

Graduate Student Senate Minutes
October 24, 2011

I. Call to Order

II. Roll Call – Introductions

III. Approval of the Minutes

IV. Guest Speaker: Dr. Carolyn Hodges, Dean of the Graduate School

Dr. Hodges spoke primarily on how to strengthen graduate studies at UT as part of the Top 25 Initiative. The university has created a task force designed to investigate ways to increase the number of doctorates and masters awarded. Dr. Hodges also discussed four focus areas for strengthening graduate presence on campus that this task force will explore:

1. Increase graduate student quantity and quality
2. Strengthen graduate student financial support
3. Enhance graduate student benefits
4. Increase university operational effectiveness and infrastructure

Regarding the first initiative, the university would like to streamline the admissions process and make it more efficient (by not initially requiring official transcripts for applications, for example). The school would also like to have more recruiters specifically for graduate studies. By having more recruiters, the university could also recruit for those departments which at the moment have none. The university is also exploring ways to maximize degree offerings and increase interdisciplinary work.

The university, furthermore, is exploring ways to increase funding for graduate students. The school is discussing increasing the graduate application fee (which is most lower than most universities) and using the money to support graduate student funding, benefits, and professional support.

Regarding the third initiative, the Graduate School is working to develop a permanent Family/Medical leave plan. For professional development, during the 2011-2012 year, the Chancellor and Provost of the Graduate School have approved a one-year increase in the Travel Fund. Dr. Hodges says the school is exploring ways to make this increase more permanent. The Graduate School is also investigating ways to increase professional support on campus, through workshops, mentoring, etc.

Regarding the final initiative, Dr. Hodges said that the university has also developed an Office of Educational Research and a new position – Chancellor for Informational Technology – in order to generate better data (and ways to use the data generated) both on how the UT Graduate School works in comparison to other top universities, and to develop ways to increase professional support to graduate students while here. The Graduate School will also be developing an Office of Graduate Training and Professional Development to support these goals.

V. President's Report

1. Todd encouraged GSS members to attend the Chancellor's luncheon on October 26 and Town Hall on November 8.

2. Todd would like to continue visiting other graduate student groups on campus. He has been able to attend meetings with the Graduate Students in English, as well as the Graduate Students in Nuclear Engineering.

VI. Vice-President's Report

1. Will extends his thanks for his Get Well card in September.
2. Will gave a report on the Curriculum Committee Meeting on October 10. The meeting addressed dropping classes on the catalogue that have not been taught for four or more years (the "Four or More" list). The committee met again on October 27 to vote on which courses to drop. Will encouraged GSS reps to look over the list and attend the meeting if they had any concerns over a course about to be dropped. If a GSS rep desired to contest the dropping of a particular course, they were encouraged to come to the meeting with a valid reason for why the course should not be dropped as well as a plan for teaching it soon.

VII. Old Business

Committee Chair elections:

Committee on Graduate Student Equity and Diversity: Trish Brown and Monique LeMieux

Committee on Communications and Outreach: Shelby Johnson

Committee on Graduate Student Senate Travel Awards: Amanda Sanford

Committee on Graduate Student Senate Fun Run: Alex Brown and Meagan Dennison

VII. New Business

1. Travel Award Revision: GSS and the Deans are working to revise travel award criteria, especially to make the application process friendlier to those working in the fine arts. The university is also looking at ways to streamline reimbursement.
2. Discussion of campus issues: parking, safety on campus and in the Fort, student fees.
3. Set priorities for GSS 2011-2012 agenda: travel awards, student fees, safety on campus.

VIII. Adjourn