Chair Prabhudev Konana called the third meeting of the Graduate Assembly for the 2016-2017 academic year to order on Wednesday, February 1, 2017 at 1:30 PM in the Harry Ransom Center, Tom Lea Room, 3.206.

**Faculty Members Present:** Alper, Alu, Castelli, Cole, Cox, Deigh, Frazier, Gershoff, Harrison, Hasenbein, Juenger, Kim, Konana, Ren, Fuller-Seeley, Matouschek, Murray, Pollak, Radhakrishnan, Rascati, Schallert, Trace, Weaver, Worthy

**Faculty Members Absent:** Balhoff, Brustad, Srinivasan, Strong, Thompson, Wilson

**Student Members Present:** Brown

**Ex Officio Members Present:** Canning

**Representatives from the Office of the Graduate Studies Present:** Broadway, Dalton, Neuse, Hackert, Rhodes, Riley, Sylvia

**Visitors:** Sherry Melecki, Natasha Saldana, Katy Buchanan, Karma Chavez, Richard Flores

**Order of Business**

I. Approval of the minutes of the September 21 and November 9 meetings

The minutes were approved unanimously

II. Report of the Graduate Dean, ad interim (Marvin Hackert)

Dean Hackert first turned to the national news and the Executive Order (EO), “Protecting the Nation From Foreign Terrorists Entry Into the United States.” The EO has caused a lot of furor in the US and abroad. Several academic organizations have made strong statements condemning the order. The Dean asked Shannon Neuse to report on the impact of the EO on applications to UT.

As of 31 January 2017, Shannon reported that for summer and fall of 2017, we currently have 26,254 applications, down 700 from this time last year. The largest change is in Engineering. We’re down 591 applications, about 9%. Liberal Arts has seen an 8% drop (270 applications). Natural Sciences is up 319 applications (about 8%) and Business is up 200 applications (4%). There has been a 3% reduction in applications from China but a 3% increase from India as well as a reduction of about 100 applications from South Korea. Dean Neikirk added that there was a 34% decrease in applications from the UK, 30% from Canada, and 17% from Mexico.

The Dean then turned to Governor Abbott’s order freezing new hires in the state. The university is still exploring the implications of the order and has no news to report there. In addition, the dean mentioned that there were many bills being filed about tuition but that it was too early to comment on any of them.

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The Dean announced that there are two new sources of money to support graduate students. The first one this year is the ConTex program that allows students from Mexico to get five years of funding that comes from four years funded by Mexico CONACYT in Mexico and one year from the UT system.

The second comes from the Provost who collected unused balances which has led to $13 million of additional fellowship funding across campus. Most of the funds will be used as four and five thousand dollar top-offs to existing fellowships but with no restrictions (these can be used with a TA appointment). This is an experiment to see if higher offers will actually yield a better incoming class.

The Dean concluded with information about the Three Minute Thesis competition and that the hard copy of the signature page will be eliminated sometime this semester.

III. Report of Chair (Prabhudev Konana)

The chair had no formal report but did compliment the Graduate School on the speed of their new degree approval process.

IV. Academic Committee (Hal Alper)

The Academic Committee chair opened by introducing the guests who spoke to the proposal for a new PhD. They were Dr. Richard Flores, MALS department chair; Dr. Karma Chavez, Associate Professor and Graduate Advisor; Katy Buchanan, Administrative Manager; and Natasha Saldaña, Graduate Coordinator.

A. Proposal to create a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree program in Mexican American and Latina/o Studies (MALS)

Dr. Flores described the core of the program as an interdisciplinary approach created through courses in the department and other departments with a core field/discipline. The core of the program examines the social and historical and contemporary experience of Latinos in the US. There were a few questions but they were all points of clarification. Both James Cox, English, and Charlotte Canning, Theatre and Dance, made statements in favor of the new PhD.

The proposal to create a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree program in Mexican American and Latina/o Studies (MALS) was approved unanimously.

B. Report on proposals to add room-share arrangements to the Option III programs in Finance and Marketing (Pending)

Dr. Alper reported that the committee had unanimously approved this proposal. Maria Juenger, Civil Engineering, pointed out that there was precedent in other departments for this arrangement.

C. Proposal to create a dual-degree program in Medicine/Business Administration (Pending)

No report.

D. Proposal to create a dual-degree program in Medicine/Public Health with the UT Health Science Center at Houston School of Public Health (Austin Regional Campus) (Pending)

No report.
V. Administrative Committee (James Cox)

James Cox had no formal report but shared very briefly some information on two issues that the committee was examining. The first is whether or not there should be a requirement for entering candidacy, for example after a certain number of hours. The second issue is the publication embargo on dissertations which is currently two years. A lively discussion followed and assembly members asked the committee to consider the needs of different fields in regards to both issues.

VI. Admissions and Enrollment Committee (Diane Schallert)

Diane Schallert had no formal report but did say that the committee was looking at the use of GREs for admission.

VII. Graduate Student Assembly (Wills Brown)

Wills Brown reported that the current administration is trying to make GSA a beacon of professional development workshopping and a social networking for Graduate Students. He listed several events: in September a welcome to UT, in October an Academics theme with events in the PCL, in November a mental health theme with cookies and coffee with Dr. Brownson the Director of the Counseling and Health Center (CMHC) on campus. In addition, the GSA has a new logo.

The GSA has also created an undergraduate mentorship agency which strengthens the relationship between undergraduates and graduate students.

There will be a graduate student prom at the end of February featuring a 90s cover band. The focus in March will be on diversity on this campus and in April a focus on health and wellness will tie into the Longhorn run on campus.

The GSA is part of the Invest in Texas group, which includes the Student Government Senate and the Graduate Student Assembly. They will be advocating to the Legislature on behalf of students about affordability and student health/wellness.

Charlotte Canning, Theatre and Dance, asked how events and services would be promoted and if faculty can be on the mailing list. Wills Brown provided the GSA’s URL and said he would provide information later about the list serve.

VIII. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was passed unanimously at 2:18 PM.