STRATEGIC PLAN
Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences (GSBS)
(Modified January 2008)

I. Background

The GSBS has a policy of developing annual goals for each academic year (September 1 – August 31) and holding itself accountable for reaching, or attempting to reach, those goals. However, it is equally important to develop more far reaching goals that pertain to all important endeavors and may improve the school in the context of its vision and mission. Therefore, in this present strategic plan, we outline short-term (0-3 years) and longer-term (4-7 years) goals for the GSBS for academic year 2007-2008 together with some plans and strategies for achieving them. Also, we provide information about some goals achieved during the academic year 2006-2007.

It is essential that all GSBS goals fall within the published mission statements of the University of Texas Medical Branch (UTMB) and the GSBS as well as the core values and vision statement of the University. These are listed below:

A. UTMB Mission and Core Values

The mission of The University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston is to provide scholarly teaching, innovative scientific investigation, and state-of-the-art patient care in a learning environment to better the health of society.

UTMB’s education programs enable the state’s talented individuals to become outstanding practitioners, teachers, and investigators in the health care sciences, thereby meeting the needs of the people of Texas and its national and international neighbors.

UTMB’s comprehensive primary, specialty, and sub-specialty care clinical programs support the educational mission and are committed to the health and well-being of all Texans through the delivery of state-of-the-art preventive, diagnostic, and treatment services.

UTMB’s research programs are committed to the discovery of new innovative biomedical and health services knowledge leading to increasingly effective and accessible health care for the citizens of Texas.
EDUCATION: We are committed to life-long learning for our students, staff, faculty and community.

INNOVATION: We always think of new ways to do things better.

DIVERSITY: We are committed to employ and educate a health care work force whose diversity mirrors the population they serve.

SERVICE: We have a burning commitment to serve the health care needs of all Texans, regardless of their ability to pay.

COMMUNITY: We are committed to making our community a better place to live and work.

B. UTMB Vision Statement

The University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston's vision for the future is captured in the following standards. UTMB sets a standard for leadership and excellence in health sciences education, research, clinical care and service, and for integrating these missions within a single governance structure. UTMB's programs are in the top 25 percent of comparable programs nationally, and at least five are recognized as unsurpassed worldwide. UTMB is widely recognized as a public trust, one that makes the most of finite resources to improve the health of the many communities it serves. UTMB demonstrates good stewardship by remaining true to its mission -- supporting programs that are consistent with its core values, discontinuing programs in which excellence cannot be achieved, and eschewing programs that are incompatible with its societal purpose. The university community functions as a seamless coalition of health professionals who understand and embrace their roles, take collective pride in their accomplishments, share their scholarship and innovations, and participate in shaping and securing UTMB's future and fulfilling its pledge to society.
C. GSBS Mission

The Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences at the University of Texas Medical Branch promotes the advancement of human understanding and knowledge in health-related disciplines through scholarly teaching and research in the biomedical sciences. Foremost, the graduate school embraces excellence in all of its academic pursuits and activities. Academic curricula and programs are available that emphasize developing individual leadership, communication, motivation, and scholarship to meet the challenges of today’s society.

II. GSBS Short-Term Goals (0-3 yr)

A. People

• Create a postdoctoral affairs office in the GSBS to provide support for the Organization of Postdoctoral Scientists and to help recruit outstanding postdoctoral scientists to UTMB

Strategy: Office space is available in the current GSBS space due to staff cuts and office reorganization in spring 2007. Funds must be identified to support a staff person for the office at no less than 0.25 FTE.

B. Growth

• Obtain final approval from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board for the new GSBS Program in Clinical Science

Strategy: Meet in Austin, Texas and petition successfully the THECB for final approval of the Clinical Science program that received preliminary approval in 2004.

• Increase GSBS Applications by 10% vs. the previous academic year. Increase enrollment in the Basic Biomedical Sciences Curriculum and the Biophysical, Structural and Computational Biology Curriculum by 10% vs. the previous academic year

Strategy: Applications are tracked monthly during the academic year and current data compared to the previous 5 years. Published national trends are also viewed. Numerous undergraduate schools in Texas and surrounding states are targeted for trips by GSBS deans and faculty to attend career fairs or present seminars. Selected “partner” schools have been identified for establishing personal close contact with their science and health care faculty advisors. Certain undergraduate schools receive special attention because they graduate large numbers of under represented minority students or are “feeder schools” for the
GSBS. The GSBS continues to refine its website recruitment and application process. The GSBS has developed additional electronic and traditional recruitment materials to be used in coordinated recruitment campaigns. The effectiveness of each tool will undergo continuous assessment and updating. An external firm (Hobson’s) specializing in recruitment strategies and computer software designed to communicate with potential student inquiries and turn inquiries into applications has been contracted for a 3 year period. This outsourcing effort is being employed because it is cost effective. This outsourcing program will be evaluated for performance yearly. GSBS recruitment deans focus annually on planning and evaluating recruitment weekend activities when highly sought applicants are brought to campus for a weekend to interact with GSBS faculty, programs, and current students. GSBS will annually evaluate the efforts to recruit minority students and the current policy of admitting ~25% international students.

C. Education

- **Review Graduate Programs**

  **Strategy:** In partnership with the School of Medicine, conduct external reviews of the graduate programs housed in the Department of Pathology and the Department of Biochemistry & Molecular Biology. Also, independently conduct an external review of the Basic Biomedical Sciences Curriculum that was implemented in 1999 and a separate external review of the overall GSBS and its leadership.

- **Develop plan with the School of Public Health (SPH) at the University of Texas Health Science Center to allow GSBS PhD students to enroll concurrently in an MPH program**

  **Strategy:** UTMB’s GSBS has THECB authority to offer the MPH only to medical residents. This excludes UTMB GSBS students that are not medical graduates who may wish to obtain an MPH in addition to the PhD. We will develop and sign formal inter-institutional agreements with the SPH to allow concurrent enrollment of selected GSBS students in the SPH MPH while they are completing their dissertation for the UTMB PhD.

- **Develop plan with the UTMB School of Allied Health Sciences (SAHS) to implement concurrent enrollment of OT/PT students in the GSBS Rehabilitation Sciences curriculum of the PMCH PhD Graduate Program**
Strategy:  Gain approval from the GSBS Program Review Committee, the GSBS Executive Committee and general faculty and implement the agreement formally with the SAHS.

D. Finance

- Obtain federal or foundation grant support to support recruitment of minority students to the GSBS

Strategy:  The GSBS deans will continue to seek funding from federal agencies to support student training, particularly of minority students, as we have done for the past 8 years.  To this end, we will prepare a successful renewal application to continue the current NIH grant “Bridging Master’s Students to the PhD”, which is designed to bring Hispanic master’s graduates to UTMB from partner schools (TAMU-Corpus Christi, TAMU-Kingsville, and UT Pan American).  The renewal application will add a new partner, the Universidad Central del Caribe in Puerto Rico.

- Foster Development Activities

Strategy:  The GSBS Director and Assistant Director of Development & Alumni Affairs will build on past successful approaches to seek additional philanthropic support.  They will work with the GSBS deans and the Office of University Advancement to prepare funding proposals to submit to alumni, Development Board contacts, foundations, corporations, and wealthy individuals in order to support student trainees and GSBS faculty members.  Funding will be used to support educational special programs (e.g., SURP), graduate programs, student scholarships and awards, tuition scholarships for students, or faculty professorships.  Outreach development related activities will include a quarterly alumni newsletter, solicitation of membership in the GSBS alumni association, and periodic telephone or mail solicitation of alumni donors.

E. Accreditation

- SACS

Strategy:  The GSBS deans, office staff, and faculty members will serve on various UTMB committees involved in gathering data and preparing the SACS reaffirmation compliance document for the SACS review and the site visit in spring 2008.  The GSBS dean will serve on the SACS Leadership Committee and the Committee to
develop the Quality Enhancement Plan, “Synergy”, and ensure the GSBS gathers data and participates in the site visit in any way requested in order to help ensure a successful site visit outcome.

III. GSBS Long Term Goals (4-7 yr)

A. Administration

• GSBS Office Organization & Efficiency

  Strategy: The GSBS deans and office staff will continue to search for developing new technologies that will improve service and efficiency. This may take the form of new advances in electronic communication or may involve outsourcing of activities involved in student recruitment and application, records keeping, course delivery, or job placement. National trends in graduate education will be followed closely through membership in the Council of Graduate Schools, the AAMC GREAT subgroup, and the Association of Texas Graduate Schools.

B. Recruitment/Admissions

• Enrollment and Scholarship Plan

  Strategy: The GSBS will continue to evaluate ways to expand GSBS class size. This will be critical to compete for NIH training grants. Also, resources must be found to support tuition and fees for all GSBS students for every year they are enrolled. A pool of institutional money should be developed to bridge student support in the event a grant lapses unexpectedly. Additional tuition scholarships for students will continue to be a focus of fundraising for the GSBS development staff.

C. Education

• Program Development and Review

  Strategy: The GSBS and SOM will undertake a review of the MD-PhD program and will support efforts by the director of the program to gain MSTP support from the NIH. The GSBS will work with the PMCH graduate program on two issues: 1) to determine whether the Rehabilitation Sciences curricular track should be considered a candidate for separate program status now that its chief advocate, the previous SAHS dean, has left UTMB; 2) to determine whether a
space life sciences curriculum in partnership with NASA can be successful given the recent NASA re-programming in favor of manned exploration of the moon and Mars and a corresponding de-emphasis of life sciences research. The GSBS also should consider whether current programs are better served by SOM departmental names and organization or should be named and organized around centers of research excellence. We will also consider developing new training opportunities to take advantage of our international prominence in high hazard biocontainment research.

- **Program Expansion**

  **Strategy:** The current MPH degree offered at UTMB is available only to medical residents. The THECB will be petitioned to allow the curriculum and degree to be offered to medical students who wish a dual degree other than MD-PhD and to SON and SAHS faculty. This could serve as a springboard to an eventual MPH for such students with an abiding interest in public health research. Also, we could have a unique niche in the infectious disease public health area by having a free standing program or one developed in partnership with the UT School of Public Health in Houston.

D. **Collaborative Programs**

- **UT Pan American PhD in Biomedical Life Sciences**

  **Strategy:** UT Pan American (UTPA) has been asked by the THECB to seek a partnering academic health sciences institution to help them to develop a PhD program in biomedical sciences. The UTMB GSBS has worked in close collaboration with UTPA for several years, UTPA has requested that the GSBS partner with them to achieve this goal. While this is a reasonable request, we will give careful consideration to the costs in required effort and funds as well as the substantial length of time required to make such a project viable and successful.

- **Law Education for GSBS Students**

  **Strategy:** GSBS will continue to work with IMH and the University of Houston Law School to offer special courses in Science, Law and Society to GSBS students. GSBS should evaluate whether it will be possible to offer selected students completing the PhD at UTMB an opportunity to enroll also for a law degree in Houston. Efforts for accomplishing this are made
more challenging by the different university governing systems involved and the distance between the schools.

• **UTMB-Austin Initiatives**

  **Strategy:** The GSBS should follow progress with the new Austin MD-PhD program to develop ways to enhance the UTMB MD-PhD program. Also, the GSBS will evaluate whether collaborative research efforts between UT-Austin and UTMB scientists offer additional opportunities for collaborative programs to further graduate student education.

• **Medical Discovery News**

  **Strategy:** *Medical Discovery News* is the brainchild of GSBS deans David Niesel and Norbert Herzog and was implemented in collaboration with initial support from a UTMB President’s Cabinet Award. Medical Discovery News is a weekly series of brief radio episodes that provides insights into a broad range of biomedical science and human health topics. The shows explain a variety of exciting discoveries in biomedical research and their promise for the future of medicine. The goal of these episodes is stimulate listeners about how scientific investigation impacts them and to highlight the GSBS and UTMB. The show has been broadcast since November, 2006 and now airs on 42 NPR and college and university stations in five states and Monterrey, Mexico. Episodes are currently broadcast on 3 Houston area stations, KACC, Alvin, KUHF, Houston, and KAMU, College Station. Episodes also are featured on a companion website at [www.medicaldiscoverynews.com](http://www.medicaldiscoverynews.com). The website features each weekly episode, the script and audio files along with additional information and links about each topic. The website generated over 500,000 hits in 2007. The show has been supported by small grants and philanthropy, and Federal funding from the NIH is pending. Long term goals are to broadcast on 300 stations, expand to two other major broadcast markets in Texas, develop collaborations with the Center for Disease Control and other federal agencies, launch a related newspaper column, and develop a Spanish language version of the program.

E. **Development**

  • **Distinguished Chair/Endowed Professorships**

    **Strategy:** The GSBS development staff will pursue establishment of a distinguished chair for the dean of the GSBS, expansion of student support through the creation of tuition scholarships and
pursuit of additional GSBS teaching professorships. Other recognition for GSBS faculty members should occur through the newly formed Academy of Master Teachers under the direction of Dr. Ruth Levine.

- **Promotion of Graduate Education**

  **Strategy:** The development staff and the GSBS deans will work with the UT System and the UTMB Development Board to promote statewide appreciation of the value and the importance of graduate education to the state and the nation. This may take many forms, including legislative interaction, electronic communications, radio programs, or newspaper articles. In academic year 2006-2007, the GSBS dean served on a UT System Task Force on Doctoral and Postdoctoral Education that made recommendations for the future to the UT Executive Vice Chancellor for Health Affairs and the UT Board of Regents.

### IV. Goals Accomplished During Academic Year 2006-2007

#### A. Administration/Operations

- **Reorganize GSBS personnel to achieve greater efficiency and improve service at a lower cost**

  To meet this goal, GSBS office personnel was reduced. A reduction in force included the release of 2 full time office classified personnel, 1 half time computer programmer, 1 part time Associate Dean, and 1 part time faculty curriculum director. To improve service, GSBS deans and the office staff have met to reassign required operations to the remaining staff and to devise ways to increase efficiencies using technology and outsourcing some complex tasks.

- **Define GSBS teaching effort by faculty with primary appointments in the School of Medicine**

  The GSBS Associate Dean for Student Affairs and SOM Vice Dean have met and developed formulas that allow a first approximation of the faculty teaching effort in terms of FTEs. This allows a calculation to be made of the cost of the total effort and how much is borne currently by each school. This cost impacts the adjusted operating margin of each school and allowed a view of how much cost the SOM bears that currently is not funded by the GSBS. Additionally, some means for assessing the “value” that graduate students provide to the UTMB research effort should be developed, since students are half
time classified employees, work productively on funded faculty grants, and coauthor publications that result from the work.

B **Education**

- **Move from printed copies of theses and dissertations to submission of electronic versions only**

The submission of electronic theses and dissertations will be mandatory beginning with the academic year 2008-2009.

- **Review Graduate Programs**

**Strategy:** All GSBS programs except CPMB have been reviewed over the past 10 years. The CPMB review was scheduled but did not occur, because the SOM Department of Physiology was merged with the Department of Anatomy & Neurosciences to create a new SOM Department of Neuroscience & Cell Biology. The GSBS worked with the chair of the Department of Neuroscience & Cell Biology and the CPMB program director and conducted a review in spring 2007. Recommendations for restructuring of the program were considered and are in the planning and implementation process.

- **Develop partnership with the University of Monterrey in Mexico to foster a research and educational collaboration**

We established a formal, signed agreement with the University of Monterrey (UDEM) to bring talented MD graduates to UTMB for summer research at UTMB (SURP) and to pursue PhD training.

C **Special Programs**

- **Resize Summer Undergraduate Research Program (SURP)**

SURP, our 10 week residential program for undergraduate science majors, is designed to foster interest in a career involving scientific research and to recruit talented undergraduates to UTMB’s GSBS, SOM, and MD-PhD program. The 16 years of data on SURP attendees who have entered UTMB for graduate level study provides our most solid quantitative evidence for a recruitment initiative that works. Historically, much of the support for this program has come from the SOM department chairs, but current financial pressures make this source uncertain for future stable support. Therefore, the GSBS downsized this program and accommodated several undergraduates sponsored largely from external funding sources. Since UTMB, has no university summer
housing for the program, we also recruited students who live within commuting distance during the summer, so that expensive housing costs for students living in Galveston commercial properties were not a major issue.

- **Formalize Inter-Institutional Gulf Coast Consortium Graduate School Course Credit**

The Gulf Coast Consortium has had an informal agreement that graduate students at any of the 6 participating institutions may take selected graduate courses for credit at any other member institution. This has been a “gentleman’s agreement” in the past, but a recent SACS reaffirmation visit at Baylor College of Medicine mandated that a formal agreement be developed. The GSBS now has signed formal agreements with the graduate schools at Rice University, Baylor College of Medicine, and the University of Texas Health Science Center – Houston. (that also serves MD Anderson GSBS students). Only an agreement with the University of Houston remains to be signed.

**D. External Funding**

- **Foster Development Activities**

The GSBS Director and Associate Director of Development & Alumni Affairs enabled successful approaches to win substantial, additional philanthropic and alumni support over the past academic year. The additional funding will support educational special programs (e.g., SURP), graduate programs, student scholarships and awards, tuition scholarships for students, or faculty professorships. Outreach development related activities included a quarterly alumni newsletter, solicitation of membership in the GSBS alumni association, periodic telephone or mail solicitation of alumni donors, participation in UTMB hosted alumni events, and selected receptions for graduates of the UTMB GSBS at national and Texas meetings.