

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

Executive Committee Report

Dr. Dihua Yu, Chair

Meeting on August 17, 2017

I. Approval of Minutes from March 23, 2017 Meeting

Minutes were approved as written.

II. Program Managers Update

Ms. Patricia Cruz Bruesch reported:

- The Community Working Group felt strongly that Program Managers play a crucial role in building community. The working group recommended that Program Managers should be centralized through GSBS and should not assist more than two programs.
- Elisabeth Lindheim will lead the group of Program Coordinators and will remain the coordinator for the Program in Genetics and Epigenetics.
- Amy Cater will be the coordinator for the Programs in Quantitative Sciences and Cancer Biology.
- Amanda Williamson will be the coordinator for the Programs in Biochemistry and Cell Biology and Neuroscience.
- Joyce Brown will be part-time and will assist the Program in Microbiology and Infectious Diseases.
- There is still one more position to fill and that person will assist the Programs in Immunology and Therapeutics and Pharmacology.
- The hiring of these individuals had no negative impact on the budget.

III. Curriculum Plan Update

Dr. Eric Swindell reported:

- All Curriculum plans that have been submitted are published on the GSBS website. Keep in mind that this is a period of transition and Programs are still making changes to their Curriculum Plans and will continue to do so into the coming year.
- Dr. Swindell will be putting together a summary so that the differences between each program are more apparent. If you would like to make any suggestions about ways to improve, please feel free to contact GSBS or the Program Director.
- All proposed changes will be discussed and reviewed by the Curriculum Committee.
- Many Programs met and discussed ways to reduce overlap in their Curriculum and have consolidated some courses to address this issue.

IV. Professional Science Master's (PSM) Program Update

Dr. Eric Swindell reported:

- The GSBS is going to offer a Professional Science Master's in Biomedical Sciences beginning in Fall 2018. The application will be offered online beginning September 1st.
- No new courses have been created for this specific program. These students will utilize courses that are already being offered at GSBS.
- This program requires that these students take intensive science curriculum (which can be personalized to the student's goals) along with professional development courses. The GSBS doesn't offer the professional development courses, but our students are able to take courses through the GCC agreement at Rice University, University of Houston, etc. in order to meet this requirement.

- Finally, these students will be required to complete an internship and a capstone project will come out of this internship. This program does not require bench science.
- The goal for the first class to consist of ten students. These students are self-funded and the Program will take 18 months to complete.
- The students that would be interested in this program are ones that don't want to do traditional bench science and may need it to facilitate career goals. However, this program would not be the best way to move into a PhD.
- In the future, the GSBS will create a way for PhD students to receive a certificate in this area to supplement their PhD.
- At this time, the program is a full-time program, but we are discussing the options of having a part-time program as well.
- Dr. Swindell is working with Dr. Safayi in our Career Development office to facilitate relationships with industry within Houston to set up internship opportunities to our students.
- These students will not officially affiliate with a program.
- UT System is trying to come up with a large online compilation of undergrad and grad school courses that we may be able to tap into for this program.
- The application review will be handled separately from the other admissions application process, but most likely it will be an internal review, however, we may ask a couple faculty to assist. The deadline to apply is the same as our other Masters Programs.

V. GSA Report

Ms. Kimiya Memarzadeh reported:

- In an effort for first year student to have a smooth transition, the GSA put together a mentor-mentee program.
 - All mentors are students that are post-candidacy and volunteered to be part of this program.
 - There will be multiple events throughout the year for first-years and their mentors. The first one will be a pizza lunch during orientation and there will be additional events at the end of the fall semester and during the spring semester.
 - In addition, the GSA will hold a meeting specifically for first years to ask questions and voice any concerns they have to current senior students.
 - There will also be the 1st annual GSBS Flea Market. All faculty, students and staff have been asked to donate household goods. The goal is to help new students save a little money and not have to purchase basic household items.
- The GSA has decided to not provide alcohol at any of their events and to think of new ways to engage students to participate in these events.

VI. Deans' Report

Deans Barton and Blackburn reported:

- Orientation begins Monday and there is a full week of activities planned for the new incoming class. The schedule is available on the GSBS website. There are still a few more spaces available for the Speed Mentoring event at the BSRB, if you are interested in participating, please reach out to Karen Weinberg.
- The Lab Coat Ceremony will be on September 15th and Pierre McCrea will be awarded the Darlington Mentor Award during this event.
- Kopchick Award:
 - This gift was in the amount of \$10.5million and was a collaborative effort between UTHealth and MD Anderson's Development Offices.
 - There will John Kopchick fellows which will be a scholarship of \$7,500 to the student and an additional \$7,500 that may be used for their research, but not the lab in general. This award is not to be used for the student's stipend. The goal would be to have 15 John Kopchick fellows each year, but the first year will most likely have six fellows.

- There will be a Char Kopchick fellow and this award is for students that have overcome a hardship.
- There will be a Kopchick Symposium, most likely to occur every other year. There will be a committee and they will determine a theme and assist with planning the event.
- In addition, there will be a Kopchick Research Award which will be awarded to a student/faculty pair. The funds haven't been determined just yet, but can be used for the lab.
- More details will be forthcoming regarding the specific amounts of these awards and what the full impact is towards the school and our students.
- There will be a new president at MDA and should be decided by August 25th. Once the announcement is made there is a 21-day commentary period.
- We are continuing our branding efforts and as such we will have a 1-page advertorial in Nature online and in the September and October print issues.

VII. New Business

Proposed Standing Committees for 2017-2018

The Committee reviewed and unanimously approved the proposed members of next year's standing committees. The slate of candidates will be sent to the Faculty for final approval at the September Faculty Meeting.

VIII. Old Business

No old business was discussed.

Dr. Michael Lorenz, Chair

Meeting on October 19, 2017

I. Approval of Minutes from August 17, 2017 Meeting

Minutes were approved as written.

II. GSA Report

Kimiya Memarzadeh reported:

- The focus of the GSA this year is to help integrate the first year students into the GSBS. With this goal in mind, the GSA began an initiative to pair a new student with a senior student. Mentor/Mentee program began prior to Orientation and they recently had a Mentor/Mentee lunch that went well. In addition, they invited 1st year students to attend a panel discussion to ask questions related to graduate school.
- The Deans gave an update to the student body at a recent Student Town Hall.
- The GSA has a Google Form that any student can complete anonymously to bring up issues/concerns/comments/etc. If anything is presented the GSA relays these concerns to the Deans.
- Since Hurricane Harvey, it may be helpful to mention on the website that Renter's insurance does not cover flooding.

III. Deans' Report

Deans Barton & Blackburn reported:

- 5-year Tuition and Fee Proposal
 - On October 3, UT System requested an updated 5-year Tuition and Fee Proposal to determine if we want to increase tuition and fees. This proposal would begin in Academic Year 2018-2019 (effective Fall 2018) and end in academic year 2022-23 (effective Fall 2022).
 - Part of the proposal process is to convene a Student Fee Advisory Committee (SFAC) Meeting, which occurred on October 25.
 - The SFAC is comprised of 10 students (1 member from each PhD Program, 1 student from MS in Biomedical Sciences and 1 Student from Genetic Counseling).

- The purpose of the SFAC is to provide feedback on the proposed tuition and fee increases.
- A Faculty Town Hall is tentatively scheduled for November 8 so that faculty have the opportunity to provide feedback on the proposed increases.
- The deadline to submit our proposal to UTHHealth Office of Academic Affairs is November 17.
- As of 2015, our tuition and fees are almost equal to UTHSC-SA, which comes to roughly \$5,000 each year.
- Tuition pays for career development, recruitment, and other enrichment and educational needs. Tuition is not used to pay for staff or student stipends.
- Some concerns were raised in regards to raising tuition as it relates to M.S. students.
- The increase that we are proposing is not excessive. The increase would allow for additional student services to be developed and expanded.
- Some members of the committee would prefer small increases to tuition over time, while others felt fewer larger increases are easier to plan for.
- **GRA Stipend Increase**
 - Now that we have discussed tuition increases, the next step is to begin the discussion on increasing the stipend.
 - Students do not make their decision solely on stipend, especially if it is close, but when there is a significant difference, it could have an impact on the student's decision.
 - The stipend level has remained the same since 2012.
 - The current rate to support a first year Postdoctoral Fellow is roughly \$70,000 and currently a graduate student costs \$42,000. Even if we increased to a stipend level of \$32,000 there would still be a significant difference between supporting a graduate student versus a postdoctoral fellow.
 - The Executive Committee was agreeable to increase the stipend to \$32,000, but some recommend a gradual increase instead of a large jump.

IV. Kopchick Fellowships and Research Award

Dr. Bill Mattox reported:

- The Dr. John J. Kopchick Fellowships will be for a total of \$15,000. Of that, \$7,500 will go to the student and the remaining \$7,500 can go towards the student's research. These fellowships will be for one year and may be renewable for another year.
- Charlene Kopchick Fellowships will be for a total of \$16,500. Of that, \$8,250 will go to the student and the remaining \$8,250 can go towards the student's research. These fellowships will be awarded to GSBS students who demonstrate unique characteristics beyond merit and financial need, which may include: first generation, exemplary personal character, uniqueness of background and culture, strong work ethic, perceived leadership qualities and an enthusiastic scientific curiosity. These will be one-time awards for the fellow and are not renewable.
- The application will be separate from the Common Application. The application deadline will be at the end of January and the awards will be announced in March. The Student Scholarship Committee will review the applications and narrow down the applicants to 10 finalists that will then be interviewed.
- All post-candidacy students are eligible to apply for the fellowships even if they have received an award/scholarship/fellowship in the Fall or Spring Common Applications.
- Full details of the Fellowships will be available on the GSBS website later this month.
- The final award will be a \$50,000 Research Award given out to one mentor/student. Further details to come.

V. New Business

No new business was discussed.

VI. Old Business

No old business was discussed.

Meeting on January 18, 2018

I. Approval of Minutes from October 19, 2017 Meeting

Minutes were approved as written.

II. GSA Report

Kimiya Memarzadeh reported:

- Events that occurred since the last meeting include:
 - The Graveyard Gala
 - Puppy Therapy
 - The Holiday Friday Afternoon Club (FAC)
- Upcoming events are:
 - Student Town Hall with the Deans
 - Mentor/Mentee Lunch & Wrap-Up
 - Since this is the first year of the Mentor/Mentee Program, there will be a survey sent out at the end of the semester to hear feedback and suggestions from all participants.
 - Puppy Therapy
 - GSA Olympics
 - Everyone that attends has a great time, but there is not a great turn out. The GSA plans to advertise this event more and highlight the positive impact it can have on mental health.
 - In addition, the GSA wants the GSBS faculty to participate in this event as well.
 - Annual Facebook Photo Competition with an event to celebrate the winners

III. Deans' Report

Deans Barton & Blackburn reported:

- The tuition and fees increase proposal suggested to tuition and fees in Fall 2019 with a rate change of \$792/year and again in Fall 2022 with an additional \$792/year increase. This increase will help to support our educational and student resources. UT System will review these plans at their next meeting scheduled for February 26th.
- There will be a Faculty Town Hall on January 30th to discuss the consideration of a stipend level increase which hasn't increased in 5 years.
- There is an upcoming Student Town Hall and the proposed stipend increase will be discussed with the student body as well. In addition, the Deans will discuss an updated mental health policy going into effect in which student counseling services will billed the student's insurance and the student will be required to pay a co-pay. Paid GSBS students have the option to go to EAP at either UTHealth or MD Anderson.
- Visitation dates are on February 9, February 23 and March 9. The Deans encouraged everyone to participate by interviewing applicants and/or attending Friday Afternoon Club (FAC) at 5:00PM.
- There has been some discussion about bringing back the hold/wait list, but full details have yet to be determined. The main issue that GSBS wants to avoid is having the students solicit/shop for faculty support.
- Suggestion: Break down the seeking student list by program so that new students can narrow down the list a little easier. Kristina Fern will work on initiating this update to the website.

IV. Alumni and Diversity Update

Dr. Marena Wilson-Pham reported:

- As of today, Dr. Wilson-Pham's manuscript has been accepted to the CBE Life Sciences Education Journal which focus efforts in higher education. The goal was to thoughtfully provide information to effectively show that a school can increase diversity without quantitative measures (i.e. GPA & GRE), but still maintain high success rates of their students. The manuscript outlines the changes made in the admissions process as well as the additional educational programs set in place.
- She will be submitting an IMSD R25 grant through the NIH NIGMS which will focus on the community aspect in order to improve outcomes and experiences for our students. Our current student body comprises of 23.5% underrepresented minorities. Improve outcomes and experiences of our students.
- Dr. Wilson-Pham will share the manuscript or a summary of the manuscript with the group once it is ready.
- Alumni Affairs is currently accepting nominations for this year's Distinguished Alumnus. If you have a someone you would like to nominate please send an email to Dr. Wilson-Pham.
- The GSBS will no longer have a centralized Alumni Association and instead will move to a decentralized version with chapters throughout the country.

V. New Business

No new business was discussed.

VI. Old Business

No old business was discussed.

Meeting on March 22, 2018

I. Approval of Minutes from January 18, 2018 Meeting

Minutes were approved as written.

II. GSA Report

Robert Williams reported:

- Tomorrow, March 23rd at 2:00PM the GSA will host Puppy (and a cat!) Therapy in the GSBS Large Classroom. Please come if you are able.
- There will be a networking event off campus with the 1st year to build upon the mentor/mentee program established this year.
- The GSA has developed a virtual (and anonymous) suggestion box on the GSA webpage. A majority of the suggestions are about the shuttle. Any information brought forth is forwarded to the Deans or appropriate GSBS staff member.
- The GSA Olympics has turn it into picnic and will now be open to all GSBS students, their families and to the faculty.
- The GSA, Office of Career Development and the MD Anderson Postdoctoral Association are working together on a career expo with *Nature*.

III. Deans' Report

Deans Barton & Blackburn reported:

- The proposed 5-year tuition and fee plans were supposed to be on docket for February UT System meeting but was tabled. Since then, UT System had a special phone meeting to decide on these plans and the GSBS proposal was approved as written.
 - The change will go into effect in Fall 2019 with an increase of \$792/year and again in Fall 2022 with an additional \$792/year increase.
 - We are still amongst the most affordable graduate schools in the country.

- During Visitation this year, we interviewed 154 students. We have made 88 PhD offers of admission and so far 22 have accepted and nine declined with roughly 50 pending. The deadline for applicants to respond is April 15th. After this date, Karen Weinberg will send the list of the incoming PhD class to the faculty and GSA.
- This year, we will create a hold/wait list of students that are admissible if we had additional funding beyond the 50 slots that were budgeted. Instead of students contacting faculty, like in years past, we want departments and/or faculty to that are willing to support a student to inform GSBS via the Sponsor Tuition Agreement form.
 - Once this list is finalized, the list of applicants, along with their applications and interview evaluations will be sent out so faculty can determine if any applicant(s) may be a good fit for their lab.
 - These applicants will not know that they are on the hold list and will have the same deadline (April 15) to respond to the offer.

IV. Master's Program Enrichments

Dr. Eric Swindell reported:

- The MS Program will have a major program review next year. Over the last few years, we have been trying to increase enrollment. In 2016 we admitted 15 student and in 2017 we admitted 22. The admissions letter state that these students are self-funded, though most need funding of some sort.
- MS students are required to take Ethics and then 12 graded course and a total of 36 credit hours to graduate.
- In order to integrate these students into the school and expand upon their experience at GSBS, the Deans' Office would like to propose that Master's students could formally join a PhD program.
- Previously the Texas Higher Educational Coordinating Board monitored the numbers of graduating students each year, but now they are not monitoring these numbers.
- The Experimental Therapeutics and now the Therapeutics & Pharmacology Program and the Cancer Biology Program have allowed students to formally affiliate with their Program.
- Many Programs stated that they have welcomed Master's students into their Program related events.
- If Programs do want to allow MS students to join their Program, the Program would need to develop requirements for these students.
- Eric will email the Programs to determine how many are willing to allow MS students to formally affiliate with their Program.
- Suggestions from discussion:
 - MS students should be eligible to take the core course or create a core course specific for MS students.
 - Create an option for MS students to do a shorten rotation with a faculty member.
 - Have a standardized funding process for MS students.

V. New Business

1. Acceptance of T32/F31 Eligible Students

- Dr. Koehler recently was part of an external review and was found out that a school only admits T32 eligible students and the students ineligible must find their own funding.
- As part of the Microbiology and Infectious Diseases Program they require all their students to submit an F31 application, which can also be used to apply for other awards.
- The GSBS suggested Programs to incentivize students to apply for F31 awards, but not many adopted this. Unfortunately, GSBS does not have the budget for this incentive.
- The GSBS student population is roughly 35% international student with the national average at 32-35%.
- International students are an important part of our GSBS community.
- Dr. Kelly Moore is now the Assistant Director of Graduate Education, but will continue to assist students with the F award process.

- Since Dr. Moore took over this process the approval rate went from 6% to 50%.
 - She focuses on the quality of the application rather than the quantity.
 - In addition, post-candidacy students have a higher chance of being funded than pre-candidacy.
- Dr. Moore lectures in the Scientific Writing course and informs the students of the resources she has for these applications.
- If students are awarded an F award, the GSBS does pay the difference of stipend level.

VI. Old Business

No old business was discussed.