Graduate Studies Task Force Final Report
May 2012

Introduction

Provost Enz Finken created the Graduate Studies Task Force in August 2010 to examine the state of Graduate Studies at UW-L. The Task Force was charged with examining the following:

1. Role of Graduate Studies at UW-L now and in the future
2. Vision/Mission/Structure of Graduate Studies
3. Financial/Personnel/Student support considerations in Graduate Studies
4. Communication (web, recruitment, visibility, social networking as a recruiting tool, etc.) and consistency with processes and communication (functioning)
5. Marketing, recruitment, visibility

The Task Force spent the first year surveying and meeting with members of the graduate community (administrators, graduate program directors, graduate faculty, and graduate students) in order to examine the current status and possible future goals of graduate education at UW-La Crosse. The Task Force went on to establish goals and take strategic action steps towards meeting these goals in the first and second years. The following is a summary of the strategic action steps that were taken by the Task Force and recommendations for future action.

Task Force Response to Charges from Provost

Charge #1: Role of Graduate Studies at UW-L

In the first year the Task Force conducted research on the current status and possible future goals of graduate education at UW-L through:

a) A survey regarding specific graduate programs (sent to graduate program directors). This was followed by a meeting with graduate program directors.
b) A survey regarding specific graduate programs and graduate education overall at UW-L (sent to graduate students)
c) Research on the role of the Office of Graduate Education, the Graduate Council and the Graduate Curriculum Committee.

In the second year the Task Force continued research on the current status and possible future goals of graduate education at UW-L through:

a) Research on the role and responsibilities of the Director of Graduate Studies position
b) Research on UW-L Academic Policies Pertaining to Graduate Students (Fall, 2011 edition)
c) Meetings with the Director of the Office of International Education, the Director and Assistant Director of the Office of Admissions, and Graduate Program Directors on graduate admissions and recruitment
In both years the Task Force has used its research on the role of graduate education at UW-L now and in the future to inform its strategic goals, action steps and final recommendations.

In 2011-12 after consultation with Vice-Chancellors for Graduate Studies and Sponsored Research Vijendra Agarwal and Bob Hoar, the Task Force recommended to Provost Vice-Chancellor Kathleen Enz Finken (Letter of 3 October 2011) the hire of a full-time Director of Graduate Studies. The additional responsibilities that the full-time position could take on in the advancement of graduate education at UW-L were detailed in this communication. Once it was announced that the Graduate Program Director position would stay at 50%, the Task Force focused on assisting the Graduate Program Director by working on improving the graduate admissions processes.

In 2011-12 the Task Force made recommendations to the Provost Search & Screen Committee (see letter dated 14 December 2011) regarding qualities to seek in the next Provost and suggested questions for candidates related to graduate studies.

**Charge #2: Vision/Mission/Structure of Graduate Studies**

As a result of its work, the Task Force created a Vision and Mission statement for graduate education at UW-L and for the Office of Graduate Studies. These documents were vetted to administrators and graduate program directors and then sent to Faculty Senate, Academic Staff Council, Graduate Council and Graduate Student Organization during Spring 2012. The Academic Staff Council, the Graduate Council and the Graduate Student Organization endorsed these in Spring 2011. The Faculty Senate has not taken official action on the Vision and Mission Statements.

- **Mission of Graduate Education at UW-L**
  The mission of graduate education at UW-La Crosse is to promote and support excellence in graduate programs, empowering graduates to be leaders in their chosen professions with global perspectives. Graduate study at UW-La Crosse promotes the educational, professional, and personal development of students. Consistent with the mission of the University, graduate education prepares students for responsible citizenship, stewardship, and productive lives beyond the campus boundaries.

- **Vision of Graduate Education at UW-L**
  UW-La Crosse will be recognized for the quality of our graduate students and the contributions they make to research, scholarship, and professional practice. Our graduates will not only be recognized for what they bring to their professions, but what they bring to society.

- **Core Values of Graduate Education at UW-L**
  Creativity and innovation
  Creation and application of knowledge
  Lifelong learning
  Inclusiveness
  Service to community
  Innovation
• **Office of Graduate Studies Mission**
  The Office of Graduate Studies provides leadership and support to graduate education and scholarship at the master’s and professional levels in select programs that expand upon the institution’s undergraduate strengths. It promotes the sustained development and maintenance of quality graduate programs. Graduate Studies strives to be a student-centered administrative unit, committed to ethical practice, open communication, quality service and continuous improvement. As an advocate for graduate education at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, the Office of Graduate Studies endeavors to ensure that students are well prepared for responsible citizenship, stewardship, and productive lives in a globally competitive environment.

**Charge #3: Financial/Personnel/Student Support Considerations**

In 2010-11 the Task Force advocated for increased stipends for graduate assistantships. A plan for augmented graduate tuition of $600/year (phased in over 2 years) to cover the cost of increased GA stipends was developed by Administration & Finance. The plan was approved by Joint Planning & Budget. UW-L was asked by UW-System to hold on submission of the proposal during the 2011-2012 fiscal year because of the state economic and political situation. The Task Force recommends that UW-L submit the proposal to UW-System during the 2012-13 fiscal year, for implementation in 2013-14.

In 2010-11 the Task Force advocated for a change to the on-line course fee policy, which had been $75/on-line credit. A model for an on-line technology fee for all courses ($2/credit) was developed by Administration & Finance. The plan was vetted to governance groups and approved by Joint Planning & Budget for implementation in Summer 2011.

In 2011-12 the Task Force identified a number of fundraising needs, including graduate student scholarships, grants for graduate student international study, grants for graduate student research, and grants for graduate student travel for conference presentations. Interim Assistant Vice-Chancellor Bob Hoar and the Office of Graduate Studies took the lead in meeting with Vice-Chancellor Greg Reichert of University Advancement and members of the UW-L Foundation to present these needs.

**Charge #4: Communication and Consistency with Processes**

In 2011-12 the Task Force reviewed graduate policies and recommended to the Faculty Senate that the following policies be reviewed by the Graduate Council (Letter of 31 October 2011):

- a) Policy on Graduate Student Load – review minimum credit requirement
- b) Policy on Graduate Probation and Retention Standards – consider adding appeal process for graduate specials
- c) Policy on Undergraduate Enrollment in Graduate Courses – review exception process

In 2011-12 the Task Force met with Director of International Education Jay Lokken, Director of Admissions Kathy Kiefer, Assistant Director of Admissions Corey Sjoquist, and Graduate Program Directors to discuss the graduate admission process and how improvements could be made to the process. Aspects of graduate admissions (GRE submission, priority dates for
application review and consideration of graduate assistantships by programs, graduate tuition remissions, Image Now Software capabilities, national application processes and the Graduate Admissions Pilot Program with SAA) were discussed.

In 2011-12 the Task Force arranged for Assistant Director of Admissions Corey Sjoquist to meet with Graduate Program Directors to discuss the Admissions Pilot Program with Student Affairs Administration. This streamlined electronic admissions process will provide a more efficient and effective admission process with improved communication mechanisms. The Pilot Program will be expanded to other graduate programs beginning in Spring 2012 and continuing throughout 2012-2013, with the goal of including all of the graduate programs.

**Charge #5: Marketing, Recruitment, Visibility**

In 2010-11 the Task Force advocated for greater recognition of graduate students at commencement and other events. Beginning with the December 2011 Commencement, graduate students will process in first and receive their diplomas at the beginning of the program.

In 2011-2012 Interim Assistant Vice-Chancellor Bob Hoar and graduate student Katie Josephson reported to the Task Force on the new marketing efforts that the Office of Graduate Studies was undertaking. Major renovations have been made to the Graduate Studies web-site in order to promote graduate study at UW-L. Plans for graduate studies recruitment at regional graduate fairs and at the 2013 NCUR Conference at UW-L are underway.

In 2011-12 the Task Force met with Interim Assistant Vice-Chancellor Bob Hoar and Graduate Program Directors to discuss marketing of graduate programs. Marketing to encourage diverse student populations to apply is an area where particular attention needs to be paid. Strategies such as personalized trips to historically black universities were discussed. Promotion of UW-L graduate programs on Gradschools.com is just one of a number of electronic marketing venues available for graduate program marketing. Promotion of graduate programs through targeted direct mail communications with undergraduate programs and participation in regional graduate fairs and conferences was also discussed. Bob Hoar and the Office of Graduate Studies are compiling data on enrollment trends in the graduate programs. They will be conducting a survey of graduate program directors regarding capacity, so that they will be able to consider appropriate marketing campaigns for growing selected graduate programs where capacity still exists and conducting general graduate studies marketing efforts for graduate studies as a whole.

**Task Force Recommendations for Future Action**

The Task Force on Graduate Studies has 3 major recommendations for advancing graduate studies at UW-L: 1) Increase Director of Graduate Studies to a full-time appointment, 2) Create an Advisory Council for the Office of Graduate Studies; and 3) Enhance graduate education at UW-L by increasing advocacy and support for graduate education, graduate program directors, graduate faculty and graduate students across campus.

**Recommendation #1: Increase Director of Graduate Studies to a full-time appointment**

The Task Force on Graduate Studies recommends increasing the Director of Graduate Studies position to an annual full-time position. In addition to the current Director of Graduate Studies
responsibilities, the increase to full-time would allow the Director to focus on marketing, recruitment and admissions; advocating and securing support for graduate students; providing enhanced support for Graduate Program Directors and graduate faculty; and advocating for a stronger graduate studies presence at UW-L (see attached October 3, 2011 memo to Provost Enz Finken for additional detail).

**Recommendation #2: Create an Advisory Council for the Office of Graduate Studies**

The Task Force also recommends creating a Graduate Studies Advisory Council chaired by the Director of Graduate Studies with representation across the university similar to that of the Task Force on Graduate Studies. This group can meet at the request of the Director of Graduate Studies to provide advice, feedback and ideas on issues and opportunities related to Graduate Studies. The group could also serve as an advisory council for the accreditation process through Higher Learning Commission (HLC).

**Recommendation #3: Increase Advocacy and Support for Graduate Education**

UW-La Crosse has strong graduate programs but much still needs to be done if those programs are to thrive. In particular, the level of advocacy and the level of support for graduate education needs to be enhanced. As the Task Force examined graduate studies at UW-L over the last two years, the following suggestions emerged.

**Graduate Studies Enhancements**

1. Continue the goal of elevating the status and recognition of graduate studies at UW-L.

**Graduate Program**

1. Continue to develop enrollment standards in all graduate programs to ensure viable and rigorous graduate programs.
2. Facilitate periodic graduate program director meetings to focus on topics of mutual interest.
3. Explore how the Academic Program Review process for departments could better serve the needs of graduate program evaluation, particularly for those programs that are not evaluated through a national accreditation body.

**Graduate Program Development**

1. Work towards an environment of interdisciplinarity among graduate programs rather than isolationism.
2. Continue to encourage the development of graduate certificate programs and other alternative graduate studies options.
3. Encourage further development of graduate course offerings in Continuing Education and Extension and the colleges, with the goal of collaborative and non-competitive agreements.
4. Explore opportunities for collaborations between UW-L graduate programs and graduate programs at other regional schools on coursework and program partnerships.
Graduate Assistantship, Teaching Assistantships, and Other Graduate Student Support

1. Continue to explore how graduate students could be used as teaching assistants at UW-L.
2. Continue to support the submission of a Graduate Assistantships Financial Model to UW-System.
3. Continue to support the UW-L Foundation and Advancement’s work to raise funds for graduate student scholarships, travel and research and graduate program activities.
4. Continue to work on issues such as:
   a. Marketing of graduate studies
   b. Recruitment of students
   c. Student orientation activities
   d. Student retention issues

Academic Affairs Task Force on Graduate Education Members
Ruthann Benson, Dean, College of Liberal Studies (Chair)
Ray Abhold, Associate Dean, College of Science & Health
Chris Bakkum, Registrar
Rob Dixon, Director of the School Psychology Graduate Program
Christina Hayes, Office of Financial Aid
Bob Hoar, Interim Vice-Chancellor for Academic Affairs
Bruce May, Associate Dean, College of Business Administration
David Riley, Graduate Faculty, Department of Math
Michele Stertz, Office of Multicultural Student Services
Katie Josephson, Graduate Student
Vacant, Office of International Education
Attachment: Memo to Provost Enz Finken regarding fulltime Graduate Studies Director

3 October 2011

To: Kathleen Enz Finken
Provo*/Vice-Chancellor

From: Academic Affairs Task Force on Graduate Studies
Ruthann Benson, Chair
Ray Abhold
Chris Bakkum
Rob Dixon
Christina Hayes
Ryan Hemmesch
Bob Hoar
Bruce May
David Riley
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Re: Restructuring of Graduate Studies

As you consider the restructuring of the Graduate Studies Office, the Academic Affairs Task Force on Graduate Studies would like to recommend a full-time Director of Graduate Studies.

This would allow the Director to take on the following responsibilities, in addition to the current responsibilities.

1. Assist with the organization of an efficient graduate admissions process.
2. Work with the Admissions Office, the Office of International Education, and the graduate program directors on the recruitment and admission of graduate students.
3. Coordinate with the Admissions Office and others on graduate student recruitment fairs.
4. Advocate for graduate student support in employment, financial aid, housing, child care, and similar needs.
5. Serve as the graduate studies consultant on enrollment management issues.
6. Provide increased communication to graduate program directors through emails, regular meetings graduate studies retreats and web-page information.
7. Be more involved personally and encourage more participation among graduate program directors in the Council of Graduate Schools conferences and workshops.
8. Provide the central information site for all graduate studies data. Working with Institutional Research, generate more extensive graduate studies data so that data-driven decisions can be made at the program, department, college and university-wide level.
9. Provide systematic follow-up to graduate programs and university administrators after annual graduate studies surveys have been analyzed.
10. Provide support to graduate faculty and students engaged in grant-writing.
11. Advocate for support (financial and other) for graduate programs, graduate students and the Graduate Studies Office.
12. Provide support to the graduate student organizations.
13. Help departments implement the recommendations from Academic Program Review and accreditation bodies regarding their graduate programs.
14. Provide consistent support to graduate program directors in understanding graduate studies policies and procedures.
15. Serve as a consultant to colleges and departments on the development of new graduate programs and certificate programs and the revisions or elimination of current graduate programs.
16. Engage in research on graduate programs nation-wide and serve as a resource to the university on issues of graduate studies and potential areas of growth or change.
17. Engage in fund-raising for graduate studies grants and activities.
18. Advocate for an elevated level of understanding of and support for graduate studies throughout the university.
19. Work with graduate programs and others to build an inclusive graduate community.
20. Support further development of the graduate student orientation program.
21. Provide support for strategic planning for graduate studies at UW-L.

A review of the FTE supporting the graduate office at UW-System schools 2 years ago showed that UW-L was significantly understaffed for the number of graduate students being served compared to UW-Stout, UW-River Falls and UW-Oshkosh.

UW-La Crosse - 880 FTE graduate students/1,266 Head Count graduate students, 22 graduate programs - 1.18 FTE (0.4 AVC, .45 Program Assistant, .33 Graduate Assistant)

UW-Stout - 543 FTE graduate students/1,045 Head Count graduate students, 19 graduate programs - 3.5 FTE (Director, Office Manager, Admissions Evaluator, Degree Clearance Evaluator)

UW-River Falls - 779 Head Count graduate students, 15 graduate programs - 2.5 FTE (.5 Director, 2 Program Associates)

UW-Oshkosh - 515 FTE graduate students/1,314 Head Count graduate students - 4 FTE (1 Director, 1 Student Services, 2 Admissions/Records)

Thank you for your consideration of this recommendation.