Chair Hal Alper called the first meeting of the Graduate Assembly for the 2017-2018 academic year to order on Wednesday, September 27, 2017 at 1:30 PM in the Lee Jamail Academic Room, Main Building, 212.

**Faculty Members Present:** Hal Alper, Andrea Alu, Tasha Beretvas, James Buhler, Darla Castelli, Tanya Clement, James Cox, Sue Cox, Hugh Daigle, John Deigh, Catharine Echols, Alison Frazier, John Hasenbein, Maria Juenger, Wonsuck Kim, Prabhudev Konana, Francisco Polidoro, George Pollack, Kavita Radhakrishnan, Pauline Strong, Sharon Strover, Catherine Weaver, Jo Worthy, Robert Young

**Faculty Members Absent:** Allan Cole, Elizabeth Gershoff, Linda Golden, Paula Murray, Karen Rascati, Kui Ren, Shirley Thompson

**Student Members Present:** Kareem Mostafa, Isabell Chou, Jon Bender, Monica Mohseni

**Ex Officio Members Present:** Steven Hoelscher

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

**Visitors:** Jessica Smith, Laura Suggs

Order of Business

I. Approval of the minutes of the April 26, 2017 meeting.

- The minutes were approved unanimously with one abstention.

II. Report of the Graduate Dean (Mark Smith)

Dean Smith has been at UT for 8 weeks now. He thanked Marv Hackert and the Graduate School staff for their work. He then gave a brief introduction as to his background. He was a faculty member at Georgia Tech for 18 years, including four in the President’s office, which helped him develop a broader perspective on issues. He then joined Purdue University as head of the school of Electrical and Computer Engineering, which was a challenging balance of working with students, faculty, and upper-level administration. He became Dean of the Graduate School at Purdue University, which brought exciting work with a multitude of disciplines, e.g., Philosophy, Nursing, and Liberal Arts.

Dean Smith discussed his goals as Graduate School Dean. The first goal is ‘excellence’ – to become preeminent in as many disciplines as possible. This includes producing preeminent research work, being innovative leaders in education and learning, and preparing our students to excel in a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, global workforce.
The University that does that well will be an elite University. Dean Smith mentioned three issues are ‘on the radar’, among many: 1) interdisciplinary programs, such as those involving partnerships with the Dell Medical School; 2) distance/on-line learning, which may include a mix of campus instruction and on-line supplemental offerings; and 3) affordable housing for graduate students.

Dean Smith then commented on the importance of getting feedback from faculty, staff, and students to help improve the learning environment. John Dalton is taking the lead on an updated ‘climate study’. Dean Smith encouraged members of the Assembly to take the time to complete the survey.

Lastly, he summarized national CGS survey results for Fall 2016. Nationally, the number of admissions, enrollments, and graduates increased in 2016. The number of underrepresented minorities, while still low, also increased in 2016. Enrollments of international students decreased slightly (by 0.9%).

Dean Smith asked Shannon Neuse to update the committee on UT Austin’s admission statistics.

Shannon Neuse reported that based on UT 2017 data, there was a 2.6% decrease in the number of applications submitted, while admissions and enrollment counts increased by 1%. If you break this down to look at international applicant data, there was a 3.4% decrease in the number of applications, a 1.1% increase in the number of acceptances, and a decrease of 1.9% in the number enrolled. These are smaller decreases than some expected. As usual, we accepted about 25% of the applicants, and about 50% of those accepted actually enrolled. Shannon stated that she will provide a report that breaks down the data by ethnicity, gender, and citizenship, along with data from the National Student Clearinghouse, informing members of the Assembly about students that were admitted to UT but did not choose to enroll here.

III. Report of Chair (Hal Alper)

Hal Alper welcomed the Graduate Assembly to their first meeting of the 2017-2018 academic year. He noted that he has been a member of the Graduate Assembly for 5 years, and has worked with both the Admissions and Academic committees. He applauded the productivity of the Assembly and informed new members that a lot of the details of proposals are discussed in the sub-committee meetings before being presented to the Assembly. He encouraged everyone to attend the sub-committee meetings they have been assigned to. Hal Alper then announced the following upcoming events: 1) Group photo of Graduate Assembly members. 2) In the Spring, the President and Provost will attend a Graduate Assembly meeting.

IV. Academic Committee (James Cox)

A. Proposal to Establish an MD/MSE Degree Program between the Dell Medical School and the Department of Biomedical Engineering.
This is the third iteration of this proposal. The Academic Committee met with Sue Cox and Laura Suggs to work out some small changes. After these changes, the committee approved it unanimously.

Sue Cox provided a brief summary of the proposal to create a 4-year dual-degree in medicine and biomedical engineering. Students in the DMS MD degree program have a third-year that is called their “Innovation/Leadership Year,” which can be used to complete requirements for a Master’s degree. Dell Medical School received approval to offer three dual degrees last year. These include the following: 1) Master of Public Health; 2) Master of Education in Educational Psychology; and 3) Master of Business Administration.

The proposal was approved unanimously with one abstention. (Sue Cox abstained since she prepared and submitted the proposal for the Assembly’s consideration.)

V. Administrative Committee (Darla Castelli)

A. Report on the committee’s discussion regarding the 14-semester rule.

Darla Castelli reported that the committee is discussing the possibility of eliminating the Graduate School rule that currently limits graduate student academic employment to a total of 14 cumulative semesters. Dean Neikirk emphasized that while we have been working to reduce time to graduation, tracking how many semesters students are employed is not a good proxy for evaluating academic progress. The committee’s current report and recommendation suggests letting each department/college establish its own rules and develop its own method to track this metric. Darla Castelli concluded that this change warranted more discussion from the UT community.

B. Report on the committee’s discussion regarding lengthening the embargo policy.

The current embargo (delay) on publishing a dissertation is two years. Some programs in the Humanities have suggested this may not be enough time to get a book published before the dissertation is made public.

C. Report on the committee’s discussion regarding an annual review for all graduate students.

Discussion of making this a requirement for all departments/colleges will resume after gathering feedback from graduate coordinators.

VI. Admissions and Enrollment Committee (Catherine Weaver)

A. Proposal to solicit participation in focus groups on admissions’ policies and practices across programs at UT
Catherine Weaver reported that the committee is currently soliciting participation in focus groups on admissions policies and practices across graduate programs at UT. Along with Dean Neikirk and Shannon Neuse, a review of the current policies and practices regarding admissions is being conducted through a series of focus groups. Shannon Neuse noted that the goal is to try and use collective wisdom across campus to raise our effectiveness in recruiting good graduate students. It is meant to be an informal collection of ideas about what works and what does not.

VII. Graduate Student Assembly (Kareem Mostafa)

Kareem Mostafa reported that there are four main issues that the Graduate Student Assembly is currently focusing on. These can be found at utgsa.net:

1. Improvement of communication. Many graduate students are not aware of all of the resources that are available to them. Also, students may not communicate well with administration.
2. The GSA is currently looking into how to address equity issues.
3. Professional development: a) seminars – e.g., CV development, job searching, presentation skills; b) centralized graduate student-focused career resource center
4. Mental and physical health and wellness – e.g., Gym with GSA

VIII. New Business

Prabhudev Konana from the McCombs School of Business asked Dean Smith for ideas about resources from central administration that might be used to visit minority serving schools (e.g. HBCUs and HSIs) to attract graduate students. Dean Smith confirmed that these funds could be made available but also commented on the importance of building networks. He noted that building networks is a long-term initiative that takes time but also added that some results occur in the short term. For example, placing UT graduates on the faculty of minority serving institutions can help create a network to attract minority students to UT. Dean Smith noted the need to seek external funding -- for example, from the National Science Foundation – and invited anyone with interest in developing a grant proposal to contact him.

IX. Adjournment at 2:37 PM

Karen Rascati
Secretary

3233c