

MEMORANDUM

To: Kevin Wagner, Ph.D., UFS President

From: Paul R. Peluso, Ph.D. UGC Chair 

Date: December 16, 2020

RE: UGC Report on Discussion

CC: UGC, UFS Steering Committee

On November 13, 2020 the University Graduate Council, following a directive from the University Faculty Senate President, discussed data it had collected over the Fall semester from across the University regarding how dissertation supervision is assigned to faculty in different departments and colleges, and how faculty are compensated for their effort supervising dissertations. As expected, practices varied significantly across programs and disciplines. Nonetheless, there were some common features in those practices, and the Council was able to reach a consensus on several guiding principles that it feels could be applied universally at FAU without undue burden to any program.

On the central question of whether or not specific university-wide policies are warranted, our consensus settled around the following key points:

1. Chairing of dissertation committees is an essential function of the university. Faculty effort in this activity should be recognized as such across the university. The Provost's office, whether in the form of a Memo or official policy, should communicate to faculty and administrators that annual assignments must accurately reflect these efforts, consistent with value placed on the activity and the amount of time that must be invested in supervising doctoral students.
2. The specific category in which the effort is listed on annual assignments may be left to the academic colleges and administered by the College Deans and Department Chairs in consultation with their faculty. Likewise, programs and departments should be allowed to institute additional policies or requirements in response to discipline-specific standards.
3. In the majority of cases, and in keeping with the spirit of the university-wide value placed on chairing dissertation research, overloads or other compensation for this effort should be discouraged. Colleges and departments may grant faculty limited course releases for supervising multiple dissertations and may then offer those same faculty limited overload assignments in order to present their full curriculum. The use of overload assignments to support dissertation supervision directly seems problematic to the Council and prone to creating conflicts.
4. At the same time, academic units experiencing consistent shortfalls in resources and relying on overloads to offer their full curriculum should receive priority for new tenure-track faculty lines.
5. The University Graduate Council feels that similar considerations should apply to the supervision of Masters' level theses.