



Graduate Student Learning Assistance Program

Executive Summary

History of Program

The Tomás Rivera Center initiated the Graduate Student Learning Assistance Program in January 2006 to provide academic support services to the graduate student population at the University of Texas at San Antonio. The TRC initially hired a Program Coordinator to research, plan, implement, and promote this initiative. Program staff now consists of an Assistant Director and a part-time Student Development Specialist, plus several Graduate Assistants.

For the 2009-2010 academic year 2,959 student contacts were logged through a variety of services, including the Graduate Student Learner Series semesterly workshops, in-class workshops, academic coaching, Writing Institutes, Thesis/Dissertation Groups, and StressDown Day.

Services

The Graduate Student Learning Assistance Program consists of a variety of services that have been expanded over the past three years to provide assistance to graduate students at all levels, from entering students to those working on their thesis or dissertation. Below is a summary of these services:

- Graduate Student Learner Series
 - A series of workshops offered each semester to cover research, writing, academic, and professional excellence.
- In-Class Workshops
 - Workshops offered during a graduate course, at an instructor's request, most generally to cover graduate level writing and research or APA citation style.
- Academic Coaching
 - One-on-one assistance to help students identify their study strengths and then build an effective and flexible set of study skills. Assistance also includes dissertation and thesis coaching. This can be peer-to-peer or with a staff member.
- Thesis/Dissertation Group
 - A six-week group that meets to support students who are endeavoring to complete their thesis or dissertation. Topics covered include overcoming writing blocks, time and stress management, defense preparation, and working with committee members.
- Writing Institutes
 - Four-day writing workshops for students finishing a large writing project (such as a seminar paper, thesis, or dissertation.) Includes lessons on motivation, time management, good writing, grammar, and the revision process.
- Online resources: Website and Blackboard course *Grad Assist*
 - All resources and workshops are available to students online through our website www.utsa.edu/trcss/gsla and our Blackboard course *Grad Assist*, in which all graduate students are automatically enrolled.

Growth of Program via Annual Comparison

The growth of the GSLA program is evident when looking at the increase in student contacts and students served. In 2006-2007 there were 777 student contacts compared to 2,959 student contacts in 2009-2010. Although the grant-funded activities in 2007-2008, to include peer advising, writing consultations, the Mix n Mingle, and the Writing Institutes, did contribute to the growth of the GSLA program, we have managed to maintain significantly high student usage beyond the granting period.

Annual Comparison of GSLA Program Student Contacts

	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010
Service Type	Contacts/ Served	Contacts/ Served	Contacts/ Served	Contacts/ Served
Graduate Student Learner Series	327/165	117/65	62/41	338/174
In-Class Workshops	69/69	714/521	567/474	989/792
Thesis/Dissertation Support Group	54/17	87/28	11/3	63/19
Academic Coaching	66/22	150/53	161/91	220/103
Special Projects:				
StressDown Day	181/181	53/53	156/156	86/86
Grad Orientation	60/60	384/244	361/237	278/278
Mix n Mingle	20/20	21/21	NA	NA
Writing Consultations	NA	217/123	399/196	NA
Writing Institute	NA	172/42	108/30	185/38
Academic English Skills Seminar	NA	NA	NA	36/14
Outreach	*	*	56/56	764/679
Annual Totals	777/534	1959/1195	1881/1284	2959/2183

*Note: Outreach services not previously tracked and for 2008-2009 not tracked consistently.

Staff Biographies*Melissa Thomas, J.D.*

Melissa Thomas received her Doctorate of Jurisprudence from the University of Texas at Austin and her Bachelors of Arts in Communication with a minor in Legal Studies from the University of Texas at San Antonio. While at UTSA, she served as student body president and was active in several other leadership positions. She also worked at the Tomás Rivera Center as a Supplemental Instruction Leader in Texas History.

Thomas presents frequently at the local and national level about the value of integrating critical thinking opportunities in the classroom and how to use a strengths-based approach to work with students inside and outside the classroom. She began the Graduate Student Learning Assistance program as the Program Coordinator in January 2006 and has grown the program each year. She has since been promoted to Assistant Director of Learning Assistance. She served as the co-chair for the Graduate and Professional Student Success Special Interest Group of the College Reading and Learning Association for four years and has been asked to run for President of CRLA this spring.

Annemarie Mulkey, M.A.

Annemarie Mulkey earned her Masters of Arts in English with an emphasis in Rhetoric and Composition from the University of Texas at San Antonio, where she also completed her Bachelors of Arts in English. She began working for the Tomás Rivera Center as a student employee, mentoring provisionally admitted students in the Academic Development Program. She then joined the TRC's Graduate Student Learning Assistance program (GSLA) where she worked as both writing consultant and peer advisor. As a GSLA Student Development Specialist, Mulkey academic coaches and presents workshops to graduate students on strategies for academic success.