

DOCUMENTS AND PROCEEDINGS OF THE GRADUATE ASSEMBLY
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN
January 30, 2008

Pauline Strong, chair of the Graduate Assembly, called the third meeting of the Assembly for the 2007-2008 academic year to order at 2:18 PM in the Harry Ransom Center, Tom Lea Room, 3.206.

Faculty Members Present: Browning, Carter, Cline, Dean-Jones, Doty, Gamkhar, Golden, Heinzelman, Henry, Hess, Hull, Kachelmeier, Kwallek, Lauderdale, Markovits, Mehdy, Murray, Odell, Ovando, Parker, Popova, Slawek, Sprinkle, Strong, Wilson

Faculty Members Absent: Edgar (excused), Haunschild (excused), Kinney, Loukas (excused), Neikirk (excused), Stout (excused)

Student Members Present: Ferguson, Witherspoon

Student Members Absent: Carpenter, Gatten (excused), Jones (excused), Marlantes

Ex-Officio Members Present: Rodríguez

Representatives from the Office of Graduate Studies: Bancroft, Belinoski, Collins, Dalton, Grant, Hackert, Kahn, Mattos

Visitors: Debbie Roberts, Jennifer Morgan

Order of Business

I. Approval of the minutes of the November 14, 2007, meeting

The Assembly approved the minutes of the November 14, 2007, meeting.

II. Report of the Graduate Dean

Graduate Dean Victoria Rodríguez had five elements to her report. She first mentioned that, following recommendations from the SACS accreditation review, the next version of the *Graduate Catalog* will specify that doctoral students must accumulate a minimum of 30 graduate hours at UT. Associate Dean Hackert noted that the mean number of credits earned by PhD students at UT is 82.1.

The second item from her report was that SACS is also asking the UT Graduate School set the maximum number of allowable transfer credits for the doctoral degree at six (6). Exceptions to the six-hour maximum may be granted with approval of the GSC and the Graduate School.

Rodríguez briefly mentioned that, given that the university regents want to cap tuition rates for undergraduate state residents, the Tuition Policy Advisory Committee would renew its deliberations soon.

The fourth item of Dean Rodríguez's report involved the planned Graduate School initiative, Come to Texas, designed in conjunction with President Powers and the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement to increase the enrollment of traditionally underrepresented groups at UT. Associate Dean Grant and Rhonda Collins are taking the lead on the program and they, with Dean Rodríguez, explained its characteristics and responded to questions from the Assembly.

Finally, the Dean reported that the Graduate School has produced a new and attractive brochure for recruitment. The brochure, co-sponsored by the Office of Public Affairs, the Office of Research, and the university libraries, specifically addresses the four-part mission of graduate education at UT: original research, creative expression, teaching, and intellectual leadership.

III. Report of Chair

Assembly Chair Polly Strong reported the on-going deliberations in the Faculty Council Executive Committee about an honorary grade of A+, which is a continuation of discussions related to the previous formal adoption of the plus/minus grading system for students across the university. There was further discussion of the honorary A+ grade in the report of David Hull, chair of the Administrative Committee (see V below).

Rhonda Collins described this year's round of Graduate School awards and their respective deadlines. She recruited Assembly members to act as reviewers for these programs. Chair Strong echoed the need for such reviewers.

IV. Academic Committee (Susan Heinzelman)

Chair Heinzelman reported that the committee had reviewed the report of the Science and Technology Commercialization Option III master's program written by the program's new GSC chair Bob May. The Graduate Assembly's 2001 review and an external review in 2006 identified three concerns that the program had to address: the quality of students, the strength of the faculty, and the proportion of full-time faculty members on the GSC. The committee was satisfied that these elements are being successfully addressed. The Assembly specifically discussed the proportion of adjunct faculty members in the program.

V. Administrative Committee (David Hull)

Chair Hull focused his report on the committee's current discussions. The first item was the time limit for a graduate student to file a grievance; the current limit is six months. The second was the honorary A+ grade. Hull reported that the Faculty Council has indicated that any change to include the A+ will be instituted

if, and only if, both the Council and the Assembly approved it. Hull mentioned that he had asked all graduate advisers to poll their faculty members about their attitudes toward an honorary A+, and preliminary results indicated that less than half of faculty respondents support the A+ grade. The Assembly discussed concerns about the potential confusion caused by an honorary A+ while keeping a 4.0 rather than a 4.33 system and whether concerns about undergraduates' grades should influence the Assembly's deliberations.

VI. Admissions and Enrollment Committee (Karen Browning)

Chair Karen Browning introduced a motion to make the waiver of the GRE for the dual MD/PhD degree permanent, using the MCAT in its stead.

- The Assembly unanimously supported the proposal to waive the GRE for the dual MD/PhD degree and to replace it with the MCAT and identified it as minor legislation.

Associate Dean Darlene Grant said that 18,533 graduate applications had been received to date, with more than half already reviewed and sent to departments for decisions. The rate of review at GIAC is double what it was at this time last year. The Assembly also discussed the success of the new ability to submit electronic letters of reference.

Grant mentioned the one-day conference of associate deans and deans of graduate programs from some 60 historically black colleges to be held at UT in late February, and she invited 25 faculty members and/or recruiters to join the conference attendees and representatives of the UT Graduate School at lunch.

VII. Graduate Student Assembly (Brian Gatten)

Brian Gatten, President of the Graduate Student Assembly (GSA), reported first that planning was proceeding for the annual graduate and professional student appreciation week, including its graduate research showcase. Along with various other participants, the GSA was working on a means to help potential applicants answer the question "why come to graduate school?" Secondly, he noted that a small committee is forming to continue research into the provision of more statistics courses for graduate students, including the potential role of the Division of Statistics and Scientific Computation.

VIII. Adjournment

Chair Strong adjourned the meeting at 3:35 PM.

Philip Doty, Secretary