Graduate Deans' Group
Thursday, March 29, 2012, 2:00 – 3:30 p.m.
Graduate School Conference Room

Attending:

Chris Boake, Caula Beyl for John Stier, Joy DeSensi (Chair), George Dodds, Tom George, Carolyn Hodges, Jan Lee, Catherine Luther, Stefanie Ohnesorg, Masood Parang, Kay Reed, Cynthia Rocha, Rita Smith, Michael Zemel

The Graduate Deans' Group meeting was called to order by Joy DeSensi, on Thursday, March 29, 2012, at 2:00 p.m. in the Graduate School Conference Room.

1. The minutes of the Graduate Deans' Group meeting from February 9, 2012 were approved.

2. Announcements

   Joy DeSensi announced the following dates and events:

   - May 10, 2012 Graduate Hooding Ceremony
   - March 30, 2012 Graduate School Fellowships announced on the Graduate School website by 5:00
   - August 16, 2012 GTA Orientation Workshop

   Carolyn Hodges discussed the 2010 tax law regarding graduate assistants. Ways of assisting these students have been reviewed by the assistantship task force. A salary supplement may be given to graduate assistants who were not in the 80% of the graduate assistants reclassified.

   Carolyn Hodges explained that questions regarding travel funds awarded by the Provost's Office should be directed to Betsy Adams. If associate deans of the college sign off on the student's request, then they would receive funding. If the request is denied, a letter is sent to the department and student applicant.

3. Evaluation Processes of GTA's – Graduate Deans

   Each department needs to assure that the quality of the courses taught by GTAs is maintained. Decision regarding retention of the GTA may also be made through the evaluation process. A manual for faculty evaluation located on the Provost's website may be used as a basis in creating the program/department GTA evaluation procedure. Evaluation and observations should be written and placed in the GTA personnel file. It was suggested that information regarding the evaluation process of GTA's may be included in the Departmental Graduate Student Handbook**.**

Reports from the group included:

Engineering – Masood Prang shared the information he had received from his department heads. Graduate students assist professors in class, grading, etc. or teach labs. Occasionally the students are evaluated by other students. Their applications for the positions working with freshmen are very rigorous. (Attachment 1)

Communication – Catherine Luther shared the following: The GTA writes a self-report to turn into the graduate associate dean and they give the student feedback about his/her performance. The reports are then sent to their faculty supervisor. The self-report is usually very good, as they want to improve the job they are doing. Catherine will be sharing the information and method of evaluation with the others in the Graduate Deans' Group.

Social Work – Cynthia Rocha stated the evaluation is overseen by an administrative committee. Directors of Graduate Program in Social Work had not been retaining and filing the reports after reading them. Cynthia Rocha has changed the policy, and the reports are now placed in the student's personnel file. Evaluations have been very lax, and Cynthia Rocha is trying to establish a better method of evaluating by using ideas she learns from the other colleges. The GTAs are required to attend either their in-house training on teaching or the Graduate School's Best Practices in Teaching Program.

Agriculture – Caula Beyl stated the college uses checklists in evaluating GTAs. The students who need more help are referred to the Teaching and Learning Center and/or the Best Practices in Teaching Program offered by the Graduate School.

Education – Tom George shared the information he received from his department heads. Faculty oversee GTA's evaluations at the departmental level. They use observations and SAIS results. Awards are given at the end of the year by some departments to the GTAs that perform the best. GTAs work with faculty in the labs, as well as, lecture classes. GTAs receive feedback from three faculty on GTA student evaluation and peer teaching. GTAs can turn in a self-report to the faculty.

4. Report Curriculum Process (SACS Requirements) – Sally McMillan

In her report to the Graduate Deans' Group, Sally McMillan shared the Curriculum Review Process following points regarding the Curricular Review Process:

1. Implement Student Learner Outcome objectives to be compliant with SACS.
2. Create a better credit hour definition for SACS and course offerings consistent with the policy.
3. Identify courses that are high impact on areas outside the program.
4. Assure the processes for graduate and undergraduate curriculum submission be similar.
5. Identify and eliminate the increased number of errors in curricular submissions.

5. Other

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:05 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Gay Henegar
Secretary to Graduate Deans' Group

GTA Performance Evaluation	
CBE	GTAs with primary course teaching responsibility: 0 GTAs assisting faculty: 7 currently, ranging from 5 - 14 depending on semester. Typically higher in Fall. Preparation: Many of our teaching assistants serve primarily as graders, also holding office hours for occasional one-on-one tutoring or answering questions about homework. This is especially true for our international students, most of whom score 40 or 45 on the SPEAK test. In these courses, exact GTA duties are at the discretion of the course instructor, and instruction in how to accomplish those duties is given directly by the instructor. One exception is the CBE 310 laboratory course, which uses three GTAs. These TAs have substantial direct interactions with the students and significantly impact delivery of course concepts. These GTAs likewise receive their preparative instruction primarily from the course instructor; however, we have an apprenticeship program wherein one of the three GTAs has previously served as an assistant for this course. This "senior" TA then has responsibility for coordinating the efforts of all of the GTAs and providing mentoring to the inexperienced GTAs. This approach, along with careful selection for GTAs with excellent communication skills, has substantially enhanced the quality of instruction in our laboratory course since implemented around four years ago. Evaluation: To date, all GTA evaluations have been performed informally by the course instructor, and communication to the GTAs has taken whatever form the instructor wishes -- usually direct face-to-face discussion but also written email communication. This semester, we are implementing a student survey of GTA performance to be completed at the end of the term. This survey will allow us to supplement GTA evaluations with a formal, objective component and will aid efforts to identify underperforming individuals, as well as provide important data that can be used in nominating exceptional individuals for awards.
CE	The Civil Engineering Department has approximately 6 students per year that are involved in teaching lab courses. We do not use GTAs in lecture courses, with the exception of one course during the summer. We have another 15 or so students involved in grading and other means of assisting with instruction. To prepare students to teach labs a faculty member normally reviews the labs with them. In some classes we try to overlap a new GTA with a longer established GTA to provide peer training. We also use graduate school resources. Faculty members also observe them teaching and provided informal feedback to them. Students that are involved in stand alone labs receive SAIS evaluations. Faculty members responsible for the lab are primarily responsible for the quality of instruction and providing the necessary feedback to the GTAs to improve their teaching performance.
EECS	The UT/EECS Department employs a large number of GTAs to support courses in computer science (CS) and electrical and computer engineering (ECE), with approximately 40 having ¼ time GTA appointments and 30 having ½ time GTA appointments. For these classes, the GTAs provide support with grading, monitoring laboratories, and providing individual help to students (e.g., for homework, projects, and labs). The GTAs do not have primary responsibility to teach different sections of our courses. Instead, the GTAs assist faculty in the teaching of EECS courses as discussed above. (This semester there is one exception: Scott Hansen, a domestic graduate student, is teaching ECE 316.) The management of EECS GTAs is the responsibility of the graduate coordination committee that supports the UT/EECS graduate coordinator (currently Hairong Qi). Selection of which applicants receive GTA positions is a function of this committee. The assignment of GTAs to specific courses is performed by Gregory D. Peterson. GTAs are evaluated using several tools. First of all, each semester the faculty provide feedback on each of the GTAs assigned to assist with their courses. The ACM and IEEE student sections recognize outstanding GTAs with awards, and the feedback from these student organizations is considered. The EECS department performs an annual performance review of graduate students. This review is also

	used as feedback for GTAs. This includes evaluation of the progress of the GTA students in their studies, including current and cumulative GPA, status with passing PhD qualifying exams, progress in coursework, publication of research results, and potential for timely completion of their degree program. GTAs required to take the SPEAK test have these scores considered in evaluating their suitability for student interactions. When there is cause for concern, GTAs are typically counseled about how to improve their performance, with their respective advisor also kept in the loop. All incoming students are given a briefing on departmental expectations, including GTA duties. GTAs are also encouraged to attend graduate school seminars and meetings about their studies and courses and seminars on teaching (e.g., OIT Blackboard training).
EFD	In Engineering Fundamentals, we have 14 GTAs. None have primary teaching responsibility for a course; they only assist the faculty in teaching. They do run lab and recitation sessions. We have a one-day training session in Fall before classes start. About two hours of this training is conducted by the Tennessee Teaching and Learning Center. We also meet for about 1.5 hours on a weekly basis to review the past weeks sessions and go over the upcoming sessions. We use our own teaching evaluation form each semester to get feedback from the students on the GTAs. The results of this evaluation are given to each of the GTAs along with suggestions on how to improve their teaching. The faculty also regularly visit the labs and recitations to observe the GTAs. Feedback is provided during the semester as needed. An overall evaluation is conducted before offering a GTA a position for the next year. In several cases, we have not retained GTAs.
Engr Honors	In the honors program, there are currently two GTA's. The GTA's do not have primary teaching responsibility, rather they assist Dr. Parsons and Dr. Pionke in running the recitation portion of the class. This includes running labs and problem sessions as well as helping during project testing, working help sessions (about 2-4 hours a week) and grading homework papers. Dr. Parsons and Dr. Pionke formally meet with the GTA's twice a week for about an hour to an hour-and-half for each meeting to discuss lesson plans, learning objectives, etc. Dr. Parsons and/or Dr. Pionke (most of the time both) will always make an appearance in each of the recitation sessions to observe the GTA's performance as well as to assess the progress of the students and assess the effectiveness of the given activity. We provide feedback to the GTA's in either one-on-one discussions or in our twice-weekly meetings. We do not use the university GTA training sessions but we meet with the GTAs at the beginning of each semester during the registration period and discuss expectations for the semester.
IE	The Industrial and Information Engineering Department currently has 9 GTAs. The responsibilities of the GTAs are determined by the department head and faculty member assigned to them. We have 1 GTA that primarily teaches IE course 202 (Work Measurement Introduction to Manufacturing Procedure) with assistance from faculty member Dr. Rupy Sawhney. There are two GTAs who assist in teaching courses with faculty members Dr. Xiaoyan Zhu and Dr. Rupy Sawhney. Both GTAs assist faculty members by proctoring tests, submitting final grades, and substituting in class during the faculty's absence. The GTA whose primary responsibility is teaching receives teaching evaluations through SAIS student evaluations. The results of the evaluations are shared with the GTA along with his assigned faculty member, Dr. Rupy Sawhney. Any suggestions of improvements are communicated through scheduled meetings. The two GTAs who assist faculty members are evaluated by their assigned faculty member. These evaluations are communicated to the GTAs through scheduled meetings. The faculty members provide the GTA positive or negative feedback on their performance. Any issues that arise which are not resolved with the GTA are submitted to the department head for further discussions. The remaining GTAs are assigned to various departmental labs, updating the department website and updating the department's Facebook account. With oversight from the faculty member assigned to the IE lab, the GTA's responsibilities include: maintaining and improving the overall functionality of the lab, maintaining the lab's budget and providing lab access to other students. Further, one GTA is assigned to updating the website's content on a periodic basis. This includes updating department news, events and any approved changes approved on by the department. Another GTA is assigned to updating and maintaining the department's Facebook account. These individuals works closely with the recruitment committee, the student interest committee and faculty to inform IE's current student body and alumni on department news, events and changes in the department through the Facebook account.
MSE	In the Materials Science and Engineering Department in the 2011-2012 academic year, there were 7

	GTA's who acted as laboratory teaching assistants and 9 GTA's who assisted faculty as graders. Evaluation of the performance of the laboratory teaching assistants was performed via the university's Student Assessment of Instruction System. GTA's who acted as graders were not evaluated. Participation of the GTA's in any teaching skill preparation classes was not required by the department.
MABE	The Mechanical, Aerospace and Biomedical Engineering Department has 31 GTAs. During this academic year only one GTA had a significant/primary teaching responsibility in a single course. This GTA, who is a doctoral candidate, was supervised by a professor who was listed as the course instructor. The professor and students evaluated the GTAs performance. Four GTAs lead a two hour laboratory as a component of a three hour course. The GTAs are trained by GTAs who have taught the laboratory previously as well as the faculty member in charge of the common lecture potion of the course. These positions are limited to US citizens with good communication skills who have had this course as undergraduate students at UTK. Their performance is evaluated by the faculty member in charge of the course each semester. The remaining GTAs assist professors in the teaching of courses primarily through homework grading and laboratory setup. Their performance is evaluated by the professor to whom they are assigned that semester. In all cases above, inadequate/poor performance is addressed by the faculty member in charge of the GTA that semester. More often than not, a problem is addressed during the semester when it is observed rather than at the end of the semester.
NE	The usual policy of this department is that no GTAs will have primary teaching responsibility; however, with the inopportune timing of Dr.Liao's departure, we were forced to have Seyed Nicknam teach NE 585. In this unusual case, Dr. Upadhyaya is the instructor of record and meets with Seyed periodically to provide assistance and review his performance. GTAs are primarily used to assist faculty in grading but also are used in our laboratory classes to assist the students in setting up and operating the laboratory exercises. In all cases, the responsible instructor has responsibility for preparing the student for their assignment and monitoring their performance. This usually includes periodic meetings and laboratory preparation meetings. Since our GTAs are not used for teaching, we have not used graduate school services. In the future, we feel it is important to allow experienced graduate students the opportunity to teach courses if they plan on entering the faculty profession. I am not aware of the graduate school professional development activities for students wanting to enter education, but feel a program should be developed that includes teaching workshops, research proposal development seminars, and faculty search preparation.