

ACU Graduate Council
November 11, 2025
12:00 – 1:00 p.m.
Zoom

Present: W. Carroll, K. Witemeyer, L. Sharp-Penya, T. Womble, D. Walls, M. Lee, R. Slaymaker, A. Huddleston, M. Long, D. Perkins, M. DeHart

Absent: C. Flanagan, T. Baggs

Guests: M. McCallon, D. Kennamer, J. Smith, R. Milligan, C. Miertschin, J. Drachenberg, C. Westmoreland, R. Team

The meeting began at 12:01 a.m.

- Prayer by W. Carroll
- Approval of the minutes from 5/6/25

Minutes passed by consent.

Information Items:

1. BMFT 610 – Change Course Title & Description

L. Merchant - This is connected to the new class we will be approving. Changing this to Couples Therapy I since we will have Couples Therapy II. We also updated the description.

2. SOCW 753 – Change Course Outcomes

R. Slaymaker - Last year we overhauled our curriculum, and we realized we needed to revise some of our course outcomes to align better with our accreditation needs.

Action Items:

3. New Certificate – Certificate of Adv. Graduate Studies in School Psychology

C. Westmoreland - This is in collaboration with ACU Dallas. It will be a certificate program to help with the shortage of school psychologists in Texas. Historically, the only way to be a school psychologist in Texas was to have a specialist degree - a 60-hour program. We now have a pathway to licensure for those who have a master's degree in a related field who can participate in an additional certificate. This will be the first

program like this in the state of Texas. This is a 36-hour certificate. One year of classroom instruction and one year of in-school practicum.

R. Slaymaker - As we go through CGIO, I have questions about verbiage. There are some places where it mentions fully online and other places where it is mentioned as hybrid.

C. Westmoreland - We have some synchronous elements and we also have two residential weekends where the students come here. J. Smith - SACs has a very broad definition of hybrid and online. C. Westmoreland - ACU Dallas asked us for the hybrid tag to add clarity that there are synchronous and brief residential elements since that differs from their usual asynchronous modality. R. Slaymaker - So there are no plans for this to be a residential program offering. C. Westmoreland - Correct. We don't think it would be successful residentially.

R. Slaymaker - What about cohort vs. section size? R. Team - I imagine we will eventually have multiple cohorts at a time, so those numbers are more section size.

L. Merchant - Tell me about the residency component. Why is it important? C. Westmoreland - There are some very important skills checks that will be happening. These people will be working with our children, so it is very important. It also allows for networking. This is a small field, and having that time to network within the field is valuable. We don't offer an alternative to the residency. R. Team - We've been working on this program for 2 years. We need to make sure these students are prepared. We will not allow students to skip this residential step. It's that important. We want to make the schools better, not worse. Students might be able to fake it on a video, but we can see any lack in person. L. Merchant - Will the grade be pass/fail? R. Team - Yes.

L. Merchant - And the statistics course? Is this combined just for this track? R. Team - Yes. We need to lower the total hours, and most of these students are coming in with some experience that applies. We are honing in on key skills.

L. Merchant - Since this is targeted toward Texas, will students from other states be attracted? C. Westmoreland - We are being very upfront that this is designed for Texas. We are hoping to get national accreditation in the future. R. Team - There are a few other re-training programs in the country, but our Texas folks can't take those because they don't meet the Texas requirements. There is potential to branch out, but that isn't our focus yet.

L. Merchant - Is PSYC the subject code or should it be PSYO? J. Smith - They will be PSYC.

W. Carroll - It is unusual for a certificate to be 36 hours. Why a certificate instead of a master's degree? R. Team - A 36-hour master's degree will not allow licensure. However, a certificate that is combined with a different master's degree does.

L. Sharp-Penya - This looks good, but will you have sufficient staffing? Will there be adjuncts? Faculty overload? C. Westmoreland - Right now the plan is adjuncts. R. Team

- To be nationally accredited, we will need full-time faculty. Right now they don't accredit certificates, but we expect that to change in 2030. L. Sharp-Penya - Do you have concerns about finding adjuncts? R. Team - No. L. Sharp- Penya - I'm a little concerned about staffing a program with adjuncts. Our experience is that adjuncts often disappear. R. Team - We will go in the direction of full-time faculty eventually. Right now the adjuncts are us and our friends. R. Slaymaker - The course development model for Dallas is very different than for Abilene. M. Lee - It is a facilitator model. J. Smith - But all adjuncts will be credentialed. L. Sharp-Penya - It's more the reliability that concerns me.

Motion to approve by L. Merchant; seconded by A. Huddleston; 7 in favor, 1 abstention. Motion passes.

4. New Program – MS in Nuclear Science & Engineering

M. DeHart - These two programs have a lot in common. They are 30-hour programs. Some differences - the MS is a thesis-based program that is research-focused for those looking for academic careers. The focus is on research and design. This would be a good fit for those who wish to pursue PhDs.

The master of engineering is project-based, no thesis. It is more of a practical degree. There will be opportunities to collaborate with industry. It emphasizes practical skills. This would be a good fit for our ACU graduates with mechanical engineering degrees. They would be able to find careers with nuclear companies.

Both of these programs align with the ACU mission to lead. It works with NEXT to support commercialization. We want to produce nuclear engineers that can work with multiple types of reactors. We are becoming a national hub and a center for innovation. As we grow the graduate program, I hope we will grow other programs with Math, Computer Science, etc. We are working to equip a workforce to develop the next generation of reactors. We expect to start with 5 students, and we plan to provide fellowships. It will expand to 10 for the next year. They will finish in 18 months or 3 semesters. We will encourage research or internships elsewhere during the summers. We hope to expand to a PhD program with the students from this masters program. We eventually expect an annual enrollment of about 20 students with 4-5 full-time faculty. This is very similar in structure to how the University of Texas operates.

A Huddleston - Is the masters required on the route to the PhD? M. DeHart - No. It's not. When the PhD program is approved, students can transfer into that program instead of the master's. A. Huddleston - So the PhD will not make these degrees irrelevant? M. DeHart - No, it will not. There will always be students who don't wish to tackle a PhD program.

R. Slaymaker - I noticed some of the faculty who can teach the courses are outside of the Engineering Department. Do we have support from those departments? M. DeHart - Physics is on board. We have talked to Math. C. Miertschin - We have looked at crosslisting. We might be able to use undergrad faculty for grad only. We might also use

faculty from sister institutions. M. DeHart - Long term - We would like to have faculty within our department teach them.

A Huddleston - I see an option for remote participation. Is online an option? M. DeHart - We are looking at that. The coursework can be offered remotely. We would like to have an online option eventually. The challenge will be on the research side. We are not marketing it as an online program, but we are trying to build in possibilities. A. Huddleston - It is a face-to-face program, though, correct? W. Carroll - Yes. This is a residential program. M. DeHart - There is definitely a market for an online program, but one step at a time.

A Huddleston - Did I hear you say that the students will have their tuition covered? M. DeHart - Yes. The university will cover the tuition and provide income for research assistants. R. Slaymaker - This funding is being provided on the assumption that grants will be procured to cover funding, correct. M. DeHart - Yes.

(T. Womble and M. Lee had to leave at 1:00 pm)

**Motion to approve by L. Merchant; seconded by D. Walls; all in favor.
Motion passes.**

5. New Program – MEng in Nuclear Science & Engineering

See discussion above.

**Motion to approve by L. Merchant; seconded by D. Walls; all in favor.
Motion passes.**

6. New Course - BMFT 612 – Couples Therapy II

Tabled.

7. MFTH & MFTT – Add BMFT 612, Remove BMFT 651

Tabled.

Meeting ended at 1:15 p.m.