



# **Davis Division Academic Senate**

## **Request for Consultation Responses**

### **Report: Prioritizing and Strengthening Graduate Education at UC Davis**

**November 30, 2012**

On May 18, 2012, the Joint Administration/Academic Senate Special Task Force on Graduate Education issued its report. The report provides a vision, issues and recommendations for strengthening graduate education at UC Davis.

# **Council of School & College Faculty Chairs (LS: HACCS)**

**November 5, 2012 6:52 PM**

Consultation from Faculty Executive Committee, College of Letters and Science

Prioritizing and Strengthening Graduate Education

November 5, 2012

The Faculty Executive Committee of the College of Letters and Science supports any and all efforts to strengthen graduate education.

# **Elections, Rules & Jurisdiction**

**November 14, 2012 10:58 AM**

*No response at this time.*

# **Graduate Council**

**December 3, 2012 11:06 AM**

*Response continued on next page.*

December 3, 2012

## **RFC: REPORT PRIORITIZING AND STRENGTHENING GRADUATE EDUCATION AT UCD**

Graduate Council's comments on the Joint Administration/Academic Senate Special Task Force on Graduate Education Report (May 18, 2012) draw on input from several sources. Graduate Council discussed the Joint Administration/Academic Senate Special Task Force on Graduate Education Report (May 18, 2012) at its November 2, 2012 meeting. Its Academic Planning and Development subcommittee reviewed the report at its November 16, 2012 meeting and provided written comments. Comments were solicited from graduate program chairs via email.

### *Strategic planning*

Graduate Council agrees with the report's emphasis on integrating graduate education into strategic planning for the campus. Graduate education is an integral component of a world-class research university, and UC Davis's strategic planning should recognize this. For example, graduate teaching needs should be included as an explicit criterion when allocating faculty FTE. Resource allocation should be aligned with strategic planning. Many concerns were expressed regarding various specific aspects of resource allocation. These concerns were largely aligned with the taskforce report. One important consideration is ensuring transparency in strategic planning and resource allocation.

### *Non-resident Supplemental Tuition (NRST)*

Recently there has been increased interest in attracting additional non-resident students to campus, due not least to the NRST they pay. NRST paid by undergraduate students is a gross revenue gain for the campus. However, for the most part NRST charged for doctoral students is not. Most NRST is paid by internal fellowship funds, contracts and grants, and general funds via the Provost's 25% buydown of tuition and NRST for external contract and grants. The cost of NRST influences decisions regarding graduate education. Specifically, NRST affects admission and employment decisions. The increasing cost of graduate student researchers, particularly ones subject to NRST, has reached the point that post-doctoral scholars provide principal investigators with "more bang for the buck," which has had a negative effect on GSR employment. The higher cost of supporting international students affects graduate programs' ability to admit the best students regardless of their country of origin. The International Advisory Committee Report (June 5, 2012) identified NRST for graduate students as a significant barrier to internationalization.

The effects of NRST on graduate education were a universal concern among Graduate Council members and those providing comments. The task force report's token acknowledgement of the negative effects of NRST in the discussion of enhancing the environment for graduate student success is not commensurate with the importance of these effects.

### *Equalizing treatment of programs administered by graduate groups and departments*

Concern regarding differential treatment of graduate programs administered by graduate groups and graduate programs administered by departments was expressed in a number of ways. One set of comments focused on resource allocation. Equalizing treatment requires allocating more financial resources to graduate groups. Groups require adequate funding for administration; they do not have the option of subsidizing administration from other activities like departments have been able to do historically. (Departments' continued capacity to do so is by no means guaranteed given current budget conditions and future budget uncertainty.) Equalizing treatment requires allocating more faculty resources to graduate groups. As noted in the taskforce report, many faculty members teach graduate courses on an overload

basis. Providing funding to buy out courses for faculty would aid in mitigating this problem. It would aid faculty members in balancing their workload across their many types of activities.

Another set of comments regarded strategic planning and differential treatment of graduate programs administered by graduate groups and graduate programs administered by departments. Specifically, the report placed too little emphasis on department-based graduate programs. Rather than framing the challenge of advancing the future of graduate education at UC Davis as one of improving graduate groups, Graduate Council would like to see it framed as a goal to put graduate groups and department-based programs on an *equal* footing. Equal treatment should be part of UC Davis's commitment to graduate education.

### *Metrics*

Comments on metrics for measuring program success addressed the design of metrics, their use, and their desirability. Because metrics would evaluate academic success in delivering the graduate curriculum, the design of metrics and the evaluation of programs' success in meeting those metrics is under the purview of the Academic Senate. Graduate Council considers it very important that any metrics applied to graduate programs must be allowed to vary by program. Thus, it is important that programs participate in designing the metrics applied to them. The definition of successful graduate education outcomes varies, and the metrics used to assess success should vary accordingly.

Regardless of how metrics are designed, they provide a specific set of incentives that may alter behavior. Any use of metrics must be monitored on an ongoing basis to assess whether metrics rewarding certain aspects of graduate education have distorted efforts regarding other aspects. Finally, the design and assessment processes must be transparent, as well as the use of the metrics in resource allocation. Transparency in resource allocation must make the link between performance and resources explicit.

Some members of Graduate Council and others providing input are concerned about the value of metrics at a more fundamental level. Because metrics tied to resource allocation incentivize certain aspects of graduate education they may distort the overall quality of graduate education. There is an inherent bias in metrics in favor of easily quantifiable outcomes and against outcomes that are difficult to quantify. For example, time to degree is relatively easy to measure, while the quality of a completed dissertation is less so. One way to reduce time to degree is to reduce the time and effort Ph.D. students (and their advisors) spend on researching a topic and writing a dissertation, which can negatively affect its quality. Thus, responding to a quantifiable metric may reduce an important aspect of the quality of graduate education. A fundamental question regarding the use of metrics is *how* they will be linked to resource allocation. If a program weakness is identified, perhaps that should result in more funding being allocated to the program, not less. Finally, Graduate Council notes that the desirability of quantitative metrics has been an important campus concern regarding the incorporation of graduate education into the ongoing WASC review. Consistency suggests that the internal use of metrics should be evaluated at least as carefully.

### *Suggestions for immediate implementation*

The topics addressed above are critical for the success of graduate education at UC Davis. Identifying and implementing means of moving forward will take considerable time, effort, and in some instances resources. There are other recommendations in the report that can be implemented immediately with few or no additional resources required. Grassroots efforts to improve mentoring do not require financial resources. Providing graduate students with more opportunities to present their work at professional meetings could add considerable value to their experience and aid them in their search for employment at relatively little cost.

Funding student-driven research outlets would provide graduate students with more opportunities to publish peer-reviewed research.

*Conclusion*

Graduate Council agrees with two key emphases of the report: the need to integrate graduate education into strategic planning and resource allocation and the need to address the negative effects of NRST on graduate education. Moving forward, greater attention needs to be paid to equalizing treatment of graduate group-administered and department-administered graduate programs. Any metrics for assessing program success must be designed in collaboration with individual graduate programs and undertaken as a responsibility of the Academic Senate. There must be a broad discussion of the fundamental value of metrics prior to any use of them for assessing program quality or allocating resources.

More broadly, Graduate Council would like to see that any implementation of the recommendations in this report be coordinated with the implementation of any recommendations in the internationalization advisory committee report and the Vision 2020 report. All three reports address aspects of graduate education and should be considered jointly. Integrating graduate education into strategic planning requires nothing less.

Sincerely,



Rachael E. Goodhue, Chair  
Graduate Council

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c: Gina Anderson

# **International Education**

**December 28, 2012 8:17 AM**

The CIE reviewed the report, “Prioritizing and Strengthening Graduate Education at UCD” and comments on the section entitled, “Provide Global Experiences and Support for International Students.”

We applaud the committee which prepared the report for recognizing the central role of international education in the graduate curriculum. We will not remain a world class university unless we both attract the brightest international students from around the world and provide experiences for US students that allow them to thrive in the global community. We urge University Administrators to resolve the issue of out-of-state tuition for graduate students as that prevents us from attracting the best students from around the world. These students not only contribute to our research and teaching mission; they provide a valuable resource to faculty and students on the UC Davis campus. We also remind the Administration that these students need resources, including English as a Second Language training, to help ensure their success, and that these services should be appropriately funded.

We support the Committee’s recommendation to support international conference and travel research for graduate students. However, there are supplementary mechanisms for supporting international conference and research. Graduate students should be encouraged to apply for outside funding from various public and private agencies. Not only would these funds support their conference and research activity, the successful applicants would demonstrate that their research attracts outside support as well as campus support – an important component of professional academic success. Graduate students should be made aware of the large number of funding opportunities and encouraged to seek these funds to supplement the University’s financial support.

# Planning & Budget

November 15, 2012 11:37 AM

CPB discussed the Prioritizing and Strengthening Graduate Education at UC Davis Report. Overall, CPB endorses the report. However, the following concerns were discussed:

The report intentionally does not get into the how, but assuming we all agree that graduate education is critical to a research one university, now is time to get into the how. First, in general, UC Davis must do much better in terms of merit fellowship funds for graduate students. Such funds are very strategic to fund graduate students during their initial few years in a time when they take classes, decide on research and before they are supported as GSRs or TAs. UC Davis is the lowest in the whole UC system in terms of offering fellowship support to our graduate students. This simply must change. Fundraising for graduate fellowships must become a very high priority of the campus fund raising campaign.

- **DOCTORAL STUDENTS:** The reality is that doctoral students are not a source of funding. It is an expense and that should be admitted up front. From a resource perspective, it must be realized that the cost of the education of a PhD student consists of: i) GSR stipend, ii) In-state tuition fee, iii) NRT (only one year for a domestic student, and all years of study for international student), and iv) Resources for research for the student. If the student is a doctoral student the predominant costs of (i), (ii), (iii) and (iv) fall onto a faculty member. The tuition-fee buyback that UC Davis offers for GSRs supported from grants is a very important resource for graduate education, and so is the NRT cost reduction after an international students passes the Qualifying Exam. However, the campus should be actively promoting a completely different model. If a student is employed as a GSR on a grant that pays full overhead, that GSR employee should not have to pay in-state fees or NRT. This would provide a natural incentive to faculty to support graduate students on grants rather than postdocs and also would lead to significant simplification of processing of funds. Note that this is not an all win situation, because if a student is supported as a GSR then that student may not necessarily count towards the funding model that is used for graduate program fellowship funds allocation (i.e. the old block grant funds). That would be a reasonable expectation as in-state graduate fees do pay for some of the graduate program fellowship funds. Another reasonable expectation is that a similar benefit (i.e. no tuition and NRT) should be waived for a TA position (along with that a possible proportional reduction in the graduate program fellowship funds). TAs should be funded from undergraduate sources, and the stipend + tuition + NRT must be built into the cost of educating undergraduate students (if you grow the undergraduate population, automatically the cost for TAs should grow).
- **MASTER'S DEGREE STUDENTS:** Master's students, unlike doctoral students, can be a source of revenue provided that the program is a terminal program. It can be a big source of income if the students are international. However i) the program that offers such programs must directly receive the financial incentive, and ii) it is not an all win situation. The faculty's time is very limited. If they expend time on self-supporting in-class instruction they are not expending that time on something else. Our current promotional system poorly recognizes in-class instruction, so in addition to a financial incentive to the program, there might have to be a financial incentive (or other carrot) for the faculty member teaching the larger classes. If such programs are offered on a large scale it may make sense for the campus to transition them to a self-supporting model. It also will require a change in the culture of admitting these students. Most programs admit graduate students and not specifically to only the Master's and only to the PhD. If a program grows their Master's degree programs for the purpose of increasing resources, they had better make sure they have a separate selection process for admission to their PhD program.

Finally, we simply must insist that in terms of resource allocations, an undergraduate student should be allocated less resources than a graduate student. The education of a graduate student in large part takes place outside of the classroom. For this reason, a simple 1:2:5 resource allocation formula for "Undergraduate:Master's:PhD" should be used. If the above described incentives are put into play for PhD and Master's degrees, then maybe a more modest approach such as 1:1:3 can be justified. In addition, it

would be helpful to know how these issues are handled at the other UC campuses, and at some point, the campus will need to engage in a more concrete discussion of metrics for evaluating graduate education.

# Research

**November 15, 2012 1:30 PM**

The Committee on Research discussed the Prioritizing and Strengthening Graduate Education Report. Overall, COR supports the report but the committee has significant concerns about graduate education funding on the campus. A strong graduate education program leads to a strong undergraduate education program.

In addition, COR had the following specific concerns:

- The committee has concerns about where graduate groups fit in, and specifically COR is concerned that some recommendations in the report will lead to the disempowerment of graduate groups.
- COR is concerned about the new budget model and funding streams, specifically, having funds flow from the deans to the departments.
- The campus needs to have guaranteed funding for graduate education including a campus where graduate students will feel safe that funding will be available for them to complete their education.
- There was no mention of TA funding in the report.
- COR would like a clearer definition of what it means to be a “lead” dean.