

The Graduate School Information Technology Vision Plan for 2009-2010

Request Summary

For 2009-10, we are requesting funds for the following student-based initiative:

Complete programming phase of on-line Award and Fellowship Tool to serve the growing number of graduate student awards and fellowships	\$ 80,000
Total ITAC Request for 2009-2010	\$ 80,000

Needs and Proposed Use of Funds – One-Time Project

Graduate Student Award and Fellowship Application Tool

Funds are needed to complete programming of the on-line Award and Fellowship Application Tool. The web-based system will be used for nomination, approval, review, and selection of award and fellowship recipients.

This new application tool is an important component of the Graduate School's campaign to bring in additional funds for graduate student support and to improve the quality of graduate students we are able to recruit and retain at The University of Texas at Austin.

Once the Award and Fellowship Application Tool is complete, it will be used to build a similar tool for the Graduate School's Faculty Development Program's Faculty Research Awards.

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 2,800 master's degrees are awarded each year. The Graduate School's fellowship program makes over 500 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.

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.

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

The Graduate School will be celebrating its 100th birthday in 2010. In recognition of this milestone, the goal for the capital campaign is \$100 million. As mentioned above, the focus of the capital campaign is graduate student support.

Over the next two years, we hope to have the Awards and Fellowship Application Tool and the Recruiting Portal fully operational. Once the major Graduate School processes are automated, they will be maintained and enhancements will continue to be made.

The Graduate School is also working with the Office of Information Management and Analysis to establish a new Institutional Research Analyst for Graduate School support. This position will identify data sources, design data structures, and perform statistical analyses of data as appropriate to support informed decision making by University officials. Specific areas of analysis include graduate student cohort tracking, retention, and time to degree; graduate degree program assessment; graduate student financial support, recruitment, and post-degree placement.

IT Organization

Currently we fund 2 FTE at the senior systems analyst level on the Student Information Systems "SIS" team. The SIS team leader, in consultation with Graduate School staff, establish priorities. As noted under the Best Practices section of this proposal, our partnership with SIS in developing systems for use by students and staff enables us to build upon programming and development across campus and reduce duplication of efforts.

Infrastructure

The Graduate School has 45 Apple desktop computers, 8 Apple laptop computers, 3 Dell PC desktop computers and 1 Dell laptop computer. There are 2 networked multifunction copiers, 4 networked monochrome printers (2 of these are used for mainframe printing), and 1 networked color printer for staff use. 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 one Dell PowerEdge 800 server that serves as our office fileserver. Particulars about this device include:

- network security that is provided by the Windows built-in firewall and adjusted for best security practices by SIS staff
- access restricted to the Graduate School's computer subnet (128.83.84.xx)
- antivirus software that is updated at 4:00 a.m. daily via automatic downloads from an SIS-managed Symantec antivirus server
- backup power provided by a UPS (uninterruptable power supply) that allows for a clean shutdown in the event of a power outage, reducing the possibility of data corruption
- data backups conducted every weeknight and stored on hard drives that rotate between the server rack and a secure off-site storage location; this routine provides a backup of 4 – 6 weeks worth of data
- physical location in a server rack in MAI B-1 (Registrar's office basement), protected by an alarm system that comes on automatically after the last staff member leaves in the evening and remains active until turned off manually the following morning by staff

Current and Proposed Funding Sources for IT Programs and Infrastructure

The Graduate School uses Available University Funds "AUF", Option III program fees, funds from flat rate tuition, and ITAC funds to support its IT programs and infrastructure. AUF funds are primarily used for systems administrator and analyst salaries. Operating expenses primarily come from designated fee and flat rate tuition accounts.

Estimated costs and percentages devoted to the different aspects of IT are as follows:

New development	\$ 112,000	42%
Maintenance/Enhancements	72,000	27%
System Administration	43,500	17%
Web Design/Maintenance	21,500	8%
Equipment/Software/Supplies	<u>15,500</u>	<u>6%</u>
Total	\$ 264,500	100%

Best Practices

With SIS in charge of programming and development, the Electronic Access to Student Information "EASI" graduate student services system brought all related systems and information together. The impact across campus and the amount of time saved by Graduate School, Admissions staff, graduate coordinators, advisers, and students have been phenomenal. Improving communication between advisers and students and allowing for customized degree plans, a record of all communication and status checks to be available to both parties at any time is just one example of what is being accomplished under the EASI umbrella. The most recent additions to EASI are the program of work submission system and the initial phase of the recruiting portal.

The EASI application framework was intended to be re-usable and table-driven to allow for faster development time for new applications related to student information and services, using consistent interface, navigation and security implementation. Many processes relied on the same student information, so EASI was developed with the concept of reusable TABS. Future enhancements will result in less duplication of code and the result is that new services will combine the piece of functionality unique to them with existing security and a familiar look and feel. EASI now consists of over 35 services.

Use of Previous Academic Year Allocations

\$40,000 in ITAC funds received during 2008-09 provided funding for the on-line award and fellowship application tool. These funds made possible the initial phase of exploring solutions and mapping processes. We expect to complete work on the first phase of the project in January. Programming will begin in early spring for recruitment fellowships and we expect the tool to be in production by Fall 2009.

During 2009-10, the tool will be expanded to include continuing and other fellowships. The final phase will be the addition of student and faculty development awards.