Chair Hal Alper called the third meeting of the Graduate Assembly for the 2017-2018 academic year to order on Wednesday, February 14, 2018, at 1:30 PM in the Lee Jamail Academic Room, Main Building, 212.

**Faculty Members Present:** Hal Alper, Darla Castelli, Tanya Clement, Allan Cole, James Cox, Hugh Daigle, John Deigh, Elizabeth Gershoff, Linda Golden, Michael Holleran, Maria Juenger, Prabhudev Konana, Michael Mauk, Paula Murray, Francisco Polidoro, Kavita Radhakrishnan, Karen Rascati, Kui Ren, Sharon Strover, Catherine Weaver, Jo Worthy

**Faculty Members Absent:** Andrea Alu, Tasha Beretvas, James Buhler, Sue Cox, Catharine Echols, Alison Frazier, John Hasenbein, John Hatfield, Wonsuck Kim, Andreas Matouschek, Pauline Strong

**Student Members Present:** Monica Mohseni, Jon Bender

**Ex Officio Members Present:** Steven Hoelscher, Anita Vangelisti

**Representatives from the Office of the Graduate Studies Present:** Dean Mark Smith, Marv Hackert, Michelle Broadway, John Dalton, Shannon Neuse, Erin Rhodes, Rebekah Sylvia, Nancy Riley

**Visitors:** Francisco Gomes, Robin Dusek

Before beginning the official business of the meeting, Chair Hal Alper welcomed special guest Provost Maurie McInnis. Chair Alper announced that Provost McInnis would be sharing remarks and responding to some pre-arranged questions, prior to opening the floor. Provost McInnis greeted the Graduate Assembly, sharing her appreciation for being invited to join the meeting. The provost acknowledged the Graduate Assembly’s reputation on campus and stated the Graduate Assembly is one of the hardest working, most effective committees that accomplishes what they set out to do.

She indicated that there is the need to have campus-wide strategic conversations concerning the role of graduate education at UT in the context of national trends. The recruiting of Graduate Dean Mark Smith to UT’s campus was part of that strategic vision. Provost McInnis mentioned ongoing discussions regarding curriculum development, job preparation for students, and meeting the needs of a new generation of graduate students.

Chair Hal Alper introduced the following questions/comments that were submitted to him by members of the Graduate Assembly:

**Question 1:** One of the threats for graduate education is very expensive stipends: How are there going to be ways in the university to incentivize GRAs over postdocs when looking at both the research and the teaching mission, especially as these price differentials may become similar, even inverted over time?
Dean Smith shared that stipends are examined regularly and that it is a continuous effort to competitively support students in balance with each program’s priorities. Conversations are ongoing and engagement from faculty across campus is welcome.

**Question 2:** Is the expansion of fellowships being looked at and discussed? Is there a way to look at increasing minimum wages for TAs, AIs, and GRAs across campus?

Dean Smith responded that a university-wide minimum could be raised, but that all units must be considered and reviewed the context of the particular program. One approach is top offs. Funds were allocated by the Provost to all eligible colleges.

**Question 3:** With respect to student summer tuition and summer registration, can you explain why students who are on external grants are required to register for summer, for research or dissertation, that are theoretically supervised by the PI and yet the PI is not paid by the university at that point in time given they’re on a nine-month salary. Could this requirement be removed and possibly be one way to reduce cost on research grants?

Dean Smith stated if the tuition is removed, the people paying for a student from a grant would benefit but that there would be expenses to the university. Additionally, part of the expectation for a GRA is to be actively participating in research, and students must be registered in order to use campus resources in the summer months.

**Question 4:** What is the university’s view on the scope of Opt III programs? Over time, the guidelines and rules have been evolving. What have we learned about where this model works versus where such programs may challenge our existing programs and mandates? Also, how is cost and revenue sharing working under option III programs that draw courses and/or faculty from different departments or schools?

Provost McInnis stated she still is getting a feel for the programs. Option III programs have expanded significantly over the last decade and now it is time for the administration to have conversations about how to manage this success. There is the need to look at the market and how Option III programs meet unmet educational demand, particularly as new proposals are increasingly interdisciplinary. The Provost’s Office and Graduate School will work to understand how these programs can support the research undertakings of the university as a whole and where they fit in to the suite of graduate offerings at UT Austin over the coming years.

Chair Alper and Prabhudev Konana asked about the challenges with respect to cost and revenue sharing, when there are programs that are drawing expertise in courses from faculty from distinct programs and then also how that interplays with the on-load versus offload teaching.
Provost McInnis agreed that the on-load/offload teaching component is significant and will require a consideration of demands on faculty time in balance with their other responsibilities to the campus.

**Question 5:** What are plans to further expand graduate student and family affordable housing?

Provost McInnis acknowledged Dean Hackert’s leadership in the project to build dedicated graduate student housing. Development is still ongoing, but it continues to be a priority. UT struggles to house the first-year undergraduate class and that the issues relating to cost of living in Austin is a problem that begins with first year students and goes all the way through our doctoral students.

**Question 6:** Mental health and work life balance continues to be an issue among graduate students, how might the university better serve individuals with such needs? In this regard, it seems that many of the services tend to be geared toward undergraduate students.

Provost McInnis acknowledged the importance of addressing the mental health needs of our graduate students. Dean Smith will work with Chris Brownson, head of CMHC, and the other stakeholders to discuss options to better serve the students.

Chair Alper opened the floor up for questions to Provost McInnis. Additional questions were raised about trends in increased interest in master’s programs versus doctoral programs, assessment framework, opportunities for expansion in online programming and cost of living stipends for low-income students.

Chair Alper thanked Provost McInnis for coming and welcomed her to stay for the rest of the meeting. Provost McInnis shared her gratitude and departed.

**Order of Business**

I. Approval of the minutes of the November 15, 2017 meeting.

   The minutes were approved unanimously.

II. Report of the Graduate Dean (Mark Smith)

   Dean Smith reported that the exception for tuition waivers remains in the federal tax code. Analysts from ETS have reached out for collaboration on a project to correlate GRE scores with success markers of a select number of programs; Dean Smith will share results. The 3-minute thesis competition was held, with our winner traveling to the regional competition.
Dean Smith addressed the use of the plagiarism software, iThenticate, and asked the Assembly to consider if there would be value in having the University pay for this software. Discussion included concerns about the interpretation of results and suggestions that training would need to accompany the purchase of a license.

III. Report of Chair (Hal Alper)

Chair Alper noted the passing of an Assembly member, Robert Young. The Graduate School is sending condolences on behalf of Graduate Assembly.

IV. Academic Committee (James Cox)

A. Proposal to add a Master of Advanced Architectural Design (MAAD) degree to the graduate program in Architecture. Minor legislation-vote of Assembly will be required.

Cisco Gomes, Associate Professor and Robin Dusek, Graduate Program Administrator, School of Architecture, attended the meeting to answer any questions.

The National Architectural Accrediting Board (NAAB) reviewed the MA programs in the School of Architecture in 2012. They expressed concern that two MA degrees, one accredited and one non-accredited, had the same name and would therefore cause confusion among applicants. The retain accreditation, the NAAB required the School of Architecture to change the name of one of the programs. Architecture changed the non-accredited, post-professional degree name to Master of Advanced Architectural Design (MAAD).

The proposal was approved unanimously.

B. Briefing on committee’s discussion regarding development of graduate certificate policy on Dec 13 and January 31. Discussion to continue on February 28 with recommendations to follow.

James Cox reported that the academic committee discussed and began developing a graduate certificate policy from materials drafted by Michelle Broadway. The committee will continue these discussions at another meeting, during which it will focus especially on the number or percentage of hours earned in non-degree status that OGS will allow to apply to a master’s degree. The current policy allows up to six hours, or 20% of a 30-hour master’s degree, to apply.

C. Briefing on committee’s upcoming discussion on February 28 regarding program-closure policy, with recommendations to follow.

Michelle Broadway drafted a document concerning the program-closure policy. The committee is in the beginning stages and would like to include Steve
Hoelscher due to his role as chair of the Faculty Council.

D. Briefing on committee’s discussion and unanimous vote to recommend approval of the MSITM room-share arrangement. Per Option III Guidelines, the request will be forwarded to the Graduate Dean and Provost for final approval.

The committee discussed this request which would allow Option I students to take Option III classes. This is meant for the most advanced undergraduate students. It was determined that it would mutually benefit the Option I and Option III students.

E. Briefing on committee’s decision to withhold vote on request to establish room-share arrangements in Nursing DNP program. Proposing faculty were advised to submit a revised proposal.

James Cox shared that there were concerns that an Option III student might displace an Option I student but discovered there was some misunderstanding about how room-share arrangements work. Kavita Radhakrishnan agreed to serve as a mediator between the committee and Nursing.

V. Administrative Committee (Darla Castelli)

A. Briefing on committee review and support of proposed changes to the graduate student academic grievance policy in the HoP. No action required.

Dean Niekirk worked closely with the GSA regarding the existing HoP policy in the adjudication of academic grievances. Some terminology needed to be updated along with the addition of reasonable limitations and timeframes to guide the grievance process. New deadlines have been created.

The committee felt that it makes sense to have reasonable terms and timeframes because there were concerns about the scenario of a student submitting a title IX and an academic grievance simultaneously.

B. Briefing on the current HoP limitation of GRA/TA/AI appointments to no more than 30 hours. No action required. Based on questions, it was noted that exemptions for spring break and summer may be requested.

Discussion included the importance of the graduate school setting guidelines so that there would not be potential abuse of the graduate student working too many hours. Concerns were voiced about limitations inhibiting the graduate student from reaping additional financial gains. Units have been asked how they felt about the 30 hour limit and will return feedback.
VI. Admissions and Enrollment Committee (Catherine Weaver)

A. Proposal to waive the GRE requirement for MSSW program. Minor Legislation – vote of Assembly will be required. Waiver consistent with similar competing institutions offering this professional degree, which is a terminal practice degree.

The proposal was approved unanimously.

B. Report of changes to guidelines for GRE/GMAT waiver requests. No action required.

Catherine Weaver shared that the language was updated and made more consistent with the idea that the evidence of the GRE/GMAT as an indication of performance in graduate programs is in flux.

C. Briefing on committee’s endorsement of the Graduate School’s development of guidelines on holistic admissions. No action required.

The committee drafted a letter to the Office of the Graduate Studies and Dean Smith to thank him and his staff for raising awareness and providing training on holistic admissions.

VII. Graduate Student Assembly (Monica Mohseni on behalf of Regina Mills)

Vice President Mohseni reported that the GSA has a Masquerade Ball scheduled for February 23, 2018, and that they are in a period of transition, with the new executive alliance elections coming up.

VIII. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 3:05 PM


Karen Rascati, Secretary