

DOCUMENTS AND PROCEEDINGS OF THE GRADUATE ASSEMBLY
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN
September 19, 2007

Pauline Strong, chair of the Graduate Assembly, called to order the first meeting of the Assembly for the 2007-2008 academic year at 2:22 PM in the Harry Ransom Center, Tom Lea Room, 3.206.

Faculty Members Present: Carter, Dean-Jones, Doty, Edgar, Gamkhar, Golden, Haunschild, Heinzelman, Hull, Kachelmeier, Kinney, Kwallek, Leal, Odell, Parker, Sprinkle, Strong, Wilson

Faculty Members Absent: Browning, Cline, Hess, Loukas, Markovits (excused), Mehdy, Murray (excused), Neikirk (excused), Ovando, Popova, Rubin, Slawek, Stout (excused)

Student Members Present: Carpenter, Gatten, Jones, Marlantes

Student Members Absent: Ferguson, Witherspoon

Ex-Officio Members Present: Rodríguez

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

Order of Business

I. Approval of the minutes of the April 25, 2007, meeting

The Assembly approved the minutes of the April 25, 2007, meeting.

II. Report of the Graduate Dean (Victoria Rodríguez)

Dean Victoria Rodríguez of the Office of Graduate Studies (OGS) began by welcoming all new and continuing members of the Graduate Assembly, especially new chair Pauline Strong. She reported on the several small retreats that the Graduate School held earlier in 2007 that resulted in a number of changes in the Graduate School's organization: hiring a new development person under Assistant Dean John Dalton in external relations, consolidation of graduate fellowships under one administrative umbrella, renaming of graduate fellowships to make their intentions plainer, and hiring of Rhonda Collins to work with Darlene Grant (Director of Recruitment and Outreach).

In terms of services for students, OGS has put more emphasis on electronic recruiting of graduate students, and all UT graduate programs (with six exceptions) can now accept electronic letters of recommendations for applicants using an online template. PDF attachments will be acceptable within a short time.

The final item of the Dean's report was the ongoing deliberations of the tuition policy advisory committee, which is preparing to make its recommendations about flat rate tuition to the Graduate Student Assembly as well as the Graduate Assembly.

III. Report of Chair (Pauline Strong)

Chair Strong started her report by thanking Randy Parker, the immediate past chair of the Assembly, for his service and help and thanking the chairs of the three standing committees of the Assembly for this academic year.

She noted that a focus of her service as chair will be improved communication with graduate advisors, and she solicited the Assembly's help in identifying graduate advisors' concerns across the university. She briefly discussed salaries for TAs and RAs and finished her report by reminding the Assembly that members should notify the Graduate School if they cannot attend Assembly meetings and should not accumulate more than two unexcused absences per academic year in order to remain members in good standing.

IV. Academic Committee (Susan Heinzelman)

Chair Heinzelman reported that the committee tabled the proposal to create a Master of Interior Design from the School of Architecture. The committee will consider the proposal in early October.

V. Administrative Committee (David Hull)

Chair Hull had no report.

VI. Admissions and Enrollment Committee (Karen Browning)

Darlene Grant, Associate Dean of the Graduate School, speaking for absent chair Browning, informed the Assembly of the Graduate School's intention to invite admitted students who meet the university's diversity criteria to visit UT on March 6 and 7. The goal is to increase the number of these students who enroll at UT. Several members of the Assembly had questions about how this initiative might be coordinated and timed with existing programs bringing admitted students in at the various schools and colleges. An overall goal of the OGS program is to complement what the other academic units are doing on campus.

VII. Graduate Student Assembly (Brian Gatten)

Brain Gatten, co-chair of the Graduate Student Assembly (GSA), had several items to report. The GSA is discussing proposing flat-rate tuition for graduate students, exploring implications of the potential development of the Brackenridge tract for graduate students' financial status and for the strong sense of community among graduate students now living on the tract, and discussing the establishment of a department of statistics at UT. Gatten initiated a complex discussion between him and several members of the Assembly and representatives of the Office of Graduate Studies about graduate fellowships. The discussion focused on health insurance, the fact that TAs are state employees, and in-state tuition waivers. The chair, with Gatten's agreement, referred these concerns to the Admissions and Enrollment Committee for consideration.

VIII. Adjournment

Chair Strong adjourned the meeting at 3:00 PM.

Philip Doty, Secretary