiang, Joe Kohlburn, James Monahan, Chin-Chuan Wei, Nicholas Young, Nima Lotfi, Eunyoe Ro, Amy Nusser, Cinnamon VanPutte

EXCUSED: Ramana Madupalli, Chris Slaten

ABSENT: Ken Witt

The meeting was called to order at 2:31 p.m.

I. Approval of Using Copilot for Meeting Transcription

Jill Smucker outlined the parameters for using Copilot to prepare meeting minutes. Meetings will be recorded and transcribed in Microsoft Teams, and only Microsoft Copilot will be used to draft the minutes. Each draft will be reviewed by the Graduate School and the Graduate Council Chair before posting. The recording and transcript will be deleted after the minutes are finalized.

Because Teams cannot identify individuals who are participating in the room, the chair will verbalize motions, movers, seconders, and vote outcomes. Future agendas will include a notice that Teams is used for transcription, so the matter will not need to be reconsidered at each meeting.

Nicholas Young moved to approve the use of Copilot for meeting transcription as described. Nima Lotfi seconded the motion. The motion passed with no opposition or abstentions noted.

II. Announcements

A. Course Review Committee (CRC) Report

The report is available on Teams.

B. Graduate Committee on Assessment (GCOA) Report

The report is available on Teams.

C. Enrollment Management Report

James Monahan reported that graduate enrollment is up modestly for both spring and fall, primarily because of domestic enrollment. International enrollment remains down. The Graduate and Professional School Open House will be held Tuesday, October 20, in the Legacy Room of the Morris University Center. Registration is progressing, and programs were encouraged to have representatives present.

D. Student Affairs Announcements

Mindy Dilley reported that the Dean of Students Office triages Care and Concern referral forms. The volume is considerably higher than in prior years, reflecting both increased reporting and the number of individuals who are struggling. She offered to visit departments and schools to explain available resources and the reporting process and hopes to share retention data at a later date.

Dilley reminded members that TimelyCare is available to students, faculty, and staff. Usage reports are received through Counseling and Health Services. TimelyCare is promoted through orientation, annual communications, and printed materials.

Jill Smucker added that the Graduate School conducted a spring campaign promoting counseling services and TimelyCare to graduate students with support from the Mental Health Incubator Grant. Dilley will work with Angela Pritchett at the School of Dental Medicine to strengthen outreach at the School of Dental Medicine.

E. International Affairs Announcements

Amy Nusser reported that the proposed Department of Homeland Security rule eliminating duration of status did not take effect because a federal judge paused it. She also noted that a separate restriction remains in effect that limits participation in off-campus internships unless the internship is required for graduation.

Nusser discussed a proposed rule that would impose substantial new Optional Practical Training fees to be paid by universities. The proposal remains in the comment period. International Education Week will be held November 9-13 by the Kimmel K-Hub, beginning with a flag ceremony and remarks on Monday, November 9. Faculty and staff were encouraged to attend in support of students.

F. Graduate School Announcements

Liz Cali, reporting on behalf of Dean Chris Slaten, announced that approval was received to develop a position description and hiring process for a new Graduate Studies Specialist. The position will enhance centralized support for graduate students across the University, and suggestions regarding graduate student needs are welcome.

Jill Smucker announced that Grad Connect Happy Hour & Headshots will be held Tuesday, November 10, from 4:30-6:30 p.m. in the Morris University Center Legacy Room. The event is for graduate and professional students and will include professional headshots, appetizers, themed mocktails, and a life-size Grad Connect 4 game. Registration is required by November 4, and members were asked to help promote the event.

A new annual research speaker series will begin this year and will typically feature three or four speakers annually, including the prior year's Distinguished Research Professors. The first speaker is Faith Liebl on November 12 from 4:00-6:00 p.m. in the Morris University Center Legacy Room. Kristine Hildebrandt will speak in late January, and an external keynote will be featured during Research Day on April 6.

The Illinois Innovation Network Conference will be held October 22-23. The conference includes panels with community and industry partners and a student poster session.

The Beyond the Lab podcast, hosted by Chris Slaten and Liz Cali, launched on Spotify on October 15. The first episode features Angela Kim.

G. Other Announcements

There were no other announcements.

III. Approval of Minutes of September 10, 2026

There were no comments on the minutes posted in Teams. Beidi Qiang moved to approve the minutes of September 10, 2026. Nicholas Young seconded the motion. The motion passed with no opposition or abstentions.

IV. Public Comments

There were no public comments.

V. Guest: Jeff Manuel, Graduate School Inaugural Faculty Fellow for Research Innovation

Jeff Manuel discussed plans for Research Day on Tuesday, April 6. The event will build on the Graduate School Symposium and add a session featuring prior award recipients, recognition of the Hanson Humanities Award, presentation of current research awards, induction of new Distinguished Research Professors, and a keynote address. The confirmed keynote speaker is Henry Roediger of Washington University in St. Louis, co-author of Make It Stick: The Science of Successful Learning.

Manuel also introduced The Research Roar, a new faculty newsletter that will provide faculty-to-faculty research highlights and practical information. The newsletter is being developed in Microsoft Sway and will incorporate video and podcast content, including Beyond the Lab.

During the year, Manuel will solicit faculty feedback about the state of research at SIUE, including strengths, opportunities for improvement, and ways to better recognize research. The feedback will be compiled into a report.

Discussion included opportunities to integrate research podcasts and related content into graduate recruitment and marketing. Members also discussed revised Distinguished Research Professor recognition. The revised language has been ratified, and a full announcement is forthcoming.

VI. Report of the Educational and Research Policies (ERP) Committee

Beidi Qiang reported that the ERP Committee met on October 8 and reviewed GR2627-03, Admissions Policy 1E1, and GR2627-04, Combined Baccalaureate and Graduate Degrees, Policy 1L17. Proposed revisions update English language proficiency requirements to permit additional test options and clarify admission pathways for international students with prerequisite deficiencies or those pursuing combined baccalaureate and graduate programs. The ERP Committee approved both policies with revisions.

VII. Report of the Programs Committee

The Programs Committee did not meet because there were no agenda items.

VIII. Continuing Business

A. Graduate Dean Evaluation Process

Jill Smucker reviewed the annual Graduate Dean evaluation process. Voting members volunteer for the evaluation committee, with at least three members recommended. The committee develops surveys for Graduate Council members, graduate faculty, graduate program directors, and Graduate School staff; compiles the results; and submits a report and memorandum to the Provost. The target completion date is April and no later than the end of the academic year. The Graduate School can provide administrative support, including building and distributing the survey in Kuali Build and providing access to results.

The following members volunteered: Cinnamon VanPutte, Nima Lotfi, Chin-Chuan Wei, and Beidi Qiang.

IX. New Business

A. Discussion of Term Length for the Graduate Council Executive Team

The Council discussed whether the Graduate Council chair should serve more than one year to allow sufficient time to learn the role, lead the Council, and support leadership transition. Members noted that Council appointments are three years and that the Graduate Council operating paper does not establish a term limit; it states that a chair-elect is selected at the first meeting of the academic

year. Therefore, a chair may be nominated to serve an additional year without changing the operating paper.

Discussion addressed the benefits of continuity as well as concerns about concentrated influence, reduced opportunities for new ideas, faculty workload, and burnout. The Council was generally supportive of encouraging a two-year term as a practice rather than revising the operating paper. The discussion will be documented and communicated to Ramana Madupalli.

B. Election of Graduate Council Chair-Elect

Ramana Madupalli was nominated to serve as chair in the next academic year. No other nominations were made.

X. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made and seconded. The motion passed. The meeting adjourned at 3:26 p.m.