

Graduate Assembly Meeting
Meeting Minutes from February 10, 2022

Thursday, February 10, 2022
Starting time 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, Jennifer Jie Zhang, Philip Baiden, Eusebius Small, Seyedali Abolmaali, Panos S. Shiakolas, Shawn Christensen, Alejandro Rodriguez, Leonidas Fegaras, Jacqueline L. Michael, Subhrangsu S Mandal, David A Jorgensen, Jinny Choi, Jiyeon Yoon

GUESTS ATTENDING: Sara Ridenour, Conroy E Kydd, Kimberly Tate, Kelli Sederavicius, Casey Graham Brown, Minerva Cordero, Jorge F Jaramillo

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS ATTENDING: James Grover, Rebecca J. Lewis, Amber M. K. Smallwood, Raymond L. Jackson, Pranesh B Aswath, Rebecca Bichel, Teresa Taber Doughty

Call to Order - The meeting of the Graduate Assembly was called to order at 2:30 pm by Chair, Dr. Ali Abolmaali. Dr. Shiakolas made a motion to call the meeting to order and motion was seconded.

I. Introductions

Welcome by the Chair

II. Members and Committees Introduced

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 November 4, 2021 as presented by Graduate Assembly Secretary, Dr. Shiakolas. Dr. Michael moved to approve minutes. The motion was seconded. The minutes were approved.

IV. Dr. Pranesh Aswath, Interim Provost

Dr. Aswath thanked everyone for their work in the return to face-to-face classes. He mentioned that students were excited about coming back—90% of dorms were full in the first week of the semester. He also commented that COVID rates had dropped from 25% in early January to 7% at the present, but he reminded everyone to continue to take precautions in classrooms.

V. Dr. James Grover, Dean of Graduate School and Interim Vice President for Research

Dr. Grover also thanked everyone for all their work in dealing with their flexibility such as COVID and winter weather.

1. Admissions Changes in Anticipation of the End of Emergency Pandemic Provisions

- Dr. Grover mentioned that the flexibility in testing requirements for admissions will end in the foreseeable future. Once the emergency set of provisions expires, the university will revert to the previous admissions standards and processes.
- If any program feels that the emergency admissions processes were more favorable, they will need to put forward a proposal for approval to UT System and the Board of Regents to change the admission standards. In particular, if a program wants to eliminate the use of standardized testing scores, they will need to present a well specified holistic review process in place of what was there previously.
- The Graduate School is available to assist any program if they wish to make this change. Dr. Grover mentioned literature available on holistic review processes.

2. Dissertation Fellowships

- Dr. Grover mentioned any input or questions are welcome and can be emailed to him.
- These have been awarded in the Summer, in the amount of \$7000. They were given to help students graduate in a given academic year in order to assist the university in meeting the Tier 1 target of graduating 200 PhDs in a consistent way.
- In the last two years, the number of dissertation fellowships has grown from around 45-50 to 65-75. That growth was not done within the recurring budget of the graduate school, so now it needs to be decided whether that much money should continue to be spent on Summer fellowships. The following changes are being considered.
 - a. Increasing the amount of the fellowship from \$7000 to \$8000 because it has not been increased in 15 years. This alone will mean there can be fewer fellowships—they will likely be closely to the historical average of around 45-50 fellowships.
 - b. Having a fellowship program that covers either the final 9 or final 12 months of the doctoral period—a substantial amount of time that the student is writing their dissertation. One example under consideration is a 9-month fellowship during the academic year that would award \$30,000. The goal being to help students produce writing that is more impactful in their field and could be published in top tier journals. This would also decrease the overall amount of dissertation fellowships available.
- The Graduate School is also currently soliciting nominations for a fellowship for the beginning of graduate studies, recruiting bonus, called the Maverick Merit Fellowships. The nomination period has been extended for another week. It gives a \$5000 signing bonus for high priority applicants. A program has to nominate the student and explain why the student is outstanding compared to the other program applicants.

- The Graduate School is also continuing the Bridge Fellowship Program, which provides two years of support for students whose doctoral studies will involve serving the needs of under-represented, under-served or marginalized populations. This program can still receive nominations for a while since it has a later deadline.
- Over time, a goal of the Graduate School is to provide a range of fellowships and other financial mechanisms that provide support to doctoral students over the whole period of doctoral study—including support for writing dissertations and recruiting students.
- Dr. Abolmaali asked about in-state tuition for recipients of the Summer Dissertation Fellowships. Dr. Grover said that these recipients are eligible as long as they submit a full-time waiver form but there is a process that needs to be followed.
- Dr. Shiakolas asked why the number of these Dissertation Fellowships will be reduced given that assisting graduate students in graduating is what helped UTA achieve Tier 1 status and why not use some of the money from Tier 1 status to increase the number of awards. Dr. Grover responded that the initial Year 1 funding that came from the Tier 1 achievement was not something that was suitable for a recurring cost such as these fellowships. Also, Dr. Grover suggested that while we want to maintain productivity since it affects our Carnegie status, UTA has already focused a lot of resources on the end and on the graduation step, and it may be appropriate to rebalance the use of these resources to maintain our status as a doctoral institution.

V. Graduate Student Council

No one from the Graduate Student Council attended the meeting.

VI. Old Business

1. Report from Committee on Graduate Students: Dr. Matt Brothers

a. Exit Survey for Master's Students

- Doris Navarro from Rebecca Lewis's office created the survey in Question Pro. It was distributed last week to members of the Assembly, and it includes feedback from the deans.
- Doris Navarro asked how the survey would be distributed. Dr. Lewis mentioned that her office strongly recommends that it be distributed in the same way that the undergraduate exit survey is—obtaining a list of students who have applied to graduate and using the same email account that is used to send graduation information so that it feels like part of the graduation process.
- Dr. Lewis recommended that the survey add a field for students to enter their program of study so that the survey results could be sorted by program.
- Dr. Lewis also suggested that she take the survey to the Assessment Input Group meeting with associate deans and directors to get their input.

- Dr. Lewis would like to pilot this survey to all graduating master's students starting in Fall 2022.
 - Dr. Jackson commented that the Assembly needs to be clear that they endorse the use of a survey instrument for master's students who are graduating and then decide if this survey is the one they want to endorse with the understanding that it will be refined as data comes in.
 - Dr. Brothers, Dr. Abolmaali, and Dr. Aswath all supported the use of the survey.
 - Dr. Shiakolas suggested that the survey also ask when students joined their program so we can get an idea of how long they have been in the program. He also suggested a "non-applicable" option be added to all questions because some are not relevant to all programs.
 - Dr. Jackson commented and suggested the survey is a good place to start and understand that it will evolve to be useful to the university and departments. Dr. Lewis commented that the question of when students are graduating is redundant. Dr. Aswath also mentioned this. Dr. Jackson mentioned that including this information is probably useful because not everyone who is a prospective graduate may not end up graduating that semester, but Rebecca's suggestion for disseminating the survey only to the list of those who have applied to graduate would remove this issue.
 - Dr. Baiden motioned to approve this survey pending the minor edits.
 - Dr. Abolmaali suggested a motion to accept the survey subject to continuous improvement by the Provost's office. Dr. Baiden accepted this motion. The motion was seconded and unanimously passed.
- b. Deficiency Course Credit to be Used or Not Used as Credit for Master's Degree Plans
- Dr. Brothers summarized this discussion from previous meetings.
 - Dr. Brothers said the conclusion of the sub-committee was that any undergraduate course that a graduate student takes (3000 or 4000 level), that would be sufficient for meeting leveling criteria earning appropriate grade, could not be counted toward graduate credit; however, if that student took a 5000-level version of that undergraduate course, they would be able to use that for both leveling and for graduate credit.
 - Dr. Mauldin asked if this conclusion was only for fast-track programs or for others as well. She also questioned if such a course could actually be used for leveling. Dr. Brothers said that some programs allow up to 9 hours of undergraduate courses towards graduate credit. He said that these courses cannot be used towards leveling. Dr. Jackson mentioned that those two things are not distinguished in the catalog for these undergraduate courses.
 - Dr. Mandal expressed concern that many students would opt for undergraduate versions of courses because they are easier, so he suggested that graduate advisors or program directors decide and approve whether students can take them.

- Dr. Abolmaali mentioned that leveling or deficiency courses typically refer to 2000- or 3000-level courses for students who come from a different degree background. He distinguished this from elective 4000-level courses that also have a 5000-level section.
 - Dr. Christensen mentioned that students from different programs may take the same course but based on their respective programs, for student in program A it would be considered a leveling course and for the student in program B it would be an elective. In this circumstance, when looked at from a college level, it does appear that students are taking the same courses and only some are getting credit, so it's important that the graduate advisor makes the decision about how the course is used.
 - Dr. Shiakolas mentioned that his department allows the graduate advisors to define whether courses are for deficiencies or not on a case by case basis. He agrees that this decision should be left to the graduate advisors who know the programs better instead of having a blanket policy that could be abused by students.
 - Dr. Lewis mentioned that allowing undergraduate courses to count toward a graduate degree is highly discouraged by SACS, so she's worried about compliance issues. Dr. Jackson mentioned that the catalog says that students are allowed to take up to 9 hours of advanced undergraduate courses towards a graduate degree. Dr. Christensen said it happens a lot in his department because there just aren't a sufficient number of cross-listed courses.
 - Dr. Michael motioned to adopt the recommendation of the sub-committee. Dr. Mauldin seconded the motion. There were 11 yes votes, 3 no votes, and 2 members abstained. The motion passed with a majority.
- c. Review of Dual Degree Credit Hour Eligibility Limit
- Dr. Brothers summarized the discussion of this topic from the last meeting.
 - The proposed new language would state that students in a graduate degree program must be admitted to the second degree program prior to completing their first program.
 - The new language would also state that students can graduate from both programs in the same semester or in different semesters as long as the second degree is completed within 3 years of completion of the first degree.
 - Dr. Michael moved to adopt these changes. Dr. Pole seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
- d. Develop Policy for Revisions of Thesis/Dissertation after Submittal to Library
- Dr. Brothers provided an update and discussed proposed changes, though no vote was taken at this time.
 - i. The archive copy / official request would have to be approved by the dissertation committee via an official form.

- ii. The request must be submitted, along with a justification, by the end of the next long semester.
- iii. The request must be for minor, editorial changes or consideration for removal or modification of classified or confidential information.
- iv. Dr. Jackson has researched the language used by publishing companies in their policies on making these types of changes. Dr. Brothers will incorporate similar language in future discussion.

2. Report from Committee on Program Creation: Dr. Kathryn Pole

- a. University of Dallas and UTA 4+1 MSEE Fast Track Program (College of Engineering)
 - The required revisions have not yet been submitted by the program.

VII. New Business

1. Report from Committee on Program Creation: Dr. Kathryn Pole

- a. Fast Track Program for Master of Science in Marketing Research (College of Business)
 - Sub-committee voted to put this on hold pending the following:
 - i. Clarifying what happens to undergraduates who don't obtain a 3.5 GPA in these graduate courses.
 - ii. Clarifying how transferring courses in will work.
 - iii. Considering making the program more inclusive by lowering the required GPA for admission.
- b. MEd Instructional Learning and Design Technology (College of Education)
 - Sub-committee voted to move this forward.
 - The sub-committee requested a more flexible admissions requirement; currently 3.0 is required for full admission and 2.75 required for probational admission; the sub-committee asked that anything less than 3.0 be considered on a case by case basis, rather than keeping 2.75 as the absolute minimum.
 - Dr. Mauldin moved to accept the proposal as submitted and also to pre-approve the above-mentioned change if the program chooses to do so. Dr. Michael seconded the motion.
 - The motion passed unanimously.
- c. Graduate Certificate in Engineering Logistics (College of Engineering)
 - Sub-committee voted to move it forward without questions or conditions.
 - Dr. Shiakolas moved to accept the proposal. Dr. Michael seconded the motion.
 - The motion passed unanimously.
- d. MS Applied Statistics and Data Science (College of Science)
 - Sub-committee voted to move it forward pending the correction of the following typographical errors.

- i. The program can be completed in a minimum of 18 months and correct in the proposal where it states 12 months.
 - ii. Unchecking the box that identifies this program as a graduate certificate. It is a master's program.
- The sub-committee also asked for consideration of renaming the degree to avoid confusion with other similarly-named programs.
 - Dr. Michael motioned to accept the proposal. Dr. Shiakolas seconded the motion pending the typographical error corrections.
 - The motion passed unanimously.

2. Call for Nominations for Graduate Assembly Chair, Chair Pro Tem, and Secretary for Academic Year 2022-2023

- a. Dr. Abolmaali reminded the Assembly that this is his last semester as Graduate Assembly Chair, and that Dr. Grover wanted a preliminary discussion on nominations.
- b. According to the HOP, Dr. Grover must preside over nominations, not the GA Chair, and the election must take place at the last meeting of the spring semester, which will be in April.
- c. Dr. Grover suggested that the nominations be opened and remain open after the meeting and that candidates can volunteer or be nominated. He mentioned that the advantage of naming the candidates during the meeting is that the list of nominations could be completed and the nomination period closed.
- d. No nominations were made during the meeting.
- e. Dr. Abolmaali mentioned that nominations should be emailed to Dr. Grover since he will be presiding over the elections.

VIII. Adjournment

- Dr. Shiakolas moved to adjourn the meeting. Dr. Pole seconded the motion.
- The meeting was adjourned at 3:50pm.

Teams Meeting:

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