

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT SAN ANTONIO  
DOCUMENTS AND PROCEEDINGS OF THE GRADUATE COUNCIL  
ACTION MINUTES

May 4, 2000

The eighth meeting of the Graduate Council for the 1999-2000 academic year was held in room 4.03.08 John Peace Library Building, May 4, 2000, with Dr. Louis Mendoza presiding.

**Present:** Deborah Armstrong, Beverly Bunch, Thomas Bylander, Chak-Tong Chau, Frances Colpitt, Robert Fuhrman, Emily Gaston, Daniel Gelo, Larry Golden, Juan J. Gonzalez, Daniel Hogenauer, Amir Karimi, Michael Kelly, Ming-Ying Leung, Hugh Maynard, Louis Mendoza, Palani-Rajan Kadapakkam, Clyde Phelix, Frank Pino, Joel Saegert, David Sebald, Ted Skekel, Philip Stotter, Raydel Tullous, Diane Walz, Paul Westmeyer, Kathy Wohlert and Kenneth Wunderlich

**Absent:** John Adams, Stephen Amberg, Robert Bayley, Krista Bragg, Blandina Cardenas, Brian Davies, Daniel Diaz, David Garcia, Ken Little, Andrew Martinez, Parimel Patel, Andrew Perez, Jeanne C. Reesman, Cherylon Robinson, and Robert K. Smith

**Excused:** Mark Allen and Rosalind Horowitz

**Visitor:** Daniel Hollas, Weldon Hammond, Cheryl Schrader, Lex Akers, Laura Levi, Dorothy Flannagan, David Clarke, John VanderWeg, James McDonald, Richard Sincovec, and James Dykes

I. Call to order and taking of attendance

The meeting was called to order at 3:35 p.m.

II. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the April meeting were approved with an addition on page 2218 indicating that the delay in evaluation of the Master of Music program was due to confusion on the part of the Council and its Evaluation Committee.

Dr. Mendoza introduced guests and requested a motion allowing them to address the Council. This motion passed.

III. Reports

A. Council Chair

Dr. Mendoza indicated the need for a Task Force to develop a handbook of procedures for program evaluation and asked volunteers to let him know of their interest in working on this.

He called on Dr. Bunch, who reported that a colloquium will be planned for a Friday in the Fall Semester, to be followed up by college level colloquia in the Spring Semester.

He reported that a Coordinating Board site visit has been scheduled for the proposed PhD in Culture, Literature, and Languages.

He also reported that the SACS visiting committee has questioned the efficacy of graduate advising at the downtown campus and that the Interim Dean of Graduate Studies plans to have a committee work on alleviating this problem.

B. Interim Dean of Graduate Studies

No report

C. Secretary

Dr. Westmeyer called upon Dr. Kelly for nominations for academic year 2000-2001. Dr. Kelly presented the slate in Attachment A. These nominations were voted upon by acclamation and passed.

D. Committee on Graduate Programs and Courses

Dr. Armstrong commented upon and presented committee recommendations on the proposals for a PhD in Business Administration and a PhD in Electrical Engineering as on pages 2223 and 2224 of Council Documents. The committee recommended approval of the first of these under the assumption that need faculty positions will be filled. This proposal was approved.

Dr. Armstrong commented that the committee understands that faculty positions for the program in Electrical Engineering have been filled and that the plan has appropriate support. This proposal was also approved.

E. Membership Committee

Dr. Fuhrman distributed a revised list of membership recommendations (Attachment B). These recommendations were approved.

F. Committee on Graduate Program Evaluation

Dr. Mendoza first reviewed problems that had occurred during the year with evaluations. The Master of Music program evaluation has been delayed because of Council confusion over procedures. And two programs in Business were also not evaluated because the appropriate persons were not informed of necessary procedures. A time line has now been established for these evaluations beginning in Fall 2000. Evaluation of the Computer Science doctoral program also suffered from some confusion, for which Dr. Mendoza apologized. He reported that he had prepared the evaluation report with the help of Dr. Maynard, since the outside reviewers had done their job and the self study had also been done.

Dr. Dykes then presented the evaluation report for the MA in Anthropology as on pages 2232-2235 of Council Documents and commented upon the recommendations in the report. Dr. Pino commented that certain linguistics courses offered by Foreign Languages could enhance offerings in Anthropology. The report was approved.

Dr. Bunch presented the evaluation report for the MS in Psychology as on pages 2226-2231 of Council Documents and commented on strengths and weaknesses in the program. A question was raised regarding the recommendation to add industrial psychology; the answer was that this would add an element that is locally popular. The report was approved.

Dr. Mendoza presented the evaluation report for the PhD in Computer Science as in Attachment C and commented on the recommendations. A question was raised regarding administrative support for this program; the answer was that positions have been added and support has increased. The report was approved.

IV Unfinished Business

None

V. New Business

A question was raised regarding Graduate Office support for recruiting of new students and also regarding student handbooks. The Graduate Office does have a recruitment person. Some programs on campus do have handbooks for graduate students.

VI. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 4:47 p.m.

## ATTACHMENT A

**COMMITTEES  
GRADUATE COUNCIL  
2000-2001**

**PROPOSED**

**ADMINISTRATIVE AND AGENDA**

\_\_\_\_\_, Chair  
Jeanne Reesman, Interim Dean of Graduate Studies, Ex Officio

- (1) Paul Westmeyer, Secretary
- (1) David Sebald
- (1) Diane Walz
- (1) Andra Schreiner, Student Representative

\*\*\*\*\*

- (1) Stephen Amberg, Parliamentarian
- (1) \_\_\_\_\_, University Assembly Representative (student representative)

**MEMBERSHIP**

- \* (2) William Flannery
- \* (2) Frances Colpitt
- (2) David Senseman
- \* (1) Daniel Gelo
- \* (1) Kenneth Wunderlich
- (1) Dhiraj Sardar

**Composition:**

One Member from each college  
and two at large, minimum of three  
members of the Graduate Council

**GRADUATE PROGRAM EVALUATION**

- (2) Stephen Bach
- (1) Maria Luisa Urdaneta
- \* (1) Hugh Maynard
- (1) James Balentine
- (1) Fred Nordhauser
- (1) James Dykes

**GRADUATE PROGRAMS AND COURSES**

- \* (2) Su Zhou
- \* (1) Stephen Amberg
- \* (1) Deborah Armstrong
- (1) Dennis Olsen
- (1) Parimal Patel
- (1) Jack Reynolds

**ACADEMIC POLICY AND REQUIREMENTS**

- (2) Russell Briner
- \* (2) Thomas Bylander
- \* (1) Mark Allen
- \* (1) Rosalind Horowitz
- (1) Ann Eisenberg
- (1) Stuart Birnbaum

\* Member of the Graduate Council

ATTACHMENT B

ATTACHMENT B

AMENDED

Recommendations for Membership in the Graduate Faculty

**College of Sciences and Engineering**

Special Member

Cathy Key

**College of Social and Behavioral Sciences**

Member

Stella Garcia  
James McDonald

ATTACHMENT C

**PROGRAM EVALUATION OF THE  
PH.D. IN COMPUTER SCIENCE**

**Report submitted to the  
Graduate Council**

**by the**

**Committee on Graduate Program Evaluation**

**May 2000**

This report is based on the Computer Science Ph.D. Degree Program Self-Evaluation, discussions with the outside evaluators, and the Evaluation Report of the Ph.D. in Computer Science Program provided by the outside evaluators. The outside evaluators were Dr. Robert Sebesta (Professor of Computer Science, University of Colorado, Colorado Springs) and Dr. A. Joseph Turner (Professor of Computer Science, Clemson University). In addition to his distinguished professional record as a Computer Scientist, Dr. Sebesta has been the Department Chair of the Department of Computer Science at the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs since 1987, and he authored the successful CS Ph.D. proposal at his home institution. Dr. Turner has served as Chair of the Department of Computer Science at Clemson University from 1978-1992. He currently serves as vice-President of ACM (the Association for Computing Machinery) and as a representative to IFIP (International Federation for Information Processing Technical Committee 3 (Education)). Consequently they provide both expertise in the discipline and governance experience. During their visit to the campus on March 23-24, 2000 they met with the Computer Science Doctoral Studies Committee, a group of computer science faculty, a group of graduate students, Dr. Guy Bailey (Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs), Dr. Jeanne Reesman (Interim Dean of Graduate Studies), Dr. Richard Sincovec (Director of the Division of Computer Sciences), Dr. Cheryl B. Schraeder, Associate Dean for Graduate Studies and Research, Jackie Crinnon (Library Collection Development Coordinator), and the Internal Review Subcommittee.

The evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the Ph.D. in Computer Science program and the subsequent recommendations will be discussed in five general areas: Faculty Issues, Curriculum Issues, Student Issues, Facilities, and Administrative Support.

## Faculty Issues

### Strengths

The outside evaluators acknowledged the progress faculty have made in "increasing their research orientation and productivity to adequately support a Ph.D. program." They also noted the commitment of the faculty to build an excellent program and believe that the present faculty provides a strong foundation upon which to build. Their assessment of the faculty is supported by the data of faculty production provided in the Division of Computer Sciences' 1999 Graduate Program Self-Evaluation. The Self-Evaluation reveals a faculty who are actively engaged in training, active research programs, publication records, and outside funding. Moreover, of the 95 faculty publications listed in Section II.B, 18 include student co-authorship, a good indicator of student training and mentorship. The reviewers noted that the faculty recognize that there is room for improvement. The overall impression of the faculty by the outside reviewers is very positive.

### **Weaknesses**

It is worth noting that three of the four paragraphs in the Faculty section of the outside reviewers' report discuss faculty frustration and low morale. These factors are attributed to several factors: the low retention rate of faculty, the perceived decline in commitment to the Ph.D. in Computer Science by the previous UTSA administration after the program was established (as evidenced by a failure to provide promised personnel and resources), below market faculty salaries, rules that impede the effective use of graduate teaching assistants, contention among the faculty for graduate courses due to the 1.5 credit received for these courses, and inordinately high teaching loads. The reviewers' note that "A teaching load of three courses per year is common for research faculty ..., and lower loads are not unusual. A base load of two courses per semester is the most that would be considered remotely competitive." The decline in faculty morale and the non-competitive faculty salaries are evidenced by an actual decline in the number of faculty since the Ph.D. program was started. Finally, the conclusion of the outside reviewer's report suggests a need for faculty to rethink the way they work together. The report suggests that in addition to stressors created by the lack of administrative support, faculty need to acknowledge that they need to adapt to new modes of operation and realize that a "consensus that used to be the norm, will rarely occur again," but this need not inhibit growth or productivity.

### **Recommendations**

The most important recommendation is the need for clear and consistent administrative support. This renewed commitment to the Ph.D. in Computer Science should take the form of an adjusted base teaching load for faculty with Ph.D. level research expectations. The outside reviewers recommend that course load credit for undergraduate courses should be increased to that of graduate courses in fulfilling the base teaching load requirement. Moreover, the university needs to develop a funding mechanism to support graduate teaching assistants. This development will help both faculty and students maximize their productivity. Finally, as suggested by the outside reviewers, the university must take aggressive steps in the area of faculty hiring and retention by providing competitive salaries and working conditions.

## **Student Issues**

### **Strengths**

The attention paid to student issues is relatively sparse in the Self-Evaluation conducted by the Ph.D. in Computer Sciences. No data regarding admission and retention of Ph.D. seeking graduate students was provided.

Section VIII. B of the Self-Evaluation indicates that, "University support for fellowships has been valuable for attracting students who have been admitted to the program." As indicated above and reiterated in Section V.D. of the Self-Evaluation, from 1995-1999,

18 publications have resulted from collaborations between Computer Science faculty and students. Section V.D. provides a brief report of results of a questionnaire given to current students in the Doctoral program. Areas of most satisfaction include: availability of instructors, financial support, quality of faculty, and breadth of formal graduate courses. The section of the outside reviewers report on students, derived from a meeting held with computer science Ph.D. students, does not provide any positive indicators of student satisfaction.

### Weaknesses

The Division's Self-Evaluation questionnaire indicated that areas of student dissatisfaction included library book holdings, the low quality of research activities, the number of computer science faculty, and office space. Section VIII.B. of the Self-Evaluation acknowledges that student recruitment is not as organized as it should be. The outside reviewers report provides a different perspective that is at once complementary and broader. The reviewers point out that they are "simply reporting" what they were able to learn in a meeting with graduate students. The morale of Ph.D. students is low, and there appear to be several contributing factors. Chief among these is the resulting impact from loss of faculty (some students have lost their advisors). Students are also concerned about the decline in research-oriented activities involving talks from visiting speakers, faculty, and students within the program. Though no data was provided it appears that there is a serious retention problem with graduate students, which in turn has detrimental affects. The reviewers note two problems that result from students being lured away to high paying jobs: 1) it discourages other students from continuing their studies; 2) and, the resulting low number of Ph.D. students restricts the division from offering a wider variety of graduate courses. It is, of course, hard to blame the lure of the market on the graduate program. However, student commitment and satisfaction are important factors to consider when thinking about retention. The outside reviewers note that Ph.D. students are very dissatisfied with communication within the division. They do not feel that their opinions are solicited or considered important.

### Recommendations

Decisive steps need to be taken to address student dis-satisfaction and retention. As noted above, faculty and student satisfaction are inter-related. Student concerns about faculty mentorship and stability can be addressed if the university develops an aggressive plan to retain faculty. As emerging professionals in the field, Ph.D. graduate students should be included in decision-making processes as much as possible. The reviewers recommend a variety of ways for developing and enhancing communication channels between graduate students and the faculty and division director. They suggest meetings that combine social interaction and academic and/or research topics. Other avenues that solicit student input on the program and division should also be explored. The Division should develop and implement strategies to address student recruiting and retention. As the Self-Evaluation indicates, student concerns regarding space will be alleviated once the new building is complete.



## Curriculum Issues

### Strengths

The Self-Evaluation does not address curriculum per se, though it does assert that the doctoral degree written exam is reasonable and had been serving its purpose to ensure program quality. In their meeting with outside reviewers it does not appear that graduate students raised any complaints about the curriculum, except as it was impacted by faculty course offerings. The reviewers state that the curriculum for the Ph.D. program is demanding and rigorous, and that the total number of required hours and examinations are appropriate.

### Weaknesses

The outside reviewers identify some potential problems with the curriculum. Among these are: the number of required core courses (6), the amount of credit received by students entering the Ph.D. program with an M.S. degree in computer science, the lack of a close relationship between the M.S. and Ph.D. programs, and a dedicated research focus at the Ph.D. level that does not reflect the dynamic nature of the discipline.

### Recommendations

The perceived problems with the curriculum can be addressed rather easily. The outside reviewers suggest that since the qualifying exam is based on only three of the core courses, the program should consider reducing the core to match the exam. This adjustment will allow students the opportunity to take courses that reflect a wider array of their diverse interests. The reviewers also note that student retention in the program could be positively impacted if a stronger preference were given to students entering the program with an M.S., since their commitment to the field is generally clearer and stronger. For this reason, funding of students with an M.S. is a better investment. Inherent in this recommendation by the outside reviewers is a need to assess the correlation between the M.S. program and the Ph.D. program. Finally, given the dynamic nature of the field, the program should be open to re-examining its focus every few years to adapt to new opportunities presented by faculty and new funding sources.

## Facilities

### Strengths

The Self-Evaluation and the outside reviewers report are consistent in their agreement that the Computer Science laboratories serve the needs of faculty and students. The availability of appropriate hardware and software to students is considered good. Students receive accounts and access to all machines they wish to work on. Electronic access to journals in the library enhances student and faculty research opportunities. Though

improvement in library holdings is a perennial issue, positive steps have been taken to broaden the array of holdings in the last three years.

### **Weaknesses**

Some problems with office space exists, though as noted above this will be addressed with the opening of a new building. A chief problem with facilities is the lack of adequate technical support. There is an over-reliance on a single system administrator. The budget support for software, equipment maintenance and replacement is inadequate for the needs of the program.

### **Recommendations**

Administrative support is necessary for making the necessary budget adjustments that will allow the hiring of additional, well-qualified staff and to meet the software and hardware needs of the program. Enhancement of the library holdings should continue.

## **Administration Issues**

### **Strengths**

There is strong community and regional support for the Ph.D. in Computer Science. As the university's second doctoral program, strong support for its success has been voiced and commitments have been made to ensure this success. Numerous efforts are being made to ensure and improve support for the doctoral program and students in the program.

### **Weaknesses**

Past university administrations have done a poor job in honoring commitments to the Ph.D. program. This legacy has cast doubt on the degree of commitment to the program by the administration. Though many past commitments have been recently met, some have yet to be realized, such as increased support for laboratory needs. The outside reviewers note that "changes in the supporting infrastructure are necessary to provide an environment conducive to success in improving program quality." Chief among these are the need to increase research incentives and removing unnecessary administrative barriers in hiring practices. UTSA's return rate to the division and investigators of indirect costs collected on research grants is out of sync with standard practices of Ph.D.-granting departments at other universities. Current restrictions on advertising for new faculty positions and post-docs place the division at a disadvantage.

### **Recommendations**

If the Ph.D. in Computer Science is to succeed, a strong renewal of the administration's commitment to the program is needed. The necessary support is financial and

procedural. Addressing the above problems in a timely fashion will help boost faculty and student morale. More flexibility is needed with regard to position advertisements and the hiring of post-docs. Clear, consistent, and competitive hiring and incentive policies that are in-line with the practices of other institutions should be investigated and implemented. The administration must take the lead in developing policies surrounding faculty workloads in Ph.D. programs. Current workload policy makes it difficult for faculty to successfully balance the research, teaching, mentoring, and service demands required by a competitive Ph.D. program. While the long-term spatial needs of the program promise to be met with new buildings, an intermediate plan for addressing spatial needs must be developed immediately.