

DOCUMENTS AND PROCEEDINGS OF THE GRADUATE ASSEMBLY
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

November 14, 2018

Minutes

Chair James Cox called the second meeting of the Graduate Assembly for the 2018-2019 academic year to order on Wednesday, November 14, 2018 at 1:30 PM in the Lee Jamail Academic Room, Main 212.

Faculty members present: James Cox, Catherine Weaver, Hina Azam, Tasha Beretvas, James Buhler, Allan Cole, John Deigh, Catharine Echols, Alison Frazier, Elizabeth Gershoff, Linda Golden, John Hasenbein, John Hatfield, Thomas Hunt, Christopher Jolly, Maria Juenger, Stephen Limberg, Christina Markert, Andreas Matouschek, Francisco Polidoro, Kavita Radhakrishnan, Loriene Roy, Sharon Strover, Jo Worthy

Faculty members absent: Sue Cox, Hugh Daigle, Andrew Dunn, Michael Holleran, Wonsuck Kim, Jack Lee, Julia Mickenberg, Karen Rascati

Student Members Present: Samantha Fuchs

Ex Officio Members Present: Brian Evans (representing Charlotte Canning)

Representatives from the Office of Graduate Studies present: Dean Smith, Dean Hackert, Michelle Broadway, Dean Dalton, Dean Neikirk, Shannon Neuse, Rebekah Sylvia, Nancy Riley

Guests: Adrienne Howarth-Moore, Bret Johnston, Billy Fatzinger, Prabhudev Konana, Karen Grumberg

Order of Business

- I. Approval of the minutes of the September 26, 2018 meeting
Minutes unanimously approved.
- II. Report of the Dean of the Graduate School, Mark JT Smith

The Task Force for Graduate Education is working on finding permanent solutions to supporting graduate students. It will assemble innovations taking place in some departments to share and stimulate creative thoughts about the issues.

Dean Smith spoke with Dr. Soncia Reagins-Lilly, who oversees the housing office, and she reaffirmed the goal of affordable living spaces for 5000 graduate students (versus 1200 currently). The building of the East Campus housing facility was delayed, but is moving along.

Dean Smith announced a new initiative called “Constrained Optimization” which assists in sifting through a large number of applications. Instead of culling down the number of applications based on one rubric (like GRE scores), different constraints can be imbedded into an algorithm for a more holistic approach to paring down the applications for further review.

Hina Azam (Middle Eastern Studies) asked about legality of some of the rubrics that may go into the algorithm. Dean Smith replied this is about defining a pool from a large number of applications, and not the selection process per se. The selection process would then be holistic and not based on any specific quotas.

Sharon Strover (Moody College of Communication) asked about the timeline of the Task Force. Dean Smith replied that the membership is mostly complete. Some students will be added, and when gaps in expertise are identified, others may be added to the committee. He expects that the committee will have recommendations after two semesters.

III. Report of Chair (James Cox)

A. There is a graduate student summer funding opportunity where PhD candidates can earn \$1600 for 10 days of work in the summer by helping to grade AP exams. Contact James Cox or Charlotte Canning for more information.

B. Adrienne Howarth-Moore, Director of Human Resources:
Discussion regarding Workday (summer funding issue) – (questions and answers attached)

We need to remember that UT, as a state agency, must follow specific rules when it comes to health insurance regulations. Although staff who work part-time get part-time coverage, graduate students get 100% coverage. Post-doctoral fellows are considered employees and are covered. But non-employee fellows (e.g., graduate student fellows and research-affiliate post-doc fellows) are eligible to opt for the employee health care plan, but they receive no premium funding. Graduate student GRAs need a summer assignment in order to stay covered. There have been no changes in these rules.

However, once students graduate in May, they are no longer employees and will not have access to the UT health plan in the summer following graduation. The change that raised concern relates to graduate student employees who are funded by UT in the Spring, want to be covered in the summer, and plan to return in the Fall on a (non-employee) Fellowship. They can choose to stay on the UT employee plan (\$598/month) or the Student Health plan (\$209/month), but they would have to pay for it. These changes were made based on a review of rules by Human Resources Legal Affairs and the UT System. These previous allowances for non-employees were deemed to be out of compliance.

Samantha Fuchs (President of Graduate Student Assembly)

Graduate students that may be just coming off of their parents' health insurance may not know the difference between plans and be able to make an educated

choice. Will information be provided about the advantages and disadvantages of the various options?

Adrienne replied that the Federal Government has rules about who can provide information about insurance plans (they have to be a Certified Navigator). Instead students can look at the federal Marketplace Exchange to help with this decision, although it is not as robust as it once was.

IV. Academic Committee (Catherine Weaver)

A. Proposal to create a graduate portfolio in Middle Eastern Studies

Karen Grumberg, Associate Professor and Director for the Center of Middle Eastern Studies (MES), provided a summary of the proposal, noting current and growing demand for graduate courses in Middle Eastern Studies by non-MES graduate students. The portfolio program will provide students the opportunity to earn a transcriptable degree notation certifying their expertise in Middle Eastern Studies.

The proposal was presented to the Graduate Assembly following unanimous approval by the Academic Committee. There were no objections from the Assembly so the proposal will be directed to the Graduate Dean and Provost for final approval.

V. Administrative Committee (Elizabeth Gershoff)

A. Proposal to update Graduate School policy to require maintenance and provision of graduate student handbooks by Graduate Studies Committees

At the request of the Graduate School, the Administrative Committee of the Graduate Assembly reviewed the Graduate School's policies and procedures related to departmental graduate student handbooks. Following this review, the committee presented a motion to update Graduate School policy, requiring that all graduate programs maintain a graduate student handbook, that the handbook be reviewed yearly, that it be made available to applicants, and that each student be given a copy of the handbook when they matriculate.

The proposal was approved unanimously.

B. Proposal to update Graduate School policy related to annual progress reviews of graduate students

At the request of the Graduate School, the Administrative Committee of the Graduate Assembly considered the need for annual progress reviews of graduate students.

Based on this review, the committee presented a unanimous motion to establish a Graduate School policy requiring graduate programs to review the progress of all doctoral and master's students on an annual basis and to communicate the results of these reviews individually, in writing, to the students. The committee noted that each Graduate Studies Committee will be responsible for defining and monitoring adequate progress for the students in their graduate programs..

The proposal was unanimously approved with the exception of one abstention.

VI. Admissions and Enrollment Committee (Tasha Beretvas)

A. Proposal to waive the GRE/GMAT requirement for select applicants to the Master of Science in Energy Management (MSEMA) self-funded (Option III) degree program

The proposed test-score waiver will allow the graduate program in Energy Management to waive the GRE/GMAT requirement for a limited number of highly performing undergraduate applicants who apply to the self-funded (Option III) MS Energy Management degree program. If approved, the Director of the Option III program will have the ability to waive the test-score requirement for students who 1) are completing an undergraduate degree at UT Austin; 2) are in the final year of undergraduate study; 3) are provisionally admitted to the MSEMA degree program; 4) have a cumulative GPA of at least 3.5 on a 4.0 scale at the time of application; and, 5) provide letters of support from two faculty from their undergraduate major.

The proposal for test-score waiver was approved unanimously.

B. Proposal to waive the GRE requirement for all applicants to the Michener Center for Writers' (MCW) Master of Fine Arts (MFA) degree in Writing

Dr. Bret Johnston, Director of the Michener Center, introduced the proposal and discussed reasons for the proposed waiver. He noted that the MFA program is in the top five writers programs and only accepts about 2% of their applications. He also noted that competing programs do not require the GRE. The proposal for test-score waiver was approved unanimously.

VII. Graduate Student Assembly (Samantha Fuchs)

A. Universal TA training

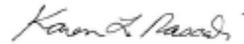
There is a need for some type of TA training for incoming graduate students. This would include topics such as information about library and campus resources, ADA, and Title IX compliance, how to set a grading schedule with the instructor etc. GSA is asking for feedback on this issue, and legislation to request new policies may follow.

B. Graduate Student Labor Conditions Summary

A survey was conducted in spring with results from over 700 students from 15 colleges. Stipends vary from \$9000 to \$27000. Rent is taking about 40% of the stipend (the rent for one-bedroom in Austin runs about \$1000/mo). Full report was submitted to Dean Smith, the Provost and the President.

VIII. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 2:55 PM



Karen Rascati, Secretary