

The Graduate College at Ohio University

*Final Report from the Graduate College Task Force
2 May 2008*

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Introduction

The Graduate College Task Force was established by Executive Vice President and Provost Krendl in Fall 2007 and began meetings in September. The task force was charged to determine the structure and function of the Graduate College, as recommended by different groups on campus, especially the Graduate Priorities Implementation Team of Vision Ohio. In the initial meetings of our task force four themes emerged. (1) The College would need enough resources and autonomy to improve graduate education, asserting a greater advocacy and visibility role for graduate education than the Office of Graduate Studies is able to do. (2) The College ought not, however, assert an overseeing role that deprives individual departments, schools, and programs around campus of their ability to make choices about their unit. (3) The College ought not be a structure that results in unjustified mandates to the programs to redirect efforts, enhance outcomes or create additional administrative burdens on the schools and departments. (4) The task force would negotiate these issues best by actively seeking the input of faculty, directors, and deans on campus.

The document we present here attempts to implement throughout the philosophy inherent in these points.

Process Overview

In addition to periodic meetings of the task force, we arranged meetings with the associate deans for graduate studies of the academic colleges, with the Council of Chairs and Directors, with Graduate Council and its Planning and Strategy committee, and with members of the University Curriculum Council (UCC). Sergio Ulloa also met with the retired dean of the former Graduate College on campus (closed in the 1970s, Prof. Norman Cohn). Based on these meetings, and on our own deliberations, the committee crafted a description of the College, including a mission statement, the organization of the College, and its functions. In December 2007, several members of the task force met with EVP Provost Krendl to discuss an initial draft of this report. One of the conclusions of that meeting was that this report should also develop a set of specific metrics to accompany the goals of the Graduate College, in order to measure its success.

The members of the task force acknowledge the feedback and guidance received across campus on this effort.

Members of the Task Force

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Dominic Barbato – Graduate Student Senate
Mia Consalvo (SCC) - Media Arts and Studies
Kenneth Cutright (BUS) - Management Systems
Andrew Escobedo (A&S) - English
Dana Levitt (EDU) - Counseling and Higher Education
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Ex-officio: Katherine Tadlock, Interim Assoc. Provost for Graduate Studies

Mission Statement of the Graduate College

The Graduate College has, at the heart of its mission, to support, strengthen, coordinate, and advance graduate education at Ohio University in partnership with the graduate faculty and Graduate Council.

Recognizing the need for advocacy for students and faculty with university administration and within the state of Ohio, the Dean of the Graduate College will promote graduate education, as well as research and creative activities, at all levels including outreach programs in the state, national, and international arenas.

Due to the intellectual impact of graduate students on undergraduate education, the Graduate College will foster collaboration between graduate and undergraduate programs across the institution.

A. The Goals of the Graduate College

In support of its mission, the Graduate College will have the following goals. Each goal is followed by a list of metrics meant to be illustrative rather than exhaustive, and for which quantitative targets should be established soon after the establishment of the Graduate College.

1. Advance graduate education through the enhancement of existing programs with a strong record of achievement in teaching and scholarship, and through the support of new programs at the graduate level within the university and the state. Develop a long-term strategic plan for graduate education in conjunction with Graduate Council that is consistent with individual colleges and university priorities.
Metrics: program competitions instituted and followed through to completion and/or with positive results; number of existing or new programs, initiatives or certificates supported administratively with strong potential; identification and follow-through on promising areas for new initiatives; efficient advocacy within the University System of Ohio for graduate education at Ohio University; a long-term strategic plan.

2. Support graduate programs at Ohio University by assisting departments and schools in the recruitment of high quality graduate students both at home and abroad and providing appropriate funding for those students based on program selected peer institutions. It will coordinate domestic and multicultural graduate recruitment, and liaise with the office of international affairs for international graduate student recruitment.

***Metrics:** quality and number of graduate student applications according to discipline-specific guidelines; increases in stipend levels and numbers of TA/GA lines; financial and administrative support of recruitment activities (materials, websites, visits to fairs, students visiting campus, etc.); monitoring, reporting, and improving the multicultural diversity of incoming graduate students; assist on the effective tracking of alumni, especially abroad, and reports to the programs.*

3. Assist graduate programs in the admissions process by overseeing and standardizing appropriate functions, such as university requirements for admission, while respecting the autonomy of schools and departments in establishing discipline specific requirements.

***Metrics:** new and revised general admission policies (such as TOEFL, and appropriateness of undergraduate degrees in changing global environments, e.g. Bologna Accords) in conjunction with Graduate Council; measurement and tabulation of peer standards with reports to the programs; reduction of central application processing times.*

4. Advocate for and assist in retention of graduate students through working with the administration, Graduate Student Senate and faculty in maximizing the graduate student experience, including the quality of programs, health insurance, housing, child care and the support of a graduate community.

***Metrics:** establishment and monitoring of the effectiveness of the New Graduate Student Orientation initiative; reviews of current funding mechanisms and assumptions; implementation of student surveys to identify/refine priorities to improve graduate student life; increase amounts and number of awards for named fellowships; advocacy for and reduction of the graduate student general fee; develop and support of plan for increased subsidy or other provisions for health insurance and child care for graduate student community.*

5. Strengthen graduate programs through a fair, equitable, and streamlined process of assessment and enhancement of those programs with potential for national recognition and/or fulfilling the needs of the nation and region.

***Metrics:** establishment of benchmarks, timelines and ongoing processes for assessment of programs in coordination with Graduate Council and UCC; follow-through of evaluation of Task Force on Centers of Excellence.*

6. Advocate at the national, state, and local levels, as well as with administration, for the funding and presentation of research and creative activities for graduate students and faculty to achieve the goals of Vision Ohio; facilitate the efforts of faculty and students in the grant writing process for training and research grants; facilitate and implement strategies for the development of strong teaching skills in graduate students.
Metrics: identification of potential sources for external support of fellowships and monies awarded relative to peer institutions; support of graduate student travel to research conferences/meetings at the national and international levels; number and support for quality programs that support graduate student professional development in pedagogy, grant writing, etc.; promotion of graduate students participation in the research and creative activity fair; number of graduate students participating in teaching skills development activities.

7. Support and facilitate the administrative aspects of multidisciplinary research, creative activities and program development at the graduate level.
Metrics: completion of the Individual Interdisciplinary Program 7-yr review and implementation of recommendations; number of multidisciplinary programs where associated workload is reported to be more easily managed.

8. Coordinate graduate program activities among the Athens and regional campuses, as well as with programs on the Athens campus.
Metrics: identification of funding sources for graduate outreach program initiatives; number and quality of training events for regional campus staff to facilitate program implementation; identification and implementation of policies to facilitate organizational reporting, etc.

9. Coordinate collaboration of graduate students and faculty with undergraduate programs across the institution.
Metrics: promotion and creation of programs for undergraduate experience in research and creative activities in collaboration with graduate students and faculty; number of undergraduate students reporting satisfaction with graduate teaching and research mentoring; numbers of students reporting that research endeavors are brought into the undergraduate classroom.

10. Leverage resources of the Office of Research and the Graduate College to enhance graduate student and faculty research and creative activities, as well as the endeavors of the graduate programs across the university.
Metrics: number of students reporting external support of student research, scholarship and creative activities; number of graduate programs that report increased support from their programs.

B. Structure of the Graduate College

1. Graduate College Organization

The Graduate College will be led by the Vice President for Research and Creative Activities and Dean of the Graduate College. The Dean will be a member of the University's Academic Leadership Council and the Executive Staff. The Graduate College will be represented on university committees including the University Curriculum Council, the University International Council, and the Graduate Education and Research Board. The Dean will represent the University to external groups such as the Regents' Advisory Committee on Graduates Study (RACGS), the National Research Council, and the Council of Graduate Schools. The Dean shall be the chief advocate for graduate education on campus.

The main faculty advisory group to the Dean will be the Graduate Council, particularly in areas of strategic planning and resource allocation, as well as policies and procedures related to the awarding of graduate degrees. Other consulting groups to the Dean include the Associate Deans for Research group, and CRSCA (Council for Research, Scholarship and Creative Activities). We recommend that Graduate Council retain its present structure, but take on more explicit responsibilities for establishing university-wide rules and procedures, playing a more central role in advising the Dean, EVP and Provost, and President on matters pertaining to graduate education and graduate programs. As appropriately described in the "*Organization and Administration of Graduate Education*," a publication of the Council of Graduate Schools, the Graduate Council should have legislative authority over academic matters pertaining to graduate programs at Ohio University. These include curriculum proposal/development, creation of new degree/certificate programs, standards of conduct, and ethical standards, academic conflicts and program assessments. [Notice that Graduate Council recommendations on curricular matters will be forwarded to UCC as appropriate, as per Faculty Handbook sections VII.B and VII.C.] At the same time, Graduate Council will act as an adviser to the Dean on all administrative matters pertaining to graduate education, including resource allocation.

The Associate Deans for Research and/or Graduate Education will discuss day-to-day operation of graduate education, make recommendations to the Graduate Council on policy matters, make recommendations to the Dean on items such as recruitment, application process, graduate appointments, and setting of graduate priorities, and serve as a liaison between the Graduate College and the colleges.

CRSCA and GERB will continue with current functions of responsibility

for research activities and strategic investments, with participation of the VPR/Dean of the Graduate College.

2. Associate Dean of the Graduate College

The staff currently in the Office of Graduate Studies will report to the Dean. Moreover, we recommend that an Associate Graduate Dean be appointed to oversee the operation of the College. This will parallel the structure of the academic colleges, where a tenured member of the Graduate Faculty is appointed to assist the Dean.

3. Graduate College Faculty

Group I Faculty in the ranks of Assistant Professor, Associate Professor or Professor, are members of the Graduate Faculty at Ohio University, unless specified otherwise by the school or department.

All schools and departments must have an explicit policy on file with the Graduate College that describes their criteria and possible different levels of Graduate Faculty (e.g. Master vs. PhD) as appropriate to the discipline. This policy should address criteria for Group I to IV Faculty (as per the Faculty Handbook), as well as for adjunct and visiting appointments as fitting to the discipline and professional practices. The corresponding dean of the academic unit should approve the policies for each school and department before they are filed with the Graduate College.

The Chair of Graduate Studies in each department or school will be chosen from among the Graduate Faculty in that unit, and appointed by the Chair or Head of the unit, as it is current practice.

4. Graduate College Students

The Graduate College will initially adopt the current rules and regulations of the Office of Graduate Studies pertaining to graduate students. These regulations, contained in the *Graduate Student Handbook*, will serve as the starting point for the continuing improvement of processes and policies in the Graduate College.

C. Functions of the Graduate College

1. Oversight of Graduate Education Programs

The Graduate Dean will provide oversight for all graduate education programs at the university. These activities include, but are not limited to, assistance with the development and implementation of new graduate programs and interdisciplinary programs, final acceptance of theses and dissertations, and final graduation clearances.

- a. Graduate Program Reviews: the Graduate Dean shall be involved in the review process of graduate programs, being vigilant of the graduate issues of a given review, and assist Graduate Council and UCC in carrying out a timely and rigorous review process. We recommend that the Dean be involved in the review timeline *simultaneously* with Graduate Council, in order to provide a summary letter to UCC that also reflects the views and considerations of Graduate Council. These reviews are conducted for each program normally every seven years, although we strongly recommend that the Graduate Dean work to establish a flexible review schedule that coincides with accreditation or other external reviews of a program, in order to reduce its administrative burden.
- b. New Graduate Programs: The Graduate College shall consider current program offerings at the university and the broader national and international context to inform and facilitate the development and implementation of new graduate programs. The Graduate Dean will work with academic units to prepare for the inclusion of new programs and address necessary steps for their implementation. The Graduate Dean will work with initiating departments and colleges to facilitate the implementation of new graduate programs including marketing, recruitment, and university processes for course offerings and matriculation of students. The Graduate College will assist the initiation of programs in proposal development, as well as full proposals to UCC, RACGS and the Board of Regents, and advocate for the program with those groups.
- c. Graduate Interdisciplinary Programs: While there are few interdisciplinary programs currently in place, there are inherent challenges with the present system. The Graduate College will serve as the college of record for students who pursue interdisciplinary graduate degree programs not fully or predominantly contained within a college. The Graduate College may facilitate the construction and implementation of interdisciplinary programs, promoting their application as appropriate, and coordinating communication among colleges as necessary. The Graduate College will likewise oversee the process to ensure that students fulfill degree requirements.
- d. Final Graduation Clearance: The Graduate College will maintain the current system of graduation clearance in the academic college, thus receiving recommendations for graduation from the appropriate granting individual within each college. The Graduate Dean will, according to university policies, perform a final review to ensure students' eligibility for university degrees, and will work to develop

processes that ensure quality control for theses and dissertations. The Graduate Dean will have the final signature to clear applicants for graduation.

- e. Ethical behavior policies: The Graduate College will require all the schools and departments to elaborate an explicit policy on ethical behavior of their graduate students, and post such policy on the Graduate College website.

2. Recruitment and Admissions Processing

- a. Support for processing, follow-up and maintenance of graduate applications: All graduate applications will initially be screened and processed at the Graduate College office to ensure that all minimal standards for graduate study are met. Applications that meet the minimal standards will be forwarded to the appropriate department for an admit/reject decision at the department and college level in a timely manner. The department will then notify the applicant and the Graduate College of the decision and any financial assistance or scholarships that may be offered. When the applicant notifies the department of his/her intentions regarding the offer the department will notify the Graduate College. The department will then verify enrollment and notify the Graduate College of the applicant's enrollment or non-enrollment.
- b. Funding to assist departments/schools/programs in recruitment efforts (brochures, webpage, visits): The Graduate College shall maintain a webpage with information regarding all graduate programs and associated options for each degree, the application process, contact information for the department graduate chairs, minimal standards for admission, and financial support. The Graduate College should coordinate efforts and provide assistance in the recruitment of students from underrepresented groups for all graduate programs. This should include additional funding through the Graduate College for financial aid to help recruit those underrepresented minorities.
- c. Coordination of recruitment for interdisciplinary programs: Information on interdisciplinary graduate programs housed in the Graduate College (see 1c) should be provided on the College webpage (see 2b); a liaison for all interdisciplinary programs should be housed in the Graduate College.
- d. Coordination of international student recruitment: The Graduate College will support coordination of international recruitment activities,

including establishment and fostering of relationships with key international institutions, and providing assistance to prospective students. The Graduate College webpage will have a link for prospective international students that would provide information, requirements, applications process, etc. (similar to the current page in Graduate Studies). These activities, in coordination with the office of international affairs, will pursue the recruitment of high quality international graduate students to Ohio University.

3. Support of Graduate Student Research and Creativity

Along with program oversight and admissions processing, the Graduate College will actively seek to support graduate student research and creative work. At present, each year the university offers five named fellowships: the Cady, Clippinger, Kantner, Trisolini, and the Graduate Fellowship. These fellowships are valuable, both for monetary support and graduate student morale, but the awards themselves remain at a modest level. The Graduate College will advocate for additional funding, through external and internal sources, in order to increase the amount dispersed with each award and to add more awards of a similar nature. These augmentations would assist graduate student recruitment at the program level, improve morale for current graduate students, and increase production of high quality work among graduate students.

The Graduate College will also work to promote existing sources of funding and information relevant to graduate student research and creativity. The Graduate Student Senate itself currently administers grants for research travel and for original work projects. The Graduate College will assist the Senate in support of the effort to advertise and administer these grants. The Graduate College will maintain an online central database of graduate student activities related to research and creativity on campus, as well as information about internal and external funding sources. This database, a clearinghouse of information gathered from various sources, will feature a user-friendly and easy-to-update format.

In a further effort to augment support for research and creativity, the Graduate College will institute an Office of Nationally Competitive Awards for graduate students. This will borrow elements from the very successful undergraduate version of this office, but will also be sensitive to the differences of graduate awards and prizes, as they tend to be very discipline specific. This office will intervene in areas common to most graduate award applications, such as professional presentation and deadline management, as well as matching applicants with appropriate faculty mentors. This office will also encourage graduate student participation in international scholarships, such as the Fulbright program facilitated by the office of international affairs.

4. Support for Graduate Students

The Graduate College shall be responsible for increasing the financial support given to graduate students, particularly the number of stipends and stipend levels to achieve parity with peer institutions identified by programs that offer graduate degrees in the university. The Graduate Dean shall advocate for increased levels of funding for graduate students and for decreasing the graduate general fee and health insurance costs to students in order to make Ohio University more attractive for graduate education. Research on stipend levels at peer institutions shall be tracked consistently by the Graduate College for comparison purposes and as a responsible way to increase funding. The Graduate Dean will actively secure funds to assist in supporting graduate students across the university.

The Graduate College will also work to aid in the professional development of graduate students. Ohio University should continue to expand its training and mentoring for graduate student assistants, collaborating with the Graduate Student Senate to provide workshops focused on grant writing. Similarly, the Graduate College will be committed to activities that support the preparation of future faculty, and coordinate campus activities towards the development of strong teaching skills in graduate students. With the increased focus on academic integrity and ethics, it is necessary that workshops on professional ethics be provided by the Graduate College. All of these professional development efforts should be coordinated between the Graduate College and the other colleges, schools, departments, and the Graduate Student Senate.

Although the academic functions of the Graduate College are the most important, it will also be firmly committed to enhancing the life of Ohio University graduate students. The Office of Graduate Studies has already implemented a successful general student orientation and increased its efforts to provide support to students. The Graduate College should continue with those efforts as well as expand them in key areas: aiding graduate students in finding affordable and safe housing, as well as providing assistance with childcare and general support for families.

Another important mission of the College will be to enhance the social and cultural programming targeted at graduate students. The Graduate College will especially collaborate with the office of international affairs to organize activities for international students on campus.

A user-friendly website that contains all of the information required by graduate students to utilize the social and professional programs initiated by the Graduate College is imperative for coordinating efforts effectively and providing easy access to the graduate student community.

5. Support and Involvement of Postdoctoral Fellows

As the graduate enterprise continues to grow at Ohio University, increasing number of postdoctoral fellows are strong contributors to the academic mission of the institution. They are mostly supported by external agency grants and contracts, as well as with internal funds, and work in close connection with the faculty and graduate students associated with these projects. As their work tends to be somewhat disconnected from other on-campus activities, they do not typically make use of the support structure offered to graduate students or faculty. The Graduate College will make efforts to positively impact the research and creative activities as well as the general on-campus experience of postdoctoral fellows by incorporating them into the graduate fabric at Ohio University. They will be encouraged by the Graduate College to be active participants of professional development workshops and other support activities available to graduate students.

6. Graduate Student Records Management and Retention

The Graduate College will take central responsibility for graduate student records collection, management, and retention. The Graduate College will work with associate deans and program graduate chairs to identify data collection needs. The Graduate College will collaborate with Institutional Research to ensure the collection of descriptive (such as GRE, TOEFL, average undergraduate GPA, number of completed applications, acceptances, and enrollments) and performance data (for example – retention in program, time to graduation) and to provide requested data subsets to colleges and programs. The Graduate College will act as the central clearinghouse for graduate program data collection and reporting for data requests (reviews and surveys) for both internal (for example – seven-year reviews) and external (for example – accrediting agencies, *U.S. News* surveys) constituencies. The Graduate College will ensure that the data collected is of high quality (consistent and complete), is available in appropriate forms based on constituent needs, and is provided in a timely manner.

7. Interaction with Regional Campuses

The Graduate College will promote the offering of central-campus graduate programs at regional campus locations, where determined to be appropriate by the offering programs. The Graduate College will facilitate intercampus communications regarding graduate programs and act as an arbitrator in disagreements, as appropriate. The Graduate

College will identify and document best practices in the offering of graduate programs at off-main-campus locations by main campus programs and aid in the establishment of any desired off-campus offerings.

The Graduate College will act to incorporate students not in Athens into the Ohio University graduate student experience through the establishment and maintenance of a communication system that makes these students aware of professional development and social activities available on the Athens campus. The Graduate College will encourage the offering of professional development activities remotely (by internet or by interactive broadcast, for example) where feasible.

8. Evaluation of Future Challenges, Investments and Strategic Planning

The Graduate College will establish an ongoing strategic planning process in concert with the other colleges for identifying and fostering new efforts in graduate education, research and creative activities across the institution. In coordination with GERB, the Dean of the Graduate College will evaluate new opportunities for program development, and recommend investments to facilitate these activities. The Graduate College plan will be informed by and provide follow-through to the ongoing process by the Task Force on Centers of Excellence.

9. Coordination with Undergraduate Programs

The Graduate College will take responsibility for ensuring that there is communication and collaboration between graduate programs and the undergraduate programs in the institution. The talents and energy of graduate students and associated faculty have a direct impact on the intellectual environment at Ohio University. As such, activities under the Graduate College make an important contribution to undergraduate education. Participation of undergraduates in research projects and creative activities, many in collaboration with graduate students, provide unique opportunities for professional and personal advancement at all levels and in all disciplines and should be encouraged.