**Graduate Assembly Meeting**

**Meeting Minutes from February 1, 2024**

Thursday, February 2, 2024

2:30 pm

*Virtual via msTeams*

**PRESIDING**: Kathryn Pole, Chair of the Graduate Assembly

**MEMBERS ATTENDING (voting):** Drs. David Arditti, Philip Baiden, Matthew Brothers, Dennis Chiessa, Chi-Young Choi, Shawn Christensen, Paul Componation, Sophia Fantus, John Garrigus, Robin Jocius\*, Subhra Mandal, Cedrick May, Donald Mcconnel, Jacqueline Michael, Patti Parker, Kathryn Pole, Alejandro Rodriquez, Erika Roland, Panos Shiakolas, Jiwon Suh, Christian Vasquez, Jennifer Zhang; Mr. Chris Durham.

\*Dr. Robin Jocius was a voting member, but now has a new job as associate dean of academic affairs: not sure if voting member, guest, or ex officio.

**EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS ATTENDING (non-voting):** Frank Foss, James Grover, Raymond (Joe) Jackson, Tim Jacobbe, Rebecca Lewis.

**GUESTS ATTENDING (non-voting):** Drs. Sebastian Fuentes, Jay Horn, Amber Smallwood. Kimberly Tate, Medina Vidal, Zeng (John) Wang

**MEETING MINUTES**

1. **Call to order**
   1. The meeting of the Graduate Assembly was called to order at 2:30 pm by Kathryn Pole, Chair
2. **Members and Committees Introduced.** 
   1. Dr. Pole invited the members to introduce themselves.
      1. Committee members, ex officio members, and guests introduced themselves
   2. For the record the names of the chairs of the subcommittees are
      1. Committee on Graduate Students — Dr. Matthew Brothers
      2. Committee on Program Creation — Dr. Subhra Mandal. Note: Dr Mandal has taken over the chairmanship of Program Creation as of several days ago.
      3. Committee on Program Revision — Dr. Patti Parker
3. **Consideration of Minutes**
   1. Dr Christensen states that the minutes from November 2023 are not ready to be voted on. November minutes will be considered during the April meeting.
      1. No Motion to approve
      2. No Vote taken
4. **Greeting and message of appreciation to the assembly members from Provost Dr. Tamara Brown**
   1. Not present.
5. **Updates from Dr. James Grover, Dean of Graduate School and Interim Vice President for Research**
   1. Fall and Spring PhD enrollments were unusually high. A good year for doctoral recruitment.
   2. We are not recruiting as many as we have in the past and our enrollments in most master programs have been dropping for some time. We will want to focus on master's enrollment going forward.
   3. I'd like to remind folks that it is necessary to elect officers of the Assembly at the April meeting.
      1. Dr. Pole (Chair of Graduate Assembly) is rotating off the assembly.
      2. Not sure of the status of other Graduate Assembly officers
      3. Consider whether you or one of your fellow Graduate Assembly voting members would make a good officer.
6. **Updates from Graduate Student Council, Mr. Durham**
   1. We just opened a graduate student lounge and the library of 521; We had a opening ceremony.
   2. We're involved in politics: We sent a delegation to Washington to argue for changing the F1B rules so that holders don't have to go back to their home country to renew the visa and thus risk having to wait out as semester. We plan to send a follow-up delegation.
7. **Old Business**
   1. **Report from Committee on Program Creation: Dr Subhra Mandal.**
      1. Rural Health Certificate proposal: A vote was initiated by email on 12/15/2023 with a link to a msForm. The Rural Health Certificate proposal was approved (19 for, 0 against, 0 abstain).
   2. **Report from Committee on Graduate Students: Dr. Matthew Brothers**
      1. Proposal to Change Summer Enrolment Requirements and 7399 rule: A vote was initiated by email on 1/18/2024 with a link to a msForm. The Proposal to Change Summer Enrolment Requirements and 7399 rule was approved (17 for, 0 against, 0 abstain).
      2. Academic Fresh Start Proposal
         1. The Fresh Start proposal is different than the Grade Forgiveness Policy. Grade Forgiveness is where we allow a student to retake the same course if a poor grade was earned and take the better of the two grades. Up to two retakes is allowed (across two courses or a single course).
         2. The proposed Fresh Start Policy would allow students to expunge their graduate transcript after failing out of the program (or leaving) allowing them a fresh start in same program or a different program.
         3. The committee talked about potentially enacting a two-year period (for example) where a student cannot enroll again, if they opted for the Fresh Start, to allow time for life circumstances to improve. However, we might lose other students who look/go elsewhere to avoid waiting two years to come back. We went back and forth without a decision.
         4. Another thing we had discussed was whether we even want to propose to enact a Fresh Start given that we now have Grade Forgiveness. Grade Forgiveness has been well received and is quite active. Dr Kimberly stated that 130 or 150 or so requests for Grade Forgiveness
         5. We wanted to get the opinions of the Grad Assembly on the following questions. If you have opinions, let us know. You can email me.
            * The idea of a Fresh Start came up during the Grade Forgiveness proposal. Now that we have Grade Forgiveness, do we need a Fresh Start?
            * Do we want to wait and see how Grade Forgiveness shakes before making another big move with the Fresh Start policy?
            * Dr Foss stated when he was a chemistry graduate advisor, he would occasionally transfer a student to another program because the student failed chemistry (didn't have the foundational background) but the student had the preparation for related fields (e.g., bioengineering, etc.). I think the Fresh Start policy is needed for students who find themselves in the wrong department/program.
         6. Dr Christensen stated that it is on the admission committees to not admit students lacking fundamentals. And Dr. Foss stated that that is a good point and that the admission committees need to be in the loop when/if a student is switching programs.
         7. Dr. Componation put forth an alternative to the proposed Fresh Start: base the GPA one needs to maintain based on the classes within the program of study one will be graduating with instead of all the courses one has taken.
         8. The committee will continue their deliberations.
   3. **Report from Committee on Program Revision: Dr. Patti Parker**
      1. No Old Business
8. **New Business**
   1. **Report from Committee on Program Creation: Dr. Subhra Mandal**
      1. Graduate Certificate in Mexican American Studies
         1. Certificate from Mexican American Studies graduate certificate proposal was discussed last meeting.
         2. While the Certificate was approved by the GA Program Subcommittee discussion in the full GA generated an unresolved issue: whether Mexican American Studies Certificate could be housed in the Office of the Provost. Could the provost office be the academic place of record through which course credits are awarded?
         3. A meeting was held with Drs. Grover and Smallwood and it was confirmed that the Provost's Office could be the place of academic record. Rebecca Lewis had determined the center was an appropriate place for the certificate. Thus, it appears that a certificate from the center and credits from the Provost’s Office is workable.
         4. Doctor Vidal from the Center of Mexican American Studies spoke briefly about the goals of the center and the certificate. The graduate certificate in many ways mirrors the existing undergraduate certificate and gives graduate students a path to a certificate from the Center of Mexican American Studies. As Hispanic serving research university we felt a master's certificate was needed.
         5. Motion to approve, motion carried, vote to approve held on msForms,
            * Vote Results: 21 Approve, 0 Oppose, 0 Abstain
      2. STEM MBA (College of Business)
         1. The primary goal is to create a new MBA program focused on preparing future business leaders with a quantitative background to develop their analytical skills and business acumen. The STEM MBA is different from their regular MBA and MS in business programs.
         2. The GA Program Creation committee reviewed the proposal and felt the proposal is well thought out and well developed. The new MBA has merit and will likely have demand.
         3. Motion to approve, motion carried, vote to approve held on msForms
            * Vote Results: 21 Approve, 0 Oppose, 0 Abstain
      3. Masters in Multidisciplinary Studies (MMDS) hosted in the Graduate School
         1. The Master of Multidisciplinary Studies (MMDS) is a 30-hour graduate degree program in which students are required to complete a graduate certificate program (9-15 hours), combined with additional coursework in one or more other disciplines, including the option of obtaining a second certificate. The GA Program Creation subcommittee felt the proposal has merit and may serve certain student population to continue higher education and obtain a master's degree. Enrollment may be low but does not require additional creation of course or faculty.
         2. The target population would be someone who wanted to get a pay increase through continuing education or someone with an incomplete masters and/or having a certificate who wanted to come back.
         3. The MMDS Program is meant to encourage continuing education and higher education.
         4. There will be a graduate studies committee composed of faculty, as there would be for any program.
         5. Dr. Shiakolas inquired as to the susceptibility of the courses being used to get multiple master's degrees (i.e. double dipping). Dr. Grover replied that the university against double dipping rules would apply. Language specifying that the university rule against double dipping would apply could be added to the MMDS description.
         6. The GA Program Creation subcommittee voted in favor of the proposal.
         7. Motion to approve, motion carried, vote to approve held on msForms
            * Vote Results: 21 Approve, 0 Oppose, 0 Abstain
      4. Fast Track for the Masters of Applied Statistics and Data Science program.
         1. Tabled until next meeting.
   2. **Report from Committee on Program Revision: Dr. Patti Parker**
      1. No New Business
   3. **Report from Committee on Graduate Students: Dr. Matthew Brothers**
      1. Proposal requesting revisions to the English Language Proficiency for admissions to UTA graduate programs. Introduced by Dr. Brothers with Drs. Horn, Fuentes, and Lin fielding questions.
         1. Dr Horn stated that UTA is currently requiring students from certain English-speaking countries (whose education is in English) that other Texas Universities (e.g., UT Dalllas) are not requiring. For example, Kenya. We propose an updated list of countries that we feel UTA should not require English language test scores from.
            * There are 23 countries that seem to be commonly waived for English proficiency because of one or two things or both, and that is that the governmental language was English and or the language of instruction K through 12 was English. We propose that we add these 23 countries UTA’s list of countries that do not need to prove English language skills.
         2. Discussion about GTA language requirements was had as GTA language requirements are often higher.
         3. Dr Horn clarified that the list was written to be applicable to graduate and undergraduate
         4. Motion to approve, motion carried, vote to approve held on msForms
            * Vote Results: 16 Approve, 0 Oppose, 0 Abstain
9. **Adjournment**
   1. **Dr. Pole asked for a motion to adjourn.**
      1. Dr Shiakolas motioned to adjourn.
      2. Dr. Christensen seconded.
      3. Adjourned at 4:17 pm.

**Teams Meeting:**

* Chat feature should be used for questions or comments during the meeting.
* Votes are taken using msForms. Links to the forms are supplied within the meeting chat feature.

**Meeting Minutes Submitted by GA Secretary:** Dr. Shawn Christensen