MEMORANDUM

To: Deans, School Chairs, Grad Coordinators, Advisors
From: Susan Cozzens, Vice Provost
Date: February 5, 2016
Re: Graduate Student Experience

Georgia Tech has an interest in improving the quality of life of graduate students for one single reason: to enable graduate students to do their best work. Graduate students are our Institute’s hidden workforce. They are our next-generation of experts, our lab managers, our teaching assistants, our colleagues, our graders, and support almost every task required for the educational mission of Georgia Tech. Given the dependency of Georgia Tech on the graduate student workforce, we must directly address the factors that affect their quality of life, such as financial, time, and academic stress; advisor-advisee relationships; and quality of academic programs. Currently, there is insufficient information about these factors to shape strategic visioning and action plans; that is, until now.

To develop a thorough understanding of graduate student quality of life, together with the Graduate Student Government Association (Grad SGA), we have created Georgia Tech’s first-ever comprehensive survey of the graduate student experience. The survey will take place from February 8th through February 29th. The survey has been tailored to Georgia Tech’s graduate student population while taking inspiration from the Undergraduate Experience Survey conducted in January 2015, and synthesizing Princeton University’s Graduate Student Surveys and the 2015 Berkeley Graduate Student Health and Well-Being Report. The survey will cover topics ranging from advising and mentoring; finances; quality of academics; mandatory student fees; time spent on research, teaching, coursework, and sleep; and sources of stress and support. Demographic data will be collected such that each Program of Study, School, and College will be able to analyze results relevant to their programs.

To encourage participation Grad SGA has fundraised $4,000 worth of incentives for those who participate in the survey (http://sga.gatech.edu/g/gradsurvey/incentives/). In general there are three main ways that you can encourage students to take the survey:

1) Include and display information about the survey in your school newsletters, on bulletin boards, and hand-out flyers out during meetings and at the beginning of classes.
   a) The survey is available to graduate students through the following link: https://surveys.assessment.gatech.edu/grad_student_survey
   b) The main website for information about the survey is provided at: http://sga.gatech.edu/g/gradsurvey/
   c) Flyer, presentations, and answers to frequently asked questions are all available at: http://sga.gatech.edu/g/gradsurvey/press-kit-and-media/
2) Express to students that you will use the results to guide future initiatives.
   a) Let graduate students know that you will be reading through the results summaries and using the
      information to guide future initiatives in your department.
   b) Once the survey is completed, members of the Graduate Student Senate are planning to meet
      with their School Chairs to discuss the results of the survey: the success areas and the areas that
      need improvement.

However, given the significant differences in the graduate student experience between schools, the key
to the entire study is high completion rates in every school. Your assistance is essential to achieving high
completion rates in your schools. To that end, there are two important campaigns that we have developed
to encourage students to take the survey:

3) School Survey Challenge (http://sga.gatech.edu/g/gradsurvey/school-survey-challenge/)
   a) Completion rates for each school will be compiled on Mondays and Thursdays and posted in
      interactive graphs.
   b) Awards will be provided to students of schools that achieve 25% and 50% completion rates.
   c) The school that achieves the highest completion rate for its tier (based on population) will
      receive additional awards.

4) Eat and Complete Sessions (http://sga.gatech.edu/g/gradsurvey/eat-and-complete/)
   a) Each school should provide time and space for graduate students to leave their offices or labs
      and take the survey. To encourage attendance you can provide food to students who have
      completed the survey and have received the confirmation email. Senators from Grad SGA will be
      contacting most schools to set up “Eat and Complete” sessions.

To provide background on the type of results that will be generated by the survey, enclosed with this
memo is a printable version of the entire Graduate Student Experience Survey. Many demographic
questions, including the school and program of study, are not directly asked because that information will
be captured when the student logs into the survey. If you have any further questions about the survey or
the campaigns, please contact Marc Canellas, the President of the Graduate Student Body
(marc.c.canellas@gatech.edu).

Questions about the quality of graduate student experience at Georgia Tech is one of the most important
that we face. The success of Georgia Tech is strongly linked to the success of our graduate students. I look
forward to your support of this survey.

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