

DOCUMENTS AND PROCEEDINGS OF THE GRADUATE ASSEMBLY
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN
February 24, 2021

Chair Elizabeth Gershoff called the third meeting of the Graduate Assembly for the 2020-2021 academic year to order on Wednesday, February 24, 2021, at 1:30 PM over Zoom.

Faculty Members Present: Hal Alper, Hina Azam, Jim Buhler, Michael Butterworth, Tanya Clement, Allan Cole, Kerry Cook, Sue Cox, Noah De Lissovoy, Andrew Dunn, Catharine Echols, Alison Frazier, Elizabeth Gershoff, Linda Golden, John Hasenbein, Christopher Jolly, Jack Lee, Stephen Limberg, Christina Markert, Julia Mickenberg, Robert Paterson, Marc Pierce, Francisco Polidoro, Kavita Radhakrishnan, Rebecca Rossen, James Spindler, Jessica Toste, Catherine Weaver, Soo Young Rieh

Faculty Members Absent: Ethan Burriss, Gloria González-López, Thomas Hunt, Lizy John, Karen Rascati

Student Members Present: Ashley Bennett, Karina Mendez-Perez, Gregorio Ponti, Sanju Vardhan

Ex Officio Members Present: N/A

Representatives from the Office of the Graduate Studies Present: Michelle Broadway, Jim Cox, Marv Hackert, Maria Juenger, Shannon Neuse, Mark Smith, Rebekah Sylvia

Visitors: Mike Boylan-Kolchin, Caitlin Casey, Lydia Contreras, Nick Hundley, Gina Magharious, Mia Markey

Order of Business

I. Approval of the minutes of the November 18, 2020 meeting.

The minutes were approved unanimously.

II. Report of the Graduate Dean (Mark Smith)

A. Dean Smith started his report by sharing details on the recently released Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) International graduate applications and enrollment report. He indicated that UT is doing better than the averages with respect to International applicant numbers and diversity.

B. Next, he provided a reminder of the CGS April 15 agreement and the updated language associated with student release after the April 15 deadline.

C. Finally, Dean Smith provided a presentation on the updated graduate student insurance plan, Academic Blue. He mentioned that this new plan allows for students to be enrolled year round and includes cheaper dependent options as well as free vision and dental. Furthermore, he stated this change addresses many of the issues raised by the Graduate Education Task Force.

III. Report of Chair (Elizabeth Gershoff)

- A. Chair Gershoff started her report by posing a question as to whether dissertation defense dates could be extended this semester due to COVID and the winter storms. A conversation ensued among several meeting attendees regarding the existing policy and the waived *in absentia* registration fees that will once again be implemented this summer.
- B. Next, Chair Gershoff reminded the Graduate Assembly about upcoming elections both for new members as well as within the Assembly for next chair and committee chairs.
- C. Assistant Dean Broadway indicated that election announcements were waiting until previously approved bylaw changes for elections were being added to the HOP.
- D. Chair Gershoff then asked Associate Dean Cox to provide an update on the graduate mentoring committee that he has been leading. Associate Dean Cox indicated that the committee would soon be publishing a guide that provides best practices for mentoring across campus. He also reminded Assembly members of the upcoming mentoring workshop for both faculty and graduate students.
- E. Finally, Chair Gershoff introduced Gina Magharious, Survey Coordinator, IRRIS, who discussed the results of doctoral exit surveys. As part of this presentation, Gina Magharious provided an update of institutional survey consortiums and showcased a series of dashboards to view data and indicated that both a public version and EID-controlled access version would be available soon.

IV. Admissions and Enrollment Committee (Allan Cole)

- A. A proposal to waive the GRE requirement for the Chemical Engineering program was introduced based upon the unanimous recommendation of the Admissions and Enrollment Committee. Committee Chair Cole introduced the proposal as well as Prof. Lydia Contreras from the Chemical Engineering department. Prof. Contreras indicated that they seek to remove the GRE requirement, as this requirement reduces program competitiveness, the scores do not correlate with student success and the program has not been formally considering these scores for the past few years. This has led to increased diversity in the program.

Prof. Soo Young Rieh asked for clarification about the GRE waiver and wondered whether students could still optionally submit the GRE. Prof. Contreras indicated that they would not be using this information. Director of Graduate and International Admissions Center Shannon Neuse clarified that this score would still sit in the EASI system should students apply to multiple programs.

The assembly voted unanimously to approve the GRE waiver for the Chemical Engineering program.

- B. A proposal to waive the GRE for the Astronomy Doctoral Program was introduced based upon the unanimous recommendation of the Admissions and Enrollment Committee. Committee Chair Cole introduced the proposal as well as representatives from the program, Prof. Mike Boylan-Kolchin and Prof. Caitlin Casey. Prof. Boylan-Kolchin indicated they sought to waive the GRE as scores have not been used in the past year and cited an increase in applicant diversity when Physics waived their GRE requirement. Prof. Casey added that their program is at a competitive disadvantage as most peer institutions have removed the requirement.

The assembly voted unanimously to approve the GRE waiver for the Astronomy program.

- C. A proposal to waive the GRE for the Biomedical Engineering Doctoral Program was introduced based upon the unanimous recommendation of the Admissions and Enrollment Committee. Committee Chair Cole introduced the proposal as well as a representative from the program, Prof. Mia Markey. Prof. Markey echoed similar comments as were cited in the previous proposals including that the admissions committee has not used GRE scores for years, the exam does not match the quantitative nature of the field, and the requirement has deterred students from applying.

The assembly voted unanimously to approve the GRE waiver for the Biomedical Engineering program.

- D. Finally, Committee Chair Cole provided a report on revisions to the Guidelines for Standardized Test Waivers. Specifically, he wanted to provide these updates so that every program and subsequent admission committee are provided with a set of standards and guidelines. He then described the attempts at sharing best practices and recommendations for programs considering waivers. Discussion on the document was tabled until the next meeting to allow for adequate time to review the guidelines. Questions and comments for the committee were invited both through the Zoom chat function and by email.

V. Academic Committee (Christopher Jolly)

- A. Chair Gershoff decided to table all reports and business from the Academic Committee until the next meeting due to time constraints.

VI. Administrative Committee (Tanya Clement)

- A. Chair Gershoff decided to table all reports and business from the Administrative Committee until the next meeting due to time constraints.

VII. Graduate Student Assembly (Gregorio Ponti)

A. Graduate Student current well-being update

GSA Chair Ponti opened his remarks by indicating that students (as well as faculty) are likely tired and struggling with the compounding events of the day. He mentioned that workshops were being planned for graduate students paying special attention to mental health.

B. Invest in Texas

GSA Chair Ponti continued his report by indicating that legislation is being considered now including the “Invest in Texas” platform where they will then go to the State Legislature to consider how students are funded and how employee funding is considered in an effort to raise wages.

Finally, GSA Chair Ponti closed his remarks by indicating that elections are ongoing and new representatives from the GSA will be joining in the next meeting.

VIII. Adjournment at 2:58 PM



Hal Alper, Secretary