

TEXAS HIGHER EDUCATION COORDINATING BOARD
Division of Academic Quality and Workforce
1200 E. Anderson Lane, Austin, Texas

Graduate Education Advisory Committee

April 1, 2016
10:00 AM – 2:00 PM
Board Room

Committee members present:

Mohamed Abdelrahman	Larry LeFlore	Dean Neikirk	Angela Spaulding
Karen Butler-Purry	Dmitri Litvinov	Les Riding-In	Joan Staniswalis
Jessica Carter	James Lumpkin	Rial Rolfe	Kandi Tayebi
Bill Harn	Gregory Maddox	Mark Sheridan	
Susan Keith	Sofia Montes	Meharvan Singh	

Committee members absent:

Matthew Capps
Sharon Hileman
William Kritsonis
Bonnie Melhart
Lisa Thompson
Costas Tsatsoulis

Coordinating Board staff:

James Goeman
Allen Michie
Rex Peebles
Stacey Silverman

Others in attendance:

Charles Goldman
Rita Karam

1. Welcome and call to order – Dr. Mohamad Abdelrahman, Chair

2. Consideration of summary notes from the September 14, 2015 meeting

A motion to approve the summary notes was approved.

3. Discussion of the RAND study on graduate education – Dr. Charles Goldman and Dr. Rita Karam, RAND Corporation

Dr. Goldman and Dr. Karam provided an update on the RAND Corporation's upcoming study of graduate education in Texas. There was a PowerPoint presentation of some preliminary findings. The emphasis of the presentation was on how graduate programs are responding to local, regional, and national job demands.

Dr. Goldman asked GEAC members what fields they see having the most growth over the next ten years. Dr. Singh responded that the National Institute of Health (NIH) has a Biomedical Workforce document that has done a good job predicting the emerging Biomedical workforce needs. He added that Physician's Assistants roles are changing in the profession.

Dr. Tayebi added interdisciplinary Criminal Justice degrees with Computer Science or Chemistry. Other GEAC members added Biomedical Engineering, Pharmacy, Cyber Security, Child Life, Informatics, Applied Information Technology, master's degrees relating to grant writing, doctoral-level Accounting, Public Health, doctoral-level Statistics, Health Sciences (especially for bilingual graduates), Electrical Engineering, Computer Science (especially for international students), and Mental Health (especially Guidance and Counseling or School Psychology).

Dr. Goldman asked which of the broad traditional fields are expected to have the highest job demand over the next ten years. He added that Business, Education, Health, and Social Science are currently the biggest fields for graduate education in Texas.

GEAC members stated that there is expected to be continued strong job demand for Engineering, Education, and Social Work graduates.

Dr. Goldman pointed out that statistics alone are not a good basis for policy decisions about new programs. For example, it is difficult to say which degrees prepare for the in-demand profession category "Top Executives." This could be degree programs in Social Sciences, the Humanities, or Engineering.

Dr. Butler-Purry said that emerging fields are missing from the analysis, and it may take up to ten years for them to appear on publications of job statistics. Dr. Goldman agreed, and stated that the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) only updates their job field codes every ten years. He said that universities are in a better position to recognize emerging fields and trends years before the BLS. In response to a question from Dr. Litvinov about how to tell which emerging fields require graduate degrees, Dr. Goldman said that occupations with a high demand for graduate degrees are rarely created or destroyed, and that newly created fields tend to require degrees at the lower skill level. Sub-fields drive the demand for graduate education, and these sub-fields are not reflected well in the statistical sources.

Dr. Karam continued the RAND presentation with an emphasis on the interviews they conducted at selected universities to better understand how institutions make decisions about adding or expanding graduate programs. She pointed out that sometimes the labor market need and student demand are not aligned. The consensus among institutions was that they would only expand graduate programs if they had the available faculty, financial support for students, or ability to expand the research capacity.

On the subject of international students, Dr. Litvinov stated that many of them do not want to finish their programs in one year, even if they can, because they cannot get jobs with just one year of study. Dr. Staniswalis added that in Math programs, language skills matter more than citizenship. Dr. Singh added that some students come to the US on an arrangement where their funding depends upon them going back home for a number of years. Some students want to stay, but the job demand in their home countries is a strong incitement to leave. Dr. Abdelrahman said that in the field of Engineering, there is an increasing "brain drain" of graduate students and even professors returning to India.

Dr. Goldman asked GEAC members what Legislators need to know in order to support graduate programs at the state level.

Dr. Tayebi said that graduate programs are a way for Texas to make connections with other countries and open up global business opportunities. Dr. Maddox said that international students often pay full tuition, subsidizing Texas students. Dr. Staniswalis said that graduate teaching assistants help with the large teaching demands of undergraduate programs such as Math. Dr. LaFlore added that graduate students have positive interactions with undergraduates, attracting many of them to graduate study and advanced careers. Dr. Neikirk said that institutions could not support all of their research without international students.

Dr. Tayebi said that legislators need to understand that it is wrong to assume that online programs necessarily save money. Faculty will need technical and teaching support, or the online programs will not be high quality. Dr. Maddox said that legislators need to know that accreditors go over every online course, ensuring that they are the same quality as face-to-face courses. Dr. Singh said that institutions have a responsibility to get feedback from employers and partners about their expectations for graduates of online programs.

4. Update on Coordinating Board procedures and requirements relating to graduate education – Dr. James Goeman

Dr. Goeman told GEAC members that the Academic Quality and Workforce Division will now use initial desk reviews for new doctoral program proposals. Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (Coordinating Board) staff will contact an out-of-state consultant in the discipline who will review the written proposal and write an assessment. The consultant's document and the Coordinating Board staff's pre-site visit assessment go forward together to the Coordinating Board administration. The same external consultant who writes the initial assessment will hopefully be able to join to the site visit team.

Dr. Goeman said that the agency will now be scheduling all advisory committee meetings, including GEAC meetings, up to a year in advance. Coordinating Board staff will be in touch with GEAC members about preferred dates.

Coordinating Board administration has decided that the 18 Characteristics of Doctoral Programs needs to include information about professional doctoral degrees. The criteria will vary for academic and professional programs. The revised document is currently under staff review and will be presented to GEAC for comments at a future meeting.

Dr. Silverman asked GEAC members to please update the current 18 Characteristics for Doctoral Programs on their institutions' web pages. Full compliance with the requirement has been a problem for several institutions.

5. Update on issues relating to master's degree programs – Dr. Stacey Silverman

Dr. Silverman said that Coordinating Board staff have a streamlined process for the approval of new master's degrees. There is a long form for proposed master's degrees in all Engineering disciplines or degrees that cost over \$2 million over the first five years, and a short form for all other proposed master's degrees. She reminded GEAC members that the review process is still rigorous for the streamlined process with the short form. If institutions submit a proposal that has unusual elements, such as a large number of required semester credit hours, Coordinating Board staff may send it back with a request that institutions complete the long form.

Dr. Silverman reported that the number of master's degree programs has remained about the same from 2006 to 2015, with a slight decline because of degree consolidations, but the number of master's degrees awarded has increased sharply.

6. Comments on issues relating to degree equivalencies from foreign universities – Dr. Mohamed Abdelrahman

Dr. Abdelrahman said there is inconsistency in how institutions award degree equivalencies when graduate students apply from foreign universities. The issue affects scholarships. Some countries, such as India, award three-year degrees. Some U.S. institutions accept these three-year degrees as the equivalents of four-year degrees, and some do not.

Dr. Litvinov said that his institution does not leave the determination up to departments, but instead relies upon professional agencies and a university committee. Dr. Butler-Purry added that unconscious bias sometimes goes into the decisions. We need to look at outcomes and see how students have done over time, using that as a basis for comparing grades and test score equivalencies. The process takes time and experience, because a grade point average is more than just a number.

7. Election of a new GEAC chair – Dr. Abdelrahman

Dr. Michie clarified the terms of the appointment: GEAC's chair and vice-chair serve two-year terms, which begin upon election and end two years from that date or upon expiration of their terms, whichever comes first. If the chair resigns, the vice-chair may serve as Acting Chair until GEAC members elect to fill the position of chair or upon expiration of the vice-chair's term, whichever comes first.

Sonny Singh was unanimously elected chair.

Karen Butler-Purry was nominated for vice-chair and was elected by acclamation.

Dr. Michie thanked Dr. Abelrahman for his service as GEAC chair, and Dr. Goeman thanked Jessica Carter for her service as student representative.