Chair Hal Alper called the fourth meeting of the Graduate Assembly for the 2017-2018 academic year to order on Wednesday, March 28, 2018, at 1:30 PM in the Lee Jamail Academic Room, Main Building, 212.

Faculty Members Present: Hal Alper, Tasha Beretvas, James Buhler, Darla Castelli, James Cox, Hugh Daigle, Catharine Echols, Alison Frazier, John Hasenbein, Michael Holleran, Maria Juenger, Wonsuck Kim, Prabhudev Konana, Andreas Matouschek, Francisco Polidoro, George Pollak, Kui Ren, Sharon Strover, Pauline Strong, Catherine Weaver

Faculty Members Absent: Andrea Alu, Tanya Clement, Allan Cole, Sue Cox, John Deigh, Elizabeth Gershoff, Linda Golden, John Hatfield, Paula Murray, Kavita Radhakrishnan, Jo Worthy

Student Members Present: Regina Mills

Ex Officio Members Present: Steven Hoelscher

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

Visitors: Sarah Carlson, Matthew Bendure, Sarah Sweitzer, Renee DeLota

Order of Business

I. Approval of the minutes of the February 14, 2018 meeting.

The minutes were approved unanimously.

II. Report of the Graduate Dean (Mark Smith)

Before beginning the official business of the meeting, Dean Smith had 3 items to discuss. First, he reminded the faculty that the Council of Graduate Schools agreed upon a rule that stipulates that accepted students have until April 15 to make their decision about which school they plan to attend. Secondly, the number of applications is down 3.9% from last year, but the number accepted was up 6.7%. This may change between now and April 15th. The current projection is 3,084 students, compared to 3,371 last year. He will give us final numbers at the next meeting. Thirdly, Dean Smith discussed his concern about the lack of affordable housing near campus for graduate students. Currently there are 1200 units available in graduate housing per year. The housing complex that is being built on East Campus will add another 700 units, at about $1200 per month (including utilities) for a single unit. He emphasized that works needs to continue concerning affordable and competitive pricing, and the longer it takes to make this investment, the worse the problem can get.

Dean Smith then answered questions about the Council of Graduate Schools’ deadline of April 15th for students to decide which school they’ll attend.

Question 1: Michael Holleran (Architecture) asked if there were official sanctions against
schools that ‘poach’ students after they have committed to one school?

Dean Smith replied that the ‘poacher’ would be considered a bad citizen, but he does not know of any official sanctions. He asked for monitoring of the situation and ideas for discouraging this practice.

Question 2: Prabhudev Konana (Business School) mentioned that some schools offer a monetary incentive for early acceptance before the April 15th deadline.

Dean Smith replied that the offer of more money for early acceptance should not be allowed.

Question 3: Francisco Polidoro (Business School) asked if a program with classes beginning in the summer would need to abide by the April 15th deadline, as the window is much shorter.

Dean Smith replied that as far as he knows, summer admits are not addressed.

Renee De Lota, Department of Marketing Administration, Red McCombs School of Business, asked if the spirit of the document for graduate programs is for those that start in the fall and stated that their programs start in the summer which gives them a shorter window to see what classes look like before July.

Dean Smith responded that he believes the document had the fall semester in mind when it was written. He’s not aware of any language that addresses summer.

III. Report of Chair (Hal Alper)

Hal Alper alerted the faculty that the next meeting agenda may be very busy since some committees are addressing unfinished business during the next month. He then encouraged everyone to remind colleagues to vote for next year’s graduate assembly nominees. Newly elected members will be asked to join next month’s meeting.

IV. Academic Committee (James Cox)

A. Report: Committee recommendations regarding Graduate School policy for graduate certificate programs

Jim Cox asked that the graduate assembly members take this report back to their programs in order to get feedback before an extended discussion takes place. The second item will require your vote or your approval, but it comes to you with unanimous support from the Academic Committee. So, the first item is our recommendation for policies governing the delivery of graduate certificate programs. These are programs that from nine to 29 semester credit hours. You'll hear us refer to them as micro credentials. The current policy reads “Graduate non-degree seeking students who later are admitted to graduate degree seeking status may petition to have applied to the master’s degree up to six semester hours of graduate credit earned while he or she was a graduate non-require degree seeking student.” The committee is considering increasing this number, especially for those that complete the requirement for a certificate program while they are a non-degree seeking student. The committee could not reach a consensus on the increase and would like feedback. The second issue stems from section 7 of the draft policy, which limit the number of hours that can be transferred from another institution. Again, the committee could not reach a consensus on the limit. The committee felt that input from a broader group of faculty would help them reach a consensus. The Academic Committee is requesting feedback by April 10th in order to have the policy in place by the end of the year.
Alison Frazier (History Department) asked if these certificates are almost entirely the Professional Schools. Jim Cox responded no.

Prabhudev Konana (Business School) reported that many other institutions, such as Harvard, MIT, Michigan, and Georgia Tech are allowing these transfers, so the competition is expanding. The idea is that students can get hands-on skills through a certificate program – and then transfer these credits if they wish to continue to the MS degree. Jim Cox replied that the Provost also mentioned this point in her remarks from the last meeting.

Maria Juenger (Civil Engineering) wanted clarification on how to handle the admissions process for those with a certificate, so it is not assumed by the student that if they complete a certificate they will be admitted to the graduate program. Jim Cox replied that the draft specifically contains wording that completion of a certificate does not guarantee admittance to a degree program.

Maria followed up by asking if the admission processes for the certificate programs are different than those for a degree-seeking student. Jim Cox deferred to Prabhudev Konana who stated their argument was that the admission standard required them to take GIT Math. This may not be applicable to non-degree but if the student is coming back with the degree program, those scores could be insisted on.

Sharon Stover (Moody College) replied that the admissions process is overseen by the GSCs of each program, including the admission for certificate programs.

Maria asked if non-degree students apply though the Graduate School or if they apply directly to GSC or go through GIAC.

Shannon Neuse (GIAC) states it depends. Some of the current graduate certificate programs once, where the student does have a non-degree seeking status to go through GIAC. The only difference in the process is the GRE Math is not required. There are a handful of certificate programs on campus that don't go through GIAC but they are not transcriptable. They are non-degree seeking status. If a student who starts on non-degree seeking later wants to become a degree-seeking, they reapply, GRE is required.

Jim Buhler (School of Music) added that applicants for the Arts Diploma are different in those seeking a degree. If the student wants to change from one to the other, they need to apply for a different type of status – along with different criteria for acceptance.

Jim Cox reiterated that he and Michelle Broadway would welcome your feedback on this issue.

B. Report: Updates to Option III Guidelines (Revised 2016) – see 3238b.1 & 2
   These updates include 1) adding a description of room-share limits 2) clarifying reimbursement requirements, 3) updating the description of facilities overhead fees, and 4) updating the list of Option III programs.
   These changes were approved unanimously.

V. Administrative Committee (Darla Castelli)
   Nothing to report

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VI. Admissions and Enrollment Committee (Catherine Weaver)

Proposal to waive the GRE/GMAT for select applicants to the Master of Science in Marketing (Option III) and Master of Science in Finance (Option III) programs

Renee De Lota, McCombs, stated that some proposals for other Option III programs are managed under the same program office.

Kate Weaver added that it is noted that this only applied to a small group of students in bridge programs (Juniors or Seniors in accelerated programs)

The proposal for waiver was approved unanimously.

Proposal to waive the GRE for select applicants to the Option III Online Master of Science in Nutritional Sciences (MSNS) program

Kate Weaver stated that this applies to practitioners who have already taken other standardized tests – e.g., MCAT, PCAT for their professional degree and/or have been practicing for 5 or more years in their field.

Sara Sweitzer, College of Natural Sciences, remarked that what they found is interest in the Master of Science and Nutritional Sciences program from one third current health professionals that are already practicing as doctors, dentists, pharmacists, and they’ve already passed in preparation for their career in MCAT, PCAT and some standardize tests. They are requesting a waiver of this specifically for GRE in favor of they've taken the MCAT and/or been practicing for five years or more in their field.

The proposal for waiver was approved unanimously.

VII. Graduate Student Assembly (Regina Mills)

Briefing on Graduate Student Labor Conditions Committee (Matthew Bendure and Sarah Carlson)

The students wanted to inform the assembly that the Graduate Student Labor Conditions Committee was formed after a walk-out at the end of last semester. They are bringing attention to the idea that graduate students are both ‘laborers’ and are simultaneously conducting scholarship activities. There are trying to raise the minimum rate paid to graduate students, so that they can afford to live in Austin. There was discussion about whether the committee would focus on an hourly rate or the overall base pay. It was mentioned that flexibility needs to be part of the committee’s deliberations since the number of hours a student works in the summer may be different than in the fall and Spring, and that international students may have limits in the number of hours they can work based on their visa status. Nothing definite has been decided as the committee was recently formed. The students will take the comments back to the committee.

VIII. Adjournment at 2:27 PM

Karen Rascati, Secretary