

VISION 2021

A Strategic Plan for Graduate Education at the

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-LA CROSSE

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INTRODUCTION TO THE GRADUATE EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLAN

This 2016 *Graduate Education Comprehensive Strategic Plan* at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse (UWL) is written as the primary guiding document for the institution and for all faculty and staff committed to quality graduate education. Almost two years of information gathering has gone into preparation of this report. The result is a series of recommendations based upon the data collected and the consensus of opinions from approximately one hundred UWL faculty, staff, and students. While sometimes lofty, these recommendations are realistic and achievable; as such, they should guide efforts to improve graduate education in the immediate future and set the stage for long term growth and development. It is our belief that UWL is poised to become the top *graduate* comprehensive school within the UW System.

Graduate education at UWL has many strengths, a prime example being the talented faculty dedicated to the graduate programs in their departments. All of the graduate programs at UWL produce qualified professionals for the employment needs of the Upper Midwest, and many of these programs have reputations that attract students from other states and other nations. Nonetheless, over the years, a culmination of external and internal reviews has identified concerns regarding graduate education infrastructure, enrollment, staffing, administration, and efforts to educate the UWL community about the accomplishments of graduate faculty and students.

The time is right for an increased focus on graduate education at UWL. According to the Council of Graduate Schools (*Graduate Enrollment and Degrees: 2004 to 2014*), first time enrollment of graduate students reached an all-time high in 2014. At UWL over the past two years, two thirds of newly approved degree programs and degree programs under development have been at the graduate level. According to UW System (*2017-2019 Biennial Operating Budget*), employment growth is steadiest for those with a masters degree or above, even during periods of recession. Several of UWL's peer and aspirant institutions already have made enhanced graduate programming a priority for serving the educational needs of their regions. This document is written in order to build on the current strengths of graduate education at UWL and position UWL to serve society's growing need for master prepared professionals.

NOTE: This plan was endorsed by the UWL Graduate Council on November 4, 2016, by the UWL Faculty Senate on November 17, 2016, and by the UWL Academic Staff Council on November 28, 2016. An electronic version of this strategic plan is available at www.uwlax.edu/Graduate-studies/Grad-studies-strategic-planning.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The overarching goal of this comprehensive strategic plan is to create a path for UWL to become a top tier *graduate* comprehensive university in the UW-System. To make this happen, UWL Crosse needs to devote greater attention and resources to graduate education and develop systematic strategies to continually improve its graduate offerings.

Current efforts to address graduate education were initiated with a Provost task force in 2010. However, the recommendations of the task force were not systematically implemented. Renewed efforts to address graduate education began with a self-study in 2014. The self-study was followed by a Provost-funded external review of graduate education by consultants from the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS). These efforts resulted in the establishment of the Graduate Education Leadership Board to develop a graduate strategic plan. Through the self-study, external visit, and engagement of the university community in extensive interviews and conversations, three **key concerns** surfaced. They were:

1. The infrastructure for graduate education lacks central oversight and leadership;
2. Program development is hampered by inconsistent planning;
3. The graduate student and graduate faculty experience suffers from ineffective communication, inconsistent support, and a lack of resources.

To address these concerns, this strategic plan focuses on three key themes to pull graduate education together and set the direction to build UWL into a top tier comprehensive graduate educational institution. The **key themes** are:

1. Infrastructure;
2. Program Development;
3. Enhancement of Student and Faculty Experiences.

First, it is critical that graduate education make a shift from a fragmented collection of independent programs to a centralized approach with sustained management and vision. To achieve a more centralized administration, the infrastructure of graduate studies needs to be revised and expanded. It has become clear that the Office of Graduate Studies needs to be sufficiently staffed to 1) manage and oversee day-to-day duties and 2) provide vision and advocacy for graduate education. Without this investment in the infrastructure of graduate education, the remaining recommendations will be difficult to achieve.

Second, to effectively move graduate education forward, there needs to be a focus on developing and



enhancing graduate programs consistent with the academic vision of the institution. Haphazard program development does not systematically take advantage of available resources or the market conditions that can result in building successful self-sustaining graduate programs. The involvement of the Office of Graduate Studies in supporting the development of programs will be crucial to the long term viability of graduate education on campus.

Third, campus-wide graduate education can be improved for students and faculty. Better coordination of communication and messaging across programs can bring together existing fragmented information. Inadequate funding for graduate assistantships on campus is a common concern for program directors, as well as students, and needs to be addressed. Overall insufficient attention to graduate education has resulted in inadequate financial resources and workload inequities for graduate faculty.

HISTORY OF THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

Graduate education at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse dates back to 1956 when the Graduate Division was created. In 1964, the Graduate Division became the Graduate School and, in 1967, became the Graduate College. Since then, there have been many changes in the organization of the institution and, as a result, the Graduate College has been replaced with an Office of Graduate Studies. Today, graduate education is more important than ever to the success of our students and our state, but it will take hard work and careful planning to achieve the goals outlined in this strategic plan.

The document presented here provides an opportunity for UWL to move forward with graduate education and is the end result of a number of preceding events. As mentioned in the executive summary, the planning process began with a Provost Task Force in 2010 and a follow-up self-study in 2014. As a result of the self-study, subsequent actions were taken to identify concerns with graduate education and to determine the consensus opinions of the key stakeholders. They included:

1. External Review by representatives of the Council of Graduate Schools (April 2015)
2. Graduate Education Summit (September 2015)
3. Establishment of Graduate Education Leadership Board (September 2015)
4. A series of one-on-one interviews with UW administrators, faculty, staff, and students, as well as Deans from peer/aspirant institutions (2015-2016 academic year)
5. Mini-Summit (May 2016)
6. Draft Comprehensive Strategic Plan (August 2016)
7. Graduate Summit II (August 2016)
8. Final Comprehensive Strategic Plan (October 2016)

Full reports of the task force, the self-study, and external review are available online at www.uwlax.edu/Graduate-studies/Grad-studies-strategic-planning. Below is a brief summary of these prior reports:

The 2012 **Provost's Task Force** made three overriding recommendations, which were:

- 1) increase the Director of Graduate Studies to a full-time appointment,
- 2) create an Advisory Council for the Office of Graduate Studies, and
- 3) increase advocacy and support for graduate education.

The 2014 **Self-Study** identified a number of challenges to graduate education on campus. These included:

- 1) decentralized programming and administration,
- 2) lack of interdisciplinary programming and research/scholarship,
- 3) the diminished identification of graduate education at a predominantly undergraduate institution,
- 4) low teaching assistant and graduate assistant funding, and
- 5) a half-time Director of Graduate Studies with limited time to provide leadership and strategic direction for graduate education.

As a result of the 2014 Self-Study, the Provost's Office funded an external review team from the Council of Graduate Studies (CGS) to come to campus Spring 2015. The 2015 External Visitors' Report made the following recommendations for UWL:

- Provide a clearer understanding of the role of graduate education within the mission of the University.
- Provide for appropriate personnel to support the Office of Graduate Studies. At a minimum, this should include moving the Director to a full-time position and adding a full-time staff person to support graduate admissions, graduate recruitment, and communications in addition to supporting graduate students and faculty.
- Assure graduate perspectives are included in academic discussions by adding the Director to the Council of Deans.
- Develop recruiting strategies for current undergraduate students to encourage them to pursue graduate education at UWL.
- Consider development and/or expansion of graduate programs in either online or low residency formats to more effectively compete for working professionals who wish to pursue graduate education.
- Set a goal to increase graduate enrollment to 1,000 students by 2020.
- Take specific actions to correct the misconception that undergraduate and graduate education need to be in competition with each other. The Office of Graduate Studies should highlight examples where undergraduate education is strengthened by a strong and visible graduate education program.



The 2015 **Graduate Summit** brought together over 80 UWL faculty and staff to share the results of the self-study and the external visitors report. Participants echoed the earlier reports' recommendations for a full-time graduate director and graduate representation on the Dean's Council. They also called for:

- 1) a shift toward greater centralization of graduate studies,
- 2) efforts toward greater diversity and interdisciplinary programming, and
- 3) explicit attention to the promotion of the value of graduate education within the UWL community.

Following the Summit, the Provost charged a newly created **Graduate Education Leadership Board** to:

- Strategically plan graduate education with a campus-wide focus.
- Focus on organizational and committee structures for graduate education.
- Develop and coordinate effective communication strategies to enhance the visibility of graduate education as a campus-wide activity.
- Engage graduate students and faculty members in the development of graduate education at UWL.

From October 2015 through June 2016, the Graduate Education Leadership Board gathered additional information from UWL administrators, faculty and staff, student focus groups, and graduate deans from peer/aspirant institutions. The strategic plan that follows is the result of these efforts.

MAJOR FINDINGS

In combining data from all reports and strategic work on graduate education since 2010, the major findings about graduate education at UWL fall into four major areas. They are:

1. **The Infrastructure for Graduate Education Lacks Central Oversight and Leadership**

Management of graduate education at UWL is highly decentralized, with limited programmatic oversight and a lack of centralized leadership. This gives departments considerable autonomy, but makes campus-wide coordination difficult. Specifically:

- There is no overarching strategy to facilitate coordinated growth in graduate education. There is little central support for expanding existing programs, starting new programs, or assisting programs experiencing difficulties.
- There are no consistent centralized efforts with duties such as marketing/recruitment, retention, student onboarding, and student life.
- The overall quality of graduate programs relies almost entirely upon the departments and select graduate faculty within those departments. While some of the burden should lie with the departments and most graduate faculty members willingly accept this responsibility, it often results in work inequities (both compensated and uncompensated) that challenge long-term viability of programs.
- Some graduate directors and graduate faculty feel that graduate education is valued less than undergraduate education. There is a sense that graduate education unintentionally is not considered in all campus-wide decisions (e.g., websites, recruitment of students, funding decisions).

2. **Program Development is Hampered by Inconsistent Planning**

A result of decentralization is an inconsistency in planning. Decisions on the development of new programs are haphazard across the university, as are decisions regarding budget and resource support. Graduate programs have multiple funding options, but departmental administrators rarely understand all of them. Department chairs and graduate program directors would welcome help with funding and recruitment. Also they want information for best practices on program development (both new and ongoing), student orientation, and graduate program director responsibilities.

3. The Graduate Student and Graduate Faculty Experience Suffers from a Lack of Effective Communication

There is a lack of communication about graduate education both on campus and outside campus. While no faculty or staff members are opposed to graduate education, some are not informed about, nor engaged in, graduate education. University faculty and staff who are not directly involved in graduate programs often do not appreciate the quality and the extent of the work being done by graduate faculty and graduate students. Even those active in graduate education are not always aware of innovations outside their own programs. Furthermore, graduate faculty members are not kept apprised of procedures and policy changes. This overall lack of communication contributes to inconsistent service to graduate students across campus.

4. The Lack of Central Leadership, Inconsistent Planning, and the Lack of Effective Communication All Contribute to Inconsistent Support for Graduate Programs

Graduate education at the program level is generally strong. Most graduate faculty members in departments and programs do whatever needs to be done to have a quality program in their fields. The consensus among graduate program directors and department chairs with graduate programs is that programs overall are solid, but 1) do not have competitive graduate assistantships and 2) could be even stronger with additional support from central administration. When graduate programs do encounter difficulties in quality or enrollment, there currently is no system in place to assist them in making improvements.

Key Categories of Strategic Plan

As a result of the preceding list of concerns, three overriding themes of action steps are being put forward. They are:

- *Infrastructure,*
- *Program Development, and*
- *Enhancement of the Student/Faculty Experience.*

Each category is described in detail in the next sections.

A Move from Decentralized Administration Toward a Coordinated Approach with Departments and Central Administration

The most frequently mentioned recommendation for graduate education at every stage of the strategic planning process has been investment in a more comprehensive central administration. Presently most oversight and management of graduate programs are conducted by department faculty rather than by administrators from a centralized Office of Graduate Studies. While this results in high levels of commitment to individual programs, it also results in low levels of institutional planning and resource allocation. The following recommendations will build an infrastructure that will support graduate education now and into the future. We recommend:

1. Invest in the Office of Graduate Studies

- Increase the position of Graduate Director from .5 FTE to 1.0 FTE.
- Establish a new 1.0 FTE non-instructional academic staff (NIAS) position to serve as the Assistant Director.

The full-time Graduate Director would focus on the major leadership recommendations in this comprehensive strategic plan. The new Assistant Director would assume the managerial tasks now handled by the director, plus take on the additional managerial tasks recommended in this strategic plan. Job descriptions for both proposed positions (i.e., a full-time graduate director and a full-time NIAS) are in Appendix 1.

The Office of Graduate Studies is currently staffed with a half time director and a .4 FTE administrative support position. This is a much smaller staff than comparable offices at UWL's peer and aspirant graduate institutions (see Appendix 2). **Without investment in the centralized administration of graduate education, most of the recommendations in this document will not be realized.**

2. Update of the Graduate Studies Mission, Vision, and Values

- Revise the graduate education mission, vision, and value statements.
- Integrate inclusive excellence and diversity into the graduate mission, vision, and values.
- Widely disseminate new mission and vision statements and use in decision-making.

UWL has an array of graduate programs that are professional-oriented and consistent with the Wisconsin Idea, but this has never been clearly articulated. A concise description of graduate education at UWL would help with internal communications, marketing, and decision-making about

growth in graduate programming. The existing mission, vision, and values for graduate education at UWL can be found in the 2014 Graduate Education Self-Study (www.uwlax.edu/graduate-studies/grad-studies-strategic-planning).

3. Enhancement of the leadership role of the Graduate Studies Office in marketing of graduate programs and in recruitment of graduate students

- Develop a campus-wide graduate brand.
- Develop, in consultation with the UWL Admissions Office, a recruiting strategy that would include marketing of all programs through websites, social media, hard copy materials, on-line and in-person recruitment events.
- Focus on recruiting UWL undergraduates into graduate programs where appropriate.
- Expand graduate program efforts to recruit diverse students, including diverse undergraduate students from UWL.

4. More systematic communication about and promotion of graduate education

- Develop a plan for promoting graduate education within the campus and the larger community/region.
- Communicate the accomplishments of graduate education to all members of the campus, including individuals and offices that have focused predominantly on undergraduate education.
- Educate the campus about the role graduate education plays in enhancing undergraduate programs and benefiting undergraduate students and faculty.

5. Greater role by Office of Graduate Studies in setting university standards and academic policy for graduate education and advocating for graduate education

- Review all graduate academic policies and standards and make recommendations if change is needed.
- Work closely with the Graduate Council to review and revise graduate academic standards.
- Coordinate enforcement of graduate academic standards with academic Deans' offices.
- Advocate for graduate education on University's Enrollment Management Committee.
- Represent graduate education on Dean's Council.

6. Better education of the campus about campus-wide graduate standards and expectations

- Develop written materials about duties of graduate program directors and duties of graduate assistants.
- Create guidelines for developing new graduate programs.
- Provide campus-wide information for departmental student orientations.
- Provide campus-wide information for graduate student handbooks.

7. Creation by Office of Graduate Studies of a centralized storehouse of data relevant to graduate education

- Work with Institutional Research to develop a storehouse of data related to graduate education that can be used to assess and promote graduate education.
- Track graduate student post-graduate career placement data and ongoing education data.
- Work with graduate program directors to develop data specific to individual programs.
- Examine retention rates and graduation rates of students of color, non-traditional students, veterans, and other underrepresented groups to ensure equity within programs.

8. System to advocate for Graduate Program Directors

- Create regular graduate education forums for graduate program directors.
- Explore workload equity for graduate program directors across all colleges and schools, including summer stipends.

9. A Sustainable Funding Model for Graduate Education

- Explore mechanisms for re-investing graduate-generated revenue back into graduate education.
- Reinvest federal grant dollars secured by graduate programs/faculty into graduate education.
- Work with the UWL Foundation to raise funds for graduate students, graduate programs, and the Office of Graduate Studies.

10. Revise the role of Graduate Council from primarily management to primarily vision and leadership

- Work with Faculty Senate to review and revise the Graduate Council bylaws as appropriate.
- Revise the Graduate Council membership to include only program directors and graduate faculty who are heavily involved in graduate programming.
- Have Graduate Council assume a leadership role in the implementation and oversight of the graduate strategic plan.

11. Expand efforts by the Office of Graduate Studies to enhance partnerships with various university offices/programs and external organizations. At the university, this would include but not be limited to Multi-Cultural Student Services, International Education and Engagement, Career Services, Research & Sponsored Programs, Undergraduate Research & Creativity, Institutional Research, the McNair Scholars Program, and the Center for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning (CATL). External partners should include many agencies; excellent current examples are the Upper Midwest Environmental Sciences Center and the members of the Health Science Consortium.

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

Planned Growth of New Programs and Expansion of Current Graduate Programs

The external review by the Council of Graduate Schools recommended that UWL “increase graduate enrollment to 1,000 students by 2020.” This would bring graduate student numbers to approximately 10% of the student body. This is a realistic goal (the Fall 2015 numbers were 758 graduate students), but it cannot be accomplished solely by increasing enrollment within current programs. New graduate programs need to be developed and offered to meet the changing market demands.

One result of the decentralized nature of graduate education at UWL has been an overall lack of support for the development of new graduate programs. This has contributed to haphazard growth. For the most part, departments have started new graduate programs and closed established ones without much consultation or assistance from the Office of Graduate Studies. Quality programs have come from this decentralized approach, but there has been no overarching vision as to the array of graduate program offerings on campus. If graduate education at UWL is to have a clear identity, a campus-wide plan for growth needs to exist.

Recent Progress to This End

After years of continual decline, graduate enrollment has been fairly steady since 2012. Enrollment, however, has not returned to pre-2012 numbers (e.g. 1003 students in 2010). The high demand graduate programs on campus cannot accommodate more students than they already have enrolled, so growth will come from 1) increased enrollment in programs not operating at full capacity and 2) the development of new programs. Programs recently approved or recently reestablished include a doctorate in Student Affairs Administration, a masters in Data Science, a masters in Reading Education, and graduate certificate programs in Educational Leadership and English Language Arts.

Also, in an effort to improve the evaluation process of graduate programs on campus, the Faculty Senate recently approved a separate Academic Program Review (APR) for graduate programs. Distinct guidelines for graduate program review 1) ensure a quality review of every graduate program, 2) require all reviewers to have graduate faculty status, and c) include the Graduate Director in the review process.

These recent accomplishments notwithstanding, much still needs to be done in terms of improvement and growth.

To Continue to Improve Existing Graduate Programs and Establish New Graduate Programs, UWL Needs to:

1. Develop a Clear Vision/Plan for Growth

If growth is to be a coordinated effort, the Office of Graduate Studies needs to provide departments with a clear vision for graduate education at UWL. Most of the new ideas for programming will continue to come from departments and from faculty members passionate about graduate education, but the Office of Graduate Studies can help departments and faculty develop new ideas into programs consistent with a campus-wide vision.

2. Increase Involvement of the Office of Graduate Studies in New Program Development

The Office of Graduate Studies must not only establish the vision for growth, but also offer assistance to departments in developing new programs. Some department chairs, especially those who currently have no graduate program, are interested in graduate education, but do not understand the process for establishing a graduate degree program. The Office of Graduate Studies should provide clear guidelines for developing new programs, including:

- Developing a consistent plan for strategic growth that assists graduate faculty in conceptualizing innovative new graduate programs.
- Providing step-by-step directions for proposing a program and for navigating the approval process.
- Providing an explanation of options for non-traditional delivery (e.g., on-line and hybrid, certificate, interdisciplinary).
- Providing information about funding options.
- Offering encouragement and advocacy for graduate faculty working on program development.

3. Financially Support New Program Development

New programs have been delayed or failed to occur because interested faculty members have not had time to develop the program. There should be financial support (i.e., summer stipend or school year buyout) to support faculty in the initial development of new programs that would fill an unserved market need.

- Reinvest revenue earned by graduate programs into graduate program development.
- Work with Continuing Education, the UWL Foundation, Budget & Finance, and others to explicitly explain start-up funding/staffing options for potential new programs.

4. Coordinate Interdisciplinary and Inclusive Excellence Efforts

There are emerging markets and professional expectations that allow graduate education to take the lead in developing interdisciplinary and inclusive programs, courses, and events. The Office of Graduate Studies should assume a leadership (and perhaps a funding) role in promoting interdisciplinary and novel efforts.

5. Develop Strategies to Help Struggling Graduate Programs

Graduate programs that experience challenges (e.g., enrollment issues, staffing issues, overall quality) have largely been left to address the problems with little external support. The new graduate APR process should identify concerns early, and an expanded Office of Graduate Studies should offer assistance to department chairs and graduate program directors before viability of the programs becomes an issue. The Office of Graduate Studies would also take a leadership role in helping to determine whether or not existing graduate programs should be discontinued.

6. Develop Strategies to Recruit UWL Undergraduates to UWL Graduate Programs

The external reviewers from the Council of Graduate Schools observed that UWL does not actively recruit its own undergraduate students. While some undergraduate students would be best served by attending graduate school elsewhere, others would benefit by remaining at UWL for their graduate work. To recruit this latter group, the Office of Graduate Studies should coordinate promotional materials that expand the visibility of graduate programs and educate undergraduates to related, but new fields (e.g., student affairs administration, occupational therapy). It also should look at developing alternative graduate programs (e.g., 2+3 or 4+1 programs) that build upon a solid undergraduate education and that would be popular with parents and other stakeholders. It may also promote research opportunities that clearly differentiate graduate education from the undergraduate experience. Partnerships with undergraduate programs that specifically support diverse students (e.g., McNair Scholarship Program) should be given special attention.

7. Enhance Program Delivery and Accessibility.

The future of graduate education at UWL includes an increase in alternative delivery models (e.g., hybrid models, off-campus delivery). To this end, the Office of Graduate Studies must:

- Explore opportunities for innovative programming (e.g., short-term offerings, alternative delivery systems).
- Support efforts to develop online and hybrid programs (either new programs or on-line versions of current on-campus programs)

ENHANCEMENT OF THE STUDENT/FACULTY EXPERIENCE

Specific Actions to Improve the Graduate Student Experience and Help Graduate Faculty with their Efforts in Graduate Education

UWL has the opportunity to capitalize on the hidden strengths of its graduate programs. Through the interviews of UWL faculty and staff, many themes that supported the quality and rigor of graduate programs were identified. Students were pleased with the quality of their education. Faculty members were proud of their graduate programs and even prouder of their students and their students' many accomplishments. In particular, UWL has done an excellent job of professional preparation and, for programs with a research option, an excellent job of providing opportunities for student research. Still there is room for improvement. The following are recommendations for improving the graduate student experience and for improving the instructional experience of faculty who work with graduate students.

1. To enhance graduate student experiences at UWL, the institution needs to:

- a) **Increase communication and provide consistent information to students.** The Office of Graduate Studies needs to develop a comprehensive manual for program directors that outlines campus-wide responsibilities and policies into a single document. Currently campus information (e.g., due dates, thesis guidelines, duties of the department in serving students, grant guidelines) is scattered across various institutional offices and information sources. The Office of Graduate Studies should provide boilerplate material about campus-wide policies that could be directly inserted into departmental graduate student handbooks.
- b) **Develop graduate-specific amenities to increase the graduate student connection to the institution.** One common theme among graduate students is that they feel acknowledged by their departments, but not by the university as a whole. Therefore, the Office of Graduate Studies should spearhead efforts within the institution to develop programs, services, and experiences focused specifically on graduate students. Examples included dedicated lounge space and resources for finding housing.
- c) **Provide interdisciplinary workshops and seminars.** In addition to interdisciplinary programs and courses, the University should offer non-course opportunities for graduate students in various fields to come together to explore common interests.
- d) **Reestablish a campus-wide graduate student orientation.** One explicit graduate-specific amenity would be a welcome celebration for new graduate students. This would be a way for the university 1) to show new graduate students that they are valued and 2) to make sure that key information is provided to all new graduate students. With a number of programs starting summer term, there may have to be both a summer and a fall orientation.

- e) **Enhance communication with graduate students.** The Office of Graduate Studies, working in collaboration with the Graduate Student Organization (GSO), should continue its graduate student newsletter, but also find other ways to continually inform graduate students. One specific action should be creation of a graduate student advisory group with one seat for each graduate program at the university.
- f) **Track graduate student success after graduation.** There currently is no systematic way to conduct exit interviews with graduating graduate students and/or track alumni. Some programs compile this information on their own, but there is no mechanism to track this information across programs. Institutional Research is planning to deploy a “first destination survey” for graduate degree earners, similar to the one for undergraduate degree earners. The Office of Graduate Studies should provide subject matter expertise and collaborate with Institutional Research on this effort.
- g) **Continue on-going effort to enhance Graduate Assistantship recruitment packages.** Certainly one of the most frequent complaints of graduate faculty is that the graduate assistantship/teaching assistantship and tuition waiver packages are not competitive with other universities. UWL needs to set a goal of being able to compete successfully with non-UW System comprehensive institutions. Faculty seeking external funding should be encouraged to add graduate stipends and tuition costs to their grants.
- h) **Develop additional graduate student resources.** While a few graduate programs have graduate scholarships, the Office of Graduate Studies must work with the UWL Foundation, UWL Alumni Association, and other funding resources to identify and fund additional graduate scholarships. This is especially relevant to attract and retain students of color, veterans, and nontraditional students. One specific area to be targeted is financial resources to support graduate student research (e.g., stipends).
- i) **Explore the non-traditional and/or part time graduate student experience** to ensure programs are attentive to their educational needs (e.g., scheduling options, financial assistance).
- j) **Peer Mentoring:** Encourage graduate programs to develop peer mentoring programs.
- k) **Continually enhance graduate commencement ceremonies** to better recognize graduate student accomplishments.



2. To Improve the Experience of Faculty Involved in Graduate Education, UWL needs to:

- a) Develop professional development workshops focusing specifically on issues identified by graduate faculty.** The Office of Graduate Studies could coordinate these efforts with the Center for Advancing Teaching and Learning (CATL). Topics would be identified through a more refined needs assessment to help the Office of Graduate Studies and CATL develop professional development programming specifically for graduate faculty.
- b) Enhance the leadership skills of graduate program directors, especially newly appointed program directors.** The program directors have unique responsibilities compared to department chairs and undergraduate program directors (e.g., marketing, recruitment, retention). The Office of Graduate Studies must develop training/leadership opportunities specifically for graduate program directors.
- c) Address the issue of workload inequity in graduate education.** Graduate faculty and program directors face distinct challenges with workload and compensation that need to be studied and resolved within the context of a comprehensive institution. The Office of Graduate Studies is in a unique position to contribute to these conversations.
- d) In collaboration with the Colleges, create a faculty mentoring program through the Office of Graduate Studies.** The purpose would not only be to help new faculty, but also to enhance collaboration and interdisciplinary efforts.

APPENDIX 1. JOB DESCRIPTIONS OF PROPOSED POSITIONS

Director – Office of Graduate Studies Position Description

The Director provides extensive support to graduate faculty, graduate program directors, department chairs, and academic deans in all aspects of graduate education. In addition, the Director is responsible for leading strategic planning efforts related to graduate education and for implementing strategic planning recommendations. As Director, this person is responsible for promoting graduate education, for developing a graduate student enrollment management plan, and for managing the resources, both financial and human, of the Office of Graduate Studies.

Strategic Planning in Graduate Education – 60%

- Lead strategic planning efforts and implement strategic planning recommendations
- Enhance the status and recognition of graduate studies on campus
- Participate in evaluation of graduate programs, including Academic Program Review
- Work with graduate program directors, department chairs and Deans to develop graduate enrollment standards and to assist them with meeting the goals of the UWL Inclusive Excellence plan.
- Facilitate graduate program director meetings on topics of mutual interest

Graduate Program Development – 20%

- In cooperation with department chairs, graduate program directors, and academic deans, oversee managed growth of new and existing graduate programs
- Work on interdisciplinary efforts between graduate programs
- Encourage the development of graduate certificate programs and other alternative graduate studies options
- Explore non-traditional degree programs that utilize technology
- Provide support to graduate program directors
- Collaborate with Continuing Education and Extension and the colleges to advance graduate education and programming
- Explore opportunities for collaborations between UWL graduate programs and graduate programs at other regional schools



Graduate Student Enrollment Management – 10%

- Working with others on campus, create and execute a graduate student enrollment plan.
- Ensure that graduate enrollment management planning is consistent with UWL's goals of inclusive excellence.
- Monitor graduate student enrollment
- Work with graduate program directors to provide retention support for graduate students.
- Distribute graduate assistants and teaching assistants' allocation.

Financial Planning and Staff Supervision – 10%

- Support the UWL Foundation and Advancement's work to raise funds for graduate student scholarships, travel, research, and graduate program activities
- Support program directors with budgeting and identifying program resources
- Explore grant opportunities at both the departmental and university levels
- Supervise all personnel assigned to the Office of Graduate Studies
- Ensure effective utilization and oversight of graduate assistants and teaching assistants

Assistant Director – Office of Graduate Studies Position Description

The Assistant Director provides extensive support to graduate students at UWL. In addition, the Assistant Director creates and manages much of the day-to-day and on-going communication and management efforts of the Office of Graduate Studies, provides support when needed to graduate program directors in the area of marketing and recruitment of graduate programs and graduate students, and serves as the Director in the absence of the Director of Graduate Studies.

Student Services – 50%

- Enhance student retention including strategies dedicated to part-time students, veterans, nontraditional students, students of color, and others who may experience unique barriers to degree completion.
- Manage student appeals and other grievances
- Inform graduate students and assist special non-degree students of university policies
- Oversee disbursement of graduate student grants
- Enhance and coordinate student orientation
- Organize graduate student workshops
- Serve as GSO (Graduate Student Organization) advisor
- Facilitate Graduate Student Advisory Group
- Organize hooding ceremony
- Review submitted theses for compliance to established guidelines
- Supervise Office Graduate Assistant
- Serve as liaison to key offices on campus, including Financial Aid, Residence Life, Admissions, Registrar's Office, Dean's Offices, and International Education



Communications – 25%

- Manage communication with prospective and admitted students
- Write Newsletters for both students and staff
- Publicize program completion standards and graduation
- Maintain current graduate education information of various key offices, as well as coordinate and enhance information with iComm for future graduate education information on the UWL website

Campus-wide Support – 25%

- Maintain university-wide pages for departmental graduate student handbooks
- Market graduate education in collaboration with program directors
- Develop recruitment strategies for graduate education within UWL as well as extend the reach of UWL to attract high quality graduate students from other institutions
- Develop central library of all departmental policies as they relate to graduate studies
- Assist Graduate Studies Director with graduate program director meetings, graduate council activities, graduate summits, student graduate summits, and other duties as assigned to support graduate education on campus.
- Manage graduate faculty status applications.

APPENDIX 2. LIST OF PEER AND ASPIRANT INSTITUTIONS

With help from staff at Institutional Research, the following list of peer and aspirant institutions was developed. The list is *graduate education*-specific and differs from the university-wide list of peer and aspirant schools.

PEER

East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania — East Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania

Millersville University of Pennsylvania — Millersville, Pennsylvania

Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania — Shippensburg, Pennsylvania

University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh — Oshkosh, Wisconsin

University of Wisconsin-Whitewater — Whitewater, Wisconsin

West Chester University of Pennsylvania — West Chester, Pennsylvania

Westfield State University — Westfield, Massachusetts

Winona State University — Winona, Minnesota

ASPIRANT

Bridgewater State University — Bridgewater, Massachusetts

Eastern Illinois University — Charleston, Illinois

University of Minnesota-Duluth — Duluth, Minnesota

University of North Carolina — Wilmington, North Carolina

University of Northern Iowa — Cedar Falls, Iowa

APPENDIX 3. DRAFT GRAD GOALS FOR UNIVERSITY PLAN

Priority: Transformation Education

Point Persons: Director of Graduate Studies

Consider where you want to be in 2021 with this priority and work backwards to identify foals for year one

GOAL 3: Invest in graduate education

ACTION STEPS	WHO INVOLVED?	DATES
1. Shift Graduate Education from a decentralized administration toward a coordinated approach between departments and central administration.	Office of Graduate Studies, Provost Office, Graduate Council, Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration, Department Chairs and Graduate Program Directors	Years 1-2
2. Strategically develop new programs and expand/revise existing programs by providing creative, logistical, and resource support; focus should be on programs that a) match faculty expertise with societal needs and b) increase non-traditional program delivery systems to expand student access	Office of Graduate Studies, Provost Office, Graduate Council, Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, Department Chairs/Graduate Program Directors and Continuing Education	Years 1-5
3. Enhance the graduate student experience by recruiting a more diverse graduate faculty and student population, increasing financial support, improving university-wide communication, and providing more grad-specific services.	Office of Graduate Studies, Graduate Council, Graduate Student Organization, Admissions, Graduate Program Directors, Graduate Advisory Council, Student Life, UWL Foundation and Continuing Education	Years 2-5
4. Enhance the graduate faculty experience by addressing workload equity, providing graduate faculty professional development, strengthening the graduate education culture throughout the university, and improving communication on graduate education	Office of Graduate Studies, Provost Office, Graduate Council, Deans/Deans Council, Department Chairs/Graduate Program Directors, CATL and University Communications	Years 3-4
5. Integrate and expand inclusive excellence and interdisciplinary opportunities throughout graduate education.	Office of Graduate Studies, Provost Office, Graduate Council, Associated Dean for Diversity & Inclusion and Graduate Program Directors	Years 1-5

Why this/why now? Solid graduate programs are essential for the ongoing overall success of UWL. Some of the strongest research on campus relies on graduate students. Several faculty members have stated that they came and have remained at UWL because of their departments' graduate programs. Many undergraduate students, especially those in the sciences, come to UWL because they intend to continue in UWL's science and health professions masters programs.

UWL must invest in graduate education if it is to continue to compete at the regional and national level. According to the most recent national data available, Council of Graduate Schools (Graduate Enrollment and Degrees: 2004 to 2014), first time enrollment of graduate students is at an all-time high. At UWL over the past two years, two thirds of newly approved degree programs and degree programs under development have been at the graduate level. According to UW System (2017-2019 Biennial Operating Budget), employment growth is steadiest for those with a masters degree or above, even during periods of recession. Several of UWL's peer and aspirant institutions already have made enhanced graduate programming a priority for serving the overall educational needs of their regions.

Projected Resources Needed: Full-time graduate director (from ½ FTE to 1.0 FTE), one additional FTE IAS in Office of Graduate Studies, graduate program development grants, graduate program director summer stipends/reassigned time, graduate student scholarships/tuition grants.

Measures of Success/ Progress: (match the graduate strategic plan)

- 1) Increase in the number of graduate students, especially diverse students and students in non-traditional programming
- 2) Centralized measures of program quality, graduate student satisfaction and success in place
- 3) Increase in the number of new graduate programs (or expansions of current programs), especially interdisciplinary and/or non-traditional offerings
- 4) A fair, supportive, and equitable work environment for graduate faculty and graduate program directors in place

Milestone Dates to Check Progress:

Annual progress reviews

- Students numbers each September
- Graduate APR as each program comes due
- Exit interviews with students toward end of each semester
- Program updates each September (including program additions, program deletions, certificate programs, delivery options, concentration)



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