UWL

VISION 2026

**BUILDING MOMENTUM FOR GRADUATE EDUCATION
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-LA CROSSE**

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MISSION

A graduate education at UW-La Crosse fosters in students an advanced understanding of disciplinary and professional content, along with skills such as collaboration, problem-solving, leadership, and communication. Graduate faculty and students embody the Wisconsin Idea by working together, often one-on-one or with community partners, on projects that serve the current needs of society. The close interactions between students and faculty promote student learning and benefit faculty members by enhancing their teaching, research and service. During their time at UW-La Crosse, students develop as ethical professionals and as members of a diverse workforce. Graduates are prepared to contribute to society by advancing in their professions or by seeking further education.

VISION

UW-La Crosse will be known for quality, innovation and value in graduate programs that serve the needs of Wisconsin and beyond. Graduate studies will be recognized as an integral part of the University mission, supporting and expanding upon the mission for undergraduate education. UW-La Crosse graduate programs will recruit a diverse pool of exceptional students, who will have a high-quality and well-funded graduate experience. Graduates will become positive agents of change, making significant contributions to their professions and to our globalized society.

VALUES

We are guided in our work by these core values: knowledge, collaboration, integrity, leadership, diversity & inclusion and excellence.

OVERVIEW OF THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

Since 2016, stakeholders in graduate education at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse (UWL) have followed the guidance of Vision 2021: a Strategic Plan for Graduate Education at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. Highlights of what has been accomplished are available in Appendix A. Significant progress was made over the five years covered by the strategic plan, in the areas of building infrastructure for graduate education, graduate program development, and enhancing the graduate student and faculty experiences.

The nature of graduate education at UWL has also changed since 2016, in terms of graduate program array and enrollments, summarized in Appendix B. For example, students enrolled in online, hybrid, or off-campus graduate programs rose from 28% of the UWL graduate student body in 2016, to 53% in 2021. In a parallel change, the percentage of students enrolled in collaborative or self-funded graduate programs rose from 6% and 18%, respectively, in 2016, to 19% and 29% in 2021. We must keep in mind who our students are – and who they will be - as we look forward to the next round of strategic planning.

Beginning in fall 2020, a subcommittee of the Graduate Council took up the charge to review what had been accomplished over the previous five years, and to solicit input on priorities for a new strategic plan. The Strategic Planning Workgroup included Angela Benfield (Occupational Therapy), Anita Davelos (Biology), Robert Dixon (School Psychology), Kasi Periyasamy (Software Engineering) and Meredith Thomsen (Graduate & Extended Learning).

The group began by surveying UWL graduate students, faculty and staff from academic affairs, and other individuals involved in graduate education, in early April 2021 (Appendix C). The goal was to gather feedback about what had been achieved from Vision 2021, and identify priorities for the next strategic plan. Survey results regarding priorities for the next strategic plan were shared at Roundtable sessions, held via Zoom in late April 2021. Participants then brainstormed about ideas for action steps for the priorities identified in the survey. The Strategic Planning Workgroup next conducted follow-up meetings with the deans and associate deans, and with the directors of Admissions and International Education and Engagement, to capture their unique perspectives on priorities for graduate education. The group worked to summarize the ideas from all of these sources in summer 2021, and also read a selection of publications related to priority topics.

At the Graduate Summit in September 2021, attendees discussed draft pillars and action steps in small groups. They made suggestions about clarifications and additions, and indicated their priorities in terms of the most important action steps to focus on in the Strategic Plan. Action steps receiving the highest number of "votes" for priority, along with new ideas that emerged at the Summit, were brought to Graduate Council for additional discussion in November 2021.

The Strategic Planning Workgroup used feedback from that discussion to complete the final version of Vision 2026 in December 2021. It was reviewed and endorsed by the Graduate Council on December 17, 2021.

In spring 2022, the Graduate Council will prioritize and set timelines for action steps, and identify working groups to move forward on highest-priority items.

PILLAR 1: RECRUIT AND SUPPORT A DIVERSE POOL OF EXCEPTIONAL INDIVIDUALS AS GRADUATE STUDENTS AT UWL.

Similar to educational institutions across the nation, UWL and the UW System are working to enact the values of diversity, equity and inclusion in our activities. A primary goal of the strategic plan is to build structures and processes at the graduate level which will ensure full participation by all members of our community. The key indicators and action steps listed below require the attention and effort not only of the administration, but commitment and effort on the part of each program to ensure that UWL graduate programs meet the needs of our diverse society.

**KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

- Number of graduate students; number and proportion of students from historically marginalized groups, non-resident and international graduate students.
- Data on student attrition and time to completion across programs.
- Number and dollar value of scholarships awarded each year to graduate students; number of new graduate scholarships created each year.
- GA salaries, dollar value and number of Advanced Opportunity Program and non-resident tuition waivers, and amount of grant funding provided to graduate students; comparisons as appropriate to those at other institutions.
- Number of Inclusive Excellence goals reported on year-end reports by academic departments which connect to graduate programs.

I. SUPPORT RECRUITMENT AND ADMISSION OF A DIVERSE POOL OF EXCEPTIONAL STUDENTS.

- Identify and develop recruiting pipelines for students from historically marginalized groups and use identified pipelines to share information throughout the region about opportunities at UWL.
- Work with departments, Academic Advising and Career Services, the McNair Program, and other campus partners to enhance the recruitment of talented UWL undergraduates into UWL graduate programs. Promote the value of our dual degree programs, combining an undergraduate and graduate course of study. Provide more information about financial support available for graduate school. Work to use more funding sources in a recruiting context rather than a post-acceptance context.
- Work with the UWL Foundation to build infrastructure for graduate program fundraising, to increase the number and dollar value of scholarships awarded to graduate students.
- Increase the level of financial support for graduate students, so that our students have a well-funded graduate experience at UWL, including, but not limited to, the following:
  - Graduate Assistant (GA) salaries
  - Non-resident tuition waivers
  - Tuition support for TAs
  - AOP grants
  - UWL scholarships

II. SUPPORT THE RETENTION AND SUCCESS OF A DIVERSE POOL OF EXCEPTIONAL STUDENTS.

- Develop mechanisms for obtaining feedback from graduate students regarding their priorities for changes at the program and institutional levels.
- Examine patterns retention, attrition, and in time to completion across programs and identify ways to improve metrics. Identify barriers to completion and how to minimize them.
- Work with the Equity Liaison Steering Committee and Graduate Program Directors in developing Inclusive Excellence goals for their programs, working to meet them, and reporting outcomes. Share models of this work across graduate programs, including fully online programs.
- Increase the prominence of content related to cultural competency within graduate program curricula. Gather and share examples of best practices in cultural competence content across programs; share examples of how this content matters for post-graduation careers.
- Promote mental health and well-being among graduate students, by working with student support offices to identify graduate student needs and help encourage graduate students to use available services. As appropriate, support the creation of events that are designed to support graduate students, and/or market existing events in a way which increases graduate student participation.
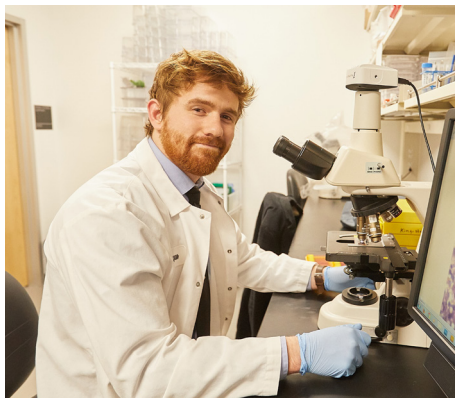
PILLAR 2: INVESTING IN OUR PEOPLE BY SUPPORTING THE FACULTY AND STAFF INVOLVED IN GRADUATE EDUCATION.

Mirroring the university strategic plan, the graduate education strategic plan emphasizes the importance of investing in faculty to ensure that we can deliver quality experiences to our students. Grounded in the core responsibilities of graduate faculty (i.e., teaching, scholarship, and service), the graduate strategic plan seeks to extend the expertise in faculty in the ways most needed for each specific program. Graduate faculty contribute in many different ways (e.g., teaching, field placements, mentoring of capstone projects), all leading to diverse educational experiences. Some will further graduate student research and educational interests to the doctoral level while others will focus on enhanced skills and professional practices in the communities our graduates serve.

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- Workload and compensation information reported by Graduate Program Directors
- Number of faculty and staff with graduate faculty status; information reported by these individuals regarding their level of engagement in graduate activities
- Number of grad student presentations and publications reported by faculty in Digital Measures
- Information in employee satisfaction report produced in 2019, Caregiver Task Force Report and other sources regarding satisfaction among graduate faculty and staff

I. PROVIDE TRAINING, PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT FOR GRADUATE PROGRAM DIRECTORS (GPDS).

- Advocate for policy re: reassignment and summer pay for GPDs, and for GPD duties to be addressed within departmental by-laws. Develop additional grants specific to GPDs to work on projects for their programs according to priorities identified in the strategic plan.
- Develop infrastructure for GPD recruiting, fundraising, and communicating activities.

II. SUPPORT GRADUATE FACULTY AND STAFF.

- Encourage best practices in hiring and retaining diverse graduate faculty at UWL, as a way to further our goals in the area of equity and inclusion. Amplify efforts and support initiatives regarding faculty workload, faculty mentoring, support for caregivers, spousal support, and flexible work arrangements as they are developed, and make sure they address topics specific to graduate faculty.
- Support graduate faculty who need opportunities for continued clinical or professional practice.

III. ADDRESS WORKLOAD INEQUITIES ACROSS GRADUATE FACULTY IN DIFFERENT PROGRAMS.

- Work to describe and make visible the work of graduate faculty, especially with regard to capstone project mentoring not captured within teaching load, and differences in expectations for graduate vs. undergraduate courses.
- Explore and share models for moving graduate duties into workload, e.g., thesis or capstone supervision courses, advisory courses, and/or more structured approaches to capstone projects of all types. Develop additional compensation for graduate faculty, including summer stipends, course load reductions, etc.

PILLAR 3: PROMOTE THE SUCCESS AND STRATEGIC GROWTH OF GRADUATE EDUCATION.

The success of graduate education at UWL depends on harnessing the skills and resources of all graduate stakeholders, including administrative offices. This support is necessary both to sustain our current successful program array, but also to promote strategic growth in new areas. Both types of success require that we make the benefits of graduate education more visible across the university community. To achieve this goal, it is important to leverage existing resources in Academic Affairs, Student Life, and Diversity & Inclusion to support our students, faculty and programs. We also must work to ensure dissemination of information on graduate education to all graduate stakeholders in a timely manner, and to be aware of how our offerings compare to those at other comprehensive and peer institutions.

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- Graduate student headcount (goal is 1000 students and/or 10% of the UWL student body)
- Number of new and continuing programs and what colleges and departments they are in (degree and non-degree)
- Number of students and programs participating in university-wide events promoting graduate education (3 Minute Grad Project, Say it in 6, Research and Creativity Symposium); number of students presenting at conferences; number of student authors on publications
- Numbers of stories featuring graduate students, faculty and programs in the Campus Connection and other UWL publications each year

I. ENHANCE COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION ACROSS ADMINISTRATIVE UNITS PLAYING A ROLE IN GRADUATE EDUCATION.

- Develop targeted marketing and promotion plan for graduate programs at UWL. Work with UComm to promote graduate programming (e.g., set a shared goal of a certain number of stories a year, develop a specific graduate education section of each College newsletter and/or updates to graduate program home pages on a rotating basis).
- Develop a "culture of kudos" among graduate faculty to make sure they are sharing information about their accomplishments and those of their graduate students with the university community and beyond, as appropriate.

II. DEVELOP AND PROMOTE A VISION FOR THE GROWTH OF GRADUATE EDUCATION AT UWL.

- Identify overarching goals about program array, e.g., pairing revenue-generating online programs with on-campus programs as appropriate, increasing the number of graduate offerings in colleges that currently have fewer programs, or developing graduate certificates in departments not currently involved in graduate education. Support faculty engaged in new program development.
- Charge Graduate Council to develop an updated list of peer and aspirant institutions, key metrics of interest, and a biennial reporting structure on how key metrics regarding graduate education at UWL compare to those schools.
- Evaluate and develop new strategies, as needed, to promote the sustainable operation of self-funded and collaborative programs

III. PROVIDE EASILY-ACCESSIBLE INFORMATION REGARDING ALTERNATE TYPES OF GRADUATE ACADEMIC PROGRAMS (DEGREE AND NON-DEGREE), MAKING IT EASIER FOR GRADUATE STAKEHOLDERS TO UNDERSTAND OPTIONS FOR POTENTIAL NEW PROGRAMS.

- Provide information about stackable credentials, certificates and alternative graduate tracks (e.g., 3+2 and 4+1 programs); explore where options like these could be developed in departments without graduate programs.
- Explore possibilities for stand-alone certificates and credentials for students in existing graduate programs.
- Evaluate and develop new strategies, as needed, to promote the sustainable operation of self-funded and collaborative programs

GRADUATE EDUCATION AT UWL: VISION 2021 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

GRADUATE EDUCATION AT UWL: VISION 2021 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

BUILDING INFRASTRUCTURE	PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT	ENHANCE STUDENT EXPERIENCE	ENHANCE FACULTY EXPERIENCE

BUILDING INFRASTRUCTURE

- Created a new Graduate Coordinator position and Dean of Graduate and Extended Learning.
- Developed a new online application and applicant review system.
- Updated program websites to emphasize recruitment messages.
- Established a UWL Graduate School Visit Day timed to attract attendees at a regional McNair conference.
- Developed an online application process for Advanced Opportunity Program grants, improving our ability to recruit WI students from underrepresented backgrounds.
- Established monthly meetings for graduate program directors to improve communication among programs and provide training.

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

- Consolidated information regarding processes for new program development on Provost's website.
- Awarded 14 grants to support work on new graduate degree and certificate programs.
- Launched multiple new degree programs focused on adult and professional learners.
- Improved our ability to recruit UWL undergraduates with three new 4+1 programs.
- Graduate enrollments grew from 818 in 2016 to 979 in 2020. Graduate programs increased in number and size in CSH, CASSH, and SOE.
- Students in online and hybrid programs increased from 19% to 37%; students in self- funded and collaborative graduate programs increased from 35% to 50%.

ENHANCE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

- Financial aid information for graduate students posted to all grad program websites.
- Credits in certificate programs and/or transferred as part of a degree plan provided increased access to financial aid.
- Increased Graduate Assistant salaries by an extra 2% to equal the average value of GA salaries at other UW comprehensives. Five new GA positions created.
- Scholarship created for Graduate Student Academic Achievement Awards.
- Created efficient, user-friendly, online processes for award nominations, grant applications, and payment for thesis and dissertation editing and binding.
- Digital orientation and resource guides provided to new graduate students; customized for on-campus vs. online graduate students.

ENHANCE FACULTY EXPERIENCE

- Surveyed graduate program directors about workload, compensation, and equity.
- Developed a position description for graduate program directors, which can be modified to include in departmental by-laws.
- Began paying a small summer stipend to all graduate program directors not on 12-month contracts.
- Effective Mentoring Workshop held in 2019.
- Created Graduate Faculty email distribution list to facilitate communication about opportunities related to graduate education
- Added information about graduate education and opportunities to New Faculty Orientation.
- Awarded 14 Recruitment Travel Grants to faculty and staff.

SUMMARY STATISTICS FOR GRADUATE EDUCATION AT UWL, 2016 VS. 2021

Table 1. Summary of changes in graduate students and programs from 2016 – 2021. Based on the Major and Minor Enrollment Trend report for Fall 2021[1], which does not include non-degree seeking graduate enrollments. Thus, the numbers here do not match "headcount" data reported elsewhere.

	2016	2021
Number of graduate students	779	912
On-campus, university-funded	597 (77%)	467 (51%)
Online, hybrid, or off-campus	182 (23%)	445 (49%)
Self-funded	139 (18%)	269 (29%)
Collaborative	43 (6%)	179 (19%)
Number of graduate programs[2]	29	30
On-campus, university-funded	21 (72%)	14 (47%)
Online, hybrid, or off-campus	8 (28%)	16 (53%)
Self-funded	7 (24%)	12 (40%)
Collaborative	1 (3%)	4 (13%)

[1] Saved at N:\IRAP\Reports for UWL Websites\THE FACT BOOK\Major and Minor Enrollment Trend\FALL 2021 UPDATE

[2] Counting Biology as one program; includes all programs with students enrolled for the year shown.

[3] Includes all IPSE programs except for Reading programs in 2016, and all IPSE programs in 2021; does not include SAA MS in 2016 but does in 2021. Note that some of these are handled as "traditional" modality by IRAP because they are taught face to face but not on campus. As a result, these breakdowns do not match those on the IRAP site.

PROGRAMS DEACTIVATED (ALL ON-CAMPUS)

COLLEGE OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

- Business Administration

COLLEGE OF SCIENCE AND HEALTH

- Community Health Education
- Human Performance
- Public Health
- School Health Education

PROGRAMS ALTERED

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

- Numerous IPSE programs were reconfigured, added, and deactivated; net change = -1 program; most taught off-campus

PROGRAMS ADDED

COLLEGE OF ARTS, SOCIAL SCIENCE AND HUMANITIES

- Cybersecurity – online
- Student Affairs Administration and Leadership (Ed.D.) – online

MURPHY LIBRARY

- Information Technology Management – online

COLLEGE OF SCIENCE AND HEALTH

- Applied Statistics – on-campus
- Athletic Training – on-campus
- Healthcare Administration – online
- Recreation Management – Professional Development – online

PROGRAMS, 2016

CBA
3%

CASSH
7%

SOE
31%

CSH
59%

STUDENTS, 2016

CBA
3%

CASSH
16%

SOE
12%

CSH
69%

PROGRAMS, 2021

CASSH
10%

ML
3%

SOE
27%

CSH
60%

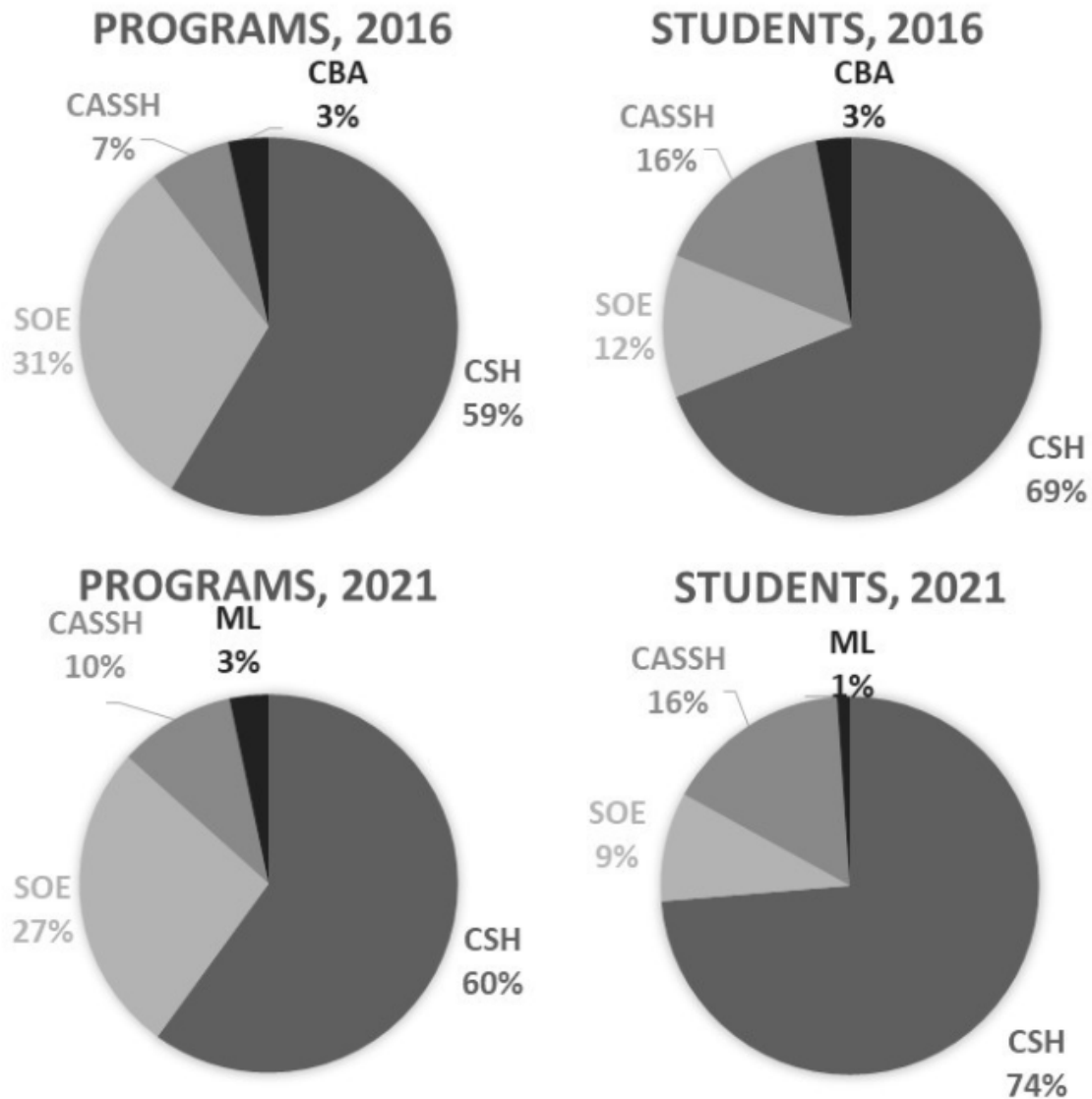**STUDENTS, 2021**

CASSH
16%

ML
1%

SOE
9%

CSH
74%

Figure 1. Summary of proportional share of the numbers of graduate programs and students across the colleges in 2016 vs. 2021. (ML = Murphy Library.) Based on the Major and Minor Enrollment Trend report for Fall 2021, saved at N:\IRAP\Reports for UWL Websites\THE FACT BOOK\Major and Minor Enrollment Trend\FALL 2021 UPDATE.

INITIAL SURVEY AND SURVEY LOGISTICS

The purpose of this survey is to collect information to develop the Vision 2026 Graduate Strategic Plan. This is the first of multiple opportunities to participate in shaping the direction of graduate education at UWL.

We start with an opportunity to comment on a summary of accomplishments from the Vision 2021: A Strategic Plan for Graduate Education at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. We will then invite you to help set priorities for the Vision 2026 Graduate Strategic Plan.

Thank you in advance for your time in completing the survey!

Vision 2026 Graduate Strategic Plan Leadership Team

- Angela Benfield
- Anita Davelos
- Robert Dixon
- Kasi Periyasamy
- Meredith Thomsen

The Vision 2021 Strategic Plan, created in 2016, was comprehensive and laid out a number of action steps. We have tried to "close the loop" by identifying the accomplishments we have made since 2016 by following the plan. You can review the action steps and accomplishments here (LINK). Please provide comments or suggestions on the accomplishments based on the previous Graduate Strategic Plan.

NOTE: You will have an opportunity to identify areas for the next iteration of the plan in future questions.

Parallel with the current graduate strategic plan, Vision 2021, the first area we will consider is Central Administration & Leadership.

In the space below we have listed ideas (items) that have been discussed by various stakeholders. Please prioritize the items for the new graduate strategic plan (Vision 2026). Please try to keep your responses to the identified targets. You may also add up to two items of your own that do not appear on the list.

Highest priority (TARGET = 2)	Medium priority (TARGET = 5)	Low Priority (TARGET=2)

Expand central administration (e.g., new positions) to further support graduate education

Continue work on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion for graduate education

Develop sustainable funding models to develop and support graduate programs

Continue or expand marketing and recruiting efforts for graduate programs

Explore opportunities stemming from the merger of Graduate Studies and Extended Learning

Highlight the Mission, Vision and Values Statement in decision-making

Continue or expand systematic communication about graduate education

Respond to the needs of graduate education by updating and developing university graduate policies

Develop campus-wide expectations for graduate faculty (i.e., workload)

Continue to advocate for and raise the stature of graduate program directors on campus

Raise the profile of external/ community partnerships with graduate programs

Work with UWL Foundation to develop graduate scholarships and awards

If you have additional comments to make about the action steps related to **Central Administration & Leadership**, please use this space to provide them. Likewise you may use this space to more fully explain the other topics you'd like to see considered in the next round of strategic planning for graduate education.

The next area is Enhancing the Graduate Student Experience.

In the space below we have listed ideas (items) that have been discussed by various stakeholders. Please prioritize the items for the new graduate strategic plan (Vision 2026). Please try to keep your responses to the identified targets. You may also add up to two items of your own that do not appear on the list.

Highest priority (TARGET = 2)	Medium priority (TARGET = 5)	Low Priority (TARGET=2)

Increase communication to graduate students across all graduate programs

Distribute consistent university information to graduate students across all graduate programs

Increase graduate student connection to the university (e.g., graduate campus life activities)

Increase focus on graduate student mental health and wellness

Pursue graduate housing including graduate family living options

Promote Career Services for graduate students for career options

Continue on-going efforts to enhance graduate assistantships and/or recruitment packages

Increase support for students of color, international, and other minoritized populations

Enhance services offered to students in online graduate programs

Work with UWL Foundation to develop additional graduate student scholarships and awards

Develop support for non-traditional, working, parenting, and/or part-time graduate students

Encourage student peer mentoring within and/or across graduate programs

Increase academic support to graduate students (e.g., writing center, tutoring, disability support)

If you have comments to make about the action steps related to enhancing the **graduate student experience**, please use this space to provide them. Likewise you may use this space to include other topics you'd like to see considered in the next round of strategic planning for graduate education.

The final area is Enhancing the Graduate Faculty Experience.

In the space below we have listed ideas (items) that have been discussed by various stakeholders. Please prioritize the items for the new graduate strategic plan (Vision 2026). Please try to keep your responses to the identified targets. You may also add up to two items of your own that do not appear on the list.

Highest priority (TARGET = 2)	Medium priority (TARGET = 5)	Low Priority (TARGET=2)

Work with CATL to develop professional development focused on graduate education

Develop training/leadership opportunities for graduate program directors

Work with administrative units to resolve workload inequities in graduate education across campus

Provide guidance to document teaching, research, service and graduate student research activities in Digital Measures

Develop resources to enhance research opportunities on campus

Educate faculty on the needs of a diverse graduate student body

Increase faculty diversity in graduate programs

Develop resources to enhance field experience opportunities

Develop award(s) and/or recognition for graduate faculty engaged in teaching, research, and service

Develop a leadership program to support new graduate program directors

If you have comments to make about the action steps related to enhancing the **enhancing the graduate faculty experience**, please use this space to provide them. Likewise you may use this space to include other topics you'd like to see considered in the next round of strategic planning for graduate education.

Please select your role on campus. (Select all that apply.)

- Graduate Student
- Faculty/IAS teaching BOTH undergraduate AND graduate classes
- Faculty/IAS primarily teaching only graduate classes
- Department Chair
- Graduate Program Director
- Member of Provost's Council
- Faculty or staff not indicated above

How many years have you been at UWL?

Select one (1) … 11+ years (7)

Survey logistics and responses

Survey was sent on April 6, 2021 to all faculty and staff in Academic Affairs, all graduate students, and to select stakeholders in Diversity & Inclusion, Student Life, Administration and Finance, and Advancement. It was open until April 14; a reminder email was sent at the midpoint.

We received 273 total responses. In these responses, 90 people identified their role on campus: 55 faculty, 28 individuals in administrative or leadership roles, and 7 students.

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