THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS SYSTEM
STUDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL
2000-2001

ANNUAL REPORT:
SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Submitted to
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Office of the Chancellor
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By

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INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

The University of Texas System Student Advisory Council (UTSSAC) for the 2000–2001 academic year accomplished a great deal of its set goals. The UTSSAC officers for the 2000-2001 academic year include: Arturo Barrio, Chair (U. T. El Paso); Myrna Rodriguez, Vice-Chair (U. T. El Paso); Meredith Tamayo, Secretary (U. T. Brownsville); and Guy DeMasellis, Historian (U. T. Medical Branch - Galveston). At the beginning of the council’s first session three goals were decided upon and geared toward the betterment of UTSSAC. Throughout the year, all goals were met and greatly assisted the council in achieving its objectives in a much more efficient and effective manner.

**Goal 1: Improvements in Communication**

One of the top challenges UTSSAC continuously faces year after year is that of member communication during the periods between sessions. This year, the Executive Council of UTSSAC focused on improving the communication channels among its members. In an effort to keep interaction flowing throughout the academic year between members, we created a list serve. This list serve proved to be quite a success. Through this list serve, which was hosted by a free Internet site, ideas and information were posted, members were in constant contact (at their convenience) as messages were sent back and forth between members, surveys were conducted and photos were available for viewing by the entire group at one central location. It is the hope of this year’s UTSSAC that similar models continue to exist.

**Goal 2: Group Development**

The members of the 2000-2001 UTSSAC were very active. Even though we only met on four occasions throughout the academic year, we were able to build a very strong relationship, in which every member participated and worked toward the assigned tasks. This year we were very fortunate enough to have been given the opportunity to travel to different U. T. components to hold two of our meetings. Our first meeting was held in Austin where we began the year exploring issues of student concern. Our second meeting was held at U. T. El Paso, where the members of UTSSAC were able to be a part of a unique experience. Since only two U. T. components have football teams, with the support of U. T. Administration, UTSSAC was able to attend U. T. El Paso’s last home game, in which the Miners became Co-Champions of The Western Athletic Conference. Our third meeting was held at U. T. Medical Branch - Galveston. This was also a unique experience for many members of academic institutions who had never had the opportunity visit any U. T. medical institutions. As we wrapped up the year, our final session was held in Austin. Overall, UTSSAC had a remarkable year. Not only did we achieve much success in tackling issues of student concern, but we also enjoyed the opportunity to experience what other U. T. components have to offer.

**Goal 3: Committees**

This year UTSSAC created a new committee specifically designed for technological issues. The Executive Council recommends having three different committee meetings that will take place simultaneously. This will allow each committee to meet for a longer period to discuss issues in greater detail. Since each component has three representatives, we recommend that one member from each component be present at each committee. This will certainly allow
each member to focus more time on committee issues. Thus, the committees will also be more efficient.

The Council would like to take this opportunity to thank the support of the Presidents of the Universities who hosted UTSSAC this year. We would like to thank Dr. Natalicio from The University of Texas at El Paso and Dr. John D. Stobo from The University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston. This really had a positive impact on all the students from the Council.

We would also like to thank the speakers who motivated us throughout this year: They really helped us clarify some of the issues that the committees discussed. These speakers include:

Dan Bureck, Chancellor of The University of Texas System  
Dr. James C. Guckian, Vice Chancellor for Health Affairs  
Dr. Diana Natalicio, President of The University of Texas at El Paso  
Mr. Charles Miller, Chairman, Academic Affairs Committee, Boards of Regents

Elected Officers for UTTSAC 2001–2002

On April 7, 2001 the new officers of The University of Texas System Student Advisory Council for the 2001-2002 academic year were elected. We proudly present the officers of the 2001–2002 Student Advisory Council:

Chair  
Vice Chair  
Administrative Assistant  
Historian  

Sharon Smith (U. T. Arlington)  
Paul Tran (U. T. Dallas)  
Nicholas Cook (U. T. Permian Basin)  
Leo Gonzalez (U. T. San Antonio)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This was a unique year for The University of Texas System Student Advisory Council. This year could not have been so special without the great help from our advisor Dr. Peña. His excellent advice helped guide the Council in the right direction. We also would like to thank, two great individuals who worked behind the scenes, Ms. Patty Culler and Ms. Judy White from the office of Academic Affairs. On behalf of the Executive Council, I would like to extend our sincere appreciation to all the members of The University of Texas System Student Advisory Council for their hard work and dedication throughout this academic year.
At our last meeting held on April 7th 2001, the Executive Council met to make recommendations to improve the procedures of UTSSAC.

**Executive Order 1: To create a list-serve housed at U. T.-System**

**Recommendation:** We recommend establishing a list-serve housed at U. T. System.

**Rationale:** The Council has always searched for ways to improve the communication among its members. This year, by using an outside Internet source, we were able to improve the communication among members. We believe that it would be in the best interest of the Council to have this list-serve hosted by U. T. System for years to come. This would help the Council to stay in contact and increase continuity among members. It would also allow information from previous Councils to be available online to all members.

**Executive Order 2: To have three Committee meetings run simultaneously that would allow one member from each component to serve on one of the three committees.**

**Recommendation:** We recommend having the committee meetings simultaneously to improve the efficiency of UTSSAC.

**Rationale:** The committees had always met in pairs, since there were only five different sub-committees. We realized, that having two of these committees meet at a special time did not provide sufficient time for their meetings. By having the three committees meet simultaneously, each committee will meet for a longer period of time. This will allow each member to focus more on the committee issues.
SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS
OF
THE ACADEMIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

Chair: Vasile Stanescu

I. COMMITTEE SUMMARY
The Academic Affairs committee discussed many issues, including faculty members' English competency, the accountability process, and student representation in tenure process, standardization of grading system across component institutions, and the student input on hiring of faculty. We choose to focus our efforts on the first two issues, as outlined below.

II. RECOMMENDATIONS AND KEY FINDINGS

A. Faculty Members English Proficiency

Recommendation: Recommend more efficient enforcement of Higher Education Title 3 Section 51.917 pertaining to English Competency. Recommend the creation of an additional verbal test of English competency such as a review by a committee of faculty and students in a model class lesson.

Key Findings: Interim charges revealed widespread failure to comply with Higher Education Title 3 section 51.917. Many component institutions do not test all faculty as defined by Higher Education Title 3 section faculty. Additionally the test, if any was administrated at all, was not the legislatively prescribed “Test of Spoken English” of the Educational Testing Service or its equivalent. Due to this widespread lack of enforcement virtually all component institutions reported some situation of a faculty member’s not being adequately fluent in English.

B. Accountability

Recommendation: The committee recommends that all information concerning accountability be provided to the chair of UTSSAC on a timely and regular basis. Recommend that the subcommittee working on accountability meet with UTSSAC Academic Affairs Committee on a regular basis or failing that provide progress reports to be presented at each of the UTSSAC meetings. Recommend that avenues be created for student input at the present stage of creative planning, as opposed to notifying UTSSAC when final decisions have already been reached.
Key Findings: Representatives of the Board of Regents at our first meeting informed UTSSAC that an Accountability Process was being formed for the U. T. System. A letter was drafted expressing many of the students’ concerns, such as their oppositions to standardized testing. This letter was approved by UTSSAC and forwarded by our Chair, Arturo Barrio, to the Chancellor. Additionally several component institutions passed individual resolutions within their student governments expressing concern over the accountability issue. UTSSAC feels this high level of student anxiety could best be assuaged by ongoing, regular and continuous interactive dialog between the Board of Regents and UTSSAC.
SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE GRADUATE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

Chair: Athanasia Panopoulos

I. COMMITTEE SUMMARY
Throughout the 2000-2001 academic year the Graduate Affairs Committee met four times to discuss issues relating to graduate education. The focus became the need of the U. T. System to offer tuition waivers.

II. RECOMMENDATIONS AND KEY FINDINGS

A. Tuition Waivers

Recommendation: We recommend that the component institutions be permitted to give tuition waivers to teaching assistants, research assistants, and assistant instructors.

Key Findings: The current law prohibits state universities from having tuition waivers (see appendix 1), thus preventing the use of an essential recruiting tool to maintain a competitive graduate student enrollment. In contrast to the tuition waiver bill proposed last session (see appendix 2), which mandated that universities must offer waivers, we propose that universities be permitted to offer waivers at their discretion. One possible source of the funding necessary for the components to compensate for these funding stems could be from the recent FICA-exemption agreement. This agreement exempts students who work for their higher education institutions from social security taxes. As a result, there are savings in the employer paid taxes of student workers. Components with this revenue could use this as a source for tuition waivers. It is appropriate that these funds be redirected on behalf of the students, on whose behalf they were previously paid. Several other states offer such tuition waivers (see appendix 3) and Texas needs to offer its institutions this ability to remain competitive. Therefore, we request information of the savings by each institution across the state due to the FICA-exemption agreement, and we also request that the U. T. System strongly encourage the Texas Legislature to permit tuition waivers.
IV. APPENDICES GRADUATE AFFAIRS

1. Education Code, Section 54.063

2. Texas 76th Legislature; Senate Bill 946 by Barrientos; House Bill 315 by Maxey; 1999.

3. Examples include:

   **University of Michigan**
   Graduate student teaching assistants (TA) and research assistants (RA) with appointments of a 0.25 fraction and above receive a full tuition waiver, medical benefits and monthly stipend.

   **University of Illinois**
   Tuition is waived for all graduate students with Illinois fellowships teaching or research assistantships of 25-67%, as are annual in-service fees. Health and other specialized fees are not waived.
I. COMMITTEE SUMMARY
During the 2000-2001 academic year, the committee on Minority and Multicultural Affairs met four times and discussed issues related to administrative support for non-resident alien (international) students, and the continuing problem of low student diversity on our various components. Our attention focused on the apparent lack of support for and inconsistencies in the overseeing of international student affairs. In regards to minority issues, we looked at programs established to close the gap in the rate at which minority students participate in and succeed in higher education.

II. RECOMMENDATIONS AND KEY FINDINGS

A. International Student Support

Recommendation: The U. T. System should ensure that all components that contain any international students have at least one designated individual who has been educated in aspects of international student issues. The U. T. System should provide a forum for that education in the form of annual workshops that must be attended by at least one member from each component.

Key Findings: Foreign nationals in academic programs represent over 7% of the overall U. T. System student population (See appendix 1). There is, however, tremendous variation from campus to campus as to the number of attending students and this seems to reflect the amount of support that is available to international students (See appendix 2). In addition to dealing with a culture that is often new to them, foreign nationals on student visas must also avoid falling out of legal status. This is not always easy due to the complicated and dynamic nature of U.S. immigration laws. We have found that the administrative support assigned to this population, while generally good, is neither answerable to nor supported by a system-wide mechanism. It is our concern that this inconsistency could lead to the legal status of an international student being put at risk. This committee envisages the U. T. System organizing workshops held at least annually that must be attended by persons representing every component. Such gatherings would facilitate the exchange of ideas and experiences among these administrators and lead to better support for the particular student population they serve. We are
fortunate in that at several of our components there are tremendously talented and experienced administrators who may serve as repositories of information in a workshop or conference setting. It is our hope that these recommendations help to improve matriculation and retention of foreign students during their time in the U. T. System. The positive outcome of these recommendations will be a better international profile for our components, making us more attractive to higher quality internationals. Ultimately the benefit extends to the U. T. System, and the American students, who have the enriching opportunity to interact with and learn from individuals with experiences often far different from their own.

B. The Joint Admission Medical Program

Recommendation: The U. T. System should strongly encourage the Texas Legislature to expand upon the proposed Joint Admission Medical Program to include other professional and graduate programs.

Key Findings: The unequal representation of certain ethnic groups and the economic disadvantaged at our various components is even more dramatic at the post-baccalaureate level (See appendices 3 & 4). Facilitating the development of a student population at the University of Texas that reasonably reflects the diversity of the State of Texas is no easy task. This is further complicated by the need to avoid the legal challenges such as the Hopwood decision. The U. T. System is to be congratulated for its continued attempts at dealing with this issue. A current example is the submission of the Senate Bill 940, containing the Joint Admissions Medical Program, to the Texas State Legislature. At the time of this writing, the bill was engrossed. While generally in support of this bill, our committee has concerns about potential limitations in the effectiveness of the program. We hope, however, that programs of this kind can be developed for other areas of graduate training. One limitation is that a relatively small number of individuals would be selected for inclusion into the program. As a result of this limitation, one would not expect a significant increase in the overall number of potential candidates. In addition, rejection by the program could dissuade students with the dream of practicing medicine from working towards their goal. We suggest that the program should increase the number of individuals into the preparative process without necessarily increasing the number of positions reserved at Medical Schools. This would result in a larger pool of candidates able to apply successfully to institutions, including our own. The need for addressing the homogeneity seen in medical school student bodies is also evident in most other areas of graduate and professional training. Although alternative models may need to be developed, we believe that the Joint Admission Medical Program may serve as a model for other similar ventures.
III. APPENDIX


2. Ibid (pp. 97-122).

3. Ibid (p. 89).

   http://www.hhsc.state.tx.us/budget/cons_bud/dssi/dempov97.htm
SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDENT RIGHTS COMMITTEE

Chair: Leo H. Gonzalez

I. COMMITTEE SUMMARY

This committee discussed issues that affect students in the U. T. System as a whole. All sessions provided useful information to all components over a variety of student concerns. From the discussions in these sessions, two issues were selected to be presented to the U. T. System for consideration.

II. RECOMMENDATIONS AND KEY FINDINGS

A. Student Regent

**Recommendation:** The committee recommends the creation of a Student Regent on the Board of Regents with all the powers and privileges of the existing Regents. The Governor shall appoint the Student Regent, as the Texas Constitution allows, from a list provided by The University of Texas System Student Advisory Council. Each component institution, including medical and dental units, may equally contribute applications and recommendations to the U. T. System Student Advisory Council.

**Key Findings:** Students currently only have one avenue to express their concerns regarding their specific U. T. System Component. This one body, UTSSAC, serves to advise the chancellor on System wide student concerns. Although this body has been successful in its mission, students are still not principally involved in the decision-making process that affects them and their campus communities. With a majority of the decisions concerning the U. T. System decided upon by the Board of Regents, the committee feels that adding a student is imperative to our representation on the regent level within the U. T. System. A majority of the U. T. System components are currently in favor of this proposal. Thirty-eight states currently already have students on their board of regents or similar educational governing boards (Appendix 1). The U. T. System cannot fall behind other states in its quest for excellence in higher education. We recognize that because many of the matters presented to the board during briefing sessions involve the presentation of confidential information and as a result, the committee believes that by allowing a student to be a full regent, the student could be held to the same expectation of confidentiality. The U. T. System should make every effort to strengthen its relationship with its student, most importantly at the faculty/student level, but also with the Board of Regents.
B. Book Store Procedures

**Recommendation:** We recommend that the U. T. System mandate that each U. T. component should make available upon request the complete list of classes being referred and books required for these courses, within a timely manner, at the beginning of each new academic semester. Groups, which should be provided access to this include, but are not limited to, so-called “off-campus” bookstore, online vendors and interested student groups. This book-list should be presented in an easily comprehensible manner, in both print and digital formats, and should also include the correct book title, edition, and ISBN number.

**Key Findings:** After researching the procedures of each U. T. component’s bookstore, the committee concluded that there is a need for a standardized system. No guidelines have been established System-wide for disbursement of professors compiled book list. With books being an essential part of success in the classroom, the delay in receiving books that are needed and finding books that are inexpensive can hinder a student’s academic progress. The U. T. System should make every effort to assist students in obtaining by promoting fair and equal competition between on and off-campus bookstores. Any standardized system provides for such competition and assists students in obtaining the necessary materials for success in the classroom.
SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS
OF
THE TECHNOLOGY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

Chair: Nicholas L. Cook

I. COMMITTEE SUMMARY
This committee, established by UTSSAC in May of 2000, met for the first time to discuss several issues of technological concerns throughout the system. All sessions proved to be successful and the committee, as a whole, selected three issues and recommendations for the U. T. System to consider.

II. RECOMMENDATIONS AND KEY FINDINGS

A. Online Student Services

Recommendation: We recommend that The University of Texas System require online Student Services through a secured site to allow for registration, payment of fees and fines, adding and dropping courses, ordering transcripts and making available students’ grades. (See Appendix 1)

Key Findings: We have seen how efficient and user-friendly online student services can be as per U. T. Arlington and U. T. San Antonio (See Appendix 1). Due to the increased use of the Internet and the practicality of having offices “open” 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, via the web, students would be able to use time more efficiently, while making processes such as registration and ordering transcripts more efficient for the associated offices. We concluded that student services are vital and will help with recruitment and retention due to the ease and convenience, rather than standing in the lines and visiting each individual office. As stated above, the system will be ideal for the student, especially for the non-traditional students, but also for each U. T. component’s staff and administration.

B. Availability of Contractual Merchandise Online

Recommendation: The University of Texas System should make available the distribution of software, without requiring the distribution of CDs, through existing and future contractual agreements with software companies, through the secure site in each component institution’s web site.
Key Findings: By making software available to students online, there is no need for distributing CDs, thus reducing the cost to students. Currently, students are purchasing the CD to install programs to their computers, whereas, the student could download the software without having to buy the accompanying CD. This would eliminate the need to purchase hardware but maintain the integrity of limited distribution to U. T. students and the availability to sign the software user agreement online.

C. Faculty WebPages

Recommendation: The U. T. System should require that each component institution provide and maintain an online directory of information for every professor, lecturer, and teaching assistant to include the following information: instructor name, office location, office hours, office telephone number, e-mail address, and a syllabus of each class taught. (See Appendix 2)

Key Findings: Instructors should be accessible to their students to help provide academic guidance and class information. Therefore, certain information, such as contact information, 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 of the departments to maintain such a database available on the web, important information about the instructor and course are made available to students at all times. This will improve communication between students and instructors. U. T. Arlington, (See Attachment 2), has implemented such a system, maintained by a party other than the instructor, that would strengthen each component through precise and correct information, therefore strengthening the system.
I. COMMITTEE SUMMARY
The 2000–2001 Tuition and Fees Committee of The University of Texas System Student Advisory Council (UTSSAC) convened four times throughout the academic year to discuss issues relating specifically to student finances. Throughout every meeting, the topic of student financial assistance was a main concern. Due to the reverberation of the topic, we found that a lack of consistency existed throughout the System. In order to encourage universality, the committee focused on two main objectives: (1) to create a system-wide one-stop-shop for financial assistance and (2) to require entrance exams with exit exams for student loans.

II. RECOMMENDATIONS AND KEY FINDINGS

A. Financial Aid Webpage

Recommendation: The U. T. System should establish a web page consolidated from various U. T. components that will offer every student the opportunity to access an equivalent amount of financial information. This web page should provide a search engine, links to and from every U. T. component, and access to an abundance of information in the form of federal financial aid, scholarships, grants and loans. The web page will be located on the U. T. System web site.

Key Findings: The Internet is rapidly emerging as viable resources for the students around the world. Due to its increased use and practically, the Internet provides the most effective distribution of data. Students everywhere are looking toward the Internet to assist them with their needs. Students use the Internet to aid them with their college-related decisions and therefore, look to it as a source for funding their education. After reviewing the various U. T. components financial aid procedures it was evident that there was a lack of consistency. Some components provide their students with a wealth of information while others fail to do so. Since a rapidly increasing number of U. T. students receive some form of financial assistance, it is extremely necessary to supply this type of information to them in the most concise manner. Therefore, we propose a web page be created on the U. T. System homepage adhering to the following specifications.

1. A page split in two frames.
a. The first will hold a list of links to the different components’ financial aid WebPages.
b. The second frame will consist of a search engine to search for financial assistance through key words and descriptions (i.e. ethnic background, military service, etc.). Links to general scholarships, loans, and grants, as well financial assistance links specific to medical and other professions will be provided.

2. Each component’s financial aid web page will link to this web page.

B. Entrance and Exit Loan Exams

**Recommendation:** The U. T. System should establish a system-wide procedure of administering entrance exams in those components that offer exit exams as a form of loan counseling. These exams should be available on-line with the option of personal counseling, as well.

**Key Findings:** As per federal law, exit loan exams are offered to students. However, there are many discrepancies between the different components. Some are offered on-line, while others are not. We feel that if these loan exam were on-line, students would not only have better accessibility, but will be required to thoroughly go through the process and learn about how much and when their particular loan will have to be repaid. For example, U. T. Tyler currently utilizes this type of on-line counseling for entrance and exit exams with an interactive web sit that allows the student to calculate future interest and monthly loan payments. Following this example, entrance exams should accompany exit exams. This will provide students with the necessary information to make decisions that will impact their financial future.