Graduate Appeals and Grievance Process

The right of each student to appeal decisions of the graduate academic units is affirmed and specific appeal procedures are hereby established to ensure timely and appropriate consideration of each appeal to the Graduate Appeals Committee.

Specifically, the Graduate Appeals Committee reviews decisions on the following issues: admission decisions, revocation of admission, comprehensive exams, thesis and dissertation prospectus, dismissal from a program, and any other issues the Dean of the Graduate School deems appropriate. This committee does not review grade appeals or disciplinary actions taken by the Dean of Students. The grade appeals process is listed in this Bulletin.

The Appeals/Grievance Process has five steps:

- **Step 1: Department or School Level.** The chair or director receives a written signed letter from the student within ten (10) working days that states what action the student is appealing, reviews the pertinent materials, meets with the student and faculty if appropriate, and resolution of the appeal is sought at the department or school level.

- **Step 2: Dean of the College Level.** An appeal of the department or school decision must be made in writing within ten (10) working days to the dean of the college that has jurisdiction over the department or school. The dean will review the appeal and render a decision on the appeal in writing.

- **Step 3: Dean of the Graduate School Level.** Should the student desire to make further appeal, the written appeal should be sent within five working days to the Dean of the Graduate School. The Dean will confer with the student and refer the matter to the Graduate Appeals Committee which will hold an official hearing on the appeal. The hearing will be held within ten (10) working days of receipt of the written appeal letter as long as the university is in session or within ten (10) working days of the university beginning a session. The student may attend the hearing and a representative of the department or school may also attend the hearing or respond to the appeal in writing. The Dean of the Graduate School will send the student a letter indicating the Committee’s decision.

- **Step 4: Provost Level.** Should the student desire to make further appeal, the written appeal should be sent within ten (10) working days to the Provost. The Provost will review all appeal materials and render a decision in the appeal normally within ten (10) working days of receipt of the appeal.

- **Step 5: President Level.** If the student is not satisfied with the decision of the Provost, he or she may appeal to the President of the University in writing. The President will render a final decision in the appeal normally within ten (10) days of receipt of the appeal.

* These steps are also listed in *Student Survival Guide* [www.usm.edu/student-life pg. 34].

**If the appeal concerns the chair, director, or college dean, the student should appeal to the next level.