



Associate/Assistant Graduate Deans Council Meeting
September 23, 2025
2:00-4:00 pm
Darla Moore School of Business – Room 364
Chair: Dean Ann Vail

The AAGDC Meeting was held on Tuesday, September 23, 2025 at 2:00 p.m. at the Darla Moore School of Business.

Present: Dean Ann Vail, Lucy Yu, Jack Turner, Bill Hawk, Dale Moore, Robin Dawson, Angelina Sylvain, Tracey Weldon, Danny Jenkins, Doug Pittman, Satish Jayachandran, Heidi Conte, Stephen Shapiro, Barbara Foster, Jill Stewart, Peter Moyi, Paul Tarllo, Susan Rathbun-Grubb, Trena Houpp.

Welcome & Introductions - Dean Ann Vail

- Harlan was unable to attend (planned update on OPT/H-1B visas postponed).
- Introductions included both new and existing members. New attendees:
 - Heidi Conti – Assistant Dean for Enrollment Technology & Data Management (Graduate School).
 - Lucy Yu – Associate Dean for Academic Affairs & Student Engagement.
 - Barbara Foster – Chief of Staff, Graduate School.
 - Susan Rathlin-Grub – Acting Associate Dean, College of Information & Communications.

Provost's Announcement - Dean Ann Vail

- Graduate Application Fee:
 - Originally slated for immediate reinstatement; decision has shifted.
 - Fee will return, but *not* mid-semester. Most likely Spring 2026, next academic year, or aligned with Element1801 system launch.
 - Memo language circulated earlier is outdated; faculty/staff should communicate carefully until updated language is available.
 - Waivers can be purchased by programs.
- **International Transcript Credentialing:**
 - Now a requirement before enrollment (applies to both international and domestic students with foreign degrees).
 - Enrollment requires certified credentials.
 - Exceptions for conflict zones (credentialing agencies provide procedures).
 - Faculty and staff may need to guide students through the process.

Program of Study Form - Dean Ann Vail

- Online version is live; 47 submissions, 10 approved.
- Change form automation expected soon.
- Paper forms will no longer be accepted after January 2, 2026.

Z-Status - Dean Ann Vail

- Intended only for dissertation-stage students working full-time.
- Current misuse includes using Z-Status as financial aid; some students have held it up to 17 semesters.
- Z status request for under-enrollment must be term specific and is limited to 3 terms and may be extended beyond three terms with approval and justification.

Federal “Big Beautiful Bill” - Dean Ann Vail

- Graduate students affected by elimination of Grad PLUS loans (\$27M annually at USC).
- Caps now apply to federally approved loans.
- Students must combine smaller federal loans with private loans requiring credit checks.
- Financial Aid preparing resources; Graduate School will support through Grad Hub and Student Success Center.

Graduate Expo (Dean Ann Vail)

- Over 900 registered, ~500 attended.
- Dean Vail thanked units for participation and encouraged suggestions for future improvements.

Policy Discussion: Doctoral Advisory Committee - Lucy Yu

- Bulletin language currently requires advisory committees early in doctoral study, but practice varies widely.
- Concerns:
 - First-term requirement unrealistic.
 - Four-member structure with outside representative not always practical.
 - Faculty advisors often serve this role informally.
- Consensus:
 - Remove mandatory committee requirement from the bulletin.
 - Keep option available for programs that find it useful (especially interdisciplinary or rotation-based programs).
 - Clarify that all graduate students are entitled to an academic advisor, normally graduate faculty.
 - Staff advisors may manage administrative accuracy but academic oversight must remain with faculty.
- Next step: Graduate School will draft revised bulletin language and forward to Graduate Council Policy Committee this semester.

Policy Discussion: Stop-Out Master’s Programs - Angelina Sylvain

- CHE now requires explicit bulletin language distinguishing “stop-out only” master’s degrees (awarded when students leave PhD programs early).
- Programs must either:
 - Update bulletin language to mark degrees as “stop-out only,” OR
 - Adjust PhD program language to allow students to earn a master’s on the way to the PhD.

- Graduate School provided checklist and examples for programs to update bulletin entries.
- Recommendation: adopt concurrent master's/PhD pathways to maintain productivity compliance with CHE.

Update: Element1801 Enrollment System - Heidi Conte

- Project status: on track and in discovery phase.
- 43 representatives from 26 departments engaged in documenting current processes.
- Vendor (Element 451) and Kennedy & Company leading implementation.
- Security assessment complete; data sharing with Banner approved (low risk).
- Guiding coalition established; website launched for project updates.
- Next step: conclude discovery by October 12 with product backlog and finalized statement of work.
- Long-term: plan to expand integrations (e.g., document sharing with Banner).

Next Meeting of the AAGDC meeting will be held on Tuesday, October 28, 2025