



**Minutes of the Graduate Board**  
*Special October Interim Session*  
*Wednesday, October 7, 2009*  
**3B Conwell Hall, Main Campus**  
**3:00 – 4:30 p.m.**

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**Members Present:**

Elizabeth Bolman, Joseph DuCette, William Hitchcock, Deborah Howe (via phone),  
Richard H. Immerman, Daniel Kern, Deborah Sheldon, Paul Swann

**Ex-Officio Member:**

Richard M. Englert, Interim Dean, Graduate School  
Zebulon Kendrick, Associate Dean, Graduate School

**Graduate School Staff:**

Cheryl Jackson, Assistant to the Dean  
Kathryn Petrich-LaFevre, Director of Graduate Information

**Business:**

The Interim Dean presented the Graduate Board with an agenda of areas for discussion. The first item was additional discussion of the “Summary of Key Points: Report of the Learning Alliance on Support for Graduate Education” document. When asked if the full Zemsky report would be made available, he advised that it would be released after being cleared of sensitive personnel data. He stated that discussion about restructuring the Graduate School was to occur with the Graduate Associate Deans and Deans, while the matter of Teaching Assistantships would be discussed by the Graduate Board.

*Board Response:*

Concern was quickly raised that Temple is not competitive with other graduate programs in terms of the monies offered for assistantships and that, for this reason, the best students are lost to other institutions. The distribution of funds was also called into question.

The Interim Dean noted that no rationale exists for assistantship monies being awarded by the schools/colleges and fellowship monies and tuition remission being distributed by the Graduate School.

*Board Response:*

It was suggested that the discussion begin by defining what an assistantship is and what the program is intended to do. For example, are teacher educators being prepared for their future career? It was further noted that the focus should be on when a TA teaches and how s/he can best be served in that role.

The Interim Dean raised the question of whether master’s students should be given an assistantship, albeit for teaching or research. Is the master’s degree a terminal degree – or is it an insignificant step in attaining a doctoral degree? In the case of the former, the School of Communications and

Theater funds one year and Tyler School of Art funds one and a half years. In the case of the latter, History offers no assistantships to master's students.

*Board Response:*

It was noted that comparison of funding should not be within Temple but focused on what our peer institutions are doing. For example, many competitors offer funding to their students for up to five years, while Temple typically offers three years' funding at the doctoral level. An extension to five years would increase Temple's competitiveness. It was further suggested that funds be diverted from master's students to doctoral students to improve the quality of the student pool.

The Interim Dean noted that in extending funding beyond three years would require an increase in research dollars overall at the University. He then raised three additional questions:

1. Should master's programs other than those leading to the M.F.A. or eventually to a doctorate be continued if they require large investments of centrally funded financial aid?
2. Should Temple follow the traditional pattern in American higher education, which restricts assistantships to doctoral students who are responsible for discussion or lab sections or other duties in providing assistance to a faculty member in charge of a course?
3. Should assistantships be reserved for those students pursuing the terminal professional degree held by faculty members in the department?

*Board Response:*

One concern raised was how much teaching a Teaching Assistant does. It must be taken into account how many students are in a class because the greater the number of students, the greater the workload. Is the assistantship intended as a cushion for earning the doctorate – or is the goal to see how much work can be squeezed out of an individual? Concern was also voiced about recruiting the best student assistants to put in front of the classroom. Indeed, the best student may not be a good teacher. Often international students have strong academic credentials but do not speak English well enough to teach. One suggestion was to have prospective students send a video of their teaching, which would allow for rejection of some good students if their teaching did not prove to be strong. Caution was then recommended with a reminder that a Teaching Assistantship should be viewed as part of the full educational program. It was asked if a Teaching Assistantship could be withdrawn if the student was inadequate in the classroom. It was noted that it has occurred, but only rarely.

In moving forward, the Interim Dean posited a general principle, given finite monies: Teaching Assistants should be prepared in developmental stages to instruct in the classroom. He cited Zemsky's recommendation that they first serve as lab assistants and the like. He also noted the certification program being offered by Temple's Teaching and Learning Center.

*Board Response:*

One Board member noted that teaching a prep course is very helpful for the Teaching Assistant who is starting out. Another explained that no one is happy to be thrown into the classroom at the outset and this creates hard feelings with some TAs, although the experience differs by department. A third expressed concern that master's-only programs might be excluded from the discussion.

The Interim Dean moved briefly to the document that lays out the structure of the Graduate School, which was approved by the Graduate Board some years ago. He noted that it is a mix of policy and procedure and stated his desire to see it amended to a more streamlined policy document. He also suggested that the name of the Graduate Board be changed to “Graduate Council.” When asked about the role of the departments vs. that of the schools/colleges vs. that of the Graduate School, the Interim Dean noted that jurisdiction is important. Both Zemsky and the task force led by Hai-Lung Dai, Dean of the College of Science and Technology, recommended a mix of centralization and decentralization of functions. Certain functions such as assessing international credentials, overseeing graduate student union relations, funding fellowships, working with the Graduate “Council,” and overseeing new programs would remain with the Graduate School. Its role would be post-hoc rather than decision making.

The Interim Dean charged the Graduate Board with framing ideas to move the conversation forward at future meetings.

**Adjournment:**

The meeting adjourned @ 4:25 p.m.

The next regular meeting of the Graduate Board will be held on the Health Sciences Center Campus, in the Executive Conference Room on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor of the Student Faculty Center, on Thursday, October 22, 2009, @ 2:30 p.m.