



GRADUATE COUNCIL AGENDA

May 13th, 2024

To: Graduate Council

Mr. Hassan Anderson, Chair; Drs. Sourav Banerjee, Kenneth Campbell, Besim Dragovic, Jing Fang, Edie Goldsmith, Dianna Inman, Marketa Kubickova, Amy Lehman, William Matchin, Terrance McAdoo (Vice Chair), David Reisman, Wendy Regoeczi, Sheri Silfies, Sriram Venkataraman, Nick Watanabe, Neal Woods, Christina Yao, Gaurav Harshe, GSA; Murray Mitchell (Secretary).

CC: President Michael Amiridis, Provost Donna Arnett, Trena Houpp, Deans, Department Chairs, Graduate Directors, and Graduate Program Administrators

From: Dr. Ann Vail, Dean of the Graduate School

The Graduate Council will meet virtually on Monday, May 13, 2024, at 2:00p.m.

1. **Call to Order and Approval of Agenda** (Hassan Anderson, Chair)
2. **Approval of the Minutes from April 22, 2024.** Approved actions by Graduate Council become effective 30 days after posting. A copy is available on the Graduate School website at: <https://bit.ly/3SvPO0E>.
3. **Report of the Chair** (Hassan Anderson)
4. **Report of the Dean of the Graduate School** (Ann Vail)
5. **Report of the Secretary of the Graduate Council** (Murray Mitchell)
6. **Report on Professional Development** (Wright Culpepper)
7. **Report of the Graduate Student Association** (Gaurav Harshe)
8. **Report of the Academic Policy and Practices Committee** (Terrance McAdoo)
9. **Report of the 500/600 Level Courses** (Angelina Sylvain)

This report is presented to Council for informational purposes only; no action is necessary.

500/600 Courses for May 2024 Grad Council

(CCP = Course Change Proposal; NCP=New Course Proposal). Total: 2

ENHS 575 (3) Public Health and Community Disaster Resilience (NCP: Summer 2024)

ENHS 585 (3) Crisis Leadership for the Public Health Professional (NCP: Summer 2024)

10. Associate Graduate Faculty Nominations Total: 10 (Murray Mitchell)

Name: **Matthew Geary, EdD 2023**

Program: Exercise Science, ASPH

Term: Summer 2024 – Spring 2030

Name: **Carolyn Harmon, PhD 2022; DNP 2014**

Program: Nursing

Term: Summer 2024 – Summer 2030

Name: **Jim Mensch, PhD 2010**

Program: Exercise Science, ASPH

Term: Summer 2024 – Spring 2030

Name: **Michael Moody, PhD 2020**

Program: Department of Retailing – College of HRSM

Term: Fall 2024 – Summer 2030

Name: **Teresa Moore, PhD 2000**

Program: Exercise Science, ASPH

Term: Summer 2024 – Spring 2030

Name: **David Moscowitz, PhD 2004**

Program: School of Journalism and Mass Communications

Term: Fall 2024 – Fall 2030

Name: **Jennifer O’Neill, PhD 2010**

Program: Exercise Science, ASPH

Term: Summer 2024 – Spring 2030

Name: **Laura Smith, PhD 2004**

Program: School of Journalism and Mass Communications

Term: Fall 2024 – Fall 2030

Name: **Raymond Thompson, PhD 2007**

Program: Exercise Science, ASPH

Term: Summer 2024 – Spring 2030

Name: **Michael Watson, EdD 2018**

Program: Department of Retailing – College of HRSM

Term: Fall 2024 – Summer 2030

11. Fellowships and Scholarships Committee (Edie Goldsmith)

12. Report of Science, Math, and Related Professional Programs Committee (Jing Fang)

Below is a list of proposals reviewed by the Committee. Total: 33

These 30 proposals are offered for approval:

- **Performance Nutrition and Dietetics, M.S.** (Program Change Request: Fall 2025)
- **Disasters and Climate-Ready Public Health, Certificate**, (New Program Proposal: Fall 2024)
- **Information Technology, M.S.**, (Program Change Request: Fall 2025)
- **Informatics, Ph.D.**, (Program Change Request: Fall 2025)
- **Health Information Technology, M.H.I.T.**, (Program Change Request: Fall 2025)
- **NURS 719** (3) Transition to Advanced Nursing Practice, (NCP: Fall 2024)
- **NURS 728** (3) Transition to Nursing Practice in Communities, (NCP: Fall 2024)
- **NURS 733** (3) Transition to Evidence-Based Nursing Practice and Evidence Measures, (NCP: Fall 2024)
- **NURS 735** (3) Transition to Nursing Leadership, Ethics and Policy, (NCP: Fall 2024)
- **PNDI 700** (3) Applied Nutrition Research, (NCP: Spring 2025)
- **PNDI 701** (3) Performance Nutrition, (NCP: Spring 2025)
- **PNDI 705** (3) Performance Nutrition: Approaches and Advocacy, (NCP: Fall 2024)
- **PNDI 710** (3) Medical Nutrition Therapy I, (NCP: Fall 2024)
- **PNDI 711** (1) Performance Nutrition and Dietetics Supervised Experience Level I, (NCP: Fall 2024)
- **PNDI 712** ((1) Performance Nutrition and Dietetics Supervised Experience Level 2, (NCP: Fall 2024)
- **PNDI 713** (1) Performance Nutrition and Dietetics Supervised Experience Level 3, (NCP: Fall 2024)
- **PNDI 714** (1) Performance Nutrition and Dietetics Supervised Experience Level 4, (NCP: Fall 2024)
- **PNDI 715** (1) Performance Nutrition and Dietetics Supervised Experience Level 5, (NCP: Fall 2024)
- **PNDI 730** (3) Nutrition Counseling and Education, (NCP: Fall 2024)
- **PNDI 740** (3) Medical Nutrition Therapy II, (NCP: Fall 2024)
- **HPEB 752/PNDI 752** (3) Nutrition and Public Health, (CCP: Fall 2025)
- **PNDI 750** (3) Performance Nutrition Therapy, (NCP: Fall 2024)
- **PNDI 760** (3) Leadership and Practice in Performance Nutrition and Dietetics, (NCP: Fall 2024)
- **PNDI 770** (3) Food Systems Management, (NCP: Fall 2024)
- **PNDI 780** (3) Performance Nutrition and Dietetics Capstone, (NCP: Fall 2024)
- **COMD 810** (1) Professional Seminar in Communication Sciences and Disorders, (NCP: Summer 2024)
- **COMD 890** (1) Teaching Fundamentals in Communication Sciences and Disorders, (NCP: Fall 2024)
- **EXSC 711** (3) Ecological Momentary Assessment in Health Behavior Research, (NCP: Summer 2024)
- **ENHS 715** (3) Disasters and Public Health Emergency Management I, (NCP: Summer 2024)
- **ENHS 716** (3) Disasters and Public Health Emergency Management II, (NCP: Summer 2024)

The following 3 proposals have been reviewed and approved in concept. Prior to recommending full approval, the committee believes that further discussion is warranted [Please see Attachment #1:

Nursing Exception justification]:

- **Nursing Informatics, M.S.N.**, (Program Change Request: Fall 2025)
- **Healthcare Leadership, M.S.N.**, (Program Change Request: Fall 2025)
- **Nursing Education, M.S.N.** (Program Change Request: Fall 2025)

13. Report of the Humanities, Social Sciences, Education, and Related Professional Programs Committee (Angelina Sylvain for Wendy Regoecki)

Below is a list of proposals reviewed by the Committee. Total: 8

- **Contemporary Music Performance Minor**, (New Program Proposal: Fall 2024)
- **Community Engagement Minor**, (New Program Proposal: Fall 2024)
- **SOWK 784** (1-3) Field Instruction IV: Advanced Social Work Practice, (CCP: Fall 2024)
- **SOWK 783** (1-3) Field Instruction III: Advanced Social Work Practice, (CCP, Fall 2024)
- **SOWK 782** (1-3) Field Instruction II: Generalist Social Work Practice, (CCP, Fall 2024)
- **SOWK 781** (1-3) Field Instruction I: Generalist Social Work Practice, (CCP, Fall 2024)
- **LAWH 711** (3) Organizational Leadership and Professional Development for Healthcare Professionals, (NCP: Summer 2024)
- **LAWG 734** (2-3) Climate Change Seminar, (NCP: Summer 2024)

14. Report of the Grievances, Appeals and Petitions Committee (David Reisman)

15. Other Committee Reports

16. Old Business

17. New Business

Discussion of concerns regarding implementation of the requirement for international applicants to have their transcripts evaluated by World Education Services (David Reisman on behalf of Graduate Directors of the College of Arts and Sciences. [Please see Attachment #2: International Transcript Validation]:

18. Good of the Order

Reminder Dates:

May 6th – 23rd: Dissertation Writing Academy

August 26, 2024: The next scheduled meeting of the Graduate Council will be in person on Monday, August 26th, 2024, at 2:00 pm. The location and agenda will be made available prior to that meeting.

19. Adjournment

Request for Exception for the Graduate School Admission Policy

The College of Nursing is requesting an exception for the requirement of a bachelor's degree to enroll in three Master's of Nursing Science Programs in the College (MSN, Nursing Education; MSN, Nursing Informatics; and MSN, Healthcare Leadership). This unique request arises from the current crisis of shortage of registered nurses and nursing faculty, and the state's (SC Commission and Higher Education and SC State Legislature's) urgent request for colleges of nursing to move quickly to address solutions to this crisis. This request allows the college to quickly upfit full-time faculty for our regional and technical colleges, as well as part time clinical faculty for the R1 colleges of nursing in the state which enables the state nursing programs to enroll more nursing students.

This modified entry will allow experienced registered nurses with an Associate Degree in Nursing (ADN; half of all registered nurses in SC) to efficiently matriculate through one of the three MSN programs, after completing four bridge courses that are typically found in the RN-BSN program. This extreme request impacts the safety and well-being of South Carolinians.

Additional Detailed Information

In the state of South Carolina, the nursing shortage looms as a critical challenge, impacting the accessibility and quality of healthcare services. South Carolina has the 4th highest projected shortage of nurses in the country and by 2030, it is estimated that 10,400 new nurses will be needed to meet the growing demands. With the demand for registered nurses projected to escalate substantially in the coming years, there is a need to rapidly prepare graduate nurses who can serve as part-time or full-time faculty. The South Carolina state legislature, in attempts to help alleviate the shortage and improve state health outcomes, has provided \$20 million to state funded nursing programs in the past two years - \$10million for faculty salary enhancements and \$10 million for full loan repayments for nurses to return to school to earn a graduate degree (MSN or Doctorate). To increase student enrollment, the state needs to quickly enhance the availability of qualified instructors (typically doctoral prepared for R1 schools of nursing and MSN prepared for full-time faculty in community and technical colleges and part-time faculty) for all 46 approved nursing programs in the state. In a statewide meeting last year with the SC Commission on Higher Education (agency managing the appropriated funds) deans of nursing were encouraged to be “creative” to rapidly address the nursing faculty shortage, as a means to ensure adequate supply of nurses to promote the safety and well being of South Carolinians.

Currently, just under half of all the state’s registered nurse workforce is trained at the associate degree entry to practice level. While the traditional matriculation requirements typically mandate a baccalaureate degree prior to matriculating into a graduate program, which requires multiple applications, delayed processes and timelines, there is a unique time to consider an exception to this policy to allow associate degree registered nurses (ADNs) to pursue a master's degree in nursing for several compelling reasons.

First, ADNs have validated competencies as a registered nurse as they undergo the same rigorous licensure examination (NCLEX-RN) as their counterparts who hold bachelor's degrees in nursing. This standardized examination ensures that all registered nurses, regardless of their educational background, possess the fundamental knowledge and skills required for safe and competent practice as a registered nurse.

Secondly, the proposed modified entry for ADN to MSN program for the three programs (MSN, Nursing Education; MSN, Nursing Informatics; and MSN, Healthcare Leadership), contains four bridge courses that are typically found in an RN – BSN program

along with 8 additional courses for the MSN core/specialty areas. The content for the traditional curriculum offered in bachelor of nursing program that ADN programs are not required to have are included in this proposed curriculum through the four bridge courses.

ADNs bring a wealth of experience and practical knowledge, and many of them have many years of experience as a registered nurse , acquired through their extensive training and hands-on practice in healthcare settings. The modified entry will require at least two years of full-time registered nurse experience to validate experience and advanced competencies. Further, there will be an option for students matriculating through this program to opt out after the 4 bridge courses and instead pursue the BSN if for some reason they are unable to complete the entire MSN curriculum.

Thirdly, there is precedence across the US from accredited programs for RN – MSN program without earning the BSN. The University of Mississippi Medical Center is SACSCOC accredited and offers the RN-MSN option for associate-degree registered nurses to complete the master's program in five areas, two of which are similar to the pathways being proposed (nurse educator and nursing and healthcare administrator). Similarly, Arizona State University offers a RN-MSN pathway for associate degree-prepared nurses to pursue a master's in nursing with a nursing education concentration. The RN-MSN is also offered by several other institutions (Western Governors University, Herzing University, etc.).

In conclusion, the nursing shortage in South Carolina, the mission of our flagship university to address health and safety of our citizens, workforce needs and relevance to our state, along with national precedence from accredited programs across the US triggers a reevaluation of existing admission policies to allow an exception for admission for these selected graduate nursing programs at the University. It is imperative that policymakers and educational institutions collaborate to enact necessary reforms that facilitate creative and necessary solutions to address critical challenges and ensure the delivery of high-quality healthcare services to all residents of South Carolina.



Dear Dean Vail,

We, Directors of Graduate Studies in the College of Arts and Sciences, are writing to express our strong concerns about plans by the Graduate School to require international applicants to have their transcripts evaluated by an external agency such as World Education Services (WES). International students are a core part of our graduate student body. They provide vital contributions to our educational and research missions while also increasing diversity on campus. We understand that combatting fraud is an important task. However, the adoption of this requirement would have immediate and serious negative consequences for graduate programs at USC. It also limits accessibility for prospective students from lower-income countries. There are better ways to combat fraud while keeping USC an attractive destination for prospective international graduate students.

To our understanding, the USC Graduate School has not assessed whether transcript fraud occurs at USC and, if it does occur, how widespread it is. It does not seem prudent to implement such an impactful policy without this information.

During the Graduate Directors meeting on March 19, 2024, the cost of the WES evaluation service was stated to be approximately \$200. This is an exceptionally large amount of money for prospective students from many of the countries from which we receive applications. Imposing this additional requirement will force applicants to avoid applying to USC – not because they find our programs unattractive, but because they do not have the financial means to do so. The result will be a loss of highly qualified applicants, which in turn will have a negative impact on our graduate programs—reducing them in both size and quality. This will be especially severe for programs with a substantial portion of international students, such as in the sciences, engineering, and computing. And it will inhibit programs in the arts and humanities that are looking to expand their international appeal, to capitalize on the international reputations of the faculty.

The negative impact might be mitigated if other institutions had similar requirements. However, to date the Graduate School has not provided a list of institutions that **require** an outside valuation of international transcripts. Absent this information, we have looked at USC's [six official](#) peer institutions (University of Georgia, University of Kentucky, University of Massachusetts – Amherst, University of Missouri – Columbia, University of Tennessee, Clemson

University) and five aspirant institutions (University of Iowa, University of Maryland College Park, University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, University of Utah, University of Virginia). Of these 11 institutions, **none** requires that international students have their transcripts validated by an external organization. In fact, several specifically state that they do not accept the evaluation reports in place of a transcript:

- University of Georgia: “...[do not accept evaluation reports from external evaluation agencies](#)”
- University of Tennessee: “Do not upload [...] [an evaluation provided by a credential service, for example, Educational Credentials Evaluators \(ECE\) OR World Education Services \(WES\)](#)”
- University of Utah: “[We do not accept](#) a third-party transcript evaluation as fulfilling the transcript requirement for an application, though it can be accepted in place of a certified English language translation for a transcript.”

If combatting potential fraud is the main motivation for this proposed new requirement, it is not clear why it is limited to international applicants. The transcript requirements for US and international students are identical – they can use unofficial transcripts during the original application process, but they must provide official transcripts once they are enrolled at USC. If international students can cheat during this process, so can domestic students. Why is the new requirement limited to international students, who make up only a small fraction of the overall graduate student population?

We believe that there are better ways to address this issue. The reinstatement of a small application fee would reduce the number of applications to those from students who are truly interested in attending USC. The requirement of transcript validation could be limited to accepted students only, analogous to the requirement for official transcripts. Ideally this would be accompanied by a fee waiver system for admitted students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. The collected application fee can be used to offset these costs. Or there could be a simple check to compare unofficial transcripts used for the application with the official transcripts once they are received.

Transcripts are only one aspect that our admissions committees take into account when making decisions. In addition to reviewing provided documents, many departments in the College of Arts and Sciences are performing virtual interviews with applicants. This gives the department an opportunity to gain deeper insights into the qualifications of the candidate beyond what is conveyed in their application material. This enables the department to make an informed decision and select applicants who will be successful graduate students. It quickly becomes obvious during the interview if the student is not qualified, which then prevents unqualified students from gaining admittance.

We urge the Graduate School to not implement the proposed policy. It reinforces inequity by putting up significant barriers for applicants from economically disadvantaged countries. So far,

no other peer institution has been identified that requires transcript validation for all its international graduate applicants. If USC is one of an exceedingly small number of institutions with this type of requirement (or potentially the only one), then we will miss the opportunity to recruit highly qualified applicants and, therefore, graduate education and research at USC will suffer.

Terrence Weik, Anthropology

David Reisman, Biological Sciences

Sheryl Wiskur, Chemistry and Biochemistry

Brandon Applegate, Criminology and Criminal Justice

Michael Bizimis, School of the Earth, Ocean and Environment

Eli Jelly-Schapiro, English

Caroline Nagel, Geography

Joshua Grace, History

Alexandre Bonafos, Languages, Literatures & Cultures

Anne Bezuidenhout, Linguistics

Hong Wang, Mathematics

Brett Sherman, Philosophy

Matthias Schindler, Physics and Astronomy

Matthew Wilson, Political Science

Brett Kloos, Psychology

Andrea Henderson, Sociology

Dewei Wang, Statistics

Andrew Graciano, School of Visual Art and Design

Lauren Sklaroff, Women's and Gender Studies