

# Needs Analysis Report

UNT Toulouse Graduate Ambassador Training

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## Introduction

The University of North Texas Toulouse Graduate School (TGS) employs two graduate students each year as graduate ambassadors. Because the average length of a graduate student's program is 2-3 years, turnover is high. UNT graduate student ambassadors fulfill the following roles in recruiting new graduate students:

- Scheduling, holding, and leading driving and walking tours for new and prospective graduate students around UNT's main campus
- Assisting and guiding new and prospective graduate students through through the first stages of the application process via email at [gograd@unt.edu](mailto:gograd@unt.edu) and/or over the phone
- Completing event preparation projects for the Assistant Director

Currently, new graduate student ambassadors are given several documents and are expected to either be familiar with the campus and/or memorize a script within a couple of weeks. However, the training takes much longer than expected, leading the Graduate Advisor to substitute for the graduate ambassadors over the training period. Creating a formal training program and a reference guide would help improve overall graduate recruitment efforts by:

- Decreasing time required to reach tour training proficiency and have the graduate ambassadors giving tours earlier
- Increase accuracy of graduate ambassador advice to new students in face-to-face situations
- Increase special project time time for graduate ambassadors and advisors
- Establish and increase knowledge level of current graduate ambassadors
- Produce a hard proficiency requirement before giving tours
- Streamline email and phone responses to prospective students

## Project Objectives

**Business Goals:** Implementing formal training will increase training proficiencies and expand prospective student support by UNT TGS recruitment employees.

**Project Goals:** This project specifically aims to create training materials for new and current UNT graduate student ambassadors to reduce the time required to gain proficiency in giving graduate tours around the UNT main campus, while increasing consistency and accuracy responses to prospective students over the phone, through email, and face-to-face.

## Stakeholders

### Assistant Director

**Role:** Oversees all graduate school recruitment activity.

**Training Benefits:** Increased graduate tours given overall, increased opportunity to assign graduate ambassadors to special projects, like the Graduate School Preview and Graduate School Fairs.

### Graduate Advisor

**Role:** Assists assistant director with recruitment activity and directly supervises graduate ambassadors.

**Training Benefits:** Reduced substitution and oversight for tours during ambassador training to focus on lectures, recruitment and event planning.

### Graduate Ambassadors

**Role:** Primary tour provider and prospective student support through [gograd@unt.edu](mailto:gograd@unt.edu).

Ambassadors report to the advisor for day-to-day direction and the assistant director for special projects.

**Training Benefits:** Increased confidence in training reduces mistakes in tours, more inclination to give tours, and increases prospective student service ability.

## Learner Profile for Graduate Ambassadors

Characteristics	Requirements
Age	Between 23-27
Prior Knowledge	Moderate understanding of UNT's campus, buildings, and history. Initial knowledge level is higher if the student was also an undergraduate at UNT.
Strengths	Great people-person, knowledgeable about their own department, comfortable to talking to large groups, good listeners
Attitude	Outgoing, enthusiastic about what UNT has to offer, like to work away from their desk
Needs	Guidance on what prospective students want to know, and how to guide prospective students to the correct department during support activities, know the UNT campus resources inside and out from a graduate student perspective

## Research Questions

To determine where the graduate ambassador's pain points are and whether training would solve these issues, all research methods were designed to answer the following research questions:

- What's the best way to train graduate ambassadors?
- How can this training make supervisors' jobs easier?
- What subject matter experts (SMEs) are available to help?
- What other project resources can we use?
- Do graduate ambassadors struggle more with face-to-face, email, or telephone conversations with prospective students?
- Are there opportunities to do prep work before training?

## Methods

### Shadowing

I was able to follow as a graduate ambassador and a graduate advisor gave tours. There is a roughly 3-5 year experience gap between the graduate advisor and the graduate ambassadors, but the graduate ambassadors should have the same grasp on the main campus graduate resources that UNT has to offer for prospective students after training.

### Existing Materials

I asked for a collection of the current training materials. This is what was available:

- UNT Graduate Ambassador Scripts
- The outlook email script

These are consolidated in the Employee Onboarding: Tours in the appendix.

### Informal Interviews

While I was working as a graduate ambassador, I had several conversations with the Graduate Advisor and Assistant Director about how we could improve the present training materials.

## Results

### What's the best way to train graduate ambassadors?

The assistant director said that the ambassadors needed further training, but was undecided on the correct software to use. The advisor had a tour script to give to the ambassadors, but mostly focused on giving verbal instructions. At the end of my time as a Graduate Ambassador, he responded positively to Employee Onboarding: Tours (in the appendix).

### How can this training make supervisors' jobs easier?

The graduate advisor has several instructions to give to the ambassadors, some recorded on word documents and several were given verbally. The email templates were pre-recorded in outlook and one of the graduate advisors used their own response templates, while the other did not use templates. This meant that prospective students were not receiving a uniform response for their tours. If ambassadors were given a standard document, the amount of verbal instruction would be reduced for the advisor.

Orientation Training	Doc Template /Instruction	Verbal Template/Instruction	Handled by other dept.
Tour Content	1	1	0
Cart Registration	0	1	1
Email Response	2	1	0
Phone Call Response	0	1	0

### What subject matter experts (SMEs) are available to help?

Aside from the TGS recruitment office, there are other experts who helped train the undergraduate ambassadors, the Eagle Ambassadors (EAs). Eva Garza, the Administrative Coordinator of Customer Experience for the UNT Ambassador staff, helped set up the documentation for the graduate ambassadors. Interviewing them would give insight to how the eagle ambassadors are trained.

### Do graduate ambassadors struggle more with face-to-face, email, or telephone conversations with prospective students?

In discussions, graduate ambassadors struggled the most to be consistent in email and telephone conversations. New ambassadors were blindsided by international student questions and questions that were intended for other graduate student departments, such as international students or transcript resource reviews. They did not have a resource for phone responses, which caused errors in phone responses.

### Are there opportunities to do prep work before training?

Currently, the advisor had stored the training documents on his work computer, and printed the tour scripts for the ambassadors to study on their own time. These documents had gotten lost or damaged over time. This caused delays in preparing the ambassadors for giving independent tours.

## Recommendations

### Create a consolidated reference guide PDF that can be accessed on the shared folder network

There are different documents that aren't even of the same file-type, and the graduate ambassadors did not use them. Many of the responsibilities that ambassadors were expected to know in orientation, such as cart registration or setting up a tour online, did not have training documentation. These would not have the same problems of getting lost as the previous documents.

### Create a quiz-style orientation test on Canvas for new graduate ambassadors

A training module would allow the assistant director and the advisor to assess the ambassador's current knowledge of the campus in a grade form. Canvas is available to UNT current employees once requested, and would be accessible to students when they are away from their desk. Canvas is more secure and can transfer between UNT employee accounts much more easily as compared to quizlet or google forms.

### Create a single style guide for email responses

Currently, there are two reference sheets which the ambassadors use for gograd email responses. In addition, gograd receives a high volume of emails for other departments, such as international students admission questions and department-specific questions. Having a reference sheet that helps ambassadors direct these students to the right resource would be beneficial. TGS recruitment also does not currently have a script for phone responses.

## Learning Outcomes

- New Graduate Ambassadors will be able to give a tour after two weeks of hiring, without assistance, following the testing period.
- New Graduate Ambassadors will understand how to request and drive a cart for prospective students with walking needs at the end of the training
- Graduate Ambassadors will be able to provide faster and more accurate responses to prospective student questions at the end of the training over the phone, through email, or face-to-face.
- Graduate Ambassadors will have a reduced error count in phone and email responses.
- Graduate Ambassadors will be able to give more consistent responses by following the style guide.
- The Graduate Advisor will be able to accurately assess if Graduate Ambassadors have the baseline knowledge to lead a tour independently after the testing period
- The Assistant Director will be accurately informed when Graduate Ambassadors are prepared to take on special projects