Graduate Programs Committee (GPC)

10/5/2021
To: UNLV Grad Faculty
From: Dr. Greg Moody, GPC Chair

Re: Contingency Approvals & Technical

1. Contingent Approved Status
     During the current UNLV Graduate Programs Committee (GPC) meetings, graduate programs are reviewed and may in cases receive contingent approvals pending certain items and review. For example, some of the proposals have missing votes or some of the proposed program changes require changes to courses within a program. In these contingent proposals, the Graduate Curriculum Manager manages the missing items before moving them forward in Curriculog.

     However, there have been recent cases in which proposed program changes that involve subsequent course changes have been problematic. Although the proposed changes were approved by the GPC, the follow through actions of submitting course changes have not occurred. For example, a proposed program change necessitates a change in the number of credits in a particular course. The consequence of not submitting the course changes within the academic year impacted by the program change would be discrepancies in the Catalog and confusion among both faculty and students.

     To remedy this, for proposals that require subsequent actions (such as course changes or course creation), the GPC may opt to designate a proposal as Contingent Approval status. To move a program change at the Contingent Approval status to a Full Approval status, the missing items must be satisfied and approved by the GPC with documented GPC meetings/minutes. The Graduate Committee Manager will still continue to manage the missing items and report to the GPC.

     Among other things, this process of documenting the authentic status of proposals allows for greater transparency. In sum, the GPC decisions for proposals are:
    1. Full Approval
    2. Contingent Approval
    3. Tabled
    4. Disapproval

The status of each item on the agenda will be clearly documented in meeting minutes. Those that are tabled or receive contingent approval will automatically appear on each subsequent agenda until the proposal is resolved in some way.

Q: Thoughts about this more transparent process?

2. Technical Reviews
     The purpose of the technical review step is to provide timely feedback on proposals so that they adhere to the standards of acceptable program builds and align to UNLV graduate curricular policies, practices and guidelines. One of the major goals of conducting technical reviews is not only to ensure that they align to best graduate curricular design practices but also prevent delays in the approval/implementation process.

     Having this early feedback in the proposal review process decreases the chance for rejection of the proposal at the University level. For example, without a technical review and if the proposal was rejected at the University level, the proposals would be pushed back to the originator step which would

require the proposal undergoing all approval steps again. Without providing feedback early in the review process, the proposal risks rejection at the University level resulting in delays in the approval and implementation as well as excess and duplicative efforts exerted needlessly among faculty and all curricular approvers.

Please note that technical reviews **do not focus on content** but rather on the elements including but not limited to: objectives of quality Catalog builds; accreditation standards; student and faculty policies and procedures; administrative, technological, and systemic capabilities for implementation, management, and operationalization of the academic goals reflected in a proposal; ethical aspects that may come to harm students and/or faculty; contradictions within proposals and any issues potentially interfering with the successful progression of students; compliance with initiatives of other affected UNLV offices such as: the office of online education, academic compliance, international students, Registrar's officer, VPAP office, service learning, libraries, Financial Aid office, among others; best practices in the design and presentation of the standardized graduate catalog, including terminology that supports diversity and inclusivity, etc.

Technical reviews are typically conducted on a bi-weekly basis by the Chair of the Graduate Programs Committee, the Associate Dean of the Graduate College, Assistant Dean of Admissions and Enrollment Management, Executive Director of Graduate Systems and Operations, Associate Director of Admissions, Associate Director of RPC, and the Grad Curriculum and Assessment Manager. Other UNLV offices are also triggered at the technical review step. For example, when there are changes to the program objectives, a trigger email is sent to the VPAP office to work with proposers prior to the proposal reaching the GPC step. Another example includes when certificates are being created, the technical review triggers the Financial Aid Office to determine whether the program or not students would be
eligible for financial aid.

Q: Would the GPC support Technical Reviews being conducted as the next step immediately following the originator submission step for program changes?