April 14, 2015

William Powers Jr.
President
The University of Texas at Austin
MAI 400
Campus Mail Code: G3400

Dear President Powers:

Enclosed for your consideration is a proposal from the Educational Policy Committee recommending changes in the General Information catalog that would delete in absentia registration for undergraduate and but make it still applicable to graduate students (D 12232-12235).

Final approval of the legislation resides with you with notification to UT System. Please let me know if you have questions or concerns regarding this matter.

Dean Neikirk, Secretary
General Faculty and Faculty Council

Enclosures

DPN:dlr

xc: Gregory Fenves, executive vice president and provost
    Patricia Ohlendorf, vice president for legal affairs
    Janet Dukerich, sr. vice provost
    Carol Longoria, assistant deputy to the president

Electronic copies via email:
    Bill Beckner, chair, 2014-15 Faculty Council
    Mary Rose, chair, 2014-15 Educational Policy Committee
    Vincent (Shelby) Stanfield, registrar
    Lydia Cornell, assistant to Janet Dukerich
DOCUMENTS OF THE GENERAL FACULTY

REVISED PROPOSAL TO REMOVE IN ABSENTIA REGISTRATION FEE

On January 16, 2014, and on behalf of the Educational Policy Committee, Professor Mary Rose (committee chair, sociology) submitted a proposal to remove the in absentia registration fee in the General Information catalog (D 12128-12129). The Faculty Council considered the proposal at its meeting on March 9, 2015. Upon the hearing that the Graduate School might have issues with the deletion of the fee, the proposal was tabled. On April 7, 2015, after consultation with the Graduate School leaders, the Educational Policy Committee submitted the following amended proposal, which will be considered by the Faculty Council at its meeting on April 13, 2015.

The Secretary has classified this as general legislation. Final approval resides with the president with formal notification to UT System.

[Signature]
Dean Neikirk, Secretary
General Faculty and Faculty Council

Posted on the Faculty Council website (http://www.utexas.edu/faculty/council/) on April 8, 2015.
REVISED PROPOSAL TO REMOVE IN ABSENTIA REGISTRATION FEE

This proposal came to Educational Policy Committee (EPC) from the Policy Implementation Group (PIG), a committee that is reviewing policies governing In Absentia Registration. The proposal was discussed at the January 16 EPC meeting and passed unanimously and then revised following discussion at the March 9, 2015, Faculty Council meeting. Specifically, this proposal eliminates the in absentia registration fee for undergraduates. This amendment was proposed to the EPC via an email and received no objections.

Background and Rationale: In order to apply to graduate and receive their degrees, students must be registered with the University. When students are no longer in residence at the University but have left to take additional courses elsewhere and manage other requirements for graduation, students must do “in absentia registration,” which requires a $25 fee. The Policy Implementation Group reported to EPC that the fee is viewed by some undergraduates as an additional barrier to obtaining their degree, which may create frustration and, in a small number of cases, an actual barrier. In addition, the fee does not generate a substantial amount of revenue1 for the University, and, if anything the fee may not actually pay for the additional work it creates because, depending on when the student petitions for in absentia graduation, they may not be able to pay online; it necessitates dealing with cash and checks and forms, which creates additional work. Both the Policy Implementation Group and the EPC believe that in keeping with the overall policy goal of streamlining the process of obtaining bachelor’s degrees, the fee should be eliminated for undergraduate students.

A discussion with members of the Dean’s office for the Graduate School indicates that there is an interest in retaining the fee for graduate students who register in absentia. They do not see it is a large barrier for the small number of students who use it each year (according to data provided by the Registrar’s office, offered in the Appendix, about 10% of users of in absentia are graduate students; about 25% of those using it in full terms). As evident below, different GIC rules govern whether graduate students can use in absentia registration; hence it is out of the ordinary to have different procedures for undergraduates and graduate students. The Graduate Dean’s office would like to retain the fee in order to have it as a possible mechanism for controlling/detering its use.

The fee information is therefore removed from where it was previously (in the opening paragraph) and moved to the paragraph that is particular to graduate students.

The proposed text is as follows:

IN ABSENTIA REGISTRATION
A student who is taking the final course(s) remaining to complete degree requirements via nonresident credit or a candidate for a degree who has completed the requirements for graduation and needs to register only for the purpose of having a degree conferred, may register in absentia. In absentia registration is not permitted for any other purpose; for graduate students, in absentia registration is allowed at the end of the summer session for fall graduation as described below. [The fee for in absentia registration is $25.] In order for the degree to be awarded, the remaining coursework must be completed, the final grade recorded on the student’s academic record, and degree requirements certified by the established deadlines for the term. Students registering in absentia must still meet in-residence requirements for a degree to be conferred.

GRADUATE STUDENTS
Graduate students must be registered for the semester in which they graduate and must apply for graduation by the deadline published in the academic calendar. A student who fails to complete all degree requirements or

1 Per data from registrar’s office: as an example for the 2012 – 2013 academic year, 951 undergrads registered in absentia, which generated $23,775.
misses the deadline for acceptance of the thesis, report, recital, dissertation, or treatise must register and pay tuition the following semester or summer session in order to receive the degree.

An exception is made for students who apply to graduate in the summer session but miss the deadline for acceptance of the thesis, report, recital, dissertation, or treatise. In this case, the student will be registered in absentia for the fall semester, only for the purpose of receiving the degree, by degree evaluators in the Office of Graduate Studies. The fee for in absentia registration for graduate students is $25. The thesis, report, recital, dissertation, or treatise must be accepted by the deadline for in absentia registration, which falls before the beginning of the following fall semester. Additional exceptions may be granted by the graduate dean under rare or extenuating circumstances. A student may be registered in absentia only once.

For the full text of the existing section in the General Information catalog (GIC), see:
http://catalog.utexas.edu/general-information/registration-tuition-and-fees/in-absentia-registration/
Appendix

Per Shelby Stanfield: Data on use of in absentia (ABS) registration:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semester</th>
<th>Undergraduates using ABS registration</th>
<th>Grad students using ABS registration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011 (summer)</td>
<td>393</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011 (fall)</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012 (spring)</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012 (summer)</td>
<td>399</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012 (fall)</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013 (spring)</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013 (summer)</td>
<td>417</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013 (fall)</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014 (spring)</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>