




OFFICE OF THE VICE PROVOST AND DEAN OF GRADUATE STUDIES

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

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June 10, 2014

To: Graduate Students of the Department of American Studies
From: Judith Langlois, Dean of Graduate Studies 
Subject: Letter of June 5, 2014

I have reviewed your Graduate Student Petition Opposing Proposed College of Liberal Arts Time-to-Degree Guidelines. Here are the policies and procedures of the Graduate School relevant to your petition.

1. The Graduate School policies on candidacy extensions and the 14-semester rule are maximums and are not a guarantee of continuation and support up to those limits. Individual academic programs have the authority to impose more stringent limits, and, indeed, the Graduate School encourages the programs to adopt tighter requirements.
2. The College of Liberal Arts efforts to reduce time-to-degree are consistent with efforts across the University and across academia nationwide. The proposed limits on candidacy extensions and funding are legitimate approaches to encouraging degree completion in an increasingly efficient fashion.
3. Funding for Teaching Assistants and Assistant Instructors in American Studies comes directly from the College of Liberal Arts and not from the Graduate School. Each College/School Dean and each department head have the power and the responsibility to use available financial resources strategically. While the College of Liberal Arts proposal includes limits on the number of years that students will be internally funded, there is no limit on the funding that students might receive in outside fellowships and/or employment in other University academic units.
4. The College of Liberal Arts and the Graduate School have been discussing lowering the time-to-degree within individual departments since the mid-2000s. The proposed guidelines include clearly stated funding limits and a phase-in period up to 2017. The Graduate School is in full support of the guidelines painstakingly developed by the College of Liberal Arts.

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Your Petition portrays the proposed guidelines as rather draconian. However, my discussions with the Dean's Office of the College of Liberal Arts leave me feeling comfortable that no current student in American Studies will find her/his doctoral program abruptly terminated or without support. Each individual student circumstance will be under consideration to the extent that the proposed guidelines are impactful.

JL/kb