TO: Clifford Fedler, Associate Dean of the Graduate School
FROM: Vickie Harpton, Interim Chair, Department of Design
THROUGH: Linda Hoover, Dean of the College of Human Sciences
SUBJECT: Action items following Six-Year Graduate Program Review
DATE: November 26, 2013

Thank you for this opportunity to respond to the comprehensive review of the MS and the PhD programs in the Department of Design. The following summarizes responses that have been made and those which are planned based on the feedback of the external and internal reviewers.

Two personnel changes have been made in the Department of Design following completion of the Graduate Program Review of the Department of Design.

1. A new department chair has been hired and will be starting the position February 1, 2014. She has extensive experience as department chair at a highly ranked Department of Interior Design. She is well positioned to lead the TTU Interior Design faculty in addressing the issues raised during the Graduate Program Review. These include:
   a. Additional focus on the Master's Degree Program to define purpose and scope and to develop the curriculum, including questions related to the MS project vs. the report.
   b. Filling two open faculty positions by Fall 2014 to reduce the heavy load currently carried by graduate faculty. This is particularly important given the large number of PhD students in the program.
   c. Ensuring that adequate leveling experiences for graduate students without interior design backgrounds are provided so that their work does not suffer due to lack of design and/or technical skills.

2. An additional 20 hours of staff time has been approved for the Department of Design. This allows for a full-time Senior Business Assistant in addition to the department's Business Manager Position. Duties that will be transferred from current faculty (the Graduate Program Director) to staff once both positions are filled will include assistance processing graduate students applications, degree plans, and course overrides; assistance with qualifying examination logistics; and help with recruiting and retaining graduate MS and PhD students.

Another change that has been initiated during the Fall 2013 semester addresses heavy loads carried by graduate faculty. Increased use of PhD students as Associate Instructors and Teaching Assistants not only provides relief for faculty. It also provides needed teaching experience for PhD students who are preparing for academic careers. Increased reliance on qualified PhD students is a trend that the new department chair is committed to, thus providing increased financial support for PhD students. Additional issues the department plans to address in the next year include investigation of:
- The need for both a MS and a PhD Program Director instead of the current combined Graduate Program Director. This could ease the workload of the current Graduate Program Director, and would facilitate dedicated leadership for the MS degree program.
- The graduate course rotation schedule, including the need for consistency and the issue related to summer school being required to complete the graduate degree efficiently.
- Collaboration opportunities with programs in other colleges such as Architecture, Engineering, etc. to enhance graduate curriculum opportunities and research. This could also leverage composition of doctoral committees while increasing the quality of student education.
- Distance opportunities related to the graduate program.
- Formalized mentoring programs for both new faculty and graduate students.

In conclusion, this review has been extremely helpful and pointed to several areas that need to be worked upon in the coming year to improve the quality of these graduate programs. The above comments provide a summary of the general direction that will be taken by the Department to provide these improvements. With a new Department Chair arriving early next year it is expected that these and other approaches will be taken to address the issues and deficiencies outlined in the report.