Research Advisory Board

Meeting Minutes
Friday, November 20, 2015
Faculty Center Conference Room JPL 4.04.12C

Board Members Present: Hamid Beladi, Hazem Rashed-Ali, Xiaohe Xu, John Zhang
Board Members Absent: Bernard Arulanandam, Christopher Ellison, Gloria Crisp, Harry Millwater, George Perry, Lloyd Potter, Matthew Reilly, Branco Ponomariov, Floyd Wormley, Miguel Yacamán
Non Board Member Present: Lauren Moore, DeBrenna LaFa Agbényiga, Mauli Agrawal

I. Welcome

Dr. Beladi asked if members were able to take Dr. Romo’s message of accountability back to their respective colleges. Mixed responses of dissemination were voiced. It was highlighted that the RAB should work to ensure that the message is widely disseminated and it was requested that members voice the initiative at any and all venues available.

II. DeBrenna LaFa Agbényiga, Vice Provost and Dean, The Graduate School

Dr. Beladi welcomed Dr. LaFa Agbényiga and asked that she share new initiatives she has brought to the Graduate School.

Dr. LaFa Agbényiga stated that there needed to be a restructure of the graduate school as the infrastructure did not complement the growth of the institution. The Graduate School had only been a processing unit without regard to recruiting or building a graduate student community.

Dr. LaFa Agbényiga discussed changes that still need to be made:

- Assistance for international students was discussed. An orientation for international students was implemented to address the gap in assistance.
- Creation of full recruitment and engagement team. Recruiters are assigned to individual colleges. Admissions and recruitment are now working closely together. Once students have applied and are accepted, they are engaged at various levels to ensure they come to UTSA.
- A graduate student physical space is being created and is almost ready. This space will house services for research and professional development of graduate students.

Dr. LaFa Agbényiga discussed changes that still need to be made:
- The Graduate School needs to find ways to ensure that students are truly marketable. There will be a push to assist graduate students to submit grant proposals and engage with faculty in research.
- The large number of varying application deadlines across the campus needs to be addressed. The current model puts Admissions in a bad position and is confusing to faculty, staff, and students. Deadline extensions for graduate application deadlines are also not going be sustainable for long term growth and expansion of the graduate program.
- Options are being explored to increase the amount of funding available for graduate students. UTSA is competing with schools that offer substantial funding for accepted graduate students and UTSA needs to find a way to be competitive in this regard.
- Timeframe to approve new graduate programs was investigated. New programs are stalled because System feels they are unsustainable. UTSA cannot offer unsustainable graduate programs that only set students up to fail.
- UTSA needs to establish a niche that sets us apart.
- UTSA needs to maintain programs that market to an actual need.
- Online programs must be developed.

Dr. Xu questioned whether the Graduate School would be able to support graduate student dissertations and travel.

Dr. LaFa Agbényiga explained that travel grants have been restructured to be competitive. Data is being generated in the Graduate School that will support the request for a budget that focuses on costs beyond operations and supports dissertations and travel.

Dr. Agrawal stressed the need for faculty to be able to have the means to support students they accept. Faculty should not take on students they are unable to support.

Dr. LaFa Agbényiga agreed and stated the new support forms take into account how much support is coming from other places.

The role of Associate Deans was discussed and members were reminded that Associate Deans are responsible for communication and dissemination of information regarding the Graduate School.

Deadline extensions were again discussed and Dr. LaFa Agbényiga again stressed that deadlines need to be fixed. Dr. Agrawal agreed that the right students would be able to adhere to fixed deadlines.

Dr. LaFa Agbényiga addressed the importance of creating graduate programs that address what major agencies are funding. Programs in the future must be far more interdisciplinary if UTSA is going to be marketable. Top tier research is not capable without graduate programs in place to support it.

Dr. Agrawal stressed the need for new PhD programs to show they will be self-sufficient in three years and stated that money should not automatically be given for PhD support. Metrics should
be put in place to evaluate programs and deans need to put measures in place to ensure faculty are supporting students on research projects as opposed to only their summer salary.

Dr. LaFa Agbényiga highlighted the need for UTSA to be more electronic. It was stated that this much paper had not been touched in over ten years of academia.

Dr. LaFa Agbényiga explained that, for the most part, deans have been supportive of efforts to make changes in the Graduate School. Things must change to move forward.

Dr. Agrawal explained that the Graduate School had only been processing and in that the mission has been lost. The mission is what gets the institution somewhere.

III. Non-expenditure research metrics: How does UTSA fare in terms of degree and quality of research, such as publications, citations, etc.

Dr. Beladi explained the many resources available for measuring citations and publications. At least six different software packages have been reviewed and none is complete. Colleges are measuring things differently and it should be a topic of conversation.

Dr. Agrawal explained that UTSA has recently been carried in world rankings by citations and patents. All colleges are capturing this information differently and everyone needs to ensure they are doing their part. UTSA cannot rely on a few individuals to carry this burden. Each college needs to be accountable and measure themselves against others.

Dr. Beladi stated that metrics must be developed and adopted. If you cannot measure, you cannot manage.

It was discussed that all colleges need to be accountable for their production.

IV. Approve minutes from September 18, 2015