

- **Graduate Council Work: VOTE REQUIRED (APPROVE: YES or NO)**

This past year, the Graduate Council voted to update the full-time enrollment designation to include graduate students enrolled in less than a full-time course load when participating in an accreditation-mandated internship of 30 hours or more.

The wording will be updated in the university rules (eg, 3359 60-06.4):

'Full-time study' is defined as nine to fifteen semester credits, except for graduate teaching and research assistants for whom full-time study is specified by the assistantship agreements. For doctoral students who are in their final semester of study and have completed all degree requirements except for dissertation, for international students participating in curricular practical training (CPT) and/or academic training (AT) opportunities of thirty or more hours per week with approval from the international center, **or for graduate students participating in accreditation-mandated internships of thirty or more hours per week with approval from the academic unit**, one or more graduate hours constitute full-time enrollment.

- **Graduate Council Update:**

- Mentoring Agreements – in an effort to improve the communication of shared expectations between faculty and students in a variety of mentor/mentee relationships, Graduate Council is working to define recommendations for mentoring agreements. Programs that do not currently have some form of agreement in place are encouraged to discuss and develop these agreements. The Council has created guidelines, best practices and a template that can be modified to accommodate the specific needs of a given program. Graduate students continue to experience mental health challenges and mentoring agreements can promote positive working relationships that can improve retention and timely degree completion.

- Graduate Assistant Probation – as we move through COVID, the Graduate School, with the support of Council, will be enforcing the following GA probation practice consistent with university rule:

University Rule 3359-60-06.2 (4): Any student whose GPA falls below 3.00 is no longer in good standing in the graduate school and will be placed on probation ... the dean of the graduate school will dismiss full-time students who do not return to good academic standing within two consecutive semesters (excluding summers) and part-time students who do not return to good academic standing within the attempting of fifteen additional credits.

**Effective Immediately –**

Graduate students may retain their assistantships for the two consecutive semesters while returning to good standing; anyone not returning to good academic standing will be subject to dismissal and will not be eligible for Graduate School support (this includes TA-stipend and GA-remission),

And

Any GA that is on probation a second time is no longer assistantship-eligible and will lose their assistantship at the end of the semester that qualifies them for probation a second time. This is regardless of whether or not the student was able to return to good standing within 1 or 2 semesters of funding.

- Certificate Enrollment – We have permanently streamlined the process for graduate students enrolled in degree-seeking graduate programs (Master's/Doctoral) to add certificate(s) to their current plan of study while bypassing the application system and the additional application fee(s). A simple form has been created to enable the Graduate School to process the enrollment with the signatures of the student and

the involved departments. The form (Certificate Enrollment Form) is the first bulleted form under 'Admissions'. [Forms : The University of Akron, Ohio \(uakron.edu\)](https://uakron.edu)

- **Graduate Council Committee Update:**

- Curriculum Committee - The curriculum committee approved 82 proposals during the Fall 2021 semester.
- Membership Committee - The membership committee continues to review graduate faculty credentials. As of 4/18, 43 graduate faculty applications have been approved by this committee.

All Full-time Graduate Faculty Membership Criteria have been updated by the departments. We thank everyone for their efforts to update these.

- **Graduate School Update:**

- Reporting changes - The Graduate School continues to perform daily operations under temporary leadership. Marnie Saunders continues to serve as the Interim Director of the Graduate School. The Graduate School will report to the Vice President for Research and Business Engagement / Dean of the Graduate School. As of this writing candidate interviews are taking place.
- Staffing changes -
  - 7/21 - Deborah Phillip has been hired as the Director, Graduate Admissions and Student Services
  - 12/21 – Vivian Campbell has been hired as the Director, Graduate Student Financial Aid
  - 10/21 – Tanya Kauffman left the university (Student Services Coordinator)

We continue to operate at 80% staffing. With the imminent change in leadership and the ongoing efforts to build the TargetX application and associated features, the position will remain vacant until later this year when we can better assess the new skills, job duties and workload needed to best move the Graduate School forward.

- COVID Response - As we have done for the past 2 years, we continue to monitor the situation and are working closely with the Graduate Council, Provost and Chancellor's Council on Graduate Studies (CCGS) to make timely and supportive decisions. For example, Duolingo to satisfy admissions has been extended through Dec 31, 2022.

- **New Initiatives:**

- Onboarding Project (AKR/OKR 2022) - To accommodate turnover, the Graduate School staff have collectively created an onboarding document that contains Graduate School policies, practices and paperwork. We are meeting with staff and administrators and educating them as to these matters in a small group setting. The goal is to have all those assisting in graduate education to be comfortable and clear with our operations; this should result in graduate students having a better collective experience contributing to retention and timely degree completion. The document has been created and small group meetings are underway. We have started with staff and program administrators but will expand this to all faculty that request to participate. Eventually the final document will be available online.

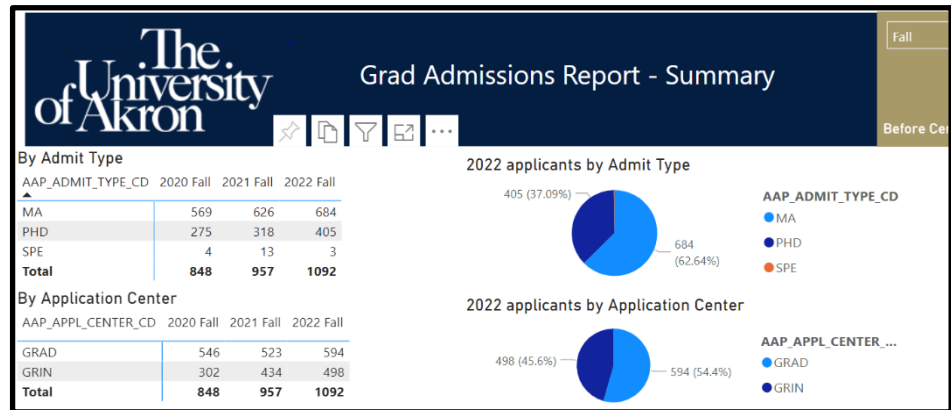
- In preparing the document, we noticed our forms have no consistent look. We will be updating all of our forms in the near future to have a consistent header. The updated forms will be included in the onboarding document.

- Accelerated Degree Pathway is up and running - On a case-by-case basis we accommodated last year's seniors that wanted to participate. The current list of programs approved to participate are: Civil Engineering; Mechanical Engineering; Computer Science; Mathematics; Statistics; Speech Language Pathology/Audiology; Accounting; MTax; and, English. The programs allow the double counting of up to 9 hours of graduate coursework in earning both the undergraduate and graduate degrees. The program is set up to charge the undergraduate tuition rate for the double counted courses.
  - i. ODHE has weighed in on these offerings. Graduate programs of 30 hours and undergraduate programs of 120 or more hours are permitted to double count at most 9 hours.
  - ii. ODHE is still considering additional double counting of hours when the graduate program hours exceed 30. If you are considering these, please contact Marnie Saunders to ensure you are creating these in accordance with the current guidelines.
  - iii. The Graduate School will send out messaging once the handling of graduate programs exceeding 30 hours are officially approved. But we recommend staying within 9 hours and you should not have issue.
  
- Cohort Surcharge Reduction - Out-of-state students with a bachelor's or master's degree from an Ohio institution (in-person attendance), will be charged \$1 over the current in-state graduate tuition rate (ie, \$442.10 in-state and \$443.10 cohort). This initiative has been delayed. ODHE has not officially determined implementation. They are currently working to determine what defines 'immediate' enrollment in a graduate program following undergraduate degree completion and if this extends beyond domestic students. The Graduate School is working with the Bursar to determine how best to implement this once we receive final decisions from ODHE; we anticipate implementation for fall 2022.
  
- Creating certificates and stackable certificates towards graduate degrees - As academic units discuss these options, please contact the Graduate School for help. As our neighboring institutions are also developing these, we have a clearer understanding of how to create these such that they conform to the expectations of ODHE and HLC. *We have created a white paper regarding this matter.*
  
- TargetX Application and Integration - We continue to work on the TargetX application and platform implementation. At this time, the basic application has been built and is in place; the temporary Qualtrics survey and payment portal have been removed. We continue to work with IT to resolve issues as we experience them or are made aware of them (please continue to let us know if you encounter problems). We have started to work on the integration that will enable tracking of the required materials (eg, letters of recommendation); the decision letters have been built and we will immediately begin sandbox testing before these are put in place. We will then move on to email campaigns and learning how to use the platform to better connect and engage with current and prospective students.

We anticipate beginning to bring program staff into this process by early summer. This will include working with staff to navigate TargetX and to learn how to monitor their own program applications and applicant progress.

We understand this has been a difficult transition for everyone and we apologize for the issues and delays. We understand the importance of a smooth admissions process in growing our enrollment and we will continue to work toward that goal. We will keep deans and chairs updated over the course of the summer as to the progress.

- Recruitment Efforts - During the Fall of 2021, the Interim Director called 200 graduate students that are active in their programs but not enrolled for the fall 2021 semester. The messaging was to check in, answer questions they may have and determine why they were not enrolled.
  - Of the 200 calls (area code 330), approximately 100 were spoken with – no major flags were present – only 1-2 had transferred – the majority were life changes (marriage, divorce, child) or COVID-related work increase (particularly in nursing, social work, counseling and education). Additionally, many were MA/MS students having completed all required coursework with no further enrollment requirement prior to degree completion and graduation. The vast majority indicated the intent to finish. Students requesting to speak with faculty, were forwarded to the Deans for distribution.
  - Waived application fee through 4/1-4/17, 2022.
  - As of today, we are up in fall graduate applications (1092) over this same week in 2021 (957) and 2020 (848). Please note, graduate students do not confirm enrollment. Our office will be sending out messaging to try to keep applicants engaged. ***Please help us with this by continuing to interact with potential students and encourage them to attend. You are welcome to contact our office to assist with providing contact information for your program applicants. Please help us make an intentional effort this summer to keep up engagement. To make an impact, we need to make an impression.***



Please feel free to contact our office if you would like to discuss these efforts further or have any questions. We welcome feedback and are always willing to hear your ideas for improving graduate education.

*Marnie M Saunders*

Respectfully submitted,  
Marnie M Saunders, PhD