

Graduate Coordinator Spring Meeting

March 5, 2026 from 12:00pm-2:00pm

Attendees: Caroline Vickers, Carolyn McAllister, Taewon Yang, Steven Childs, Shelby Reeder, Angela Horner, Halil Tasova, Nicole Henley, Luba Levin-Banchik, Dorothy Chen, Anne Lama, Cherie Ward, Amber Olney, Janine Kremling, Hyunkyung Oh, Robert Smith, Jessica Peraza, Craig Seal, Elanor Perry, Pablo Pelayo, Juan Salcedo, Enrique Murillo, Nadine Mendoza, April Lane, Chris Songsittichok, Erma Cross, Kim De Leon, Bianca Perez Ortiz

Zoom attendees: Bibiana Diaz, Michelle Lorimer, Robert Stokes, Valencia Jones, Andres Beyersdorf, Jennifer Jin, Dionisio Amodeo, Erin Yela, Douglas Weiss, Xinying Yin, Raisa Alvarado, Corey Dunn, Jonathan Robinson Anthony, Jessica Getman, Eun-ok Baek, Sue Kaiser, Deloren West, Jacinda Higgins, Joe Scarcella, Janelle Gilbert, Laura Newcomb, Vishal Munsif, Regina Ude, Matthew Des Lauriers, Satcia McCambridge, Priyanka Yalmanchili, Maria Santos, Jemma Kim, Amanda Yates-Gonzales, Alison Ragguette, Neal Malik, Golge Citak Seferoglu, Kimberley Cousins

Meeting summary

Quick recap

The Spring 2026 Graduate Coordinator Meeting covered several key updates and discussions. The meeting began with introductions from various graduate program coordinators and staff members. Carolyn Vickers, Dean of Graduate Studies, highlighted that CSU has more post-bac students than UC and discussed the need for additional resources for graduate students. April Lane provided updates on advancement to candidacy forms and leave of absence processes. Erma Cross shared information about recruitment efforts and upcoming events, including a new initiative called "Graduate Student Innovator of the Month." Shelby discussed thesis deadlines and upcoming workshops. Chris presented new dashboards for tracking graduate applications and enrollment. Eleanor Perry provided guidance on international student requirements. The conversation ended with a review of upcoming events and programming, including the Grad Slam competition and career readiness workshops.

Next steps

- April: Send the packet (including full agenda items and flyers) to Nadine via email and ensure it is re-added to the calendar invite.

- Program Coordinators (new coordinators): Reach out to April to schedule EFA (Exception from the Audit) process training if not yet completed.
- Program Coordinators: When advancing students to candidacy, ensure students have a 3.0 or higher GPA before submission; monitor for compliance.
- Program Coordinators: Fill out the Smartsheet marketing form when hosting info sessions so Kim can communicate to relevant prospects via Element 451.
- Program Coordinators: Add info sessions to the campus events calendar for increased visibility.
- All (faculty, staff, students): Nominate candidates for the new Graduate Student Innovator of the Month award—nominations to be sent to Caroline/Graduate Studies.
- Caroline: Develop a nomination form and process for Graduate Student Innovator of the Month and communicate to all.
- Caroline: Originate P forms for BS+MS CAPE programs (except Geology) for improved catalog visibility and send to program directors for approval.
- Program Directors developing CAPE programs: Work with Caroline on originating and approving P forms for BS+MS CAPE programs.
- Caroline/Shelby: Develop a new CAPE programs website this summer to market and list all CAPE programs.
- Program Coordinators: Encourage students applying for Pre-Doctoral and CDIP funding to go through the internal review process coordinated by April.
- Program Coordinators: Share information about the March 20th scholarship deadline and embedded Graduate Equity Fellowship with students; encourage applications.
- Program Coordinators: Share information about the Graduate Writing Workshop Series, upcoming workshops, and Grad Slam with students; encourage participation.
- Caroline: Contact John Reitzel (Senate) to clarify the status of potential changes to comprehensive exam policy and report back to coordinators.
- Program Coordinators: Share information about the Career Readiness Series, Beyond Graduate School webinars, and Cal State Apply application sessions with students.

- Program Coordinators: Share information about the Graduate Student Success Center hours and upcoming veterans mixer with students.
- April: Send out information about the upcoming veterans mixer when location is confirmed.
- Program Coordinators: Share the Graduate Studies Weekly Roundup with students and encourage them to review it for relevant information.
- Program Directors/Coordinators: Update program materials for Cal State Apply by end of month and send to Chris for updates.
- Program Coordinators: Reach out to Chris if unable to access the new graduate application dashboard for their program.

Summary

Graduate Coordinator Meeting Advocacy Discussion

The meeting began with technical difficulties regarding document sharing, which were eventually resolved. Dean Vickers welcomed attendees to the Spring 2026 Graduate Coordinator Meeting and led introductions from various program coordinators, including representatives from psychology, biology, social work, and other departments. The meeting included an announcement about working on a white paper and Board of Trustees presentation to advocate for additional graduate student resources, with a focus on the importance of counting post-bac students in graduate education statistics.

CSU Post-Bac Student Resource Challenges

Caroline shared that the CSU system educates more post-bac students than UC, with approximately 68,000 compared to 64,000 across their respective systems. She noted that CSU graduate students have limited resources despite educating double the amount of California resident post-bac students compared to UC. April provided updates on the new streamlined process for leave of absence and discounted grade forms, which are now processed through Smartsheet and Adobe Sign, requiring coordinator approval or denial before final processing.

Leave Policies and Recruitment Updates

Caroline discussed leave of absence policies, explaining that students can take up to two years off while maintaining their catalog year and place in the program, with the main consequence being potential issues with financial aid and loan grace periods. She also addressed the requirement for graduate students to maintain a 3.0 GPA to advance to candidacy, noting that the registrar's office will not graduate students below this threshold.

Erma presented on recruitment efforts, including "Tea Time Thursday" virtual info sessions for undecided prospects and the use of Smartsheet marketing to communicate about info sessions to potential students through Element 451.

Graduate Student Innovator Initiative Launch

Caroline announced a new "Graduate Student Innovator of the Month" initiative, starting with Desmond Workman from the MSIST program who hosts a podcast about AI. She discussed the CAPE (Coyote Accelerated Postbaccalaureate Education) programs, noting that three programs are currently enrolling students with 19 total enrolled, and seven more will launch in fall 2026. Janelle asked about flexibility in using undergraduate-level courses (I-500) toward graduate degrees, and Caroline clarified that according to Chancellor's Office policy, only students in CAPE programs can share up to 12 units between undergraduate and graduate studies.

Blended Programs and Enrollment Concerns

Caroline proposed creating separate catalog pages for blended programs similar to the geology model to improve visibility, and she volunteered to originate the changes for approval. The group discussed concerns about enrollment impacts from undergraduate students taking graduate-level courses as part of the CAPE program, with Matthew raising questions about potential enrollment drops. Bibiana explained how their program handles this by using different course levels and scheduling to protect graduate class enrollment. The discussion concluded with a question about future graduate CAPE programs, where Caroline clarified that while credentials can be used in degree programs, there are unit requirements that prevent double-dipping between master's and EDD programs.

Graduate Programs and Financial Updates

Caroline discussed several key updates regarding graduate programs and student resources. She emphasized the importance of tracking persistence rather than retention rates, particularly for CAPE programs where students graduate earlier than their cohort. The admissions team was praised for efficiently processing over 1,200 applications, with new earlier application deadlines being implemented for fall 2026 (July 1st for spring/summer and August 1st for fall). Caroline also highlighted upcoming changes to graduate student financial aid, including the potential elimination of Grad Plus loans and a \$100,000 lifetime cap on financial aid, which could significantly impact programs like medical school preparatory courses.

Graduate Admissions System Updates

The meeting covered several key updates and discussions regarding graduate admissions and programs. Chris presented new features of the Cal State Apply system, including a mobile-friendly application interface and a new Table dashboard for tracking program statistics. The team discussed enrollment trends, noting that while applications were down, enrollment was up due to more California resident students. Eleanor provided guidance on supporting international graduate students, emphasizing the importance of full-time status and in-person classes. The group also discussed strategies for increasing program visibility and applications, including leveraging conferences, information sessions, and digital marketing through Smartsheet and social media campaigns.

Graduate Programming and Exam Updates

April discussed upcoming graduate programming events, including the Graduate Writing Workshop Series and the Grad Slam competition scheduled for April 8th. She announced that 15 students are participating in Grad Slam and will receive public speaking workshops before the competition. The group also addressed concerns about potential changes to high-stakes writing examinations, with Caroline agreeing to consult with John Reitzel about the details and implications for graduate programs.

Graduate Career Resources and Support

Caroline announced a partnership with Beyond Graduate School, led by Maren Wood, which offers resources and webinars for master's students, including sessions on the hidden job market and AI's impact on employment. April highlighted the upcoming Career Readiness Series starting March 10th, featuring workshops on resume building and navigating the job market. April discussed the Graduate Application Sessions, which cover personal statements and the Cal State Apply application process, as well as resources for requesting letters of recommendation and applying for scholarships. The Graduate Student Success Center's hours and upcoming events, including a veterans mixer, were also shared.