Graduate Assembly Meeting
Meeting Minutes from October 7, 2021

Thursday, October 7, 2021
2:30 pm
Virtual via Teams

PRESIDING: Ali Abolmaali, Chair of the Graduate Assembly

MEMBERS ATTENDING: Kathryn Pole, Rebecca Mauldin, Cynthia Kilpatrick, Regina T Praetorius, Robert Matthew Brothers, Mahmut Yasar, Yi Zhang, Ivonne Audirac, Jennifer Jie Zhang, Philip Baiden, Eusebius Small, Amy M. Austin, Seyedali Abolmaali, Panos S. Shiakolas, Shawn Christensen, Alejandro Rodriguez, Leonidas Fegaras, Jacqueline L. Michael

GUESTS ATTENDING: Shane Wilson, Patti Parker, Salena Meeks, Haiying Huang, Diana Huffaker, Terrance R. Skantz, Hong Jiang, Saibun Tjuatja, Michael Cho, Sara Ridenour, Kelli Sederavicius

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS ATTENDING: James Grover, Rebecca J. Lewis, Amber M. K. Smallwood, Lynn Peterson, Paul J. Componation, Raymond L. Jackson,

Call to Order - The meeting of the Graduate Assembly was called to order at 2:30 pm by Chair, Dr. Ali Abolmaali.

I. Introductions
   Welcome by the Chair

II. Members and Committees Introduced
1. Introduction of members
   • Dr. Kathryn Pole, Chair Pro Tem
   • Dr. Panos Shiakolas, Secretary
2. Committees and chairs
   • Committee on Graduate Students—Dr. Matthew Brothers
   • Committee on Program Revision—Dr. Rebecca Mauldin
   • Committee on Program Creation—Dr. Kathryn Pole

III. Consideration of Minutes
Minutes from April 1, 2021
Motion called to approve minutes. The minutes were approved.

IV. Dr. James Grover, Dean of Graduate School and Interim Vice President for Research
Dr. Grover talked about 3 informal items and did not require voting. If anyone has questions or concerns about these items, they can contact Dr. Grover directly.
   • A question was raised about whether a graduate would be able to make changes to the archival copy of their thesis or dissertation after it was already deposited at the library.
   • The suggestion is to add erratum to the file rather than making changes to the archival copy.
2. Updating published deadlines for submitting theses/dissertations, carrying out a defense, and completing the steps required to graduate because they are not in line with current practice. The proposed changes are as follows; they will be published in the university catalog and elsewhere.
   - Eliminate the deadline to hold a defense. Instead, there will be just one final deadline, university-wide, for completing all paperwork necessary for a thesis or dissertation student to graduate. Departments can choose to set a defense deadline that is in advance of this deadline.
   - Move the aforementioned final deadline 12 days back in order to align with the time when final grades are posted.
   - Allow extensions to deadlines with approvals.

3. At the last Dean’s Council meeting, a suggestion was made to put an academic dean as an ex-officio, non-voting member on the Program Creation and Program Review Committees so that the deans have a better understanding of how the Graduate Assembly reviews program creation or program revision proposals. In this way, they would be better prepared to write proposals that would be acceptable to the assembly.

V. Graduate Student Committee
Shane Wilson, representing the Graduate Student Council, was attending while they search for a new Chair.
1. The Graduate Student Council is working with Seth Ressl and John Hillas in their search for a new Chair.
2. The GSC is working on restructuring the body so that it operates like a senate. They want to have a representative from each college (17 disciplines) because they feel that allows the council to have a better representation of UTA graduate students and more awareness of the kinds of issues that affect graduate students in different disciplines.
3. Dr. Abolmaali requested that the Graduate Student Committee address this issue, and Dr. Brothers agreed that the committee would look into it and meet with Shane Wilson.

VI. Old Business

1. Report from Committee on Graduate Students: Dr. Matt Brothers
   Dr. Brothers reported on the exit survey for master’s students.
   - Dr. Brothers recapped the exit survey project. The GA discussed the document in April; only minor changes were suggested by the sub-committee. Then the document was sent out to the colleges, but there was only one response and no changes were requested. Currently, the document is the same as the original, which came from UCLA’s exit survey.
   - Dr. Brothers will send out the document again and the document with comments and feedback from the sub-committee, with a request to return it in 3 weeks so that a final document from the Graduate Assembly can be presented in early November.
• Dr. Cho mentioned that many departments have their own exit survey and asked if the two forms could be consolidated or one used instead of the other. Dr. Brothers said he would contact deans again to ask about college-specific additions or revisions. Dr. Abolmaali suggested that email come from the Provost’s office or Dr. Grover’s office. Dr. Lewis added that the undergraduate exit survey is tailored by department, so it is a possibility for the master’s exit survey as well.

• Dr. Cho asked if the survey would be required, and Dr. Brothers responded that it wouldn’t be required, but encouraged. Dr. Lewis mentioned that when her office deploys the undergraduate exit survey, it’s delivered from the same email that the students get other graduation information from, so it feels like it’s part of the process for students, and this could be a way to encourage students to complete it.

• Dr. Shiakolas asked about creating an exit survey for PhDs; Dr. Brothers responded that the master’s survey is most urgent, but that a possible exit survey for PhDs could be discussed at the next GA meeting. Dr. Lewis added that doctorate students currently complete the Survey of Earned Doctorate.

• Dr. Componation wanted to raise awareness that some departments collect data from exit surveys that folds into their UEP, so it would be important that this survey doesn’t negatively impact that.

VII. New Business

1. Dr. Abolmaali spoke about Ph.D. student fees

• Several College of Engineering chairs have mentioned that their departments are at a disadvantage in recruiting graduate students because other schools, such as UTD and UT Austin, cover all tuition and fees. Given that an important part of attaining Tier 1 status was the number of graduating PhDs and that graduate students are fundamental in obtaining research funding, complete tuition waivers for PhD students should be considered.

• Dr. Grover agreed that UTA was not as competitive as desired, but that comparing tuition support with other institutions was difficult to do because it’s not a straight forward comparison. He mentioned that HR was considering doing a compensation study, but there isn’t a timeline for that. Dr. Grover stressed that the problem is that the amount of money needed to make large adjustments across a large pool of student employees is not there. He mentioned that getting donations that focus on graduate fellowships and graduate student support are an option to improve the situation.

• Several people added support to this request and examples of this issue.
  a. Dr. Christensen commented that any change in health insurance would provide needed assistance; Dr. Grover said that health insurance would be more expensive to address.
  b. Dr. Cho mentioned that he would like to see this issue prioritized. He provided an example of this need by mentioning that 1/3 of a PhD student’s paycheck is taken out for deductions. He suggested approaching this issue incrementally, perhaps by providing a stipend to cover monthly
health insurance premiums. Dr. Grover said that health care assistance can be seen as income, so that may not be a viable solution.

c. Dr. Jiang Hong wanted to express the urgency of the issue, which his department is also trying to address on its own, though the department is also resource-stressed. He provided the following example. In the latest PhD cohort in his department, more than half of the GRA offers were declined because of the stipend. Additionally, they have lost two, star faculty and have threats of leaving from others because of the inability to recruit quality graduate students.

d. Dr. Componation provided examples as well. He said that his department has started to experience losing PhD candidates in the middle of programs because the students realized they couldn’t live off the stipend. He added that the acceptance rate in 2014 was 90%; this year, it was only 40% due to the fact that the packages weren’t competitive for engineers.

2. **Dr. Jackson addressed deficiency course credit.**

Dr. Jackson asked for input from the assembly regarding the use of deficiency courses (3000 or 4000-level) to count towards credit in degree programs. He brought up the topic because there are different practices amongst university programs. He mentioned that for unconditionally admitted students, these same courses can count toward degree credit.

- Several people agreed with Dr. Christensen, who said that he didn’t believe deficiency courses should be counted towards a degree; he also pointed out that there needed to be clarification of the rules of use of deficiency courses.
- Dr. Mauldin and Dr. Abolmaali supported this idea by mentioning that the courses that are used as deficiency courses are by definition basic courses, so they should never count, for anyone, towards a degree. They should never overlap with the 3000 or 4000-level courses that are allowed as credit toward a degree.
- This issue will be sent to the Graduate Student sub-committee for a recommended course of action.

3. **Committee on Program Creation—Dr. Pole**

- Fast Track Program for Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering to Master’s Degree in Business Administration: the sub-committee requested the information below; pending this information, they will review the proposal again at the next meeting. Dr. Tjuatja will reach out to Scott Elbert for answers and be in touch with the committee.
  a. What would the pre-requisites for entering the MBA be?
  b. The committee would like a detailed list of courses and course descriptions that students may take. None were listed on proposal.
  c. What is the proposed launch date of the certificate?
- Graduate Certificate in Military Social Work (School of Social Work): approved pending a revision that describes the certificate as one that will be issued in conjunction with the MSW degree for those who don’t already hold that degree.
- Graduate Certificate in Military, Veteran and Family Care (School of Social Work): approved.
• University of Dallas and UTA 4+1 MSEE Fast Track Program (College of Engineering): conditionally approved; the sub-committee requested a table describing course equivalencies between University of Dallas and UTA and then they will review again.
  a. Dr. Tjuatja, from EE, responded that the graduate courses at UTA are foundational and don’t have prerequisites. He will add that to the proposal and send it to the sub-committee.
  b. Dr. Mauldin suggested a language change from “a 3.0 GPA shall be maintained” to “a 3.0 GPA is expected to be maintained”.

• Graduate Certificate in Hispanic Serving Leadership Preparation (College of Education): conditionally approved pending information about the number of students who would be enrolled; the sub-committee wants to know, in addition to the number of new students mentioned in the proposal, how many students would carry over each year and the financial implications based on that information.

• A motion to accept the sub-committee’s recommendations on the proposals was called; the motion passed.

VIII. Adjournment
  • A motion to adjourn was called; the motion passed.
  • The meeting was adjourned at 3:55pm.

Teams Meeting:
Chat feature should be used for questions or comments during meeting.