

Presidential Wrap-Up November 2015

November 2

1. Graduate Operations Committee
 - **See “Special Note: Q-Dropping Graduate Courses” at the end of this document for more information about the rules and guidelines to these processes**
 - Zero credit hour option for graduate courses: this is already in the works for some departments; need to request zero credit hour option and pass course change through graduate council
 - Departments and colleges are working to review the eligible graduate faculty
 - \$1000 scholarship winners are typically granted out-of-state tuition waivers; there is a capped percentage of students who can be granted these waivers; colleges were asked to provide input to this process and how we should move forward, should we reach the cap.
2. Meeting with GPSC Research co-chairs: discussed graduate student spotlight and human subjects recruitment hub
3. MSC Board of Directors: program update, constitution review and discussion

November 3

- General Assembly meeting

November 4

1. DSA Monthly meeting
2. Graduate Student Advisory Council meeting, with Dr. Katie Stober, Career Services: discussed how to best serve students and increase numbers of students who fill out career survey at graduation
3. Transportation Services Advisory Council:
 - Game day traffic recap & updates
 - Texas A&M won a bronze “Bicycle Friendly University” award
 - Vote to change parking waitlist policy: people with passes affected by moving offices will be inserted into the waitlist in accordance with months of service; this means some other customers will move down the list. Motion approved unanimously.
 - Presentation of proposed transit route changes for fall 2016. (This presentation was also given to GPSC during general assembly meeting on 12/1)

November 5

1. Campus Carry: update on survey (closing this week)
2. Graduate Council
 - Voted to move up deadlines for agenda items. This gives us more time to review, and works better since faculty senate deadlines moved up. Change to standard operating procedure - two weeks prior to meeting to all agenda items
 - GIC reviewing graduate committee faculty membership for professional track (not tenure track); could be given member privileges; if current faculty change, then need to follow up if sitting on a committee, recommended to discuss with units/review bylaws
 - New course approval system will be operational in January

November 10

- GPSC Executive Committee Meeting

November 12

- Campus Security Lighting Tour: tour of campus with transportation services to see the upgrades to lights around campus, and spots where lights still need to be replaced; part of a long-term plan

November 14

- Football game with President Young!

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November 16

- GPSC Leadership Roundtable, special guest: Dr. Karen Butler-Purry, Associate Provost (OGAPS): discussion of key items, upcoming events, and concerns from constituent groups

November 17

1. GPSC Officer Meeting
2. GPSC General Assembly Meeting

November 18

- Graduate Operations Committee, Deans Meeting: Attracting Best Graduate Students, Part I
 - Analyzed responses from departments & programs about what they are doing to attract the best graduate students, and what they need to continue to do so
 - Came up with a list of ways to improve: recruitment, funding, marketing

November 19

- Campus Carry Committee: discussion and updates; survey results are still being analyzed - over one million words were submitted! Sub-committees are meeting to discuss particulars of athletics, research facilities, health, and counseling.

November 23

1. Dr. Karen Butler-Purry, Associate Provost (OGAPS): Discussed GPSC general assembly grievances, helped direct me to solutions; discussed general assembly quality of life poll and future climate surveys; discussed future possible graduate student lounge/space in a future "New Cain Hall"
2. MSC Board of Directors: voted to approve constitutional changes, including the addition of an international graduate student for the board; update on programs and goals

November 24

1. Campus Carry, Sub-Committee on Research: discussed recommendations to present to the task force:
 - possible mechanisms to help determine research/lab exemptions to campus carry law;
 - possible lab spaces that should be considered for exclusion (e.g., nuclear facilities)
 - Dr. Glen Laine (Vice President for Research) will reach out to administration, deans, and Council of Principal Investigators
2. GPSC Executive Committee Meeting

November 30

- Graduate Operations Committee, Deans Meeting: Attracting Best Graduate Students, Part II
 - continued analyzing responses from programs about what they are doing to attract the best graduate students, and where the
 - Came up with a list of biggest roadblocks to recruiting best students, and actionable ways to overcome those roadblocks

Good luck with finals and wrapping up your semester. Enjoy the break!

Best,

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SPECIAL NOTE: Q-Dropping Graduate Courses

As a follow-up to the GOC meeting and discussions on the issues of enrollment status when students drop or q-drop a course, here is a brief summary:

Enrollment Status – A student's enrollment status continues to be adjusted throughout the semester when a student drops or q-drops a course. However, in most cases, the change in status has minimal impact, depending on timing or recent changes in laws. The impact is primarily on student loan repayment.

Health Insurance – In the past, students often needed to maintain full-time enrollment to continue to be covered under their parents health insurance policy. With the implementation of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), that is no longer required. A dependent can now be covered under their parents insurance plan until the age of 26 regardless of their enrollment status as a student.

Financial Aid and Scholarships – Timing matters on when a student drops a course. Financial aid checks enrollment status on two occasions – when a student's aid is released to their billing account and on 12th class day. A student's aid amount can be adjusted if the student's enrollment status changes between the time funds are disbursed to the billing account and the 12th class day. However, after the 12th class day, enrollment status is not a factor for aid that has already disbursed and instead any changes in enrollment status will be reviewed through financial aid's satisfactory academic progress standards for subsequent semesters and will not impact current semester aid. If aid has not been disbursed prior to the 12th class day, then the enrollment status on the date the aid is disbursed is what matters.

Non-Resident Assistantship Waiver - Approximately one week prior to the 20th class day, SBS will notify departments to review students who have not met all eligibility criteria. SBS will provide a deadline for departments to respond prior to removing the waiver. Departments will then review each student and provide SBS with documentation of eligibility for students who are eligible for the waiver although their record in BPP and/or Compass may not reflect eligibility. Students that do not meet all eligibility criteria as of the 20th class day will have their waiver removed.

Student Loan Repayment – Enrollment status IS a factor for when a student enters repayment on their student loans even after the 12th class day. Students must maintain at least half-time enrollment throughout the semester or the student's grace period for loan repayment will be triggered and the student can be required to begin repaying their student loan. Changes in enrollment status from full-time to half-time have no consequence in this scenario. Only changes that result in the student being less than half-time have an impact. For the record, half-time enrollment for a graduate student is 5 hours and for a professional student, it is 6 hours.

International Graduate Assistants

The Department of Homeland Security and the Department of States requires students on F-1 and J-1 visas/status to be enrolled in a full course of study. Undergraduate students are required to enroll for 12 semester hours per term. A full course of study at the graduate level is certified by the international student advisors, Designated School Official (DSO). ISS uses the University's definition of full course of study for graduate students.

International students on F-1 visas have limited reasons they can drop below full-time enrollment and maintain their immigration status. There are three basic reasons the F-1 students can below hours.

1. Medical Condition
2. Academic difficulties
 - A. F-1 students can only use it once for improper course level placement or initial difficulties in English proficiency, difficulty with US teaching methods, or reading requirements and can drop to 6 hours.
3. Final semester

F-1 students need ISS approval before dropping below full-time enrollment. If a student drops below full-time enrollment without ISS approval, then the student will be out of status and will have to stop working on campus and apply to get back in legal status. This may require leaving the United States. Students request the reduced course load by submitting the reduced course load form that has been signed by the academic advisor and graduate advisor. ISS inputs the approved reduced course load into SEVIS.

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F-1 Reduced Course load form

<http://iss.tamu.edu/ISS/media/ISS-Files/ISS-PDF/Current%20Students/F-1-Reduced-Course-Load.pdf>

Students on a J-1 visa/status may have a reduced course load if

1. There is a documented medical illness
2. There is a bona fide academic reason
3. It is the final term.

J-1 students need ISS approval before dropping below full-time enrollment. If a student drops below full-time enrollment without ISS approval, then the student will be out of status and will have to stop working on campus and apply to get back in legal status. Students request the reduced course load by submitting the reduced course load form that has been signed by the academic advisor and graduate advisor.

J-1 Reduced Course load form

[http://iss.tamu.edu/ISS/media/ISS-Files/ISS-PDF/Current%20Students/J-1-Reduced-Course-Load-\(Update\)_new.pdf](http://iss.tamu.edu/ISS/media/ISS-Files/ISS-PDF/Current%20Students/J-1-Reduced-Course-Load-(Update)_new.pdf)

If the Registrar codes F-1 or J-1 students as full-time even if though they are below hours, then the students are considered as engaged in a full-course of study. There is an interesting clause in the F-1 regulations that discusses students employed for scholarship, fellowship or assistantship may apply for a reduced course load.

iii) Reduced course load. The designated school official may allow an F-1 student to engage in less than a full course of study as provided in this paragraph (f)(6)(iii). Except as otherwise noted, a reduced course load must consist of at least six semester or quarter hours, or half the clock hours required for a full course of study. A student who drops below a full course of study without the prior approval of the DSO will be considered out of status. On-campus employment pursuant to the terms of a scholarship, fellowship, or assistantship is deemed to be part of the academic program of a student otherwise taking a full course of study.

Therefore, in most cases, the q-dropped course would not need to be replaced with another course or research hours.