

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Deans, Department and Graduate Studies Committee Chairs, Graduate Advisors

**FROM:** Philip Cohen, Dean; Joe Jackson, Associate Dean, Graduate School

**RE:** Thesis and Dissertation Electronic Formatter

**DATE:** 6 March 2003

**cc:** Charles Sorber, President; George Wright, Executive Vice President and Provost;  
Graduate School Staff

We are pleased to announce that Graduate School staff have developed and are ready to test an electronic formatting template for students writing theses and dissertations.

You may recall that in 2001, the Graduate Assembly approved a proposal to change the University's approach to thesis and dissertation formatting. That proposal aimed to simplify the formatting task for students and to allow programs more disciplinary-specific control over elements in the body and back matter of these documents. The template will make it simpler for students to format the basic elements of their theses and dissertations e.g., front matter, chapters, pagination, font size, margins, etc, and produce a formatted document that generally conforms to the requirements specified in the most current Thesis and Dissertation Manual of Style. We chose to follow this style because it is the one with which we are most familiar and the one that current students expect to follow. In the future, we will work with programs to develop additional templates to support discipline-specific format requirements.

We plan to test the template thoroughly in the Spring and Summer semesters so that it can be released for general use in Fall of 2003. We have already conducted a small number of very successful tests and are confident that the template will be helpful to students struggling to meet the Graduate School's formatting requirements. However, the template and its instructions are new and may contain some minor problems that we have yet to discover. These problems should be corrected before making the template widely available.

To ensure that we can test the template and address any unexpected problems without harming a user's graduation plans, we will initially make it available only to students who attend one of our thesis and dissertation seminars. Each seminar will be divided into two parts. The first part will cover thesis and dissertation style requirements and prepare participants to create acceptable documents without the template. The second part will be optional and will give students hands-on training in the use of the template. Students may choose whether to use the template to prepare their theses or dissertations and will be given a copy if they wish one. By limiting the size of the pool of students with access to the template, we will gather the information we need to ensure that the final version will be as effective as we can make it. Limiting

access will also enable us to provide the support students may need to resolve unexpected problems quickly, which we might not be able to do if a large number of students encountered problems. This is new territory and we want to explore it carefully and responsibly.

We will keep you posted on the progress and availability of the electronic template. We are excited about this new development, and feel that the finalized template will be an invaluable resource to students writing theses and dissertations at UTA.