

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

**November 2, 2010**

**University Room, BB 2.06.04  
3:30 p.m.**

**Present:** Ashraf Alam, Mark Bayer, Shereen Bhalla, Kimberly Bilica, Rena Bizios, Andrey Chabanov, Youn-Min Chou, William Cooke, Samer Dessouky, Sedef Doganer, Jim Dykes, Dorothy Flannagan, Rhonda Gonzales(Catherine Nolan-Ferrell substituted), Richard Hartley, Kimberly Kline, Myung Ko, Donald Kurtz, Goutham Menon, Sharon Navarro, Branco Ponomariov, Joel Saegert, Patricia Sanchez, Elaine Sanders, Rodolpho Sandoval, Can Saygin, Scott Sherer, Drew Stephen, Ram Tripathi, Lila Truett, John Wald, Honjie Xie, Xiaohe Xu, Weining Zhang

**Absent:** David Akopian, Peter Anderson, Schuyler Costello, Santiago Daydi-Tolson, Carolyn Ehardt, Yue Huang, Elizabeth Murakami Ramalho, Heather Trepal, Mindy Wallen

**Excused:** Norma Guerra, Russell Reeder, Garry Sunter, Mary Zey

**Visitors:**

Sandy Norman Chair, Department of Mathematics

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

Dr. Kim Kline called the November 2, 2010 meeting of the Graduate Council to order at 3:33 pm.

**II. Approval of Minutes (Kim Kline)**

The Minutes of the October 5, 2010 meeting were approved.

**III. Reports**

**A. Council Chair (Kim Kline)**

Dr. Kline reported on topics from the Faculty Senate meeting (now two hours) that are relevant to graduate studies. First, the plus / minus grading system was discussed. Implementation for both undergraduate and graduate courses is expected for 2011, but she noted that our 2011- 2013 Graduate Catalog is already finished. Second, proposed changes to the Handbook of Operating Procedures were discussed. An example of an insubstantial change was allowing the third year review to be conducted in either the Fall or Spring semester. The Faculty Senate asked for more time to consider the proposed substantive changes (e.g.; modifications to the misconduct in research policy). Third, she noted some of the comments made by the Provost. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board has suggested that new doctoral programs would not be approved unless the undergraduates in the same department were graduating within six years. The budget projections are depressing, but the one positive note was that the number of Summer school courses would probably not be reduced. The fourth topic was

a proposal for a new undergraduate Multidisciplinary Studies degree. It would essentially be a set of multiple minors.

Next Dr. Kline asked for people to let her know of any graduate courses on research methods courses (especially qualitative research methods). Then she described a new graduate student information session. It is designed for newly admitted student who are deciding about attending graduate school in general and UTSA in particular. The information session will be held on December 7<sup>th</sup> between 6:00 and 7:30 on the Main Campus in the UC Retama Auditorium. John Shafer (the Assistant Director of Recruiting) is the point of contact.

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

Dean Dorothy Flannagan gave no formal report, but offered to answer any questions about the issues discussed by Dr. Kline.

**C. Secretary (Jim Dykes)**

Dr. Dykes noted that Mary Kay Houston-Vega has a class conflict with our meetings this Fall, as does her substitute (Dr. Joylyn Mikow). Dr. Goutham Menon was welcomed as the representative for the Department of Social Work. Referring to Attachment A of the Agenda, Dr. Dykes thanked Dr. Elaine Sanders for her outstanding recruitment of people to serve on our Graduate Council committees. Dr. Kim Bilica is Chairing the Graduate Programs and Courses Committee and Dr. David Johnson is a new member. Dr. Goutham Menon is a new member of the Academic and Policy Requirements Committee. Drs. Hai-Chao Han and Emily Bonner are new members of the Graduate Program Evaluation Committee; which is now complete. Dr. Sanders appealed to the members to volunteer or seek colleagues to volunteer for the remaining open positions.

**D. Committee on Graduate Programs and Courses (Kim Bilica)**

Dr. Kim Bilica reported that her committee had just voted to approve the 2011-2013 Graduate Catalog this morning. She thanked her committee as well as Dean Flannagan and Ginger Hernandez and especially praised posting the Graduate Catalog on Rowdy Space. Dr. Bilica projected two items (see Attachment A): a wording change for ME 6981-3 and inconsistencies regarding the comprehensive exam between departments within the College of Liberal and Fine Arts. Dean Flannagan explained that individual colleges can establish their own policy, including allowing differences between departments. All but one of the Associate Deans want to maintain the status quo. Dr. Bilica suggested that this might be revisited for the 2013- 2015 Catalog. The 2011- 2013 Graduate Catalog was unanimously approved. Dr. Kline thanked Dr. Bilica and her committee for their great work.

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

Dr. Scott Sherer reported that all nine applicants for Special Membership in Graduate Faculty (Attachment B of the Agenda) are well qualified and hold doctoral degrees. The list was unanimously approved.

**F. Committee on Graduate Program Evaluation (Sharon Navarro)**

Dr. Sharon Navarro noted that Dr. Branco Ponomariov would present the review of the MS in Math program (see Attachment B). Dr. Kline welcomed our visitor (Dr.

Sandy Norman) and moved that our Bylaws be suspended to allow his participation in our discussion. Her motion was unanimously approved.

Dr. Ponomariov highlighted the reviewer's comments about the effectiveness of the chair and productivity of the faculty; although some lack of consensus among the faculty was noted. The reviewer recommended hiring new faculty. The quality and enthusiasm of the students was noted, but the reviewer decried the low teaching stipends and the lack of tuition waivers. He also noted that the teaching load was high (two courses per semester) and that only a one-hour workshop is offered for training. The decline in enrollments between 2006 and 2009 was also noted. This may be partially due to financial aid decisions only being made late in the Summer.

Dr. Rena Bizios asked about the 200 students cited in the report. Dr. Norman explained that there have been that many 200 students across the last five years, but that there are currently about 35- 40 active students. While 198 students are taking graduate courses in 2010, many are not degree-seeking students. Drs. Kline and Flannagan explained that tuition waivers are not allowed by State law, so it is not a departmental option. Dr. Norman agreed that the stipends for Teaching Assistants are low, but explained that the 6-hour work load is not necessarily two courses. Labs and tutoring also count. In response to a question by Dr. Joel Saegert, Dr. Norman reported that there are 18 full-time TAs (as well as part-time TAs). They are only allowed to teach developmental courses (which do not earn undergraduate credits). Many are teachers with considerable experience. While positive, the new MS in Applied Mathematics has siphoned off some of the MS in Mathematics applicants. In response to a question by Dr. Bizios, Dean Flannagan noted that there would be a one-year follow-up. The report was unanimously accepted.

Dr. Navarro reported that two programs have site visits scheduled: one on October 27<sup>th</sup> and one in November.

#### **G. Committee on Academic Policy and Requirements (Joel Saegert)**

Dr. Joel Saegert explained that his committee membership was still being filled and has not yet met. It has been charged with reviewing the composition of dissertation committees with respect to having a member from outside the department. Ginger Hernandez has compiled the requirements for 14 aspirant institutions. While not unanimous, about 2/3 of them require an outside member. Accreditation review boards have suggested that we consider it. Dr. Saegert would like to know of any programs that would prefer to not have a requirement for an outside member. Filling the last two positions (College of Engineering and College of Sciences) provides an opportunity for input. Dr. Sherer recommended sending a letter to Program Chairs and Associate Deans. Dean Flannagan said she could raise the question when she meets with the Associate Deans. Dr. Saegert appreciated her offer.

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

None

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

None

#### **VI. Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 4:09.

## Attachment A

### REPORT to the UTSA Graduate Council Graduate Programs and Courses Committee

November 2, 2010

The results of the Graduate Programs and Courses Committee members' review of the 2011-13 Graduate Catalog are as follows:

Approve: 5  
Abstain from vote: 1  
No response: 3

### COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Language update for MECHANICAL ENGINEERING, "ME 6981-3"

#### **6981-3 Master's Thesis**

1 to 3 hours credit. Prerequisites: Consent of the Graduate Advisor of Record and primary thesis advisor. Thesis research and preparation. May be repeated for credit, but not more than 6 hours will apply to the Master's degree. Credit will be awarded upon completion of the thesis. Enrollment is required each term in which the thesis is in progress.

- Inconsistent policies regarding comprehensive exam administration

The departments within COLFA departments have inconsistent policies regarding the comprehensive exam. Anthropology, History, and Sociology do not have any statements that limit the number of times a student may take a comprehensive exam. English is a little more complicated, limiting the number of attempts for its master's program but not for its doctorate. In fact, the statement regarding their comprehensive exam for the doctorate is particularly vague.

(The committee member's) concern about this inconsistency is that students in some of COLFA's programs can, technically at least, take comps as many times as they want, which may not be in their, or our, best interests. The easiest solution to this inconsistency would be a general regulation in the Academic Dismissal section stating that failure to pass comprehensive exams in either a master's or doctoral programs is grounds for dismissal. The other possible solution is to ask each of the departments in COLFA that lack restrictions on comps attempts to adopt some clear statement about a limit on those attempts. Most of COLFA's departments have such statements, so we could at least achieve consistency within the College.

### RESPONSE from GRADUATE SCHOOL:

*This matter was discussed with the Graduate Associate Deans and they unanimously elected to keep the policy as is and allow the department to set their own program specific exam limitations. I will contact them again and let you know whether they wish to change the policy in the 11-13 graduate catalog. -*  
Veronica Ramirez, Assistant Dean, The Graduate School

## Attachment B

### The University of Texas at San Antonio Program Evaluation of the Graduate Program in Mathematics October 2010

The following summary outlines the points raised in the evaluation report conducted by William Yslas Velez, Department of Mathematics, University of Arizona, with additional data retrieved from the Department's self study report.. The external reviewer prepared his report after meeting with Mathematics faculty, students, and administrators. Faculty members from the Department of Mathematics have not commented directly on the external review. The summary below is prepared by Branco Ponomariov, Department of Public Administration, member of the Graduate Council and the Committee on Evaluating Graduate programs.

## STUDENT ISSUES

### Strengths

- The evaluator recognized the quality, enthusiasm and motivation of the students
- Admirable ratio of female graduate students (50%), good Hispanic representation (20%) relative to national averages (but poor representation relative to the demographics of the regional population)
- Actual data on employment of graduates is favorable – of 47 students graduated in the last 5 years, according to the self-study report, 9 are employed in local high schools, 10 are lecturers in community colleges, and 8 are in PhD programs

### Weaknesses

- The track most students follow is to become mathematics teachers. While not a weakness per se, this is inconsistent with plans to grow the department as a research intensive department with a PhD program
- Little evidence that many students plan to pursue a PhD in mathematics (thereby undermining future rationales for establishing one at UTSA)
- Financial aid decisions are not made until late in summer, thereby reducing the likelihood that the best students, with most options, will commit to the program since most schools send firm offers to students by March or April
- The teaching stipends are very low (below living wage) - \$ 12,000 per year.
- Additionally, there is no tuition waiver, thus the modest amount of financial aid is entirely consumed by tuition fees. This lack of support for graduate students would be an obstacle for the growth of the program
- The teaching load for students is abnormally high – to courses per semester
- The students have complete responsibility for these courses, thus adding to the stress
- Students do not receive sufficient teaching training – all the teaching training they receive is a one hour workshop
- The enrollments have been stagnant or declining for the past 5 years
- The number of graduating students have been dropping since 2006 – from 16 in 2006, to only 4 in 2009
- Student preparation was identified as a weakness in the self-study report

## **FACULTY AND STAFF ISSUES**

### **Strengths**

- Current department chair perceived as very effective
- Highly productive and capable faculty

### **Weaknesses**

- The evaluator is concerned with unspecified internal problems, divisions and conflicts in the department affecting the working relationships among faculty and between the department and upper level administration. Such issues, while abating, are seen as an obstacle for the growth of the department
- The size of the department is insufficient to fulfill its role in the UTSA curriculum.
- The official teaching load in the department is 3-3. While the actual teaching load is most often reduced to 2-2, or even 2-1 the evaluator suggests that this is a likely obstacle to recruiting the best scholars in the field. More generally, a high official teaching load is incompatible with plans of establishing a doctoral program, according to the evaluator.

## **FACILITIES/EQUIPMENT AND RELATED SUPPORT**

- Space is a major issue in the department. The department is spread across campus and lacks sufficient dedicated spaces for seminars and colloquium. The department only has two dedicated mathematics classrooms.
- Teaching assistants have extremely limited space, also scattered across multiple buildings
- Very limited access to Mathematics specific software in the campus computer labs
- The department has access to several specialized machines that students can have access to
- One positive aspect of the support available the departments includes the excellent library resources, subscriptions, and databases

## **CURRICULUM**

- The reviewer made no specific comments on the curriculum other than a noticeable drop in enrollment from 1<sup>st</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup> semester classes, e.g. algebra and real analysis; per the reviewer this is inconsistent with preparation for a PhD in mathematics
- The self-study mentions that one major issue is the insufficient number of courses offered each semester – including the required classes, who are offered infrequently on a rotating schedule
- At the same time, the curriculum is flexible enough, allowing many students to complete the program part time while working.