



University at Buffalo
The State University of New York
The Graduate School

September 22, 2005

TO: Deans, Departments Chairs, and Directors of Graduate Study
FROM: Bruce D. McCombe 
Vice Provost for Graduate Education
Dean of the Graduate School
SUBJECT: Changes within Ph.D. Committees when Graduate Faculty leave UB

Questions are occasionally posed to the Graduate School concerning what action to take with regard to the composition of a doctoral student's committee when a member of that committee retires or otherwise leaves UB prior to the student's completion of his/her program. This memorandum offers some general guidelines and their rationale to directors of graduate study and department chairs regarding this issue. Please retain this memorandum and refer to these guidelines as circumstances warrant.

If a graduate faculty member retires from UB with no intention of assuming a faculty appointment at another institution, that faculty member is eligible to continue serving as the major advisor or as a committee member for a current student. The actual decision whether or not that person may continue to serve in such a capacity with a current student rests with the DGS and Chairman of the department. However, subsequent to their retirement graduate faculty members should not accept major advisor or committee membership assignments for any new student.

If a graduate faculty member leaves UB for an appointment at another institution, and the student is at the final stages of completing the dissertation (generally with one year or less needed to finish), the Graduate School will allow the departed faculty member, if he/she is willing, to retain their role on that student's committee, providing the department concurs. The primary consideration is not delaying completion of the degree and unwittingly penalizing the student. However, if the student is more than a year away from degree completion, the Graduate School does not recommend allowing a departed faculty member to remain on that doctoral student's committee and involved in the work since after that time the faculty member will generally become understandably immersed in responsibilities at his or her new place of employment, often leaving our student underserved.

Please contact the Graduate School if there are any questions regarding these guidelines or their application in specific cases.

Cc: Graduate School Executive Committee
Dr. Myron A. Thompson