

**The Graduate School
Information Technology Vision Plan
2008-2009**

Summary of Requests

For 2008-09, we are requesting funds for the following student-based initiatives:

Create an on-line Award and Fellowship Tool to serve the growing number of graduate student awards and fellowships	\$ 75,000
Develop on-line, interactive tools related to graduate student research, including modules for dissertation writing and publishing, compliance and intellectual property laws, career strategies, etc.	\$ 10,000
Total ITAC Request	\$ 85,000

Overview of Current IT Programs and Infrastructure

Vision/Mission/Goals of Unit

Established in 1910, the Graduate School has grown to encompass nearly 100 fields of study, and the number of graduate students now exceeds 12,000. More than 800 doctoral degrees and more than 2,800 master's degrees are awarded each year. The Graduate School's fellowship program makes annual awards totaling approximately 10 million dollars. The University of Texas at Austin awards the second largest number of doctoral degrees in the United States and is one of three southwestern members of the Association of American Universities.

The Graduate School operates under the direction of the Vice Provost and Graduate Dean. Areas of responsibility include Administrative Services, Awards, Faculty Development Program, Fellowships, Graduate Assembly and Legislation, Graduate and International Admissions, Portfolios, Professional Development, Recruitment and Outreach, Student Services, and Technology and Web Administration.

Our Mission:

The Graduate School at The University of Texas at Austin is an active community of diverse scholars in over 100 academic programs dedicated to excellence in original research, teaching, creative expression, and intellectual leadership. Using our extensive resources and talents, we cultivate individuals who work together to bring knowledge, innovation, and best practices to meet the great and small challenges of our time.

IT Programs

A one-time project allocation of \$10,000 was provided for the 2005-06 academic year to develop an on-line Grant Pathfinder. The Graduate School is hoping to receive recurring ITAC funds to further cross-disciplinary information technology initiatives.

Infrastructure

The Graduate School has 42 Apple desktop computers, 7 Apple laptop computers, 3 Dell PC desktop computers and 1 Dell laptop computer. There are 2 networked multifunction copiers, 4 networked monochrome printers, and 1 networked color printer. There is one in-house Systems Administrator responsible for setting up computers, upgrading software and virus protections, and providing technical support to users. Software and operating systems are kept up-to-date.

There is also 1 Dell PC desktop server that serves as our office fileserver. It is secured with firewall and antivirus software that is backed up nightly by our office LAN support, Student Information Services (SIS).

The Graduate School supports one position in the SIS Unit, under the direction of Angela Svoboda, to assist with information technology needs and maintain automated systems. SIS

has created a recruiting toolkit this past academic year to assist the Graduate School and other departments with collaborative recruiting efforts. The first phase of this toolkit is completed and is being tested.

Current and proposed funding sources for IT programs and infrastructure

The Graduate School primarily uses Option III program fees and funds from flat rate tuition as support for IT programs and infrastructure. ITAC funds are needed to develop cross-disciplinary online graduate student tools.

Best Practices

Since the last Vision Plan report, the Graduate School, working with Student Information Services, developed a Graduate Coordinator toolkit and a Recruiting Portal.

The Graduate Coordinator toolkit consolidates graduate student information from application for admission to graduation. A Program of Work submission system is currently in process.

Included in the Recruiting Portal is a customized online Graduate School application for admission and the ability to upload resumes and letters of recommendation. The first version of this portal is up and running. Enhancements are currently being made to the interactive prospective student portion of the system.

Use of Previous Academic Year Allocations

One-Time Projects

The Graduate School received a one-time ITAC project allocation of \$10,000 during the 2005-06 academic year with the stated purpose of enhancing the academic information technology activities of Graduate Studies, specifically academic program objectives.

The first project, started during 2005-06, was the creation of an on-line Grant Pathfinder. The Pathfinder is a web-based resource to help students develop grant proposals, primarily for research and travel. It provides a framework for identifying likely funding sources, developing a strategy, and actually writing the proposal. It includes other useful resources: grant-writing websites and clearinghouses of granting sources. The fully operational Grant Pathfinder will be released this spring.

The first phase of the project involved the Graduate School, the Information School, the Faculty Innovation Center in the College of Engineering, and the Hogg Foundation Library. Dr. Lynn Westbrook and graduate student Ellie Collier from the Information School worked with Allison Supancic, Head Librarian of the the Hogg Foundation Library. Together they created a process and the corollary templates and frameworks for researching grant opportunities and writing proposals.

The second phase involved the Faculty Innovation Center from the College of Engineering taking the content developed in the first phase and translating it into a web-based tool (designing the interface, doing user testing, etc.).

In addition to being a useful tool for students, this pathfinder will facilitate the creation of subsequent graduate student tools, including dissertation writing and publishing, compliance and intellectual property laws, career strategies, ethics, teaching methods, consulting, and multi-cultural communication.

There were no funding deviations from what was proposed.

Needs and Proposed Use of Funds – One-Time Projects

Graduate Student Award and Fellowship Tool

An on-line Award and Fellowship Tool will more effectively serve the graduate student population. The web-based system will be used for nomination, approval, review, and selection of award and fellowship recipients. The Graduate School's current system for competitions can no longer handle the growing number of awards. A capital campaign focusing on graduate students will bring in even more dollars to an already over-burdened process. The quality of the graduate students we attract and retain depends on adequate funding for their education.

We propose that this new system be implemented in two phases. The Awards Program will be created during 2008-09. Work on the Fellowship Tool, building on the Awards Program, will begin thereafter.

Each year, the Graduate School sponsors nine different award programs for graduate students and those who work with graduate students. Hundreds of nominations are received for the nine programs. With the current awards process, nominations are submitted to the Graduate School in multiple copies after receiving appropriate approvals from administrators. Staff prepare a spreadsheet or database with information from each submission to produce a list of nominees. The stacks of nomination documents are then hand-delivered along with evaluation instructions to the three to five reviewers for each program. The reviewers' evaluations and scores are processed and meetings are held to determine the award recipients. This process is time-consuming, uses a great deal of staff time and paper, and is not user-friendly.

We propose creating a web-based system for nomination, approval, review, and selection of winners. The Award Tool may also allow nominators to check the status of their nominations. This system will include the following functions:

- A restricted access site that allows nominators to add basic demographic data and answer questions similar to completing the existing printed form. The interface will also allow nominators to upload documents.
- An administrative section on the site will receive, sort and manipulate the data, as needed, and will allow all data to be downloaded to Excel or FileMaker Pro.
- The application will be able to send automated emails to nominators, approvers, and reviewers.

- The program will allow approvers (department chairs and deans) to log in to a private area to see nominations for their programs and submit their recommendations regarding the nominations.
- A login site for reviewers, showing only their assigned nominations, will allow reviewers to evaluate and submit scores for each nomination. The system will automatically calculate a composite list of nominations, ranked highest to lowest, based on reviewer scores.
- A portion of the site may allow nominators to check the nomination as it progresses through the stages of submission, approval, review and award.

This web-based system will move the Graduate School beyond its current over-burdened, labor-intensive processes and will allow for growth in the awards program.

This Awards Tool will then be used as a basis for the Graduate School's Fellowship program, which includes hundreds of nominations for 15 different fellowship programs. The Graduate School will include departments in this process, consolidating graduate student fellowship information and improving decision processes. This new system will also allow the International Office to obtain proof of adequate financial support, which is required for the completion of visa awards. Improved financial decisions will increase the number of students receiving awards. Providing the International Office with this information will be a great benefit to international students.

It should also be noted that these systems will be helpful in the creation of other similar processes across campus that involve submission of information and documents, approvals, reviews and awards of any type.

Additional Pathfinder Tools

The Graduate School is requesting additional ITAC funds for the 2008-09 academic year to continue efforts to provide on-line inter-disciplinary tools in support of the academic initiatives of graduate students. Student surveys have shown the highest interest in additional resources to assist with dissertation writing and publishing, compliance and intellectual property laws, and career strategies. Other topics under consideration include ethics, teaching methods, consulting, and multi-cultural communication. Funding will provide templates, tools, and interactive sites, utilizing expertise in on-line learning, graphic design, and web usability. Projects may include creating resources to support learning communities where graduate students can share ideas and resources in areas of common intellectual and community interest.

Funding Request

Funding is being requested to develop an on-line Award and Fellowship Tool and continue development of Pathfinder Tools.

Description	Quantity	Total Cost	ITAC Request
Senior Systems Analyst for Creation of Graduate Student Award and Fellowship Tool	1	\$ 75,000	\$ 75,000
Engineering Faculty Innovation Center for research, design and development of on-line graduate student tools	1	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000
Total		\$ 85,000	\$ 85,000