

# GRADUATE SCHOOL REVIEW REPORT

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

February 4, 2005

SUBMITTED BY THE COMMITTEE TO REVIEW  
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

## **Executive Summary**

The Graduate School Review Committee was charged in late August, 2004 by Provost William W. Destler to evaluate the functions and responsibilities of the Graduate School. Prior to the commencement of this review, the Graduate School was separated temporarily from the Office of the Vice President for Research and an interim dean of the Graduate School was appointed to a two-year term. The scope of this review process did not include an evaluation of the School's leadership given its recent transition. Rather, the objectives of this review were to identify the essential functions of a graduate school in the context of the mission and culture of the University of Maryland, and to identify the optimal organizational structure required to execute these functions.

The Graduate School Review Committee met regularly throughout Fall Semester 2004 while also gathering feedback and information from key stakeholders including the Graduate School interim dean, Professor Ann Wylie; graduate students; Graduate School staff; the Council of Deans, the Senate Executive Committee; and graduate program directors. The committee further examined results from a benchmarking survey of peer institutions, a survey of AAU deans, and other reports on graduate education. Dr. Edie Goldberg, University of Michigan professor and director of an Andrew Mellon grant on higher education, also shared information about other graduate programs with committee members.

The Review Committee unanimously recommends that the Graduate School remain a separate entity from the Office of the Vice President for Research. With this arrangement, the committee proposes that the Graduate School Dean report to the Provost and remain a separate position from the Vice President for Research. Given the recent structural changes, the Graduate School needs a clearly defined mission with a distinct set of functions and responsibilities. It is imperative that the mission and associated functions be conveyed to all of its major stakeholders. As a separate entity from the research office, the Graduate School should operate more effectively and efficiently under the leadership of a graduate dean, who is charged with the administration of the school.

This review process focused on indicators of quality in every component of the Graduate School – mission, programs, services, and leadership. Based on the information collected and a close examination of the primary components of the Graduate School, the Review Committee recommends a core set of functions and responsibilities.

This report is divided into the following sections:

- I. Introduction and Committee Charge
- II. Findings from Data and Information Sources
- III. Recommendations
- IV. Conclusion
- V. Appendices

## **I. Introduction and Committee Charge**

The Graduate School Review process emanated from the President's Task Group on Academic Incentives, Efficiencies, and Effectiveness. In its report, the Task Group made the following recommendation:

The maturation of the University, however, has rendered some of the responsibilities of the Graduate School either redundant or unnecessary. Every tenure-track faculty member is now a member of the graduate faculty, for example, so all faculty committees are competent to deal with graduate program and graduate education policy matters. Such matters as teaching assistant stipends are part of the overall picture of tuition revenue, student support, and course availability that are considered in other venues. Dual oversight of program curricula between the Graduate Council PCC Committee and the Senate PCC Committee is redundant and offers no obvious added value. It also significantly slows the program approval process as well as the process through which significant graduate education policy changes are initiated. With the recent delegation of fellowship funds to the colleges and the merging of the administrative functions of graduate and undergraduate admissions discussed below, it is time to re-examine the role of the Graduate School in the future of the University.

The Task Group further recommended that "... representatives of the Graduate Dean, the Provost, the University Senate, and selected college deans should meet to determine an appropriate oversight structure for graduate education and a process for moving to this structure."

In the summer of 2004, the Graduate School was separated from the Division of Research, and Dr. Ann Wylie was appointed Interim Dean of the Graduate School. In addition, Provost William Destler convened the Graduate School Task Force Implementation Committee to conduct the review that had been recommended by the Task Group.

The charge of the Review Committee included an examination of (a) the role and functions of the Graduate School, (b) its existing administrative structure, (c) issues related to institutional control and oversight of admissions, financial aid, recruitment, retention and curricular content and aspects of student life, and (d) the role of the Graduate Council in overseeing graduate policies, programs, and curricula. (Appendix 1). The Committee was asked to make recommendations relative to these issues, and to examine the implications of any changes that would be occasioned by implementation of the recommendations.

During Fall 2004, the thirteen-member review committee (Appendix 2) held its deliberations with a sharp focus on considerations of quality, both in terms of the Graduate School's contributions to the stature of the University and its responsibilities for graduate education.

## **II. Findings from Data and Information Sources**

The major sources of information and data collected as part of the review process were: a benchmarking comparison of the graduate school structures of 11 peer universities; a survey of AAU deans; a survey of University of Maryland graduate program directors; a graduate student forum; meetings with the Council of Deans, the Senate Executive Committee, the Graduate Council, Graduate School staff; and other documentation and reports.

### A. Surveys

Benchmarking of Peer Institutions' Graduate School Structures

The review committee examined the administrative structures of 11 peer comparison universities as part of a benchmarking process. A majority of these universities have separate research offices and graduate schools. Of the 11 universities, eight have separate offices and institutional leaders for their graduate schools and research offices. An additional seven universities and colleges, who have reputable graduate schools, were reviewed. Six of those seven institutions have separate units led by different institutional leaders. (Appendix 3).

#### Association of American Universities (AAU) Deans' Survey

There were eight deans (or designees) who completed a three item survey, which was distributed in the beginning of October through the AAU Deans list serve. Many of deans believed that the modern university should have a graduate school separate from its academic colleges, serving as the constant advocate of graduate education, enforcer of high quality educational standards for graduate education, and coordinator of core graduate school functions. The majority of the respondents' institutions had separate graduate schools from their research units, with the graduate school deans reporting to their respective provosts. When asked about who has the authority to approve graduate-level policies on their campuses, the majority reported that some type of graduate council had the final authority on such matters. In some cases, the graduate councils had devolved powers from their faculty senates. (Appendix 4).

#### Graduate Program Directors

In November, a survey was administered to 75 graduate program directors on campus. Of the 75 directors, 40 responded yielding a 53% response rate. The directors were asked to respond to 17 items about various aspects of the Graduate School's functions according to their estimate of the importance of each function and their degree of satisfaction with the School's execution of that function. (Appendix 5).

The survey results indicate that graduate program directors generally believe the Graduate School to be of significant importance, although the degree of importance varies according to specific functions. Program directors rated all 17 functions somewhere within the importance scale (ratings of 3.0-5.0), with six functions rated as very important (between 4.0-5.0). On levels of satisfaction with these functions, most responses fell in the neutral or weak satisfaction ratings (3.0-4.0). (Appendix 6).

The majority of graduate program directors recommended that the Graduate School remain a separate entity from the Office of the Vice President for Research. A number of program directors believe that the School can do a better job of orienting new graduate program directors and administrative assistants. Many voiced concern about the inadequate level of graduate student stipends and the University's ability to compete among our peers for top graduate students. Given that issue, several directors stressed the importance of fundraising for fellowships. Some believe that central functions, such as application and admissions processes, can be improved. Overall, the program directors recommend that the Graduate School be positioned to advocate for graduate education and have the appropriate resources to effectively manage its administrative responsibilities.

#### B. Meetings with Stakeholders

##### University of Maryland Council of Deans

The Graduate Review Committee met with the Council of Deans on October 4, 2004 to solicit the Deans' views of the essential functions of the Graduate School. Overall, the Deans endorse a separation of the Graduate School from the Office of the Vice President for Research, assuming there will be coordination and collaboration on common issues. The Deans emphasized that the academic colleges are responsible for maintaining high quality graduate programs while the

function of Graduate School is to support them through the effective and efficient execution of centralized administrative functions. Many Deans voiced the need for the Graduate School to improve upon its communications with the major constituencies that it serves, such as applicants and graduate program directors.

#### Graduate Students

A graduate student forum was held on November 4, 2004 and attended by eight graduate students from various departments. While many students voiced concern about their lack of knowledge of the Graduate School's functions and outreach, the majority of them believed that the University should continue to support a separate graduate school, especially given the size of our institution. Several students cited their appreciation of the student services provided by the Graduate School staff and the Division of Student Affairs Coordinator for Graduate Student Involvement (GSI).

When asked to identify the most salient issues facing them as graduate students, they cited lack of support for their teaching and academic endeavors, not feeling valued based on stipend levels, and concerns about the quality of their education. Most of these students recommended that the Graduate School improve its communications and advocate for enhancing the quality of life for graduate students.

#### The Senate Executive Committee and the Graduate Council

James F. Harris, Committee Chair, met with the Senate Executive Committee and the Graduate Council and invited their feedback on the directions of the Graduate School. The Graduate Council endorsed its May 2004 resolution supporting the separation of the Graduate School from the Office of the Vice President for Research and restating the Council's role in providing oversight of graduate programs, courses, and curricula. The Senate Executive Committee acknowledged the importance of this review and requested that they be kept informed of the process.

#### C. Other Information and Documentation

Also available to the committee were a number of reports and documents relevant to graduate education and the evaluation of the University's Graduate School. These included the Council of Graduate School's Organization and Administration of Graduate Education Report; past minutes of the Graduate Council meetings; various Graduate School policies; the 2004 Division of Research and Graduate Studies annual report; the May 19, 2004 Resolution from the Graduate Council to the Provost on the Role of the Graduate School; and the Functions of the Graduate School by the Interim Dean. The Review Committee used these materials as part of the evaluation process and in our deliberations about the future role of the Graduate School.

### **III. Recommendations**

The Graduate School Review Committee proposes its recommendations for the future of the Graduate School in the following areas: mission statement, leadership, and functions and responsibilities. Our findings suggest that there is lack of clarity and, in many cases, lack of knowledge about the mission of the Graduate School. In its previous configuration, the Graduate School's mission was intertwined with the focus and vision of the Office of the Vice President for Research. As a result, some academic deans and graduate students reported that they were uncertain about the Graduate School's services, programs, and functions. There is a need to clarify the School's mission and to educate the campus community about its roles and responsibilities.

### Proposed Mission Statement

Excellence in graduate education is at the heart of the University of Maryland's mission. The mission of the Graduate School is to promote excellence in graduate education and research. The School advocates for the importance of graduate education in the university, the state, the nation, and the world.

Guided by values of intellectual inquiry, innovation, collegiality, integrity, and efficiency, the Graduate School seeks to foster a challenging, inclusive environment for teaching, learning, research, scholarship, and artistic creation. It contributes to the university's commitment to excellence in education by promoting diversity in the community of graduate students and faculty. Representing the interests of the university as a whole, the Graduate School views graduate programs from an institution-wide perspective and facilitates the creation of interdisciplinary programs across academic disciplines. The Graduate School strives to engage students in the vibrant life of a research university and to prepare them for a wide range of career and civic responsibilities.

### Graduate School Leadership

Through the Graduate Dean, the School plays a leadership role in articulating a vision of excellence for the graduate community and in planning for its success. The critical role of the Graduate Dean should be affirmed. The Graduate Dean should take a leadership role in promoting the importance of graduate education and graduate student research to all levels of the campus administration.

The Graduate School's success depends on the active engagement and involvement of the colleges, academic departments, and graduate programs. The Dean's leadership must be consultative in nature, involving its major stakeholders including deans, department chairs, program directors, and students. By doing so, the Graduate School promotes the principle that the University is more than a collection of unrelated colleges, departments, and programs. The Graduate School Dean and staff should make every effort to streamline its services consistent with contemporary methods of management and information processing. As a central university office, the School actively works with its constituencies to establish strategies for dealing with common concerns and to share ideas about program development, effectiveness, and efficiency.

The Dean should be an active voice for graduate students in such areas as ensuring competitive compensation for graduate assistants and competitive stipends for fellows. The Dean should strongly encourage programs of mentorship and student development and should continue to be a strong advocate for the recruitment, retention, and timely graduation of a diverse graduate student body. The Dean should inspire innovation in the development of funding sources for student support (e.g., training grants and fellowships).

### Graduate School Functions and Responsibilities

The Graduate School advocates the highest quality standards for graduate education and maintains uniform standards and policies across academic disciplines. As a central resource on graduate education, the Graduate School serves as an advocate for the graduate student body and its special constituencies (e.g., students of color, students with disabilities, and international students). It enhances the quality of graduate student life by expanding relevant educational experiences and opportunities for graduate students. The School fosters and facilitates the training of teaching assistants and future college and university teachers.

In a broader context, the School recognizes that graduate students must have support in the non-academic aspects of their life. While responsibility for student support services such as financial

aid, housing, health insurance and benefits, counseling, child care, and international student services often lies within other campus units, the Graduate School should monitor such services to ensure that they are responsive to the needs of graduate students.

The Review Committee recommends that the Graduate School be responsible for the following functions:

1. Maintain high standards for admission of students and their continuation in graduate programs. Administer academic policies established by the Graduate Council and establish procedures to enact these policies. Oversee thesis and dissertation defenses to assure quality and uniformity of standards across academic units.
2. Assume leadership in the recruitment and retention of graduate students, with special emphasis on students from under-represented groups, to establish and maintain a diverse graduate student body.
3. Provide orientation programs, advising, and other support services that contribute to the successful matriculation and the retention and graduation of graduate students. Give special attention to the needs of international students as newcomers to our country while supporting their successful integration into the campus community. Support the Graduate Student Government, the Office of Graduate Student Involvement, and other graduate student groups.
4. Through the Graduate Dean, stimulate programs for mentoring graduate students and preparing them for roles as future university and college faculty. Work closely with the University Teaching and Learning Program and other such entities. Promote programs and career services to assist graduate students in appropriate post-graduate professional placements.
5. Administer the established processes for hearing and acting upon graduate student grievances with the Graduate Ombuds Officer playing a critical role in managing these processes. Hear and act on appeals for exceptions to policies and deadlines from graduate students.
6. Serve as an advocate for graduate education and financial resources with internal and external constituencies (e.g., legislators, federal agencies, and media sources) and participate in national higher education organizations addressing graduate education (advocacy, policy development, professional development).
7. Participate in university-wide policy and procedural processes that affect graduate education, such as enrollment management issues. Serve as the central resource for disseminating all graduate school policies and procedures.
8. Participate in external graduate program/accreditation reviews and provide oversight of University-wide ranking reviews (e.g., National Research Council).
9. Facilitate the development of interdisciplinary programs and extramural consortia. Provide oversight of the Master of Professional Studies and Post Baccalaureate Certificate in Professional Studies.
10. Administer the program of graduate fellowships while advocating for increased funding for fellowships, stipends, and benefits.

11. Oversee the appointment of Special and Adjunct members of the Graduate Faculty to assure high quality.
12. Sponsor regular leadership preparation programs for new and current graduate program directors. Foster faculty development through the General Research Board, the Creative and Performing Arts awards, the Graduate School Distinguished Lecture Series, and other programs. Initiate new programs such as seminars on best practices in graduate education and graduate faculty mentoring awards to support faculty and student development.
13. Disseminate reports and information on a regular basis to colleges, departments, and programs on graduate education trends (applications, attrition/retention rates, and diversity issues) provided by relevant sources, including the Office of Institutional Research and Planning. Create and maintain graduate student exit surveys to identify trends in graduate student satisfaction with education, learning, and campus climate.
14. Provide leadership in fundraising for fellowships and program resources (federal, state, foundation, and private sources). Participate in externally funded, national graduate education programs (e.g., Sloan Professional Master's; PEW/NSF/Atlantic Philanthropies Preparing Future Faculty Program).
15. Administer the recommendations of the Graduate Council in accordance with applicable University policies, procedures, and authorities.
16. Work in cooperation with the Vice President for Research to advance the mutual interests of the Graduate School and Research Office and to establish partnerships with external agencies.
17. Consult with the President's Legal Office on policy, contractual, or other matters that have legal and budgetary implications for the university.

#### Role of the Graduate Council

While there is agreement that the Graduate School should be responsible for overarching issues related to graduate education, the question remains as to what extent its authority should be exercised with reference to other authorities. One of the fundamental issues in this discussion is role of the Graduate Dean and the Graduate Council in setting university policy in a variety of areas associated with graduate study and graduate students. This is an area of ambiguity and occasional dispute.

According to the Graduate School's Plan of Organization, the Graduate Council acts on behalf of the Graduate Faculty to help ensure the academic quality of graduate education and graduate student research. The Council is the primary adviser to the Graduate Dean and the Provost concerning policies and procedures in these areas, including but not limited to academic standards, admissions, membership in the Graduate Faculty, graduate curricula, courses and programs, publications, and graduate student life and welfare. We recommend that decisions of the Graduate Dean and the Council be submitted to the Provost for review and approval consistent with established procedures. The Senate must review and approve all decisions of the Graduate Council related to curricula and degrees.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

The Graduate School is positioned to be an advocate and positive force on campus for graduate education. Promoting excellence in graduate education, the Graduate School makes important

contributions in preparing future leaders of our society. Its continued focus on diversity is an essential aspect of educational excellence. As part of a 21st century research university, the Graduate School plays a critical role in elevating the stature and visibility of the University of Maryland.

### **Members of the Graduate School Review Committee**

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