

## **Outstanding Adviser Essay – Dr. Patricia A. Graham**

Dr. Patricia Graham has been the advisor to the UTSA Ambassadors since its humble beginnings in 1988. When she became the Assistant Vice President for Student Services at UTSA she requested to take charge of the Ambassadors. In 1990 there were only eight students in the Ambassadors and their sole responsibility was to give tours for prospective students and their parents. She has since grown the UTSA Ambassadors into one of the most prestigious organizations on campus that gives on average 7000 hours of service to UTSA in the form of tours, being university hosts, and finally running commencement. From 8 members, she has created an organization that is comprised of 50-70 full Ambassadors with 20-30 Ambassadors in Training. Most of the Ambassadors are leaders in other organizations and truly show their pride in being an Ambassador and having Dr. Graham as an Advisor.

Dr. Graham has had numerous accomplishments and awards, but the UTSA Ambassadors are her pride and joy. Anyone can see that just by walking into her office and seeing a bookcase on the right filled with Ambassador pictures, an array of signature plaques from the various Ambassador Retreats on her walls, and on the left is a quilt from 1998-1999. It has a square done by each ambassador from that year with a definition of Doctor Graham in the middle. It says “Doctor Graham 1) A believer in excellence 2) A kind heart, warm smile, and big hug 3) UTSA Ambassadors 4) Always UTSA 5) Friend, Dr. Graham is #1 in the hearts of many.” I truly believe the each of these definitions describe what Dr. Graham means to the Ambassadors.

Dr. Graham has always believed in the excellence of others. She always pushes us to reach for our true potential. I personally was entrusted with the position of Mentee of the Student Recruitment Committee when I didn’t even apply for an officer position. She saw my potential

and recognized it. From that recognition I have applied myself to proving her trust. Because of her I have always strived to do what I can for the UTSA Ambassadors. Like me, many of the Ambassadors have felt her gentle nudges to prove their potential that she personally sees. Six of the Fall 2008 Ambassadors in Training are Mentees now, and each like myself didn't apply and from that nudge pushed ourselves to recognize our own potential. Dr. Graham sees more about us than we see of ourselves and does everything she can to help us along.

But as Dr. Graham gives us that push she's always there with us giving encouragement that means more to us than any award. Her smile can set a person at ease even in the most nervous of moments. Dr. Graham is always present for every interview, both Ambassador in Training and Full Ambassador, and her kind and gentle demeanor helps put the people that are being interviewed at ease. I have been on both sides of the table and when I was being interviewed for becoming an Ambassador in Training she asked questions I could easily answer at the beginning. Dr. Graham saw my nervousness and with her carefully asked questions she brought me out of my shell and willing to answer the questions asked by the Ambassadors. Now as an interviewer, I've seen numerous times when initially nervous and shy people come out of their shell as well. Dr. Graham always seems to know what questions to ask so that the candidates can answer without feeling nervous. She brings out their passions and is able to reveal what kind of people they really are. I never realized how much her smile helped me through that interview until months after I had been accepted. Dr. Graham is our lion's heart, our eagle's eyes, and our rabbit's smile.

When we become an Ambassador or Ambassador in Training, we see how truly passionate for the UTSA Ambassadors Dr. Graham is. She's present for every general and

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steering committee meeting. She is at almost every event, and if she's not there she'll go out of her way to ask how it went. Dr. Graham manages all the requests for Ambassadors, and personally asks individual Ambassadors for special requests. Dr. Graham knows each Ambassador's strengths and weaknesses. She asked me to be a Head Usher for Spring Commencement even though I had only one semester of experience with commencement. She saw my strength in organizing people, being dependable, and always going the extra mile. When she asked with her kind heart and that warm smile I couldn't say no, and I performed well. Dr. Graham truly sees more than we know and she has always acted to promote both our own leadership development and the development of the UTSA Ambassadors.

The UTSA Ambassadors devote over 7000 hours to the success of UTSA and each and every Ambassador shows their pride for UTSA, but no one shows it more than Dr. Graham. She has been at UTSA since 1974 and has since seen it grow from holding graduate classes in the Kroger Building to a University that has 29,000 students, 3 campuses, and a faculty that cares for the students' success. Dr. Graham shows more pride for UTSA than anyone I know and shows it by attending every home game for volleyball and basketball, always promoting UTSA, and truly caring for UTSA's growth. Dr. Graham grew the UTSA Ambassadors to accomplish the goal of supporting UTSA and promoting it. All the Ambassadors have learned to truly care about UTSA's success from Dr. Graham and we've become a better organization because of it.

But more than anything else, Dr. Graham is a friend to us all. She cares for our well-being and for our success. She does everything she can to make our college experience the best it can be. But her friendship lasts long after college. So many times I have seen former Ambassadors come into the office to see Dr. Graham. She remembers them all and will sit with

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them for a while just remembering past events and laughing with them. I always think, “How can she remember them all?” I’ve learned though that it’s because she cares. She’s our adviser while we’re in college, but that relationship transforms into a long friendship that will last a lifetime.

“The UTSA Ambassadors are a family and Dr. Graham is at the head of it deeply caring for us all. Why would anyone let something so special go?” That’s what I’ve learned from Orlando who was with the Ambassadors in 1991 when Dr. Graham began every tradition that we hold dear. Dr. Graham is more than an adviser; she’s our mentor, our counselor, our cheerleader, and finally our friend. That is what Dr. Graham means to all of us and why she truly is the most outstanding adviser there is.