

**GRADUATE POLICY COMMITTEE  
MINUTES  
October 19, 2015**

**The following members were present:** Nancy Marcus, Dean, The Graduate School; Jamila Horabin, Biomedical Science; Elwood Carlson, Sociology; Fred Huffer, Statistics; Steven Webber, Interior Design; Todd Adams, Physics; Stanley Gontarski, English; Sonja Siennick, Criminology; Gregory Gerard, Business; Linda DeBrunner, Engineering; Tomi Gomory, Social Work; Sudhir Aggarwal, Computer Science; Kimberly Hires, Nursing; Ronald Braddock, Film; Ulla Sypher, Communication & Information.

**The following members were absent:** Lee Stepina, Chair; Diana Rice, School of Teacher Education; Tahirih Lee, Law; Jeannine Turner, Education; Ron Doel, History; Jasminka Ilich-Ernst, Human Sciences; Kimberly Van Weelden, Music; Anne Barrett, Sociology.

**Also present:** James Beck, The Graduate School; Kathleen McCullough, Associate Dean, College of Business.

The meeting was called to order at 3:35 P.M. by Elwood Carlson, Interim Chair.

A quorum was present.

**Previous Meeting Minutes** –With no further revisions or additions in mind, the meeting minutes from September 28, 2015 were approved.

**Masters of Accounting (MAcc) GMAT Waiver Proposal-** Dr. McCullough gave a brief overview of the proposal. She explained that the Master of Accounting (MAcc) degree program at Florida State University (indeed, MAcc programs at all schools in North America) is a professional program in the sense that it prepares students for professional careers in accounting. It is not a preparatory program for study at the doctoral level, nor does study at the doctoral level require a MAcc degree. The MAcc degree at FSU, in addition to preparing students for careers as accounting professionals, gives students the necessary educational credits to become licensable as Certified Public Accountants (CPAs). Most of the FSU MAcc students have completed internships with the major accounting firms and already have full-time post-graduation employment lined up prior to entering the program. Most of the students also have financial support from their future employers to start preparing and sitting for the CPA exam while completing the MAcc program.

She noted that the MAcc program at FSU currently has 73 students enrolled. Forty-eight (48) of those students are from the undergraduate accounting degree program. With approximately 235 students graduating from the FSU undergraduate accounting program each year, clearly a significant number of FSU undergraduate accounting majors choose not to complete a MAcc degree at FSU. Dr. McCullough stated that “there is the potential to attract (retain) more of our own students.” She mentioned that, in terms of increasing enrollment in the MAcc program,

the most effective strategy is likely to attract more FSU undergrads. Additionally, attracting more FSU undergrads would likely raise the overall quality and external reputation of the program because the undergraduate accounting students historically have become some of the strongest graduate students. Attracting more high-quality FSU undergrads into the MAcc program will likely raise the program's (already high) placement rates and CPA exam passage rates, two widely-used metrics to assess and rank MAcc programs. She stated that "as our placement and CPA exam pass rates improve, the quality of the external (i.e. non-FSU undergrad) applicant pool will potentially improve and grow."

Dr. McCullough mentioned that the College of Business would like to waive the GMAT for strong performers from the undergraduate accounting program. Based on the rigor of the undergraduate curriculum and the success rate of the students in the MAcc program in the past, they specifically believe that it would be reasonable to offer a GMAT waiver to FSU undergraduate accounting students with an upper-division accounting GPA of 3.2 and an overall GPA of 3.4. Students starting the program in the fall of 2015 who meet these criteria had an average GMAT of 576. She noted that the program would also like to have the ability to review the waiver criteria and adjust it over time if necessary. She explained that waiving the GMAT for students with GPAs at these levels will not reduce the quality of the MAcc program at all. In fact, it will likely attract better undergraduate students into the program and actually improve the quality of the MAcc program.

Admission decisions on students for which the unit would waive the GMAT would be based on (1) undergraduate GPA both overall and in the upper division accounting courses, (2) a current resume, (3) three recommendation letters from former college professors, employers, etc., (3) an applicant statement describing relevant work experience, medium-range and long-range goals, and any significant accomplishments to date, and (4) the MAcc admission committee members knowledge of the applicant's personal characteristics such as work ethic, professional and personal ethics, and interpersonal skills.

Regarding point (4), Dr. McCullough stated that the admission committee members learn a great deal about the students because they have the opportunity to work closely with the students outside of the classroom as they navigate the recruiting process, plan their specializations and career paths, and compete in case competitions hosted by large accounting firms. The faculty members also interact with students through several active accounting organizations, such as Beta Alpha Psi (the honors organization for accounting students), Women in Accounting, the National Association of Black Accountants (NABA), and the Association of Latino Professionals in Finance and Accounting (ALPFA). As a result of working closely with the students both inside and outside of the classroom, the faculty members know the students well and can bring that familiarity to bear on the admission decisions for those students for which the unit would waive the GMAT.

Dr. McCullough explained that there are many external universities that have a similar GMAT waiver. Therefore, the goal is to capture and retain the best and brightest FSU undergraduate

accounting students. She stated that this will inevitably increase graduate enrollment and be extremely beneficial to the MAcc program.

Dr. Gomory expressed concern for the GMAT waiver. He was concerned that by removing this standardized evaluation for accounting students that the “quality” of the program could be at risk. He stated that “judgment calls by the faculty on which student is qualified is not the best evaluative standard.” Dr. Gerard (who has served on the MAcc admissions committee for 17 years) explained that many accounting students are looking at the time and cost to take the GMAT and choose to either not pursue a master’s in accounting or go to a competing external institution which does not require the standardized exam. He elaborated that these external universities know that the FSU accounting program requires the GMAT exam and therefore, markets heavily to the students. He stated that a master’s degree is not required in any state to become a CPA and as such, there is a lot of competition for students wishing to pursue a master’s.

Dr. McCullough added that the fall 2015 students that were assessed for consideration of the GMAT waiver had an average GMAT score of 576, which is relatively high. She envisioned that the “quality” of the student and program would be retained if this waiver was approved.

Dr. Sypher asked what percentage of the FSU undergraduate accounting students have a 3.2 GPA or higher. Dr. McCullough was unsure. She approximated only a few FSU undergraduate students would meet this criteria, as the program is quite rigorous and demanding. Dr. Gerard stated that at least one of the faculty member’s on the admissions committee knows each undergraduate student who applies for the MAcc program and can comment on his/her class-based performance. He noted that a student’s accounting GPA is a strong predictor of their MAcc GPA and their class-performance is the best indicator of how well they will do in the MAcc program.

Dr. Sypher expressed concern with the subjective wording of the 4<sup>th</sup> official criterion:

Admission decisions on students for which the unit would waive the GMAT would be based on: (#4) the MAcc admission committee members’ knowledge of the applicant’s personal characteristics such as work ethic, professional and personal ethics, and interpersonal skills.

She stated that the wording of this criteria is so subjective that it could create a host of potential problems, especially if a student is rejected (i.e., discrimination claims). She advised either rewording the criteria altogether or to simply remove it entirely, even if the practice exists. Dr. McCullough stated that her preference would be to strike number 4 from the brochure. Dean Marcus recommended that the wording be adjusted to say that “the program takes a holistic view of the credentials of each applicant.” Dr. Carlson stated that this can simply be a general recommendation and does not need to be included in the motion.

Dr. Adams recommended condensing the motion into the following sentence:

The MAcc program requests to offer a GMAT waiver to FSU undergraduate students with an upper-division accounting GPA of 3.2 and an overall GPA of 3.4.

Dean Marcus stated that it is noted in the proposal that the program would like to retain the ability to review the waiver criteria and adjust it over time if necessary. She asked Dr. McCullough if the program would bring the revised proposal back to the GPC for approval. Dr. McCullough agreed. Dr. Gomory expressed interest in adding an amendment about this in the motion to say:

**The MAcc program requests to offer a GMAT waiver to FSU undergraduate students with an upper-division accounting GPA of 3.2 and an overall GPA of 3.4. If the program changes the criteria in any way, the unit would have to seek approval from the GPC.**

**Dr. Adams requested a motion to approve the revised and shortened language. The motion was seconded by Dr. Gomory.**

**With no further discussion a vote was placed. All were in favor.**

### **PASSED**

**Graduate Teaching Status (GTS) for Postdocs-** At the previous GPC meeting, Dean Marcus explained that the College of Arts and Sciences asked for a change to this policy. The college requested for postdocs to be eligible for GTS without having to go through the added step of seeking courtesy faculty status. Based on the discussion, Dean Marcus felt that everyone was amenable to the change.

The current policy from the Faculty Handbook (pg. 109) reads:

“Persons holding appointment as adjunct faculty or Postdoctoral Research Associates (9189) are not eligible for GTS. Exceptions to this policy may be made by requesting Courtesy Faculty status in an appropriate classification code as well as GTS for such persons through the Vice President for Faculty Development and Advancement and the Dean of The Graduate School.”

The revised policy from the Faculty Handbook (pg. 109) would read:

Under special circumstances qualified persons who are not regular members of the FSU faculty may be hired into a compensated “Visiting in Lieu of” or non-compensated “Courtesy” qualifying faculty position and appointed to GTS on a temporary basis (up to three years) with the approval of the dean of the college and the Dean of the Graduate School. Temporary graduate teaching status is course-specific and expires at the end of the appointment period. Renewals may be requested by the academic unit. Postdoctoral Scholars (9189) are eligible for GTS for the duration of their postdoctoral appointment. Persons holding appointments as adjunct instructors are not eligible for GTS.

Dr. Carlson opened the floor to discussion.

Dr. Adams asked if the postdocs would need to pass the language requirement if they were international. Dean Marcus stated that anyone who teaches needs to meet the language and certification requirements. Dr. DeBrunner asked if this was the same for faculty members. Dean Marcus explained that somewhere along the line, a chair needs to certify that a faculty member meets the language requirement and is qualified to teach. Dr. Aggarwal agreed. Dr. Carlson asked if this needs to be incorporated in the policy. Dean Marcus disagreed and stated that it is integrated in other areas. The focus here is on the eligibility of postdocs and not the language proficiency of faculty members.

Dean Marcus noted that the revised policy makes GTS contingent on a postdoc's status as a postdoc. Meaning if a postdoc transitioned into a different position on campus (e.g., a specialized faculty member) that transition would necessitate an additional GTS request for further status to teach.

Dean Marcus stated that if an instructor is teaching and is external to the university, they are most likely not going to be hired with a courtesy appointment, as this is a non-compensated appointment, but rather with a "Visiting in Lieu of" appointment. Courtesy appointments are primarily used for faculty members who are serving on thesis/dissertation committees. She clarified this in the revised policy.

Dr. Horabin requested a friendly amendment for the revised policy to state that "postdocs are eligible to be nominated..."

The revised policy with friendly amendments from the Faculty Handbook (pg. 109) reads:

**Under special circumstances qualified persons who are not regular members of the FSU faculty may be hired into a compensated "Visiting in Lieu of" or non-compensated "Courtesy" qualifying faculty position and appointed to GTS on a temporary basis (up to three years) with the approval of the dean of the college and the Dean of the Graduate School. Temporary graduate teaching status is course-specific and expires at the end of the appointment period. Renewals may be requested by the academic unit. Postdoctoral Scholars (9189) are eligible to be nominated for GTS for the duration of their postdoctoral appointment. Persons holding appointments as adjunct instructors are not eligible for GTS.**

Mr. Beck asked if departments will still need to seek courtesy faculty status before GTS paperwork is submitted. Dean Marcus explained that the revised policy would not require this added step anymore. The 9189 job code will now be eligible for GTS. The GTS requests for postdocs should be set for a temporary maximum duration of 4 years. After 4 years, if a postdoc transitions into a different position/unit, he/she would fall under that department's rules and new GTS paperwork would need to be submitted for approval.

Dr. Huffer asked if, as a backdoor, an adjunct could get a courtesy appointment and then apply for GTS. He stated that the new policy essentially writes out adjuncts entirely from teaching graduate courses. Dean Marcus explained that an adjunct is not the correct title for someone teaching a graduate course (per the FSU Constitution); it should be "Visiting in Lieu of." Adjuncts are not permanent. Mr. Beck stated that if an adjunct wanted to teach a graduate course, then their appointment and employee class would simply need to be adjusted via ePaf to "Visiting in Lieu of" and then they would need to request GTS.

**Dr. Sypher requested a motion to approve the revised language for Graduate Teaching Status (GTS) for Postdocs. The motion was seconded by Dr. Gomory.**

**With no further discussion a vote was placed. All were in favor.**

**PASSED**

**Formal Leave of Absence Policy-** Dean Marcus explained that the GPC subcommittee met on October 8<sup>th</sup> to discuss/revise the proposed new Leave of Absence policy. She summarized the revisions.

The revised policy reads:

"Under special circumstances, graduate students may apply for leave of absence from the university for a specific period of up to three consecutive semesters (includes summer term). The circumstances justifying a leave include, but are not limited: to personal or family medical conditions, call to active military duty, parental leave, death in immediate family, or completion of a required off-campus internship. The student must provide appropriate documentation and a rationale for the leave request. Students cannot be on leave during their semester of graduation and must be registered for a minimum of two hours.

An approved leave of absence preserves the student's academic status in his or her degree program, and the time off will not be counted against the time limits for awarding degrees. Consequently, registration is not required during the leave period and the student need not re-apply to the program to return to active status at the end of the approved leave period. A leave may be extended for additional consecutive semesters (includes summer term). A student should apply for the leave extension no later than four weeks prior to the end of the final semester/term of his or her initial leave to allow time to consider and process the request. Extension of a leave is subject to approval of the program, college, and the Graduate School. The cumulative number of consecutive leave semesters shall not exceed six. The total consecutive time a student is not registered in the program shall not exceed two years. At the conclusion of the approved leave, a student must enroll at Florida State University and return to active status no later than the start of the next academic semester.

A student on a leave of absence may terminate the leave at any time prior to the approved ending date. In such cases the student would be immediately subject to the continuous enrollment and registration policies. Students returning from a leave of absence of more than one year will be required to disclose any legal or campus disciplinary charges that arose during

the leave and provide updated contact and mailing address, residency documentation, and other biographical information as required by the University for reporting and processing purposes.

Programs may have more strict leave of absence and registration policies. For example, a program may decide that under no circumstances would it allow a formal leave of absence, alternatively a program may choose to only allow a leave of not more than three consecutive semesters. Such policies shall be detailed in the program's graduate student handbook.

To apply for a leave of absence, a student must complete the Request for Leave of Absence Form (available on the Graduate School website) and submit it together with appropriate documentation to the major professor/advisor. If the major professor/advisor/Program Director approves the application it should then be forwarded to the department head and college dean for approval. The college dean should forward the approved application to the Dean of the Graduate School. The Dean will notify the student in writing if the request has been approved or denied. If approved, the Dean of the Graduate School will advise the Registrar to place a notation on the student's record.

While on leave a student will not have access to campus facilities and personnel. This means a student will not have access to labs, libraries, and online resources that require an FSUID. Students on leave cannot remain in student housing. There is no guarantee that financial aid will be continued. Students with financial aid or student loans should confer with the Financial Aid Office and review their loan agreements prior to requesting a leave of absence to ascertain the consequences a leave will have on their loan status. In-state residency status may be impacted if the student moves out of the State of Florida, and then returns to resume the degree program. Students should seek guidance from the Registrar on the potential impact on in-state residency. International students should check with the Center for Global Engagement to determine if a leave would adversely affect their visa status. Students should also consider other factors that might impact their circumstances upon their return to active status. For example, a major professor might depart the university, or under extreme circumstances a degree program might be suspended or terminated. The University has an obligation to provide a path to completion for enrolled students as well as students on a formally approved leave of absence.

Note: If allowed by the student's academic program and University policy, an alternative to taking an official leave could involve reducing the standard course load temporarily because of exceptional personal circumstances."

Dr. Carlson opened the floor to discussion.

Dr. DeBrunner asked what makes a "required off-campus internship" required. She asked if an internship can be considered "required" if an advisor states that it is mandatory for a student's research. Dr. Carlson stated that an internship is a requirement set by the program and are distinguished from those as "required" on an individual basis by faculty.

Dr. Aggarwal asked if a student who undergoes a one-summer-semester internship would need to request approval for a formal leave of absence. Dean Marcus stated that this policy would only apply for students undergoing a two-semester or year-long internship.

Dr. DeBrunner requested to remove the word “required” from off-campus internships in the second sentence of the first paragraph. The revised sentence would read:

“The circumstances justifying a leave include, but are not limited: to personal or family medical conditions, call to active military duty, parental leave, death in immediate family, or completion of an off-campus internship.”

Dr. Carlson asked if the examples noted in the first paragraph should be deleted altogether. Dean Marcus recommended keeping this sentence as it gives people an idea of some eligible examples for a formal leave of absence.

Dr. Adams asked if the maximum duration of 2 years will impact students on active military duty. Dean Marcus stated that she asked Kim Barber, the Registrar, and she did not reply back with anything. She noted that this aspect may still need to be clarified.

Dr. Aggarwal asked if a student who is not enrolled and takes one term off (i.e. summer term) can apply the following semester for a formal leave of absence. Dr. Horabin noted that the current policy does not oppose this. Dr. Carlson stated that any graduate student in good academic standing can apply for a formal leave of absence.

Dr. DeBrunner asked if a student could submit a leave of absence request at any time. Dean Marcus explained that the revised policy states that an extension of leave “should” be submitted four weeks prior to the end of the final semester/term. She noted that while this is more of an implementation issue and not a policy issue, a standard should be established so students are treated fairly and equitably. A reasonable amount of time needs to be available for a comfortable approval process and for units to decide if a returning student can or will be supported/funded. Dr. Horabin agreed with Dean Marcus that the extension deadline needs to be kept. If not, a student could submit a leave request the day before the next semester/term starts, which could be potentially problematic; however, she asked what happens if a medical emergency comes up. Dean Marcus stated that exceptions are always possible.

Dr. Gerard recommended that “Program Director” be included in the first sentence of the fifth paragraph so that it matches the next sentence. The revised sentence would read:

“To apply for a leave of absence, a student must complete the Request for Leave of Absence Form (available on the Graduate School website) and submit it together with appropriate documentation to the major professor/advisor/Program Director. If the major professor/advisor/Program Director approves the application...”



Dr. Gerard recommended that “instate” residency be properly hyphenated in the sixth sentence of the sixth paragraph. The revised sentence would read:

“Students should seek guidance from the Registrar on the potential impact on in-state residency.”

Dean Marcus recommended that the word “consecutive” be deleted from the following sentence:

“The total consecutive time a student is not registered in the program shall not exceed two years.”

Dean Marcus explained that a student should not be on leave for more than 24 months (2 years). Dr. Horabin stated that the word “consecutive” was added to this sentence for programs which do not require their students to register in the summer term. For example, she explained that if a student takes two leave of absences (6 semesters) and it ended in the spring and there was no registration needed in the summer, then the student could technically be on a leave of absence for a total of 7 semesters instead of 6.

Dr. Horabin recommended keeping the word “consecutive” in this sentence and changing the total time of “two years” to say “six semesters” so the language parallels the previous sentence. The revised sentence would read:

“The total consecutive time a student is not registered in the program shall not exceed six semesters.”

Dean Marcus explained that additional caveat language was included at the end of the policy for international students with a visa, students with in-state residency, or other extreme circumstances. For example, if a major professor departs the university or if a degree program is suspended or discontinued while a student is on a formal leave of absence. It was also stated that, if allowed by the student’s program and University policy, an alternative to taking an official leave could involve reducing the course load temporarily.

The revised policy with friendly amendments reads:

**“Under special circumstances, graduate students may apply for leave of absence from the university for a specific period of up to three consecutive semesters (includes summer term). The circumstances justifying a leave include, but are not limited: to personal or family medical conditions, call to active military duty, parental leave, death in immediate family, or completion of an off-campus internship. The student must provide appropriate documentation and a rationale for the leave request. Students cannot be on leave during their semester of graduation and must be registered for a minimum of two hours.**

An approved leave of absence preserves the student's academic status in his or her degree program, and the time off will not be counted against the time limits for awarding degrees. Consequently, registration is not required during the leave period and the student need not re-apply to the program to return to active status at the end of the approved leave period. A leave may be extended for additional consecutive semesters (includes summer term). A student should apply for the leave extension no later than four weeks prior to the end of the final semester/term of his or her initial leave to allow time to consider and process the request. Extension of a leave is subject to approval of the program, college, and the Graduate School. The cumulative number of consecutive leave semesters shall not exceed six. The total consecutive time a student is not registered in the program shall not exceed six semesters. At the conclusion of the approved leave, a student must enroll at Florida State University and return to active status no later than the start of the next academic semester.

A student on a leave of absence may terminate the leave at any time prior to the approved ending date. In such cases the student would be immediately subject to the continuous enrollment and registration policies. Students returning from a leave of absence of more than one year will be required to disclose any legal or campus disciplinary charges that arose during the leave and provide updated contact and mailing address, residency documentation, and other biographical information as required by the University for reporting and processing purposes.

Programs may have more strict leave of absence and registration policies. For example, a program may decide that under no circumstances would it allow a formal leave of absence, alternatively a program may choose to only allow a leave of not more than three consecutive semesters. Such policies shall be detailed in the program's graduate student handbook.

To apply for a leave of absence, a student must complete the Request for Leave of Absence Form (available on the Graduate School website) and submit it together with appropriate documentation to the major professor/advisor/Program Director. If the major professor/advisor/Program Director approves the application it should then be forwarded to the department head and college dean for approval. The college dean should forward the approved application to the Dean of the Graduate School. The Dean will notify the student in writing if the request has been approved or denied. If approved, the Dean of the Graduate School will advise the Registrar to place a notation on the student's record.

While on leave a student will not have access to campus facilities and personnel. This means a student will not have access to labs, libraries, and online resources that require an FSUID. Students on leave cannot remain in student housing. There is no guarantee that financial aid will be continued. Students with financial aid or student loans should confer with the Financial Aid Office and review their loan agreements prior to requesting a leave of absence to ascertain the consequences a leave will have on their loan status. In-state residency status may be impacted if the student moves out of the State of Florida, and then returns to resume the degree program. Students should seek guidance from the Registrar on the potential impact on in-state residency. International students should check with the Center for Global Engagement to determine if a leave would adversely affect their visa status. Students should also consider other factors that might impact their circumstances upon their return to active status. For example, a major professor might depart the university, or under extreme circumstances a degree program might be suspended or terminated. The University has an

**obligation to provide a path to completion for enrolled students as well as students on a formally approved leave of absence.**

**Note: If allowed by the student's academic program and University policy, an alternative to taking an official leave could involve reducing the standard course load temporarily because of exceptional personal circumstances."**

**Dr. Gerard requested a motion to approve the revised language with friendly amendments for the Leave of Absence policy. The motion was seconded by Dr. DeBrunner.**

**With no further discussion a vote was placed. All were in favor.**

**PASSED**

**With no further business to be presented, Dr. Carlson adjourned the meeting at 4:40 P.M.**