INTRODUCTION

Given its campus-wide responsibility for graduate education and its connection to the research mission through the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research and Graduate Education (VCRGE), the Graduate School is in a unique position to set university-wide standards and policies, serve a special advocacy and communication role, promote diversity initiatives, and otherwise contribute to the excellence of graduate education. We fulfill these roles by initiating and incubating new ideas and facilitating graduate education through partnerships with graduate programs, schools/colleges, and other campus units.

Because excellence in research and graduate education is the cornerstone of our university, we need to ensure support of graduate students and graduate programs. In addition to their own individual advancement through their graduate studies, our students play central roles in both the research and undergraduate education missions of the institution. As the Ad Hoc Committee on Graduate School Restructuring has aptly framed it, “Graduate students are essential to the ecology of a great university.”

OVERARCHING ACCOMPLISHMENTS

After the creation of the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research and Graduate Education (VCRGE), the Graduate School began in its newly structured form with a sharp focus on graduate education (with oversight of 142 master’s programs, 107 doctoral programs, and a total of over 9,400 enrolled students).

At this time of transition, the Graduate School has maintained the critical functions of graduate education, including graduate admissions, academic services, academic analysis, funding, professional development, and diversity initiatives, without disruption. And with the VCRGE, the Graduate School has worked to maintain the crucial integration of graduate education and research.

The Graduate School enacted the basic principles that were identified in the restructuring conversations of last academic year and completed a review of graduate education needs at UW-Madison with the VCRGE through the Ad Hoc Committee on Graduate School Restructuring. We began activating projects and improvements associated with a number of the key findings identified in the review during Spring 2015. Examples include graduate student funding (the topic


2 Graduate School: Reorganization Updates, http://grad.wisc.edu/about/reorg
of thorough analysis in a report the has now been prepared); work on policies to allow non-pooled tuition programs work smoothly (the subject of an ongoing and strengthened collaboration between the Graduate School and the Division of Continuing Studies); and the collection of more and better data on graduate students and graduate programs (a continuing and enhanced activity of the Office of Academic Planning and Assessment).

In our newly restructured environment, the graduate faculty continue to be represented through the shared governance of the Graduate Faculty Executive Committee (GFEC) and the Graduate School Academic Planning Council, both chaired by the Dean of the Graduate School. The ever-increasing workload of GFEC has been handled in a timely and efficient manner with the highest throughput in recent years accomplished in 2014-15 (see the chart below).

In a rapidly evolving higher education landscape, graduate programs must adapt and innovate to meet the changing needs of their fields and students. The Graduate School has facilitated these efforts through assistance with new program development, the merger of existing programs at the request of schools and colleges, and ongoing review and continuous improvement of graduate programs.

**Office of Academic Planning and Assessment Accomplishments**

The Office of Academic Planning and Assessment (OAPA) plays a critical role in the perpetuation of high quality graduate programs and in turn, the successful research enterprise on campus. The office coordinates Graduate Faculty Executive Committee agendas, serves as a resource for effective program reviews, program development and implementation of corresponding program approvals, develops appropriate academic and program policy, promotes assessment of student learning, and increases access to accurate, beneficial and timely graduate data.

Program reviews are an essential mechanism for ensuring our graduate students receive the best possible education. The Office of Academic Planning and Assessment supported GFEC through an active year in 2014-15, taking up 34 program reviews or program review follow-ups and 38 academic program or policy actions, a 56% increase in activity in the same area from the 2013-2014 academic year. We also worked with the Office of the Provost and Academic Planning and Institutional Research (APIR) to create strategy and a collection tool for learning goals from each graduate program at the University. This is also integral to reaccreditation of the institution.

Over the last several years, the UW-Madison has sought to develop a suite of new professionally-oriented graduate programs aimed at serving non-traditional students in non-pooled capstone certificate and master’s programs (e.g. Educational Innovation revenue generating post-baccalaureate programs). The OAPA coordinated and facilitated strategic conversations among the leadership of the Graduate School, the Division of Continuing Studies, and APIR about a long-term vision for growth and support of these programs.

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**Graduate Education Highlights**

**Forty of our graduate programs were rated in the top ten of their field by the National Research Council (2010).**

Total graduate student enrollment is 9427 with 9% domestic targeted minorities and 28% international students from nearly 100 different countries (Fall 2014)

More than 84% of our full-time doctoral students are funded through UW-Madison for their first four years (Fall 2013).

The Graduate School partners with units across campus to offer 100+ professional development events each term.

Teaching Assistants participated in 4,098 course sections, and Research Assistants supported the research efforts of 969 federal grants (Fall 2013).

Over half of all invention disclosures to the Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation include at least one graduate student.
Finally, developing appropriate policies for graduate education and providing prospective and continuing students appropriate transparency demands quality data. We have expanded data analysis and reporting capabilities to meet the rapidly increasing need for data services for graduate programs, review committees, campus partners, and potential students.

**Office of Admissions and Academic Services Accomplishments**

The Office of Admissions and Academic Services (AAS) serves as a campus resource to promote and facilitate excellence in graduate education for prospective and current graduate students, staff and faculty. Admissions and Academic Services is the academic dean’s office for graduate students and is a point of contact throughout their graduate careers, from recruitment through graduation. AAS works with students, faculty, and graduate programs to recruit and admit students, ensure their satisfactory progress, advise them during their training, manage their portfolios, and grant degrees. This involved the processing of 20,467 graduate applications, 5,507 graduate degree warrants processed, 1,413 graduate degrees cleared and posted, and 852 dissertations deposited to ProQuest between Summer 2014 and Spring 2015. The AAS staff also advises and then approves specially tailored courses of research where students’ interests are highly interdisciplinary or not well served by matriculation in a single degree program.

- A new Graduate School electronic application (eApp) for graduate applications, which will debut in the Fall of 2015 is designed with our prospective student population in mind. It has a simplified and modern look, is ADA compliant, and is mobile friendly, accessible through different devices such as iPad, cell phone, and laptop. The eApp allows for program specific questions as well as uploading of requested documents. Since it is integrated into our campus Student Information System, it will allow for easier data collection and reporting.
AAS participates in cross-unit projects to enhance our engagement with directors and graduate studies and graduate program coordinators. We provide one-on-one training for grad coordinators on the different policies and technical student systems program coordinators may use; workshops are available for grad coordinators each fall semester and on an as needed basis throughout the year. Jump Start is an initiative for new grad coordinators, which serves as a networking session with Graduate School staff as well as other grad coordinators around campus and provides an introduction to Graduate School systems and processes.

Finally, Admissions and Academic Services is the lead Graduate School office responsible for ensuring that graduate students are maintaining satisfactory academic progress, providing regular monitoring and conducting evaluations and interventions as warranted. While the student’s primary academic advising will come from his/her home academic program and faculty mentor, Academic Services makes sure that students are staying on track with regard to Graduate School timelines and expectations. Toward that end, the Office is a source of “neutral” counseling separate from one’s advisor and program. Academic Services interprets Graduate School and University policy and applies them to student situations. The Office is responsible for formal grievance procedures on the rare occasions where that is required; the office partners with the Dean of Student’s office and makes counseling referrals if it appears that a student’s issue extends beyond academics. However, much more commonly needed is confidential, impartial, informal advice and guidance to students who are having a problem with their studies or their program or advisor. The Office staff provides such advice on a daily basis.

Office of Diversity, Inclusion and Funding Accomplishments

The Office of Diversity, Inclusion and Funding plays a central role in creating an inclusive and multicultural educational landscape through the retention and recruitment of diverse students, especially those from domestic minority and low-income/first generation college backgrounds, who have been traditionally under-represented in graduate education. We work to promote a shared campus-wide commitment to an inclusive climate for all UW-Madison graduate students through initiatives such as the McNair Scholars Program and the Graduate Research Scholars communities. In addition, the unit oversees the Graduate School’s fellowship and funding competitions, serves as the coordinating unit for multiple external fellowships, and provides assistance to graduate students, staff, and faculty on campus-wide funding issues.

Graduate fellowship funding benefits campus by improving the recruitment outcomes of the most sought after prospective graduate students and improving the retention of faculty by supporting their desire to attract the best graduate students to campus. To allow more flexibility in how graduate programs use funding to support their students, we moved Arts and Humanities Fellowships to a block grant allocation model. The Social Studies division made this transition during the 2013-14 academic year.
• The Graduate School in collaboration with graduate programs has steadily increased the underrepresented graduate student population, bringing more diversity to campus and enhancing the quality of all students’ educational experiences. To recognize the achievements of our underrepresented students, the UW-Madison Bouchet Graduate Honor Society chapter selected its fifth class of inductees. The Vice Provost for Diversity again partnered with the Graduate School to provide professional development grants to all inductees.

• Recruitment and retention of a diverse graduate student population is a long-term commitment that requires engagement throughout an individual’s educational career. To help build a pipeline of prospective graduate students from underrepresented groups, we support campus Summer Research Opportunities programs. 138 undergraduate students from throughout the U.S. and 12 international students participated in the program in the summer of 2014. To support UW-Madison undergraduates interested in pursuing graduate studies, ODIF is also home to the Ronald E. McNair Post-baccalaureate Achievement Program. McNair annually supports 31 students from underrepresented backgrounds, the overwhelming majority of whom go on to pursue graduate studies.

Many UW-Madison graduate students come from Wisconsin and stay in the state after they complete their degrees.

Among our master’s degree alumni, 56% entered graduate school as Wisconsin residents.

After graduation 54% of our master’s degree recipients reported finding jobs in Wisconsin.

Of our doctoral degree recipients, 17% were Wisconsin residents when they started graduate school.

Twenty-four percent of our Ph.D. alumni reported working in Wisconsin after graduation.

Office of Professional Development and Communications
Accomplishments

The Office of Professional Development and Communications houses two offices with distinct missions. The mission of the Office of Professional Development (OPD) is to coordinate, develop, and promote learning opportunities to foster the academic, professional, and life skills of the graduate education community. The mission of the Graduate School Communications Office is to effectively portray, through various media platforms, the values and identity of the Graduate School.

Interactions with new graduate students begin early through both faculty and program contacts at the local level and onboarding communications coordinated by the Graduate School, and continue at key transition stages throughout their graduate career. For example, OPD facilitates the transition to graduate school through our New Graduate Student Welcome and offers dissertation writing camps to promote timely degree completion. Access to career services is a primary concern among graduate students; in an effort to address this gap, OPD offers career development training opportunities for graduate program coordinators.

Graduate students and programs increasingly recognize the value of professional development beyond what individual programs can offer. Thus, OPD organized and/or sponsored 20 professional development workshops and speakers in the 2014-2015 academic year. These drew attendance from over 1,200 graduate students. Additionally, we collaborated with campus partners to provide graduate students with over 200 professional development and skill building events.
Individual Development Plans (IDPs) are widely recognized to improve graduate students’ academic experience and performance and lead students to more mindful approaches to planning their graduate school careers. OPD led a campus-wide initiative to implement IDPs for all graduate students and postdocs (about 10,000 total), including facilitation of a work group of faculty, PIs, and grants administrators. The work group developed and now OPD maintains a collection of resources and tools to support the use of IDPs.

In its communications role, the office coordinates across the Graduate School and with key campus partners including University Communications and individual graduate programs to provide content designed for both prospective and current graduate students as well as supporting communications for faculty and staff. Recognizing the importance of promoting graduate education to internal and external audiences, we participate in campus-wide communications and marketing initiatives. The office maintains and provides editorial oversight for the Graduate School website and a variety of media.

OVERARCHING PRIORITIES FOR 2015-16

With a new individual stepping into the role of Dean of the Graduate School this summer, there will be upcoming transition activities as the Dean enters the new position and becomes familiar with the current activities.

The key priorities of the coming academic year will require finalization of some remaining issues surrounding the restructuring. Reaching closure on the 101 budget and ongoing staffing levels for the Graduate School is a remaining priority and will need to be negotiated between the Dean and the VCRGE. The division of Trust and Foundation accounts between the Office of the VCRGE and the Graduate School also remains to be finalized.

The Graduate School led an effort to determine an implementation plan for a new rate-based method for graduate assistant pay. After engaging in analysis and conversations with key staff and faculty, the Ad Hoc Committee on Graduate Assistantships produced a set of recommendations to be implemented on May 23, 2016 (final report dated May 22, 2015). Now that this Ad Hoc Committee’s work has come to a close, it has been suggested that the senior leadership charge a new group with somewhat different membership to take up issues of implementation, training, and communication. The Graduate School will need to remain engaged with this effort throughout the coming year and guide the necessary policy modifications in the Office of Human Resources and the Graduate School.

Office of Academic Planning and Assessment Priorities for 2015-16

- Data on our graduate students’ post-graduation plans and impressions of their graduate school experience will allow our graduate programs to adapt the quality of the education they provide to changing student interests and market environments. Thus, we plan to execute a reporting strategy and store graduation exit survey data for use by potential students, in program reviews, and for program profiles.
- We plan to reorganize and promote resources for the program review process to support a renewed campus-level emphasis on reviews as a mechanism to continuously improve graduate programs.
- Graduate alumni data can be useful in understanding the efficacy of our graduate programs, changes in markets for our graduates, and how and to what extent our graduates are succeeding. Thus, we intend to explore ways to collect graduate alumni data.
**Office of Admissions and Academic Services Priorities for 2015-16**

- Given campus emphasis on the development of new graduate programs for non-traditional students, AAS is putting in place appropriate procedures and systems. In this context, we will collaborate with campus partners to create clearer guidelines for online degree programs and for international collaboration in graduate degree programs.
- To improve graduate student advising, we intend to foster and support a graduate advising committee among graduate programs.
- To increase efficiencies from admission to graduation, we will expand digital workflow and introduce the new eApp for graduate admissions.
- We will continue to work with the Registrar’s Office to automate the degree award process and greatly decrease the amount of time necessary to officially post a degree to the student record.
- We will coordinate with the Office of Diversity, Inclusion, and Funding to streamline the prospective-student-to-applicant flow and lower the barriers to access for our first generation applicants and other targeted, at-risk populations of talented students.

**Graduate students increase the diversity of campus.**

Campus has benefited from a steady increase in enrollment of domestic underrepresented graduate students over the last eight years. Each year, more than half of the new graduate students who enroll completed a previous degree from a UW System campus. International graduate students make up 24% of our graduate student population, are drawn from the most competitive undergraduate programs around the globe, and represent nearly 100 different countries.

**Office of Diversity, Inclusion and Funding Priorities for 2015-16**

While there has been growth in the amount of measurable diversity within the graduate student population, new strategies are necessary to move the needle in this area and to that make the campus climate more welcoming to all students. The following are the priorities for this Office over the next one to three years:

- The Graduate School will use currently-collected data more effectively to evaluate student retention by division/school/program by demographic group of interest.
- A Bouchet Society seminar series and professional development events aimed at promoting the organization and providing special opportunities to members will be implemented.
- Pilot workshops on unconscious bias will be developed for graduate admissions committees in partnership with WISELI.
- Tracking students from initial contact through their graduate career will be undertaken in an effort to increase enrollment and successful graduation.
- DIF will deepen and expand collaborative relationships with internal and external partners to improve recruitment of underrepresented graduate students.

**Office of Professional Development and Communications Priorities for 2015-16**

- In response to the Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Graduate School Restructuring, OPD is currently in the midst of a major initiative to restructure the Graduate School’s professional development program. Our goal is a professional development program that is responsive to the needs of our graduate students, transparent and inclusive in its administration, and well-articulated and highly visible to graduate students, faculty, and staff.
- We expect to continue to advocate for graduate students in the campus-wide career services conversation and work to shift perceptions about non-academic careers.
As a means to promote alternative careers for our graduate students, we will develop a collection of alumni profiles that convey alternative career paths to our current students at the same time highlighting the accomplishments of our alumni.

We will continue to seek out, develop, and disseminate news stories that show the impact our graduate students and alumni have in Wisconsin and throughout the world.

MAJOR CHALLENGES/ISSUES FOR THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

The biggest challenge for the Graduate School now and into the future is the ongoing task of balancing the needs of students and programs with the available resources. Additional resources are needed, both in funding and staff support, in order for graduate education at UW-Madison to remain one of its key strengths. The report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Graduate School Restructuring captures the breadth of the Graduate School’s needs in terms of personnel and program-related resources, as well as funding of graduate students.

Staffing Needs and the Campus Role of the Graduate School

The Graduate School began in its reorganized form Fall 2014 with suboptimal resources. Although the new structure allows for a Dean with a full-time commitment to graduate education, the Graduate School has operated this academic year with only one Associate Dean and a half time assistant to the Dean. Detailed information on staffing needs is available in “Positions in Support of the Graduate Education Enterprise” (dated February 9, 2015). The current staff of the Graduate School have been amazingly effective and efficient given the constraints of the situation, and they continue to make significant accomplishments on a number of fronts; however, the limitations of current staffing levels have resulted in lost opportunities and limited the Graduate School’s capacity for innovation.

This shortfall in staffing will be exacerbated by the application of a 4% budget cut in 2015-16. Although some portion of this cut will be ameliorated by the addition of one new fee (International Applicant Document Processing Fee) and the return of another fee to its prior level (Dissertation Deposit Fee), the reduction comes at a critical time for graduate education at the UW and will hinder the Graduate School’s ability to facilitate the development of new graduate programs, strengthen and expand diversity efforts, undertake important professional development and other initiatives, and to proactively address the requirements of our accreditors and other external bodies.

Significantly, existing personnel levels are insufficient to realize the objectives put forth by the Working Group on Leadership Changes in the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research/Dean of the Graduate School (Faculty Document 2483) and the University Committee (Faculty Document 2500), each of which envisioned a proactive and innovative Graduate School. The conclusions of these two bodies were reinforced by the findings of the Ad Hoc Committee on Graduate School Restructuring, which pointed to the Graduate School being “severely understaffed for its many responsibilities, both at and below the associate dean level” and highlighted the importance of the role of the Graduate School in areas from graduate student funding to graduate student professional development. It should also be noted that the committee was unable to identify any activities currently being conducted by the Graduate School that are not essential.
Funding of Graduate Students

Assistantship and fellowship funding for graduate students is a central issue of concern for the UW-Madison campus. Graduate student support promotes the success of faculty and increases the research and scholarship productivity of our institution. Fellowship funding, in particular, benefits campus by improving the recruitment outcomes of the most sought after prospective graduate students and improving the retention of faculty by supporting their desire to attract the best graduate students to campus. A thorough analysis of current graduate student funding trends and future needs is provided in the report “Global Funding Needs of Graduate Students,” dated March 31, 2015.

Particularly in light of recent State budget developments, which have prompted the decision to increase tuition remission surcharge and have the potential to negatively impact 101 funded TA and PA positions, there is a pressing need to identify new resources for graduate student support. The State budget impacts are anticipated to result in an overall reduction of available graduate assistantships in the 2015-17 biennium. This will have a negative effect on individual graduate students and the ability of graduate programs to maintain viable cohorts.

The additional $2M in fellowship support promised by WARF for 2015-16 is greatly needed, but this increase will only partially address the graduate fellowship needs of campus. Securing this $2M as a permanent addition to the Fellowships budget is essential for future planning. Additionally, efforts by departments/schools/colleges to raise funds for graduate fellowships in the upcoming Campaign must be supported and emphasized.

STATE OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL STRATEGIC PLANNING

The most recent strategic planning undertaken by the Graduate School occurred in 2013 and resulted in five working groups that operated in 2013-14. Two of the working groups were focused on graduate education issues and completed their reports and activities in Spring 2014: Fundraising for Graduate Student Support and Graduate Student Placement Tracking. However, significant progress forward on these topics in 2014-15 has been hampered by the reorganization and staffing levels.

Although a major strategic planning effort awaits the new Dean of the Graduate School, several items in the Ad Hoc committee report have been addressed in the short term.

Other References

Detailed Reports of Graduate School Offices

Graduate School Summary Handout
(available at https://grad.wisc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/GS_one_pager.pdf)

Graduate School Reorganization poster from Showcase, April 2015