

**THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS SYSTEM
STUDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL
1999-2000**

**ANNUAL REPORT:
SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Submitted to

**The University of Texas System
Office of the Chancellor
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By

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Chair, UTSSAC 1999-2000**

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INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

The UT System Student Advisory Council of 1999-2000 has declared its administration as one of the most successful terms to date. The officers are Matthew **Mireles (UT-Houston)**-Chair, James King (UT-Houston)-Vice Chair, Steven **King (UT-Brownsville)**, and **Spencer Gould (UTMB-Galveston)**-Historian. This year, the Executive Council had established three primary operational **objectives** that were important to ~~the~~ mission and effectiveness of **UTSSAC**. We believed we have achieved all three **objectives** with tremendous success.

OBJECTIVE 1: Croup Development

The Executive Council focused on improving group developmeat. UTSSAC met only four times during this academic year, and it was necessary to establish an environment and **atmosphere** that promote trust, camaraderie, and teamwork **among** the representatives. Instead of conducting business as usual at the first meeting, **we** opted for **an** extended orientation and a **formal** dinner for the purpose of building a cohesive work group. At the suggestion **from** one member for mote social **interaction**, we actively promoted exchanges of small **gifts** or tokens from member institutions during every meeting. These **gifts** included school pennants, key rings, coffee mugs and license plate holders. The Council is considering the creation of au alumni or former members association of **UTSSAC** to maintain a friendly network that has been farmed. Lastly, with **the** assistance of Dr. Edwin **Sharpe**, our advisor Dr. **Peña**, and his staff, we closed this term with **an** appreciation dinner at the Headliners Club, during which every member was **presented** with **a** certificate of appreciation from the System and a thank-you card from the officers.

OBJECT IVE 2: Improvements in Administration

The Executive Council studied **the** history of UTSSAC and current operations of the organization. **Communication** among the members remains an operational issue. Over the years, UTSSAC has become more dependent on electronic **mail** to gather and disseminate information between meetings. The Council is exploring **teleconference** and web-based communication as efficient means of interaction among the **ccomponents**. Therefore, the Council has proposed an executive order to establish another standing committee in technology to **stay** abreast with the developments and **applications** of technology in communication and education. A second proposed executive order **calls** for changes in the UTSSAC Bylaws to **update** rhc responsibility of the **historian**. In lieu of the Council's newsletter, *The Reporter*, **the** Council recommends the use of **the** UTSSAC **website**, which already had been created to provide information about the **organization**. **The website contains** a directory of representatives, committee reports, and minutes of the general sessions. **The third** proposed executive order would improve continuity from one **LJTSSAC** administration to the *next* and enhance the fallow-up process to the response **from the** Office of the Chancellor.

OBJECTIVE 3: Increased Awareness and Appreciation of UT System

The Council strongly believes that participation at **UTSSAC** is **an** educational experience. The representatives can learn from each other through **organizational** experiences and lessons from their institutions. At the beginning of each meeting after the Chair's opening remarks, members **were** invited to share significant news **from** their components during the Campus **Announcements**. **Ultimately**, one of the **fundamental** premises of **UTSSAC** is that **each** component is vital to The UT System. Even though **we** may be diversified and separated geographically, at **UTSSAC** we work on common **issues** to derive solutions with System-wide implications, for we all **identify** ourselves as members of The University of **Texas**.

The Council routinely invites special guests to its general **meetings**. These invited guests help us understand and appreciate the operations of the **UT** System. This year, the outstanding speakers included:

Dr. **Joe** Stafford, Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic **Affairs**
Dr. Joel **Dunnington**, Chair of UT System Faculty Advisory Council
Mr. Lewis Watkins, **Director** of Information Resources
Ms. **Francie** Frederick, UT Board of Regents Executive Secretary
Dr. **Darcy** Hardy, Director of UT **TeleCampus**
Mr. Robert Robinson, Coordinator of Telecommunications **Services**
Mr. Robert **Molloy**, Director of Employee Group **Insurance**
Ms. Stephanie Sanford, Special Assistant for Technology to Lt. Governor Rick Perry

ELECTED OFFICERS FOR UTSSAC 2000-2001

The Officers Election, held on April 15, 2000, was **very successful**. We are proud to **announce the 2000-2001** Officers:

Chair **Arturo** Barrio-UT El Paso
Vice Chair **Myrna** Rodriguez-UT El Paso
Secretary lamie Poe-UT Permian Basin
Historian Jennifer Stine-UTHSC-San **Antonio**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We wish to express our sincerest **gratitude** and appreciation to our advisor Dr. Homer **Peña**. His patience, guidance and wisdom were instrumental to our success. Also, we extend our warmest thanks to Ms. Patty **Culler** and Ms. **Judy White** from the **Office** of Academic **Affairs**.

UTSSAC PROPOSED EXECUTIVE ORDERS

The Executive Council proposed three executive orders for immediate changes to the UTSSAC Bylaws, at the final meeting on April 15, 2000. ~~These~~ executive orders had been approved unanimously by UTSSAC.

EXECUTIVE ORDER 1: Recommendation for a UT-SAC Technology Sub Committee

Recommendation: We recommend the establishment of a ~~sixth~~ standing committee of UTSSAC. This committee shall be called ~~the~~ Technology ~~Committee of UTSSAC~~.

Rationale: The issue of technology is one that requires ~~continual~~ attention so that The UT System can remain ~~current~~ on ~~technologic~~ developments. This year many components demonstrated some concerns about technological issues. To ~~insure~~ that these concerns are always adequately addressed, a standing committee in technology should be established.

EXECUTIVE ORDER 2: Recommendations to Modify UTSSAC Bylaws Sections 2.4 #1 and 2.5 #2

REF: Section 2.4, #1 states: "To keep clear and accurate ~~records~~ of the proceedings and the meetings of the council."

Recommendation: We recommend ~~that the~~ aforementioned section of the Bylaws be changed to the following: "To keep clear and accurate records of the proceedings and the meetings of the council. This responsibility includes working with the individual in charge of maintaining the UTSSAC ~~webpage~~ to post these records."

REF: Section 2.5, #2 states: "The Historian shall have the following duties... 2. To oversee the Council's newsletter, *The Report*. This includes ~~creating~~ and distributing the newsletter the month before an Advisory Council meeting."

Recommendation: We recommend that the aforementioned section of the UTSSAC Bylaws be changed to following: "The Historian shall have ~~the~~ following duties... 2. To collaborate ~~with the~~ individual in charge of maintaining the UTSSAC ~~webpage~~ in updating the Council's recommendation archive on the UTSSAC ~~webpage~~."

Rationale: This recommendation will facilitate and expedite, ~~communications~~ between UTSSAC members regarding past recommendations and the ~~subsequent~~ action taken. We feel that the Internet is a more efficient medium than a monthly written report

EXECUTIVE ORDER 3: Recommendation Regarding the UT Chancellor's Response to the UTSSAC Annual Report:

Recommendation: We recommend that the UT Chancellor's response to the **UTSSAC Annual Report** be made prior to the first meeting of the **incoming** council.

Rationale: This recommendation **will** provide important feedback on issues recently discussed that may require further action. In addition, it will encourage administrative continuity for the incoming Council by providing a model of the relationship between the previous Council's efforts and the Chancellor's actions.

**SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS
OF THE ACADEMIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
Chair: Jessica Ford**

1. **COMMITTEE SUMMARY**

Due to the limited number of sections offered for required courses, many students must postpone their **graduation** or substitute classes that may not be equivalent in content or material. Course **evaluations** offer students the opportunity to evaluate their professors and classes openly and **honestly**. This being the case, anonymity **of the** students should be guarded and students should have the ability to easily attain the statistical results of such **evaluation**.

I. **RECOMMENDATIONS AND KEY FINDINGS**

A. **Availability of Required Courses**

Recommendation: We recommend that any **required** course be offered at least once in either the fall or spring semester of every academic year. Any degree-required course that is not offered within one academic year should be re-evaluated as to the continued degree **requirement** of this course.

Key Findings: This committee found that **several** components maximize their faculty by rotating classes required for **graduation**. Sometimes, classes are scheduled purposely on a two-year rotation. This schedule can place some inconveniences and hardship on a graduating student if he or she misses a required course. Two choices for this **student** is to wait two years to enroll in that required course or **enroll** in a **substitute** course that may not provide the same content or material of the intended subject.

B. **Course and Faculty Evaluation**

Recommendation: We recommend that a standard procedure for administration of course evaluations be implemented at each component, which will protect student anonymity, and that the availability of statistical results from these evaluation be made available and easily accessible to students.

Key Findings: This committee found, as discovered by previous **UTSSAC** committees, that **there** is no standard **procedure** for the administration of course evaluations. The current procedures in use do not **all** protect adequately the confidentiality of the student's **identity**. We believe

anonymity is the most **prudent** way to **obtain unbiased** faculty and course evaluations. Additionally, the statistical results of the evaluations are not readily accessible to all students. This committee prefers **that the statistics from** the evaluation be made available online, in addition **to** other university locations such as the Registrar's **Office, Office** of Student Affairs, **Office** of Academic Affairs, and/or the library.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS
OF THE GRADUATE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
Chair: Jennifer **Stine**

I. COMMITTEE SUMMARY

The committee is aware **that** the Texas Legislature makes decisions on tuition levels for the UT System and **that** legislation exists that makes tuition waivers currently impossible. To become more competitive **with** other campuses, the UT System's components need to have the ability to waive tuition for graduate student teaching assistants.

II. RECOMMENDATIONS AND KEY FINDINGS

Recommendation: The UT System should reassert the need for tuition waivers for graduate student teaching assistants and actively engage **in** legislature effort to pass such provision.

Key Findings: Graduate student teaching assistants are viewed as both paid employees and students of the UT System. This **places** this group in a special position that carries with it problems that are distinct **from** issues that apply only to students or only to employees. These students depend **on** the stipends offered them by their **department** as teaching assistantships to live on during **their tenure** as graduate students. However, as **students** under the UT System, graduate students are required to pay full time tuition and all fees that their **institution** requires. Therefore, in effect, **graduate** students are paid as **employees**, but are required to pay back some 10% of their stipend to their component as tuition and fees. When tuition or fees are raised by the state or the UT **component**, the effect is great on these graduate **students** due to their **special** position. Stipend levels are determined by each department, but tuition and fees levels are determined by the **State** Legislature and the UT component. Invariably, there is a substantial lag between a tuition or fees increase and an increase in departmental, graduate student stipends. This is **because** the individual **departments do not accordingly** receive **an** increase in funding from the UT component to offset the **tuition** and fee increase for the students.

The overall effect of this **conundrum** is that individual departments are having trouble attracting competitive students for their graduate programs. Students applying for graduate programs find that in many other state universities and at private universities tuition is waived for graduate **students** that are actively doing research or have teaching assistantships. **Many students** choose to accept a graduate position at another university rather than **at** a U.T System university purely for this monetary reason.

We are aware that the Texas **Legislature** makes **decisions** on tuition levels for **the UT System**, and **that** legislation **exists** that makes **tuition** waivers impossible **at this** time. We are also aware **that this** particular issue was brought before the Texas Legislature by Chancellor Cunningham approximately **one** and a half years ago, but no action was taken.

**SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS
OF THE MINORITY AND MULTICULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
Chair: Guy DeMasellis**

I. COMMITTEE SUMMARY

The committee had a productive and diligent number of sessions with discussions aimed at topics **such** as minority recruitment and retention and different language requirements. From these **discussions**, the committee hereby presents the following two recommendations for consideration.

II. RECOMMENDATIONS AND KEY FINDINGS

A. International Student Services

Recommendation: The UT System should establish a formal system-wide network of international student services front each component. These service representatives should meet on a regular basis to discuss **the** special concerns of international students.

Key Findings: **The** committee identified the **international students** to be a minority population among all of the components. However, noticeable discrepancies in the amount and quality of **the** services at the different components varied greatly. This is a very specialized population at most of the components, due to the **fact** that most international **students** are in the UT System to participate in our graduate programs. In order to competitively recruit the top **international students** to our universities, The UT System should make greater effort to welcome these and make them feel at home. The international students at **most** of the components rely upon their Office of **International Students** for help in **maintaining** their visas, socialization, and assistance with adjustment to a new culture and location. It is also noteworthy that, through the **committee's** research, it has been discovered there is no **office** or personnel at the System level that is in charge of maintaining a standard at the different components with regards to this unique student constituency. The committee recognized that several components had exemplary **offices** that **demonstrated** great successes and experiences in the matters related to **international** students. The UT System can simply use available technology to establish this **valuable** network among the different components. The committee envisions the use of teleconference, chat rooms, and annual meetings in Austin as elements of this service network. This recommendation **is** economically inexpensive to **initiate** due to the fact that the technology and resources necessary for implementation are already available within the System. **The** committee

believes **that**, once this recommendation is implemented, it will enhance our effort in attracting the best international students to our institutions.

B. Medical Spanish

Recommendation: The UT System should **have** a medical Spanish course to be offered for **all** students participating **in clinically** related medical and **health** training programs.

Background: The Hispanic population in **Texas**, as well as throughout the entire United States, is on **the** rise. Many projections predict that the Hispanic population will be the largest **minority** group within the U.S. within the next twenty years. In 1990, **there were** approximately seventeen million Hispanic Americans of which greater than eight million of this Hispanic population only communicates in Spanish. Among the population **that** does **speak** English, roughly 25% would **prefer** to read **and** write in Spanish. These statistics are of significant **importance** to the UT System because it is already known that Texas has **one** of the largest Hispanic populations within the United States. Therefore, patients of Hispanic origin--many who **cannot** speak English--will **continue** to seek health care at our health science centers. To improve the delivery of **health** services, familiarity of the Spanish language and its proper medical terminology needs to be made available to **all** persons **who participate** in these clinically significant **areas**. The committee is not recommending that a course be made a requirement due to the fact that **requiring such a course would** be a matter of curriculum changes. **Simply making a course** available to the **students** in the health care professions at the different health science center components would be a progressive step **towards** preparing for the future growth of our patient base. Some components are already taking the initiative to provide courses in medical Spanish **within** their curricula. An example of a program that could be initiated is **the Medical Spanish Course** at **UTMB in Galveston**. Technology that is **already in place through the UT Telecampus** could provide easily a means of **making** such a course available throughout the UT System. Additionally, **having** one instructor that can teach the course via satellite to the other components is another option to make this recommendation possible. It is **well known** that the UT System has the greatest number of health educational and professional programs throughout the state. Subsequently, in order for the UT System to continue to compete **at** the national level, it is necessary **to** design innovative ways of providing education **and training** to our health professional students so that they are prepared adequately for their practices.

**SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS
OF THE STUDENT RIGHTS COMMITTEE
Vice Chair: Jamie Poe**

I. COMMITTEE SUMMARY

The members of this committee were dedicated in **ensuring** that **all** components were represented in our sessions. All sessions proved **to** be very successful and, though a number of issues **were** raised for recommendations, the **committee** as a whole selected **five** specific issues and **recommendations** to be submitted to The UT System.

II. RECOMMENDATIONS AND KEY FINDINGS

A. Bandwidth Speed

Recommendation: The UT System should improve **its** actual maximum bandwidth utilization **until** it is at least 75% of bandwidth capacity currently available to each component institution.

Key Findings: With increasing enrollment and the **amount** of research done by **students**, the speed of Internet access and computer **services** is vital. Bandwidth refers **to** the width of the "pipe" through which information flows. Theoretically, the larger the bandwidth, the faster **the** information travels. **The** committee **recognized that** the **speed** of Internet access at many of the institutions was relatively slow, and even slower at times of high access. It was found also that most of the components are not **currently** operating at their maximum **bandwidth** capacity. **Many operate at less than 50%** of their bandwidth capacity. By increasing **the bandwidth** utilization at each component, Internet access becomes faster and the **amount** of time it takes **to** access online sites, databases, other information **exchanges** is shortened. It also would provide faster service at higher access times.

B. Online Student Services

Recommendation: The UT System should **mandate** that each component institution provide the following online services as a supplement to existing resources: registration, fee and **fine** payments, **adding** and dropping classes, changing a **major**, statistical data on course **evaluations**, ordering transcripts, and grades.

Key Findings: Due to the increased use of the **Internet** and practicality of the web, students need better access to academic on-line services, such as registration, fee and fine payment. We concluded that student services are vital not only to help our students, but for recruitment **purposes as well**. All students can benefit **from** the ease **and** convenient of **accessing** on-line **student** services, such as registration, adding and dropping courses, and attaining grades, and ordering transcripts, from home and after hours. This system will be ideal for all students, especially the nontraditional students **who** have families and work full **time**.

C. Faculty Webpages

Recommendation: The UT System should **mandate** that each component institution provide and maintain a directory of **webpages** for every professor, lecturer, and teaching assistant and require that **the** following information be made **available** on the **webpage**: instructor **name**, **office** location, office hours, office telephone number, **email** address, and a syllabus for **each class taught**.

Key Findings Instructors should **be** accessible to their students to help provide academic guidance and class information. Therefore, certain information, such as contact information and course description and assignments, should be provided to students via the **web**. **It** was the concern of the committee that many instructors are not easily **found** by their students. By requiring instructors or the departments to **maintain** a **webpage**, important information about the instructor **and** course are **made** available to students at all times. This will improve **communication** between students and instructors.

D. Upgrading Administrative Computer Systems

Recommendation: The UT System should encourage **and** aid component institutions in modernizing and integrating the **software** and hardware of the administrative computer **systems used** by the **Registrar**, Bursar, and Financial Aid offices.

Background: To offer better services to students **and** to improve efficiency, communication between enrollment **offices needs** to be systematically integrated. **Currently**, students must visit many offices on their campus to add **and** drop courses, register, and pay fees. **It would** be beneficial and **more** efficient for both students **and** enrollment **offices if** the offices communicated with one another via **the** computer. **By** systematically integrating the software in **the** enrollment offices, **students** can be served **expediently** and the offices would operate more **efficiently**. Nontraditional **students**, as well **as** traditional students, **want to be able to register, get financial** aid, and pay fees as quickly and easily as possible.

E. Additional Agreements with Software Vendors

Recommendation: The UT System attempt to set up discounted software/hardware agreements with other vendors, such as: *Adobe*® (Photoshop/Acrobat), *Macromedia*® (Shockwave/Flash), and *Dell*® (Laptops/PCs) that are comparable to the established agreement with *Microsoft*®.

Key Findings: We have learned that the *Microsoft*® Agreement with UT has proved to be beneficial for students across the UT System. Because so many students have used the software that was provided in the *Microsoft*® agreement, we believe that it would be educational and financially valuable to students to have access to other software and hardware through institutional licensure.

**SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS
OF THE TUITION AND FEES COMMITTEE
Vice Chair: Ashley Gillespie**

I. COMMITTEE SUMMARY

The Committee considered several issues related to student tuition and fees. From our discussions, two important issues were selected for study. One issue is the lack of consistency among UT components regarding financial aid procedures and policies. The second issue concerns the general property deposit.

II. RECOMMENDATIONS AND KEY FINDINGS

A. Financial Aid Procedures and Policies

Recommendation: The UT System should establish consistency among all its components regarding financial aid policies and procedures. In addition, it is recommended that all campuses research the feasibility of instituting a low- or no-interest emergency loan program.

Key Findings: Every year the majority of students rely on some type of financial assistance, in the form of scholarships, loans, grants, stipends and work study, to aid them in obtaining their educational goals. This need must be facilitated through a coordinated effort of the federal government, the UT System, individual component institutions, and various lending institutions. In the event that any of these entities become deficient in their responsibilities, the disbursement of funds available for a student's education is hindered.

The problems that arise in financial aid due to the lack of standardization can severely affect the education of many of these students. The U.T System does not have a consistent financial aid policy among the UT components. This problem can obstruct the effectiveness of the financial aid process. There are inconsistencies in the communication between the offices of financial aid and the bursar, and with the timely disbursement of funds.

B. General Property Deposit

Recommendation: The UT System should investigate the necessity of the general property deposit, and, if possible, **eliminate this particular fee**. Failing that, we recommend that the deposit be **easily** refunded to students upon graduation.

Key Findings: For years, students of the UT System have been charged a general property deposit by their **component** university. There are inconsistencies in the fee's requirement, utilization, and the way in which this fee is refunded to graduating students. **We question the need and validity** of the general use & deposit across the **UT** System. The committee has the impression that this **fee** may be obsolete at many components. **If** this were the case, then the committee strongly believes that it would be prudent to consider the elimination of this fee.