Chair Hal Alper called the second meeting of the Graduate Assembly for the 2017-2018 academic year to order on Wednesday, November 15, 2017, at 1:30 PM in the Lee Jamail Academic Room, Main Building, 212.

Faculty Members Present: Hal Alper, Tasha Beretvas, James Buhler, Darla Castelli, Allan Cole, James Cox, Hugh Daigle, John Deigh, Catharine Echols, John Hasenbein, John Hatfield, Maria Juenger, Prabhudev Konana, George Pollack, Kavita Radhakrishnan, Karen Rascati, Kui Ren, Sharon Strover, Catherine Weaver, Robert Young

Faculty Members Absent: Andrea Alu, Tanya Clement, Sue Cox, Alison Frazier, Elizabeth Gershoff, Linda Golden, Wonsuck Kim, Andreas Matouschek, Paula Murray, Francisco Polidoro, Pauline Strong, Shirley Thompson, Jo Worthy

Student Members Present: Kareem Mostafa, Jon Bender

Ex Officio Members Present: Steven Hoelscher

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

Visitors: Jane Kretzschmar, Sarah Swords, Jessica Smith, Rebecca Gutierrez, Eric Hirst

Order of Business

I. Approval of the minutes of the September 27, 2017 meeting.

The minutes were approved unanimously.

II. Report of the Graduate Dean (Mark Smith)

Frank Dobie Paisano Ranch (258 acres near Austin donated to UT Graduate School) fundraising plans with Friends of Paisano

Big 10 Academic Alliance will provide faculty hiring workshops (train the trainer) on November 27th to improve diversity in hiring practices.

The national tax law revision is being closely followed by the Council of Graduate Schools, as it potentially will include a provision to tax waived tuition fees as income.

III. Report of Chair (Hal Alper)

The chair had no report.
IV. Academic Committee (James Cox)

A. Proposal to create a dual-degree program in Social Work/Business Administration

Faculty presenting the proposal included Allen Cole, Jane Kretzschmar, and Sarah Swords from the School of Social Work, as well as Eric Hirst from the McCombs School of Business. Proposing faculty noted that the dual degree will require 89 credit hours and provide a combined program of study that many peer schools already offer.

The proposal was unanimously approved by the Graduate Assembly and was deemed minor legislation.

B. Proposal to establish room-share arrangements between MBA (Option I/II/III) programs and various MS (Option III) programs in the McCombs School of Business

McCombs’ Senior Associate Dean for Academic Affairs Eric Hirst presented this proposal. He explained that while some option III programs had already been approved to establish room-share arrangements, this proposal had been designed to cover all existing Option I/II/III programs currently being offered by McCombs.

The proposal previously received unanimous approval by the Academic Committee and did not require a vote of the Assembly.

V. Administrative Committee (Darla Castelli)

A. Report and motion to remove the Graduate School’s 14-semester limit on academic employment

The Administrative Committee considered the elimination of the Graduate School’s 14-semester limit on academic employment at the request of the Graduate School. Darla Castelli explained that Graduate School limit applies to any combination of TA, AI, GRA, or other benefits-eligible academic positions. She noted that in the absence of this Graduate School policy, the GSC for each graduate program would decide whether or not to continue imposing the employment limit, thereby, decentralizing responsibility for determining employment limits and for tracking semesters of employment. Based on the Administrative Committee’s unanimous recommendation, Darla Castelli introduced a motion to eliminate the Graduate School’s 14-semester limit on academic employment.
Kavita Radhakrishnan voiced a concern that a rule would not have much clout if it were not from the Graduate School.

Robert Young expressed concern with students being exploited.

Maria Juenger stated that part of the discussion involves the frequent assessment, so students know where they are in the program and how long they should take.

Prabhudev Konana and Steve Hoelscher noted that preferred limits on employment will vary by program and that flexibility is warranted. They further noted that guidelines from the Graduate School would be helpful to GSCs.

John Hatfield asked for more information about the programs requesting more than 14 semesters. Although Darla Castelli did not have information about specific programs to provide, she explained that the restriction on employment can be particularly problematic in programs where students start in a Master’s program and then continue on to a PhD.

Hal Alper inquired about the details of implementation. Darla Castelli responded that the committee had not discussed this but agreed that it would need to be addressed.

At the conclusion of this discussion, a vote was called. The resulting vote included one objection, one abstention; the remainder approved. The motion was deemed minor legislation.

B. Report and motion to endorse the Graduate school procedures and policy related to changes in dissertation committee.

The Administrative Committee reviewed Graduate School policy related to changes in dissertation committees at the request of the Graduate School. As a result of this review, and based on the Administrative Committee’s unanimous recommendation, Darla Castelli put forth a motion that Graduate School policy published in the Graduate Catalog be updated to clearly indicate that changes to the dissertation committees require approval of the student, current and new committee members, and the Graduate Adviser, with final approval by the Graduate Dean. A vote was called. The motion was unanimously approved by the Assembly and deemed minor legislation.

C. Report and motion to endorse the Graduate School policy related to a graduate school student’s right to schedule a dissertation defense.

The Administrative Committee reviewed Graduate School policy related to dissertation defenses at the request of the Graduate School.
Based on the Administrative Committee’s unanimous recommendation, Darla Castelli introduced a motion to update Graduate School policy published in the Graduate Catalog to clearly reflect a student’s right to schedule a dissertation defense. A vote was called. The motion was unanimously approved by the Assembly and deemed minor legislation.

D. Report on review of the Graduate School’s embargo policy

Darla Castelli reported on the Administrative Committee’s review of the Graduate School’s embargo policy, which delays publication of the dissertation within the public domain for a defined period of time. Currently, students can ask for a 1- or 2-year embargo. An analysis of data from peer institutions shows the average period of embargo ranges from 3 months to 6 years. Only preliminary discussions have begun and, therefore, there is no recommendation from the committee at this time.

VI. Admissions and Enrollment Committee (Catherine Weaver)

A. Report on committee’s review of holistic admissions processes

Catherine Weaver reported that Shannon Neuse and Erin Rhodes have facilitated the committee’s review of holistic admissions processes by conducting focus groups with faculty members who are directly involved in admissions processes in their graduate programs.

Shannon Neuse reported main findings from the focus groups indicating that many qualitative measures are being used in addition to quantitative measures, and that most decisions are made by a committee, not an individual. The main questions from the faculty were, “How do we deal with implicit bias?” and, “How do we recruit more diverse students?” Shannon also noted that when looking at an applicant’s information in EASI, faculty are provided with links to GRE-related resources. In addition, she noted that the Graduate School would be providing a video on “How not to use vs how to use” GRE scores shortly after Thanksgiving.

VII. Graduate Student Assembly (Kareem Mostafa)

Kareem Mostafa reported that the first Graduate Leadership Summit was held on October 27th. This included graduate council leaders from different schools. Highlighted areas of discussion included professional development and diversity issues. The Graduate Student Assembly (GSA) is in the process of
writing a letter which will be forwarded to Congress to address the provision under consideration, and mentioned by Dean Smith, to tax waived tuition fees as income.

VIII. Hal Alper noted that President Fenves and Provost McInnis will attend the next Graduate Assembly meeting on February 14th. He will send out a request for questions.

Adjournment at 2:35 PM

Karen Rascati, Secretary