

The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center UTHealth Houston
Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences

FACULTY MEETING
September 25, 2025 – 2:00 PM

MINUTES

Present: Rebecca Howell, Chair; Aballay, Abe, Akbani, Akhbardeh, Alcantara, Alcorn, Aldrich, Amit, Arur, Azhdarinia, Balakrishnan, Bartholomew, Bartholomeusz, Bednar, Beierlein, Bhattacharyya, Brock, Carmon, Chandra, Chang, Chauhan, Chehab, Han Chen, Lisa Chen, Yang Chen, Xiaodong Cheng, Cole, Cunha, Dabaghian, Darkoh, Daniel-MacDougall, Debeb, De Berge, DeLay, Denicourt, Dessauer, Dhar, Do Monte, Dunbar, Eisenhoffer, Evans, Fan, Farach-Carson, R. Fuentes, Fornage, Frost, Fru, Garsin, Xin Ge, Giridharan, Goetzl, Gomez-Manzano, Gorfe, Gottlieb, Hagan, Eun Young Han, Harjeet, Hawkins, Haymaker, Hecht, Heidelberger, Hergenroeder, Herrera, Herzog, Hildebrandt, Horton, Bo Hu, Jian Hu, Ishak, M Jacobs, A. Jain, Jayaraman, K Jones, Joo Eun Jung, Kalocsay, H. Kaplan, Karraas, Eunhee Kim, Karmouty-Quintana, Gab Kim, Hyun-Eui Kim, JungHwan Kim, Michael Kim, Klegerman, Koay, Konovalova, Kopetz, Krebs, Krishnan, Kudchadker, Kwartler, Kkwiatkowski, Byron Lee, Dung-Fang Lee, Tae Jin Lee, Ke Li, Yi-Ping Li, Ruoyan Li, Ziyin Li, Lissanu, Bin Liu, Yuan-Hung Lo, Lorenz, Zhen Lu, Dershan Luo, Keran Ma, Mangahas, Manzar, Margolin, Marrelli, Marshak, K., Mawlawi, McBride, McCullough, T. McDonnell, Tess Melancon, R. Miller, Milewicz, Moghaddam, Mok, R. Morales, Morano, Travis Moore, Alanna Morrison, Moura, Msaouel, Naora, Narkar, Xiao Ni, Nishino, Norris, Olson, Pagnotti, Pan, Peeler, J. Perez, Pisaneschi, Pollard-Larkin, Post, Prakash, Priya, Proctor, E. Richie, J Rong, A. Reuben, Salehpour, Raquel Salinas, Scaini, Schadler, Serysheva, Seymour, Shadding, Shepherd, Shete, Shouval, Siddik, Sirisaengtaksin, Judith Smith, Soundararajan, Stafford, Stavoe, Brian Taylor, Paige Taylor, Qingchun Tong, Tsvetkov, Urayama, van Hoof, V. Vasquez, Vega, Venna, Waxham, Jennifer Walker, Bin Wang, Guocan Wang, Hongyu Wang, Jun Wang, Linghua Wang, Tao Wang, Wenyi Wang, T Walters, Weinstein, Wenzel, KK Wong, Chenggang Wu, Danielle Wu, Jiaqian Wu, Jie Xu, Kai Xu, Yamal, Hongyuan Yang, Liuqing Yang, C Yin, M. James You, Xiaoyi Yuan, Sheng Zhang, Di Zhao, Zhongming Zhao, Michael Zhu,

Staff/Administration: Agurcia-Parker, Carter, Lademora, Lau, Manning, Mansour, Murphy, Ogunseye, Orlando, Perez, Parada, Price, Rademacher, Robinson, Ruiz, Scott, Snow, Valladolid, Weinberg, Williamson, Wolf-Taylor

1. **Nomination of candidate(s) for 2025-2026 President:** Dr. Shane Cunha PhD
The faculty voted unanimously to elect Dr. Rebecca Howell as the Graduate Faculty President
2. **Nomination of candidates (s) for 2025-2026 Vice President/President-Elect of the Graduate Faculty:** Dr. Rebecca Howell
The faculty voted unanimously to elect Dr. Danielle Garsin as Graduate Faculty Vice President/President-Elect
3. Dr. Shane Cunha passed the Faculty President's gavel to Rebecca Howell, PhD

4. **Dean's Report** – Alejandro Aballay, PhD
 - a. Recognition of Outgoing Program Directors
 - Suhendan Ekmekcioglu, PhD (Immunology)
 - Traver Hart, PhD (Quantitative Sciences)
 - William Margolian, PhD (Microbiology & Infectious Diseases)
 - b. Recognition of New GSBS Staff
 - Leigh Robinson, Special Events Coordinator
 - c. Presentation of the D. Dudley and Judy White Oldham Faculty Award 2025
 - **Swathi Arur, PhD**
 - **Rachel Miller, PhD**
5. **Accountable Mentorship Agreements** – Francesca Cole, PhD
 - a. Discussed New Accountable Mentorship Agreement
 - b. Discussed New Financial Committee Form
 - c. Updated GSBS endorsed commitments website
 - d. Updated Progress Report form
6. **Admissions Report** – Cherilynn Shadding, PhD
 - a. Successful Orientation Week (August 18 - 22, 2025)
 - b. Overall decrease in total number of PhD applications by 22% (879); 42% (467) decrease in international students
 - c. Students admitted:
 - 32% increase (99) for PhD domestic students
 - 44% decrease (36) for international students
 - d. Students entered:
 - 108% increase (54) for PhD domestic students
 - 49% decrease (20) for international students
 - e. Upcoming Visitation Weekend
 - Friday, January 23, 2026 (in-person)
 - Friday, January 30, 2026 (virtual)
 - Friday, February 6, 2026 (in-person)
 - Friday, February 20, 2026 (in-person)
7. **Internal Review Committee** – Cherilynn Shadding, PhD
Recruiting faculty to join Internal Review Committee
8. **Vote on Chairs and New Members for 2025-2026 Standing Committees** – Jeffrey Frost, PhD
The faculty voted unanimously to approve the slate of candidates as presented.
9. **Standing Committee Reports** – Jeffrey Frost, PhD
Reports listed on [GSBS website](#)
10. **Review of PhD Publication Requirement** – Jeffrey Frost, PhD

- a. PhD students must have submitted a first author, original research paper to a peer-reviewed journal at least 2 weeks before the defense
- b. PhD students must have published a first author, original research paper in a peer-reviewed journal before graduation
- c. Discussed submitting a publication waiver request to the Academic Standards Committee

11. Old Business

No old business was discussed.

12. New Business

No new business was discussed.

Proposed Faculty Bylaw Changes

FACULTY BYLAWS

1.2 Associate Members of the Graduate Faculty

Individuals who meet the above criteria for members but are not presently qualified to direct PhD student dissertation research may be appointed as Associate Members of the Faculty for a term of up to five years. In addition, biomedical professionals who are employed as staff by the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences or a University of Texas institution in Houston, and who hold appropriate graduate degrees may be appointed as Associate Members upon nomination by the Dean and approval by the Membership Committee. Responsibilities of Associate Members include those of Members except for the supervision of PhD student dissertation research. Associate Members may apply for Regular Membership as appropriate.

SECTION 3.0 -- COMMITTEES OF THE GRADUATE FACULTY

The Graduate Faculty shall maintain the following standing committees which are responsible to the Graduate Faculty and advisory to the Dean: Executive Committee, Membership Committee, Admissions Committee, Academic Standards and Policy Committee, Curriculum Committee, Program Directors Committee, Student Scholarship Committee, and the Student Success and Well-Being Committee. Members of all committees shall be appointed by the Dean upon recommendation of the President of the Faculty, the Membership Committee, and the Graduate Faculty.

Student Members shall be recommended to the Dean by the Student Association. Two student members shall be appointed to the Program Coordinating Committee annually; three students shall be appointed to the Curriculum Committee annually. The Dean shall appoint the Chairpersons of all committees, except the Executive Committee. Chairpersons are not voting members except to break tie votes.

The President of the Faculty shall be an ex officio member, without vote except on the Executive Committee, of all Standing Committees. Faculty appointments to committees, with the exception of the Program Directors Committee, shall be made for three-year terms with one-third of these committee members being appointed annually. Standing committees may also appoint one or more alternate members to fill in when an appointed member cannot attend a meeting. Alternate member appointments will be for one year. Committee membership shall commence on October 1, and end on September 30. Committee reports will be made at each faculty meeting.

3.1 Executive Committee

The Executive Committee is composed of the Dean or the Dean's designate, the President of the Faculty, the Vice-President of the Faculty, the Chairpersons of all Standing Committees, one

representative from among the Directors of Specialized Master's Degree Programs, the President of the Student Association, and three at-large representatives from among the GSBS faculty who will be appointed to staggered terms of three years each by the GSBS Membership Committee. In addition, the President of the Faculty and the chairs of the Academic Standards and Policy, Admissions, Curriculum, and Membership committees will serve as ex officio, voting members of the Committee in the year following their appointments.

The Vice-President of the Faculty is the Chairperson of the Executive Committee. Meetings shall be called by the Vice-President or the President of the Faculty upon recommendation from any member of the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee shall meet at least five times per year. The Executive Committee may upon request assume an advocate role in all matters related to academic freedom, appointments, and tenure involving members of the Graduate Faculty.

The Executive Committee is responsible for coordinating activities of Standing Committees, for reviewing academic policy, for periodic evaluation of Programs, for initiating emergency legislation, for establishment of procedures which provide nominees for the office of Vice-President, for determining the manner and time of the annual election, and for such other action as the Faculty and the Dean may deem necessary. The Chairperson of the Executive Committee shall report the Committee's recommendations to the Faculty.

3.2 Membership Committee

The Membership Committee shall consist of nine faculty members. Due regard for representation from UT institutions and Programs shall be maintained when appointing Committee members. The Committee shall meet as often as is necessary to discharge its duties.

The Membership Committee shall be responsible for ascertaining that Members of the Graduate Faculty meet the requirements set forth in Section 1 of these Bylaws and to this end shall review the activity of each faculty member at least once every five years and make recommendations concerning reappointment to the Dean. The Membership Committee shall recommend annually to the President of the Faculty the membership of all Standing Committees of the Faculty, except the Executive Committee, the Membership Committee and the Program Directors Committee.

3.3 Admissions Committee

The Admissions Committee shall consist of one faculty representative from each Program and up to 10 at-large faculty members appointed by the Dean, to ensure coverage of all program areas. This committee is responsible for soliciting recommendations from appropriate Program faculty and/or faculty subcommittees concerning student admission, for evaluating applications for admission, and for the submission of recommendations concerning admissions to the Dean.

The Admissions Committee is responsible for assuring that only persons who have demonstrated a potential for scientific excellence and meet the academic credentials defined in the GSBS catalog be recommended for admission.

3.4 Academic Standards and Policy Committee

The Academic Standards Committee shall consist of one faculty representative from each Program. Alternate faculty representatives for each program will also be appointed to take the place of a program representative that cannot attend a particular meeting. This committee is responsible for recommending to the Dean the appointments to all student Advisory and Examining Committees. This committee shall be responsible for recommending degree plans to the Dean for ensuring that faculty policies concerning academic standards are fulfilled. This committee shall make recommendations to the Dean for all scholastic disciplinary matters. The committee shall act as a panel to determine whether grounds exist for dismissal of a student. The committee will develop and recommend institutional policies for the GSBS, align governance policies between MD Anderson and UTHealth Houston, and ensure compliance with both institutions' legal and regulatory frameworks.

3.5 Curriculum Committee

The Curriculum Committee shall consist of nine faculty members and three students. This committee is responsible for review and approval of all course offerings of the Graduate Faculty, and for evaluating all introductory and area requirement courses offered by Programs.

3.7 Program Directors Committee

The Program Directors Committee shall consist of the directors of academic Programs, as defined under section 1.6 of the bylaws, plus two student representatives. The director of the MD/PhD Program shall be an ex officio member of the committee. The Dean shall recommend the membership and chairperson of the committee to the graduate faculty for approval.

The Program Directors Committee shall make recommendations to the Dean and Executive Committee concerning the effectiveness and initiation of GSBS policies. Duties will include: consideration of policy affecting the function of the Graduate School; consideration of policy affecting the structure and governance of Graduate Programs; approval of new graduate programs as defined under section 1.6 of the bylaws; and recommendation to the Membership Committee for appropriate Program representation on the Graduate School Standing Committees.

3.8 Student Scholarship Committee

The Student Scholarship Committee is responsible for reviewing student fellowship and scholarship applications and recommending the winners to the Dean. The Committee shall consist of one faculty representative from each Program, plus a variable number of at-large members to be determined annually based on the anticipated number and types of applications to be received. GSBS may also recruit ad hoc reviewers from the GSBS faculty as needed. These ad hoc reviewers will assist the committee temporarily.

3.9 Student Success and Well-Being Committee

The GSBS Student Success and Well-Being Committee is responsible for ensuring that the GSBS maintains a welcoming environment through advising, mentoring, and community engagement to empower all students to thrive, achieve, and maximize their success. The Committee will include 9 faculty and 3 staff members (or GSBS affiliates) to serve 3-year terms, 3 students to serve a 1-year term with an option to renew, and the Assistant/Associate Dean of Student Affairs. Regard for representation from UT institutions and Graduate Programs will be maintained when appointing Committee members. Duties of the Committee may include but are not limited to: conducting regular assessment of student needs to identify opportunities to foster and facilitate professionalism in the GSBS community; the recruitment, development, and retention of all students, including but not limited to first generation college students, low-income students, and underserved student populations; supporting student-led initiatives on community engagement and development; initiating effective professional and wellness offerings; and making recommendations to the Dean on these matters. The Committee will meet at regular intervals as determined by its members but shall meet no fewer than two times per academic year.

Proposed Stipend Increase

- Stipend increased to \$36,000 in Fall 2023
- Students have voiced major concerns about livability of current stipend, including at the most recent Graduate Student Association Town Hall in November 2025
- Locally and nationally, most competitor schools have higher stipends (Fall 2025)
- There has been a significant increase in cost of living for the Houston metro area
- Proposing a \$5,500 increase to \$41,500 for Fall 2026 for PhD and MD/PhD students with built-in adjustments through 2030
- MS Biomedical stipend range would be adjusted to \$33,500 - \$41,500
- SMS Stipend for Medical Physics will be discussed with Program Faculty

Proposal

- Increase PhD and MD/PhD student stipends to \$41,500 effective Fall 2026 and adjust by \$1,500 every two years through 2030.
- Increase MS Biomedical Sciences stipend range to \$33,500 - \$41,500 to align with increase for PhD and MD/PhD students.

	PhD and MD/PhD	MS Biomedical Sciences
Current	\$36,000	\$28,000 - \$36,000
Fall 2026 Proposed	\$41,500	\$33,500 - \$41,500
Fall 2028 Proposed	\$43,000	\$35,000 - \$43,000
Fall 2030 Proposed	\$44,500	\$36,500 - \$44,500