

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

February 3, 2009

**John Peace Library 4.03.08**  
**3:30 p.m.**

**Present:** Gabriel Acedvedo, Sos Agaian, John Alexander, Stuart Birnbaum (for Lance Lambert), Rena Bizios, Norma Cantú, Bill Cooke, Mari Cortez, Astrid Dewath, James Dykes, Roger Enriquez, Karl Eschbach, Dorothy Flannagan, David Jaffe, Palani-Rajan Kadapakkam, Kim Kline, William McCrary, Gregg Michel, Seyed Moussa Mirehei, Renee Nank, Emeka Nwaeze, Maricela Oliva, Alastair Olive, David Romero, Scott Sherer, Howard Smith, Eugene Stone-Romero, Ram Tripathi, Lila Truett, John Warren, Jose Weissmann, Raj Wilson, Yinlong (Allen) Zhang, Weining Zhang

**Absent:** Shereen Bhalla, John Garza, Christopher Gonzalez, Mark Saenz

**Excused:** Michael Cepek, Andrey Chabanov, Walter Ermler, Larry Golden, Mary Kay Houston-Vega, Malgorzata Oleszkiewicz-Peralba, Can Saygin

**Visitors:** Augustine Osman, Associate Graduate Dean College of Liberal and Fine Arts  
Raquel Marquez, Chair Department of Sociology  
A.Derral Cheatwood, Graduate Advisor Sociology  
Anson Ong, Chair Department of Biomedical Engineering  
George Perry, Dean College of Sciences  
Craig Jordan, Associate Academic Dean College of Sciences  
Edward Tiekink, Associate Graduate Dean College of Sciences  
Edwin Barea-Rodriguez, Chair Department of Biology  
Stephen Saville, Graduate Advisor Biotechnology

**I. Call to order and taking of attendance.**

Dr. William McCrary called the February 3, 2009 meeting of the Graduate Council to order at 3:35 pm.

**II. Approval of Minutes (William McCrary)**

The Minutes of the December 2, 2008 meeting were approved.

**III. Reports**

**A. Council Chair (William McCrary)**

Dr. McCrary noted that he expected this meeting to be longer than the December meeting. He met with Drs. Kleanthis Psarris and Weining Zhang to discuss English as a Second Language (ESL) requirements for their graduate students. He will update the Graduate Council after he meets with Jim Kelim.

**B. Dean of Graduate School (Dorothy Flannagan)**

Dean Dorothy Flannagan reported that four new program proposals have been submitted in the last month and are ready to send to Dr. Gabriel Acevedo's Committee on Graduate Programs and Courses. While each of the programs is anxious to have their proposal reviewed this semester, she noted how hard the committee has already worked this year. She asked for volunteers to help with the workload instead of having the programs wait until next year.

Dean Flannagan explained that a few months ago Jim Kelim alerted her and Vice Provost David Johnson to a state mandate that Teaching Assistants will need to demonstrate English competence. Subsequently a proposal has been sent to the Provost's Office requesting funds to implement an international TA training program for Fall 2009. There are no details yet, but more information will be available after Jim Kelim discusses testing, cut-offs, and procedures at the next Chairs' Council meeting. In response to a question by Dr. Rena Bizios, Dean Flannagan understands that the code applies to TAs, not to Reader Graders. In response to a question by Dr. Zhang, she explained that this is distinct from the certification proposal that helps with teaching skills. Dr. Palani-Rajan Kadapakkam asked about the timing and breadth of the certification code. Dean Flannagan had seen it mentioned on other websites last Spring or Summer. While it may apply to all TAs, there may be a special module for international students.

Dean Flannagan described changes to the Handbook of Operating Procedures with regard to the evaluation of existing graduate programs. Except for accreditation, undergraduate programs are not being evaluated. With the changes implanted next year, the Office of the Provost will supervise the evaluation of both undergraduate and graduate programs. Graduate programs up for review this year or next will continue to proceed under the current guidelines. Subsequently the Provost will send out the call to review all undergraduate and graduate programs and approve the committee. The procedure will be similar, but the self-study will be expanded. There will still be site visitors with expertise and the Graduate Council will remain in the approval loop for graduate programs. Answering a question by Dr. Howard Smith, she explained that the program evaluation process is separate from the SACS accreditation process, but that the collected information should be usable in both processes in order to minimize redundancy.

#### **C. Secretary (Jim Dykes)**

The membership of Graduate Council committees was distributed as Attachment A of the Agenda. Dr. Jim Dykes noted that Associate Deans Patricia Harris and Edward Tiekink recruited members to serve on our committees over the intersession. As highlighted in Attachment A of the Agenda, Drs. Marie Tillyer & Sandy Norman have joined our Academic and Policy Requirements Committee and Dr. Richard Harris has joined our Graduate Program Evaluation Committee. After emailing the Agenda, Dr. Dykes was reminded that Dr. Renee Nank has also been serving on the Graduate Program Evaluation Committee. She should have been included in the attachment and her service is really appreciated.

#### **D. Committee on Graduate Programs and Courses (Gabriel Acevedo)**

Dr. McCrary moved that the Graduate Council vote to suspend our Bylaws in order to allow our invited guests to discuss their program proposals and evaluations. His motion was unanimously approved. He asked that each presenter introduce the invited guests.

Dr. Gabriel Acevedo informed the Graduate Council that the MS in Advanced Manufacturing and Enterprise Engineering had been approved for implementation. He provided an update on the four proposals mentioned by Dean Flannagan. The proposed MS in Urban and regional Planning was reviewed by the committee and their feedback has been sent to the Department. The committee is just starting to review the proposed MS in School Psychology. In addition, there are two certification proposals submitted for review: Teaching English as a Second Language and Economics. Any volunteers would be appreciated.

As a sociologist, Dr. Acevedo recused himself from the review of the PhD in Sociology proposal. Dr. David Romero lead that review and presented the committee recommendation of the proposal (Attachment B of the Agenda). Dr. Romero introduced the invited visitors: Drs. Augustine Osman, Raquel Marquez, and Derral Cheatwood. He explained that the committee had reviewed the proposal in the middle of the Fall semester and that the program had answered all of the committee's questions about the focus of public sociology, the administration & curriculum of the proposed program, and the needs & resources. He noted that the proposal and answers benefitted from the program's review of previous proposal and coordination with the Graduate School. The committee unanimously recommends the PhD in Sociology proposal. He summarized the proposal in a PowerPoint presentation. The proposal is grounded in fundamental theories and basic research methodologies (both quantitative and qualitative), but its unique focus is on Public Sociology: the communication of basic research to public students, the lay public, and community agencies. The Public Sociology thread runs through the entire proposed curriculum from an early conceptualization course, through a seminar, and to a summary accompanying the dissertation. The 60 required hours are evenly split with 12 hours in core theory courses, 12 hours in Methods, 12 hours of dissertation, 12 hours in relevant Sociology electives, and 12 hours of free electives. He noted that the proposal is designed to meet diversity, accessibility, and programmatic needs. He also noted that all of the nine "aspirant institutions" identified in the UTSA Master Plan have a PhD in Sociology. A major strength of the proposal is that it can be funded through a reallocation of existing resources. He specifically noted that UTSA currently ranks 4<sup>th</sup> in Texas for extramural funding in the social sciences. Sociology faculty have over a million dollars in grants and support. There are currently 85 MS students in Sociology and 38 have graduated in the last five years. A survey indicated that 27% of them would be interested in pursuing a PhD in Sociology at UTSA. The floor was opened to questions and discussion with the visitors.

In response to a question by Dr. Eugene Stone-Romero, Dr. Acevedo explained that Public Sociology is a membership section in the American Sociological Association. Dr. Stuart Birnbaum asked about the expected time to complete the required 60 hours. Dr. Cheatwood estimated that the minimum would be three years, but that four to five years would not be uncommon. The schedule is to teach the core courses each year and the electives every couple of years, but the time to complete the 12 hours of dissertation will vary between students. Dr. Marquez noted the strategic hiring of two faculty with national reputations. Dr. Bizios asked if it was fair to characterize the schedule as two years of course work and one year of research. If so, was that enough research? Dr. Acevedo explained that the time course was expected to be shorter for quantitative

research students with access to public, electronic databases than for qualitative research students conducting field studies. In terms of the number of students, Dr. Acevedo expects 8 students initially and to build up to 16 students.

A number of people discussed how the proposed program interfaced with other disciplines and compared to other programs. Dr. Karl Eschbach explained that five of the seven faculty in the Department of Demography and Organizational Studies hold doctorates in Sociology. Due to their closeness, he read the entire proposal and concluded that the proposed program would complement demography at UTSA. If approved, he expected strong collaboration. For instance, Dr. Lloyd Potter's Institute for Demographic and Socioeconomic Research could employ some of their doctoral students. Dr. Raj Wilson asked how the proposed program compared to Austin's program. Dr. Acevedo appreciated the importance of the question since it is so important to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. He and Dr. Cheatwood noted that, like Austin, this program would support collaboration with demography, but cited a number of differences. This program would provide greater access and a cultural perspective. They described Austin's program as predominantly academic and basic, quantitative research. This program would focus on Public Sociology, would also include qualitative research, and would prepare some students for applied positions in addition to academic positions. Drs. Stone-Romero and Sos Agaian asked for more information about the academic / nonacademic positions in this domain. Dr. Acevedo cited University of Chicago as an example of an excellent program that prepared students for nonacademic positions. Dr. Eschbach noted that many colleagues who had graduated at the same time from Wisconsin and Harvard now work for the census bureau or other government agencies. Dr. Marquez also noted that minority students could be recruited by faculty researching the border. The PhD in Sociology proposal passed unanimously.

#### **E. Membership Committee (Scott Sherer)**

Dr. Scott Sherer presented the list of 10 applicants that his committee recommended to be Special Members of the Graduate Faculty (Attachment C of the Agenda). He noted that nine applicants held terminal degrees. The 10<sup>th</sup> applicant (John Knight) was from UT Austin and had over 35 years experience in precipitation and water collection. Dr. Kadapakkam noted that Associate Dean had included a very strong memorandum of support for John Knight. The committee unanimously recommended the list and their recommendation was unanimously approved.

#### **F. Committee on Graduate Program Evaluation (Norma Cantú)**

Dr. Norma Cantú provided an overview of the program review process. First the program submits a self study that includes data provided by the Office of Institutional Research. Then the committee coordinates a site visit to review the program in relation to the self study. The committee reviews the self study and the site visit report in order to prepare the committee's report. That report is presented to the Graduate Council. A follow up meeting is scheduled in the next academic year with a representative of the committee, a member of the Graduate School, and the program's Dean, Chair, & Graduate Advisor. A summary of the progress since the evaluation report is presented to the Graduate Council. She referenced the Graduate School website: <http://www.utsa.edu/graduate/GraduateProgramEvaluation/index.htm>

Dr. Cantú introduced Dr. Anson Ong as our visitor and presented the evaluation report of the UTSA /UTHSCSA MS /PhD program in Biomedical Engineering (Attachment D of the Agenda). She noted the two outside reviewers: Drs. Kyriacos Athanasiou and Linda Lucas. She highlighted their recommendation to hire new faculty with high visibility and student mentoring skills. Dr. Bill Cooke asked about the reviewers' comment about the "joint" nature of the program on page 3061 of the Agenda. Dr. Ong explained that it is a joint program with joint faculty meetings, joint seminars, and courses taught at both campuses. Dr. Kadapakkam asked about the status of the graduates. Dr. Ong noted that one recent MS graduate has applied to the PhD program. Of the 7- 8 doctoral students graduating since 2003, two are employed in industry, one is an Assistant Professor, and the rest are post-doctoral researchers. The Graduate Council unanimously voted to accept the report into our records.

Next Dr. Cantú presented the follow up report for the MS in Biotechnology. She noted our visitors (Drs. Perry, Jordan, Tiekink, Barea-Rodriguez, and Saville) and thanked Dean Flannagan for representing the Graduate Council at the January 22<sup>nd</sup> meeting. She also noted the excellent progress of the program. Dr. Sherer asked about the use of SCANTRONS mentioned in the follow up report. Dr. Saville explained some classes have enrollments of 48- 60 students and combine SCANTRON and essay measurements of student performance. Dr. Stone-Romero explained that multiple choice questions can be framed that are psychometrically equivalent to essay questions in terms of measuring the same skills. The report was unanimously approved.

Dr. John Alexander presented the final report for the PhD Concentration in Neurobiology. He noted that Dr. David Jaffe is a member of the Graduate Council and that Dr. Saville is Graduate Advisor. The final report is Attachment A. The program was implemented in 1992. The outside reviewers observed that the students saw the faculty as accessible, but would prefer to have more courses offered. The reviewers also observed that the faculty saw a need to increase the quantity and quality of the applicants. They recommended that the student publication rate increase. Hiring more senior faculty could help. The equipment and labs are new and state-of-the-art for current needs. The Library resources could be improved. The external report described the growth and quality as "impressive". There was no discussion. The report was unanimously approved.

#### **G. Committee on Academic Policy and Requirements (David Romero)**

No report

#### **IV. Unfinished Business**

Dr. McCrary reminded the Graduate Council of the issue of graduate student access to the University Center. Having served on the UC Advisory Committee this last year, he was pleased to report that he expects approval of a dedicated graduate student slot on the committee at the next meeting. A number of the current members are graduating seniors and are sensitive to the issue.

#### **V. New Business**

Dr. Kadapakkam asked about compiling a list of research and statistics courses that could help across disciplines. Dean Flannagan offered to help compile the list. Associate Dean

Osman noted that it would help strengthen resources and increase collaboration. Dr. Saville cited coordination with Management.

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**VI. Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 4:52.

Attachment A  
**PROGRAM EVALUATION FOR THE  
CONCENTRATION IN NEUROBIOLOGY,  
PH.D. PROGRAM OF THE DEPARTMENT OF BIOLOGY**

**2 FEBRUARY 2009**

The GPEC has reviewed the Ph.D. Program in Neurobiology. The following report is based on a number of different sources:

- 1) the *Self Study for Neurobiology Ph.D. Program* of 20 February 2008 (including data from surveys of the students and the faculty)
- 2) the external review of 24 October 2008, conducted by Dr. Francisco González-Lima (Institute for Neuroscience and Departments of Psychology, Pharmacology and Toxicology, UT Austin) and Dr. Jack Waymire (Department of Neurobiology and Anatomy, UTHSC)
- 3) the *Program Evaluation Report* of the external reviewers
- 4) the *Response to External Evaluation Report*, prepared by Neurobiology's Doctoral Studies Committee and approved on 8 January 2009.

The external reviewers met with the following individuals: Dr. David Jaffe (GAR for the Concentration), Dr. Martha Lundell (Assistant Chair of the Department of Biology and faculty member in the Concentration), and Dr. Edward Tiekink (Associate Dean for Graduate Studies). They toured the labs with Drs. Carlos Paladini, Gary Gaufo and Brian Derrick (all faculty in the Department of Biology and in the Concentration of Neurobiology). They also met some members of the administrative staff of both the Department of Biology and the Graduate School, members of the student body, and Dr. John Alexander (member of the CGPE).

Neurobiology is a Concentration within the Department of Biology. According to the *Self Study*, the concentration "prepare[s] students for research and academic careers through advanced study and research." Since its inception in 1992, it has grown rapidly, both in terms of establishing the curriculum and adding faculty members. A well-established component of higher education at UTSA, the challenge is "to continue to augment and enhance the quality of the program through increasing the number and quality of our student applicants, continue to graduate students in a uniform and efficient time, and to increase the number of student publications" (*Self Study*).

In part, the external reviewers commented on their findings in light of UTSA's goal of preparing leaders for a global environment, and becoming a tier-one research institution. They provided a set of 20 specific recommendations. In some cases, those recommendations seconded weaknesses and recommendations provided in the *Self Study*. In the *Response to the External Evaluation Report*, the faculty welcomed a number of the suggestions of the evaluators, both general and specific, and they addressed others. Upon review in January 2009, the CGPE has determined that the external reviewers made a fair and accurate assessment of the program's strength and weaknesses.

## CURRICULUM

### STRENGTHS

- 1) core curriculum: according to the external reviewers, the core curriculum is satisfactory.
- 2) lab rotations: according to the student surveys reported in the *Self Study*, rotations through 3 of the faculty-led laboratories (instituted to familiarize the students with the possible avenues of research) are a strength of the program.

### WEAKNESSES

- 1) schedule of courses: despite the large number of classes offered, students demonstrated some displeasure with the number, quality and availability of the courses.
- 2) publishing requirement: there are currently no requirements for publishing before graduation, as evidenced in the small number of publications by students. The external reviewers identified both of these issues as a problem.
- 3) statistics and writing courses: there are currently no courses specifically dedicated to teaching the students statistical analysis or scientific and grant writing.
- 4) lab rotations: despite the favorable review of the students about the lab rotations, the external reviewers felt that a rotation through 3 of the labs may not be necessary for all students.

### OPPORTUNITIES

Additional requirements to publish, and courses on statistical analysis and scientific and grant writing would improve the background of the students. However, a more flexible schedule of rotations would accommodate students with different backgrounds, experiences and directions.

## STUDENTS

### STRENGTHS

- 1) student body: according to the *Self Study*, the number of students increased rapidly after the inception of the program.
- 2) post-graduation positions: according to a report in the *Self Study*, graduates often obtain prestigious post-doctoral research positions, or move into the private sector.

### WEAKNESSES

- 1) number of applicants: the number of applicants has decreased (due in part to additional offerings at UTSA, siphoning off applicants from the Concentration in Neurobiology). Consequently, the current number of students is slightly lower than past years.
- 2) GRE scores of the applicants: although the GRE scores are improving, they are still lower than desired. This coincides with the faculty's view that the Concentration does not always attract quality students.
- 3) number of publications: according to the external reviewers, students publish fewer peer-reviewed articles than typical.



- 4) length of enrollment: over the past five years, students have completed their degrees in 6-1/2 years, on average. While still within normal range, the external reviewers believed that that was slightly longer than necessary.
- 5) lack of independent funding: according to the Self Study, the faculty believes that the students have not sought out and obtained an adequate amount of external funding.

### **OPPORTUNITIES**

The students have the opportunity to pursue a wide range of topics, and participate in the generation and dissemination of new knowledge, due to the varied expertise of the faculty.

Vigorous recruitment efforts, currently underway, may significantly increase and improve the student body.

The reviewers suggested that the faculty assume a number of additional roles or tasks in order to improve the understanding and experience of the students, while leading them to graduate in a shorter amount of time (See "Opportunities" under "Faculty and Staff"). At the same time, they encouraged the program to achieve its goal of increasing the number of students.

## **FACULTY AND STAFF**

### **STRENGTHS**

- 1) faculty numbers and expertise: the Concentration has a fast-growing group of professionally active tenured and tenure-track faculty, representing a wide range of areas of expertise.
- 2) faculty accessibility and direction: a survey of the students demonstrates that they appreciate the access that they have to the faculty, and the direction and help that the faculty provides to them.

### **WEAKNESSES**

- 1) weak support: the *Self Study* lacked some crucial data, indicating to the external reviewers that the support staff (either in the Neurobiology offices or the offices of the Graduate School) could improve the services rendered to the Concentration.
- 2) cumbersome bureaucracy: the reviewers identified some bureaucratic processes or channels that could be streamlined, although the faculty noted some benefits of the status quo.
- 3) results from self-identifying: professors from the Department of Biology self-identify in order to become a member of the Concentration in Neurobiology. The external reviewers noted a lack of clear definition about what constitutes a professor of Neurobiology, and consequently a lack of clarity or definition about a number of issues (number of faculty, calculated amount of external funding, total of lab space specifically for Neurobiology, etc).
- 4) status of the faculty: the Self Study noted the lack of senior scientists among the faculty in the Concentration.

### **OPPORTUNITIES**

The possibility of organizational restructuring could give greater definition to the program, resolving many of the weaknesses noted above. Specific suggestions of the

external reviewers included keeping better track of the progress of students, perhaps under the oversight of a Graduate Coordinator (non-faculty administrative position paid for by the Graduate School).

In response to some weaknesses in the student body, the reviewers suggested that the faculty evaluate, direct and keep track of their students more carefully (with an eye to developing an individual course of study for each student, understanding why they have fewer publications than normal, and why it takes them so long to graduate), and provide additional guidance to them (preparing and encouraging them to publish, to investigate non-traditional careers, to apply for fellowships and to participate in international global research).

The Dean of the College of Sciences should make positions, compensation packages, facilities and equipment available to attract outstanding senior scientists.

## **EQUIPMENT, FACILITIES AND RELATED SUPPORT**

### **STRENGTHS**

1) building and equipment: new buildings on the 1604 Campus provide adequate amounts of space to the members of the Department of Biology who participate in the Concentration in Neurobiology, and the labs are equipped with state-of-the-art technology. A survey demonstrates that the students are very pleased with the facilities and resources. According to the *Program Evaluation Report* of the external reviewers, "Evaluators toured faculty labs and facilities, both of which were excellent." "The laboratories are very impressive."

### **WEAKNESSES**

1) library: although the Self Study reported the adequacy of the library holdings, the faculty generally felt that the library's scientific holdings should be improved.

### **OPPORTUNITIES**

With the facilities available to the faculty and students, there is reason to believe that the Concentration will be able to achieve its goals.

## **CONCLUSION**

At the end of the external review, the scholars conducting the review noted in particular -- out of everything that they saw or heard about -- good recruiting efforts and positive growth of the concentration. One word that Dr. González-Lima used to summarize what he saw was "impressive." The *Program Evaluation Report* went on to state, "the program was generally regarded as progressing well."