

DOCUMENTS AND PROCEEDINGS OF THE GRADUATE ASSEMBLY
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN
March 28, 2007

Chair Randall Parker called the fourth meeting of the Graduate Assembly for the 2006-2007 academic year to order on Wednesday, March 28, 2007, at 2:24 PM in the Tom Lea Room of the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center (3.206).

Faculty Members Present: Auerbach, Browning, Cline, Doty, Golden, Henry, Hull, Kachelmeier, Kinney, McDougall, Mehdy, Neikirk, Parker, Popova, Stout, Strong, Wilson

Faculty Members Absent: Dean-Jones (excused), Haunschild, Heinzelman, Loukas (excused), Markovits, Murray, Ovando, Peters, Rubin, Slawek, Smith, Sprinkle (excused), Wiedemann

Student Members Present: Forestell

Student Members Absent: Cassidy, Guo, Mehrotra, Moody, Rust

Ex-Officio Members Present: Rodríguez

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

Visitors: Robert Wilson, Cheryl McVay, Frank Gavin

Order of Business

I. Approval of the minutes of the January 31, 2007, meeting

The Assembly approved the minutes of the January, 2007, meeting as amended.

II. Report of the Graduate Dean (Victoria Rodríguez)

The first element of Dean Rodríguez's report concerned the University capital campaign, for which the Graduate School has prepared a plan. She has formed a new division for External Relations and Development in the Graduate School, headed by Assistant Dean John Dalton. Kathleen Mabley currently has responsibilities there for marketing, public affairs, and public relations. Mabley and Dalton will be joined soon by a development specialist. In terms of development, all Graduate School monies go directly to support graduate students throughout UT-Austin. This emphasis dovetails with President Powers's emphasis on human capital in the faculty and graduate student ranks.

The second part of her report concerned dean searches: the College of Liberal Arts' deanship will be occupied soon, while the Colleges of Pharmacy and Fine Arts are in earlier stages of their dean searches.

Echoed by Associate Dean Marv Hackert, Dean Rodríguez expressed her thanks for programs' and faculty members' help in completing the initial stages of the National Research Council's (NRC) evaluation of doctoral programs. Hackert specified that more than 71% of individual faculty members have submitted their completed questionnaires (more than 1,000 individual responses), with eleven of the 57 participating programs having more than 90% participation. Some faculty members will also be asked to participate in the rating phase of the NRC study, ending at the completion of the spring semester.

Rodríguez completed her report by mentioning the upcoming second annual Lone Star Diversity Colloquium to be held at UT-Austin. As described further by Associate Dean Darlene Grant, this colloquium will have almost 200 undergraduates in attendance, the majority of whom are juniors and seniors. All the participating Texas universities are aiming to attract students from historically under-represented groups to graduate study in Texas. After being held at Texas A&M University in 2006 and UT-Austin in 2007, the 2008 colloquium will be hosted by Texas Tech University.

In response to a question about further documentation of doctoral qualifying examinations and dissertation defenses potentially imposed by accrediting agencies, Dean Rodríguez said that the questioner and the Graduate School will investigate further.

III. Report of Chair (Randall Parker)

Chair Parker re-issued an invitation to the members of the Assembly to have breakfast at the Campus Club on Thursday, March 29, 2007, at 7:00 AM with the UT Faculty Council, new UT-Austin Provost Steve Leslie, Dean Rodríguez, and Paul Woodruff, the new Dean of Undergraduate Studies.

Reporting from the joint meeting of the UT-Austin faculty council and A&M's faculty senate, Parker mentioned topics of joint interest to the presidents of both universities with regard to the state legislature. Two in particular were an expected 3% increase in the budget and a potential cap on the top 10% admissions to both universities. Parker noted that several of President Powers's position papers are available online on the Faculty Council web site.

Chair Parker mentioned that Graduate Assembly elections are complete.

Parker also stated he would attend both parts of the UT Remembers program on May 4, 2007, to commemorate students, staff, and faculty members who have died in the previous year. He invited all members of the Assembly to do so as well. Parker ended his report by noting that the plus/minus grading system for undergraduates would be on the agenda for the Faculty Council's next meeting.

IV. Academic Committee (Pauline Strong)

Chair Strong noted the Academic Committee's approval of the proposal for a graduate portfolio in Imaging Science from the departments of Electrical and Computer Engineering and Biomedical Engineering at UT-Austin in partnership with other UT system academic units.

The Academic Committee also recommended a proposal to create a Master of Global Policy Studies in the LBJ School of Public Affairs. Three representatives from the LBJ School described the proposal and its creation in response to students' interests and to employers' requirements. They answered questions from the Assembly about particulars of the program (49 credit hours to be completed over two years) and its comparison to other public affairs degree programs.

- The Graduate Assembly unanimously supported the proposal to create a Master of Global Policy Studies, and classified it as minor legislation.

V. Administrative Committee (David Hull)

Chair David Hull presented the Administrative Committee's proposal that 30 credit hours be the minimum required for a master's degree from UT-Austin, changing the current three-tiered system of 30 hours with thesis, 33 with report, and 36 with no thesis-no report. The proposed 30-hour minimum could include six credits for a thesis or three credits for a report. Hull directed the Assembly members' attention to the chart comparing credit hours required for graduate programs in philosophy, computer science, and engineering from six comparable major research universities (Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Stanford, Michigan, UC-Berkeley, UCLA, and UNC-Chapel Hill). These programs, with one exception, require 30 hours or less. The proposed change to a 30-hour minimum for a graduate degree from UT-Austin still meets the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's standards and does not require that any UT-Austin graduate programs change their current degree requirements. Each GSC could maintain or impose higher requirements for earning degrees – thus no existing program will be affected unless it chooses to be. All requests for changes to degree requirements must be submitted to the UT Graduate School for review and approval.

Amy Forestell, representing the Graduate Student Assembly, said that graduate students support the proposed change, especially since the change reflects many students' experience at other universities.

- The Assembly unanimously supported the proposal for a uniform 30-hour minimum for a master's degree, and the change was considered major

legislation. As a result, assistant dean Tom Belinoski will ask all members of Graduate Study Committees on campus to comment or protest. If 10 or more GSC members protest, the legislation will return to the Assembly for reconsideration; if 30 or more protest, then the dean of the Graduate School will create a review committee to reconsider the proposal and the protests.

VI. Admissions and Enrollment Committee (Karen Browning)

Chair Karen Browning said that the Admissions and Enrollment Committee reiterates its support of electronic letters of recommendation for all UT graduate programs. In response to questions, Chair Browning said that the primary question is authentication and security; and as these questions evolve and as other projects are completed, Information Technology Services will begin to address the changes in information systems caused by the proposal.

VII. Graduate Student Assembly (Amy Forestell)

Amy Forestell, president of the Graduate Student Assembly (GSA), began by noting that the first week in April is Graduate and Professional Student Appreciation Week for which GSA will sponsor many events. All activities are aimed to showcase the academic productivity of graduate and professional students and to provide opportunities for graduate and professional students to socialize, especially across disciplinary lines. She noted that her term as GSA president will expire and that the new president, Brian Gatten, will attend the next Graduate Assembly meeting with her. Members of the Graduate Assembly expressed thanks for her service.

VIII. Other Business

Dean Neikirk (Electrical and Computer Engineering) referred to a UT system task force on doctoral and post-doctoral education, which will present its report to the University Chancellor and the Board of Regents. Members of the Assembly mentioned other initiatives related to graduate students. Of special concern are the large economic contributions that graduate education makes to the state and the large variability in employment titles for doctoral and post-doctoral students. One member noted that A&M and UT-Austin will request that the legislature not consider establishing other flagship universities without increasing state support of the two existing flagships. Another member mentioned discussions in the faculty advisory committee on budgets related to equity of support for graduate students in various UT-Austin academic programs.

IX. Adjournment

Chair Parker adjourned the meeting at 3:10 PM.

Philip Doty, Secretary

