

DOCUMENTS AND PROCEEDINGS THE GRADUATE ASSEMBLY MEETING  
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN  
November 12, 2008

Chair Susan Heinzelman called the second meeting of the Graduate Assembly in the 2008-2009 academic year to order on Wednesday, November 12, 2008, at 2:15 PM in the Harry Ransom Center, Tom Lea Room, 3.206.

Faculty Members Present: Bias, Carter, Cleaver, Cline, Dangel, Evans, Garcia, Golden, Gregg, , Heinzelman, Hess, Horwitz , Hull, Lauderdale, Lindstrom, March, Markovits, Mehdy, Murray, Odell, Ovando, Sprinkle, Sylvie, Wilson.

Faculty Members Absent: Edgar (excused), Gamkhar (excused), Haunschild (excused), Kachelmeier, Kinney, Popova.

Student Members Present: Carpenter, Haenschen.

Student Members Absent: Garcia, Kim, Luu (excused), Totah.

Ex-Officio Members Present: Rodríguez.

Representatives from Office of Graduate Studies: Bancroft, Belinoski, Borden, Ellison, Grant, Hackert, Kahn, Michaelson.

Visitors: Dingwell.

#### Order of Business

- I. The minutes of the September 17, 2008, meeting will be approved at the next Graduate Assembly meeting.
- II. Report of the Graduate Dean (Victoria Rodríguez)

Dean Rodríguez reported on three items. The first related to the ongoing Capital Campaign to raise \$3 billion for UT Austin through 2014. The Graduate School will be raising funds to be entirely devoted to graduate student support. She encouraged Graduate Assembly members to promote UT Austin graduate education in different settings as this will be helpful for the Graduate School fundraising efforts.

The second issue concerned the upcoming Texas legislative session in January. SB 42 was introduced by Senator Zaffirini, which would provide health benefits for graduate students holding fellowships. She encouraged Graduate Assembly members to support this bill.

The third issue was the status of the National Research Council report evaluating universities. The report has not yet been received and remains in the pending category. Marvin Hackert, Associate Dean of the Graduate School, noted that each program will be evaluated by a series of weighted factors depending on the previously given input of the faculty. He expects considerable variability in the rankings depending on the faculty responses and the number of faculty in a department as the rankings will be on a per faculty basis.

On a different matter, Dean Rodríguez mentioned that several Deans have complimented the brisk pace of Graduate Assembly meetings in contrast to Faculty Council meetings.

### III. Report of Chair (Sue Heinzelman)

Chair Heinzelman mentioned various current efforts to establish partner benefits on the campus. She expressed hope that the Graduate Assembly could voice support for partner benefits at a future meeting. After some discussion of involving Graduate Assembly committees to consider this topic, Chair Heinzelman agreed to confer with the chairs of the committees to decide which standing committee(s) should consider evaluating and presenting this matter to the Graduate Assembly as a whole.

### IV. Academic Committee (Paula Murray)

Chair Murray reported on three items. First, a graduate portfolio in the area of Molecular Biophysics has been proposed. The Academic Committee had asked for further information such as the appropriateness of the Molecular Biophysics name. Marv Hackert and Karen Browning, both of Chemistry and Biochemistry, also referred to discussions to better define the portfolio. The Academic Committee expects to present the revised proposal at the February Assembly meeting.

Secondly, the Academic Committee approved proposals to change the Master of Arts in Kinesiology to Master of Science of Kinesiology and Master of Arts in Health Education to Master of Science in Health Education. Jonathan Dingwell, Department of Kinesiology and Health Education, was introduced and was available for questions. Discussion ensued regarding the scientific content of these fields, the predominant use of the MS degree at peer institutions, and the expressed preferences for MS degrees by graduate program applicants.

- The Assembly unanimously passed the proposals for changing from Master of Arts to Master of Science degrees in Kinesiology and Health Education and the unanimous votes were deemed minor legislation.

The final item in Chair Murray's presentation was that the Academic Committee had approved the five-year review report for the Option III program in Engineering Management. This matter required no action of the Graduate Assembly.

V. Administrative Committee (Alan Cline)

Chair Cline said his committee is likely to consider the problem of repeated absenteeism of members of standing committees. He invited Assembly members and, particularly, committee chairs to let him know if this is a problem and his committee would consider actions that would encourage better attendance.

VI. Admissions and Enrollment Committee (Harry Cleaver)

Chair Cleaver spoke of the need to understand why graduate school applicants decline to attend UT Austin and go elsewhere. He noted the paucity of data and that his committee will seek to obtain more data. Chair Heinzelman noted that some departments, such as her Department of English, may have substantial data about reasons given by applicants choosing to go elsewhere and recommended canvassing departments for this information. In addition, the Committee is continuing its work on topics listed on the handout from the first Assembly meeting including graduate student housing, variation in graduate student workloads as teaching assistants, salaries and benefits.

VII. Graduate Student Assembly (Bradley Carpenter / Katherine Haenschen)

GSA President Bradley Carpenter presented three items. He spoke of an upcoming meeting hosted by UT Austin that brings together graduate students from 9 other peer schools and UT Austin to discuss policies and advocacy on issues related to graduate education. On the matter of graduate applicants declining to enroll, he mentioned that a fellow graduate student has been working on this matter with the financial support of the Graduate School. The student may have helpful information for the Admissions Committee. Lastly, he mentioned that Brackenridge Tract planning discussions were trending towards favoring housing of increased density that remained proximal to the campus.

Katherine Haenschen, External Vice President, distributed the UT Graduate Student Housing Survey. The results indicate that graduate students prefer university over private housing for reasons including lower cost and good nearby public schools. In addition, proximity and shuttle transportation to campus were highly valued. The Assembly debated the benefits of building more housing to address the high demand and long waiting list. There was some consensus that the Graduate Student Assembly advocate for more housing units.

VIII. Adjournment

Chair Heinzelman adjourned the meeting at 3:13 pm.

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Mona Mehdy, Secretary