

DOCUMENTS AND PROCEEDINGS THE GRADUATE ASSEMBLY MEETING
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN
February 4, 2009

Chair Susan Heinzelman called the third meeting of the Graduate Assembly in the 2008-2009 academic year to order on Wednesday, February 4, 2009, at 2:15 PM in the Harry Ransom Center, Tom Lea Room, 3.206.

Faculty Members Present: Carter, Cleaver, Cline, Dangel, Evans, Gamkhar, Garcia, Heinzelman, Henry, Hess, Horwitz, Hull, Kachelmeier, Kinney, Lindstrom, March, Mehdy, Murray, Odell, Ovando, Popova, Sprinkle, Wilson

Faculty Members Absent: Bias (excused), Browning, Edgar (excused), Golden (excused), Haunschild (excused), Lauderdale (excused), Markovits (excused), Sylvie

Student Members Present: Carpenter

Student Members Absent: Garcia, Haenschen, Kim, Luu (excused)

Ex-Officio Members Present: None

Representatives from Office of Graduate Studies: Bancroft, Belinoski, Borden, Dalton, Ellison, Grant, Hackert, Kahn, Mabley

Visitors: Arbogast, Newman, Ruddock, Tweed

Order of Business

- I. Approval of the minutes of the September 17, 2008 and November 12, 2008 meetings.
- II. Report of the Graduate Dean (Victoria Rodríguez)

Dean Rodríguez reported that there was still no release of the National Research Council report evaluating universities. Marvin Hackert, Associate Dean of the Graduate School, added that he continued to monitor and that there was still no committed date for distributing the methodology. Dean Rodríguez mentioned that correspondence among graduate school personnel at different universities showed skepticism as to the relevance of a report based on 2005 data that may be finally released in 2009.

Dean Rodríguez asked Marvin Hackert to discuss the status of Tuition Benefit Assistance. He reviewed the history of the lump sum provided by the UT to help cover tuition costs. The supplement was categorized as compensation and hence subject to taxation instead of a tuition benefit that might be excluded from taxes. However, he said it is to the benefit of many domestic students to maintain the tuition as compensation because they can take a lifetime learning credit that often saves more money on their taxes than the exclusion of the tuition supplement. Hackert acknowledged that international students would benefit if tuition assistance was not defined as compensation, but the Graduate Assembly had

decided in a review several years ago to keep the current system for its better overall benefit to graduate students. Hackert encouraged Assembly members to join the Graduate School in better publicizing the lifetime learning credit to graduate students.

The third item Dean Rodríguez introduced was the status of this year's graduate student admission process. Pat Ellison, Associate Director of Admissions and Assistant Dean of Graduate Studies, noted that the number of applicants has increased 15% over last year. She said many departments had earlier deadlines this year and are concomitantly making earlier acceptance decisions. A handout showing application, admission and enrollment data for several years was distributed.

Lastly, Rodríguez announced two upcoming events: 1) the Come to Texas gathering, designed to recruit underrepresented populations to UT Austin graduate school, to be held April 4-6; and 2) a recruiting workshop on best practices to be held February 11. Darlene Grant, Associate Dean of Graduate Studies, further described the latter event.

III. Report of Chair (Sue Heinzelman)

Chair Heinzelman, joined by the Graduate Assembly, congratulated Dean Rodríguez on her selection as the president-elect of the Association of Graduate Schools, an arm of the Association of American Universities.

Chair Heinzelman noted that she had e-mailed Assembly members the Women's and Gender Studies thesis that documented difficulties and abuse experienced by the wives of international students at UT Austin. Little action has been taken since publication of this thesis. Heinzelman noted that a group including people from the Center for Women's and Gender Studies, the International Office, and the Graduate Student Assembly will meet to identify outreach to improve the situation for this population. Darlene Grant volunteered to also attend as a representative of the School of Social Work

IV. Academic Committee (Paula Murray)

Chair Murray reported on three items. First, the newly established Department of Religious Studies had proposed a graduate degree program in Religious Studies, leading to the MA and the PhD degrees. Martha Newman, Chair of Religious Studies, described the program.

- The Academic Committee had a motion to approve the proposal for a Department of Religious Studies, and the Graduate Assembly approved the proposal unanimously and ruled it as minor legislation.

Secondly, the Academic Committee recommended proposals to change (a) the degree major from Computational and Applied Mathematics to Computational Science, Engineering, and Mathematics, and (b) the degree title from Master of Science in Computational and Applied Mathematics to Master of Science in Computational Science, Engineering, and Mathematics. Todd Arbogast, a faculty member in this area, answered several questions.

- The Graduate Assembly voted unanimously and approved changing the degree major from Computational and Applied Mathematics to Computational Science, Engineering, and Mathematics, and the degree title from Master of Science in Computational and Applied Mathematics to Master of Science in Computational Science, Engineering, and Mathematics. The approval was deemed minor legislation.

Lastly, Chair Murray noted that the Academic Committee's questions related to Option III in Engineering Management had all been satisfactorily answered. This matter required no action of the Graduate Assembly.

V. Administrative Committee (Alan Cline)

Chair Cline said his committee had considered the issue of domestic partner benefits but due to not having the vote in time to put the matter on the Graduate Assembly agenda, this matter will be considered at the next Graduate Assembly meeting.

VI. Admissions and Enrollment Committee (Harry Cleaver)

Chair Cleaver distributed a handout titled "Issues Being Discussed by the Committee on Admissions and Enrollment" and said this document speaks for itself. He asked Dean Rodríguez whether she was the only channel by which the Graduate Assembly could influence policy to make concrete changes. Dean Rodríguez noted that the Graduate School had been involved in various matters such as the Brackinridge tract disposition, raising the minimum salary for teaching assistants, and obtaining benefits for fellowship holders through a bill being considered by the state legislature. Other than contacting her on issues, she answered that an alternative was direct communication to the Provost and President. Chair Heinzelman, as a member of the Faculty Council Executive Committee, said that this body was also concerned that faculty committee findings and recommendations have little impact on action by the UT higher administration. Associate Dean Hackert noted further erosion of faculty input through the higher administration selection of members to comprise Policy Advisory Committees, considering matters such as tuition and gender equality, rather than utilizing the existing faculty committee mechanisms. The discussion ended as Dean Rodríguez needed to leave to participate in the Gender Equity Report Forum.

VII. Graduate Student Assembly (Bradley Carpenter)

GSA President Bradley Carpenter requested that Graduate Assembly members ask their graduate coordinators whether their graduate program has a representative active with the GSA. He said that a large number of departments have no representative, weakening the ability of the GSA to speak as the representative of the diverse body of approximately 12,000 graduate students. As he is finishing his term as President after two years of holding an officer position within the GSA, Carpenter expressed his strong hope that the GSA will continue to build strength through greater involvement of graduate students and that the GSA will be able to have a representative on any committee, Policy Advisory Committee, or other forum considering matters relevant to graduate students.

VIII. Adjournment

Chair Heinzelman adjourned the meeting at 3:00 pm.

Mona Mehdy, Secretary