Chair Prabhudev Konana called the first meeting of the Graduate Assembly for the 2016-2017 academic year to order on Wednesday, September 21, 2016, at 1:30 PM in the Harry Ransom Center, Tom Lea Room, 3.206.

Faculty Members Present: Alper, Balhoff, Castelli, Chen, Cole, Cox, Deigh, Frazier, Gershoff, Hasenbein, Juenger, Kim, Konana, Mackert, Pollak, Radhakrishnan, Rascati, Schallert, Weaver, Worthy
Faculty Members Absent: Alu (excused), Brustad (excused), Harrison (excused), Matouschek (excused), Murray (excused) Srinivasan (excused), Strong, Thompson, Trace (excused), Wilson
Student Members Present: none
Ex Officio Members Present: Canning, Jensen
Representatives from the Office of the Graduate Studies Present: Broadway, Dalton, Neuse (substitute for Pat Ellison), Hackert, Neikirk, Rhodes, Riley, Sylvia
Visitors: Bray

Order of Business

I. Approval of the minutes of the April 27, 2016 meeting.

The minutes were approved unanimously.

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

Before beginning official business, Interim Dean Hackert provided an overview of the work and organizational structure of the Graduate Assembly and asked the members to introduce themselves.

Turning to his report, Interim Dean Hackert made several announcements. In terms of student support, the Professional Development Awards (student travel support) had increased from $200,000 to $300,000. Total fellowship support administered by Graduate School exceeded $20 million for the first time, supporting over 1000 students. This includes previous fellowships, endowments such as the Harrington, the new Graduate Student Investment Initiative (GSII), and over $5 million in external fellowships administered by the Graduate School.

In terms of professional development, the Graduate School is striving to improve partnerships across campus. Writing fellowships have been introduced, and the Writing Center will be providing more training in writing. The Graduate School will also put more focus on helping students identify and prepare for career paths outside of the academy.

Next, Interim Dean Hackert reported on the progress of the $89 million graduate and professional housing complex. The structure will be built on a block of land...
between Leona and Comal Streets just north of 21st Street east of I-35. Having a front on Comal allows us to build two- to six-story units. Being able to build six-story units is more cost effective, thus reducing the ultimate cost in rent to students, and also provides the ability to build in amenities and common space so that the housing project will serve as place to develop a sense of community for our graduate students. The goal is to bring the graduate-student housing online by June of 2019.

Interim Dean Hackert also reported that the Graduate and International Admissions Center (GIAC), formerly a part of General Admissions, was moved to the Graduate School September 1, 2016.

Next, Interim Dean Hackert reported that the Graduate School is doing work to eliminate the signature page and improve the process for updating Graduate Studies Committee (GSC) lists. Signatures will no longer be required on the signature page, and the Graduate School will manage the roster of the GSC. The Graduate School will request information twice a year in order to update and keep the roster current, but more frequent updates will be possible.

In addition, Interim Dean Hackert reported that Provost McInnis announced a national search for a new Dean of the Graduate School and Senior Vice Provost for Academic Affairs. Dean Hackert will continue as interim dean until the permanent dean is assigned. He may then continue in his role as associate dean, providing help with the transition. One prominent change in the Graduate School will be the additional programs from the Dell Medical School.

Turning to other news, Interim Dean Hackert reported that the UT System signed an agreement in June 2016 with CONACYT in Mexico. CONACYT and the UT System worked out plans to fund a five-year program that will support the training of graduate students and post docs. There will be some research funds and some exchange in faculty with short leaves between UT component institutions and institutions in Mexico.

Interim Dean Hackert announced that UT was going to have a 3-Minute Thesis competition this year, and commented on the importance of improving the communication skills of our graduate students for entering the job market. He reported that there will be a campus-wide competition for graduate students where competing students will be given three minutes and one slide to present the impact and importance of their work.

Next, Interim Dean Hackert introduced Shannon Neuse from GIAC. Ms. Neuse presented a snapshot of admissions data for Summer 2016 and Fall 2016 applicants. Overall, we received 136 fewer total applications than last year. Applications were received from all 50 states and 138 countries. 24% of those who applied were admitted; 47% of those who were admitted subsequently enrolled. 57% of the applicants are male, 43% are female. Of those admitted, 51% are male and 49% are female. Of those who were admitted and enrolled, 51% were male and 49% were female. 50% of the students who applied are international, and 50% percent are U.S. citizens or permanent residents. Looking
at applications from the U.S., 15% are Texas residents and 35% are out of state. 70% of admitted students are U.S. citizens or permanent residents and 30% are international. Texas, California and New York are the top three on the applied, admit, and enrolled; Michigan, UC Berkeley, Stanford, and UCLA were listed as last year’s top four student choices.

In response to concerns voiced by Maria Juenger from Civil Engineering regarding politician Ken Paxton wanting to do away with in-state tuition, Interim Dean Hackert noted that the Graduate School awards about 500 waivers each long semester. He suggested that UT and liaisons with the legislature pay careful attention to this as the legislative session approaches.

Jo Worthy from Curriculum and Instruction asked if GIAC is gathering information from applicants regarding the issue of guns and open carry on campus, as this might be one reason students decide not to come to UT. Ms. Neuse noted that the data from her report had come from the National Student Clearinghouse, not a local resource. Jo Worthy then asked if applications had changed drastically in any way following the application of the open carry policy. Ms. Neuse responded that they had not.

Next, John Deigh from the School of Law asked about deans referring to themselves as ‘leaders’ and ‘leadership,’ on program websites. John Deigh commented that this sounds rather corporate and questioned whether this is the appropriate way to describe the principal executive officers of the various colleges and in the tower. Interim Dean Hackert responded that John Deigh was the first person to have raised that issue and said that websites will be reviewed and this concern will be shared with the other Dean’s.

Chair Konana asked what the criteria for getting the new graduate-student housing will be. Interim Dean Hackert responded that details are still being worked out.

III. Report of Chair (Prabhudev Konana)

The chair had no report.

IV. Academic Committee (Hal Alper)

A. Proposal to update the degree title for the master's degree program in Nutritional Sciences from Master of Arts (MA) to Master of Science in Nutritional Sciences (MSNS)

Molly Bray, chair of Department of Nutritional Sciences, was introduced and spoke on behalf of the proposal. The curriculum is very science based, especially in biochemistry and metabolism, and chemistry and comparable programs that offer Master’s degrees in Nutrition generally offer Masters of Science. The existing program will be phased out when the catalog expires.
The proposal to update the degree title was approved unanimously.

V. Administrative Committee (James Cox)

A. Report – Proposed updates to Graduate School procedures

James Cox reported that the Administrative Committee had reviewed several procedural, non-legislative issues at the request of the Graduate Dean. First, the committee discussed the policy which currently allows students to make their oral defenses private without requiring any further consultation. This selection is made by the student on the Request for Final Oral, also known as the ‘pink form.’ The committee unanimously agreed that this procedure should be changed so that students who want to hold private defenses are required to consult with their committee members or their graduate advisor. James Cox, further noted, that the committee generally agreed that oral defenses should be public.

Second, Dr. Cox reported that the Administrative Committee discussed moving the deadline for updating grade status to or from CR/NC and that the consensus opinion among the committee was to move the deadline to the last class day of the semester.

Third, Dr. Cox reported that the Administrative Committee had considered the Graduate School’s practice of enforcing, without exception, a restriction on employing graduate students as TA’s or GRA’s if they have two or more temporary incompletes. The committee has recommended that the policy be maintained, but that the Graduate Dean be granted the flexibility to grant exceptions when petitions are submitted to the Graduate School.

Finally, Dr. Cox reported that the Administrative Committee had reviewed current grading policies for dissertation coursework and would be recommending that a grade of CR/NC be assigned to each semester of dissertation coursework in order to better indicate a student’s progress or lack of progress through a program. Currently, an “*” (asterisk) is assigned to indicate ‘in progress.” Dr. Cox reported that, while the committee had reached a consensus opinion, a single objection had been made by John Deigh from the Law School.

VI. Admissions and Enrollment Committee (Diane Schallert)

A. Proposal to waive the requirement for the Graduate Management Admissions Test (GMAT) for applicants to the integrated master's program in Accounting
Committee Chair Diane Schallert reported that the Admissions and Enrollment committee was recommending approval of a request to waive the GMAT test-score requirement for applicants to the integrated program in Accounting. She noted that applicants to the integrated program are students who are familiar to the faculty at UT Austin and, also, that other integrated-degree programs at UT Austin allow for similar waivers of admissions test scores.

The proposal to waive the GMAT test-score requirement was approved unanimously.

VII. Graduate Student Assembly (Wills Brown)

There was no report from the Graduate Student Assembly.

VIII. Resolution: Interim Dean Marvin Hackert noted that this was to be Pat Ellison’s last Graduate Assembly meeting as she will be retiring at the end of September. However, she was not able to attend due to the recent loss of her mother. He proposed that it would be appropriate for the Graduate Assembly to express its support and appreciation for Pat Ellison’s many years of service.

The members of the Graduate Assembly proposed a resolution to offer condolences to Pat Ellison, Director of Graduate and International Admissions Center and Assistant Dean of the Graduate School, for the recent loss of her mother, gratitude for nearly 40 years of service.

_The Graduate Assembly offers both our heartfelt condolences to Pat Ellison, Director of the Graduate and International Admissions Center and Assistant Dean of the Graduate School, for the recent loss of her mother as well as our deep and abiding gratitude for her nearly 40 years of service. We thank her for these contributions and wish her the best of luck in her retirement._

The resolution in support of Pat Ellison passed unanimously.

IX. Adjournment at 2:49 PM

Charlotte Canning, Secretary