

ACU Graduate Council
April 20, 2026
8:30 – 9:00 a.m.
Zoom Meeting

Present: W. Carroll, K. Witemeyer, D. Walls, M. Long, D. Perkins, T. Baggs, L. Sharp-Penya, C. Flanagan, T. Harmon, M. DeHart, T. Womble

Absent: M. Lee, A. Huddleston, R. Slaymaker, L. Merchant

Guests: W. Crawford

The meeting began at 8:32 a.m.

- Approval of the minutes from 4/1/25

Minutes passed by consent.

Action Item:

1. PhD in Nuclear Science & Engineering – New Program

M. DeHart – We are building on top of the master's programs. Our biggest challenge was to define pathways. Students can come straight into the PhD or come after achieving a master's degree. We will be teaching the doctorate courses in the spring only, at first. We expect this program to be more of a feeder for research. Students could be going out to national labs. One of the faculty members we want to hire can expand the program into reactor safety and health physics. We have added some Communication courses as well to broaden the scope. T. Baggs – What makes your program stand out against others? M. DeHart – We have research with the NEXT lab that no one else has. We are certainly the only Christian university to have such a program. M. Long – Two of the math classes are cross-listed 500/300. Are we allowed to use 300-level courses? M. DeHart – We are, and that is the same as with the masters. It is my goal to eliminate those completely and just offer graduate level courses. T. Baggs – Most PhD programs offer stipends to students. Will there be stipends for these students? M. DeHart – Yes, up to the limit that we have budget. We will cover tuition and a stipend. We will likely be limited to 9-10 students. W. Carroll – The stipend funding will come mainly from grants. D. Perkins – Do we have grants lined up? M. DeHart – We have several in the works. K. Witemeyer – How will we set up the pathways? M. DeHart – The PhD students will take many of the same courses as the master's students to start. I think it is best for students to do the master's first. K. Witemeyer – I will work with Eric to set up DegreeWorks and the catalog to accurately reflect what is expected for students depending on whether or not they already have

their master's degree. C. Flanagan – How are planning to hire your adjuncts? M. DeHart – I have a lot of contacts in this field, and my initial searches have been very fruitful. C. Flanagan – The requirement that every student have a publication before graduation can be problematic. At least it is in our field. M. DeHart – That is standard in our industry. The publication process can be tricky, but it shouldn't be an issue. C. Flanagan – Are there any other accreditations that you should be seeking? M. DeHart – SACs was the best from what I was told. W. Carroll – I haven't found an accreditor for Nuclear Engineering at the graduate level, but the NRC's monitoring performs many of the same guidance functions as an accreditor would. M. DeHart - I want our students to be able to work in any type of reactor, not just molten salt. I'm hoping to bring in a simulator that will allow students to train on other types of reactors. D. Perkins – Do you see your students moving into industry instead of research? M. DeHart – We have four NEXT employees interested in this program who are researchers, but yes, there are many opportunities in industry as well. D. Perkins – Do you do any training for the financial side of this industry? M. DeHart – I am hoping to have a course on that topic some time in the future. D. Perkins – We may have people in COBA who could assist with that. L. Sharp-Penya – I see GRE scores included in your admissions requirement. We don't typically require that. M. DeHart – Perhaps that is something to modify. L. Sharp-Penya – Sometimes that is a barrier. If you are not using it, you might want to remove it. M. DeHart – We really rely more on grades than test scores.

**Motion to approve by T. Baggs; seconded by L. Sharp-Penya; all in favor.
Motion passes.**

W. Carroll – There will be a new department created for the Nuclear Science and Engineering programs.

Meeting ended at 9:03 a.m.