

**Appalachian State University
Graduate Programs Committee
Strategic Planning Commission
Final Report—May 2007**

Members of the Graduate Programs Committee undertook their work with reference to the following strategic direction, which they received at the Strategic Planning Forum, on January 5, 2007.

Advance the strength of graduate education through consequential program reviews and the development and maintenance of distinctive programs

The committee met bimonthly from January through April, with sub-group meetings and electronic communications employed between meeting dates. We agreed quite readily to focus on four areas: *Program Quality and Accountability, Faculty Support and Qualifications, Student Support and Qualifications, and New Programs*. As a whole, we drafted an objective statement and related activities for *Faculty Support and Qualifications*, and then we established sub-groups to work on the other areas and to develop a unifying vision statement. Those sub-groups worked independently and then brought their work back to the entire committee for deliberation and final revision. We drew heavily from the Report of the Taskforce on Graduate Education (October 2006) and from the ample experience and insights of committee members in determining our objectives and activities. Our recommendations, submitted with respect to the Strategic Planning Council, are below.

Proposed Unifying Vision Statement for Appalachian State University's Graduate Programs

Appalachian State University provides distinctive and exemplary graduate programs that prepare graduates to be leaders in their fields, to be lifelong learners, to succeed in attaining desired employment or admission to further graduate study, and to excel in a global environment. Furthermore, graduates of our programs function competently and ethically in all domains of their respective disciplines and advocate for and facilitate positive change within those disciplines and in the broader society. To achieve this vision, the University creates and sustains an institutional culture that values integrity, collaboration, diversity, and inclusiveness and that fosters excellence in teaching; innovation and quality in scholarly and creative activity; service to graduate education on university, state, and national levels; and the personal and intellectual growth of its faculty and students.

Proposed Objective 1: Graduate Faculty Support and Qualifications

Members of the graduate faculty are excellent teachers and mentors at the graduate level, active in scholarly or creative activity appropriate to the discipline, and active in service to graduate education.

Proposed Activities:

1. All graduate programs will establish minimum criteria, consistent with Graduate Council guidelines, for graduate faculty status, submit their criteria to the appropriate governing units for review, and ensure that the criteria are disseminated to all relevant faculty members.

Rationale: The Graduate Task Force has recommended a change to achieve greater consistency and effectiveness in establishing graduate faculty status. This approach also fulfills SACS requirements.

Units Responsible: Graduate programs, Graduate Council, Governing units

Timeline: January – December 2008

Resources required: Time

Assessment strategies: Calculate percentage of programs that have submitted criteria for review and that have disseminated their adopted criteria to relevant faculty.

2. The University will develop a process whereby out-of-classroom activities related to graduate education (e.g., lab supervision, advising, field placement, supervision of culminating research projects, clinical supervision, recruitment and admissions, etc.) will be factored into faculty workload and merit.

Rationale: At the present time, many of the tasks associated with effective operation of graduate programs are not factored into faculty workloads and are completed in excess of the standard workload.

Units Responsible: Faculty, Department Chairs, College Deans, Academic Affairs

Timeline: September 2007 - May 2008

Resources required: Reassigned time, Money

Assessment strategies: Standardized policies in place and disseminated by May, 2008

3. The University will identify new strategies and provide additional resources to support graduate faculty research and instruction.

Rationale: Current resources for reassigned time and research support are insufficient to promote enhanced scholarly and/or creative work. In particular, additional support for external grant-writing activity is needed.

Units Responsible: Faculty Development committee of the Graduate Council, Research Development Officers, Colleges/Schools, Academic Affairs

Timeline: September 2007 - ongoing

Resources required: Funding for Graduate School development officer, additional allocation of staff and seed money for the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs

Assessment strategies: Calculate percentage increase in the amount of financial support for graduate faculty research and instruction from all external sources.

Proposed Objective 2: Graduate Student Support and Qualifications

The University and individual graduate programs effectively promote the professional growth of graduate students.

Proposed Activities:

1. University units will pursue, through internal and external sources, additional funding for graduate student stipends, professional development, and scholarships that is competitive with peer and aspirational institutions.

Rationale: Despite increases in graduate student support, Appalachian currently does not offer competitive funding packages, with the result that the top graduate recruits frequently matriculate elsewhere. Additional funding will allow ASU to attract, support, and retain high quality graduate students.

Units Responsible: Departments, Colleges/Schools, University Advancement, Graduate School

Timeline: September 2007 - ongoing

Resources required: Faculty time to write proposals, fund-raising time for development officers, funding for Graduate School development officer

Assessment strategies: Calculate annually, beginning in May 2008, the percentage of assistantship stipends funded through grants and external agreements, the number of new departmental graduate scholarships, and the number of new university-wide research fellowships.

- The University will identify alternatives to enhance the quality of life for graduate students, including affordable housing and health insurance options, a physical gathering place, and social opportunities.

Rationale: A need for these improvements has been identified through GSAS and surveys and focus groups conducted by the Graduate Task Force.

Units Responsible: GSAS, SOGS, Departments, Colleges/Schools, Student Development, Graduate School

Timeline: September 2007- May 2008

Resources required: to be determined

Assessment strategies: Follow-up quality-of-life surveys of graduate students

- The University will provide resources and training for graduate program directors and faculty to enhance program quality, specifically as it relates to recruiting, mentoring, advising, and supporting graduate students in their professional preparation.

Rationale: In order to assure consistent and accurate advisement and professional support for graduate students, program directors, and faculty need ongoing training and opportunities to share ideas.

Units Responsible: Graduate School, Hubbard Center, Office of Student Research

Timeline: September 2007 - ongoing

Resources required: Training staff time, faculty time, possible use of external consultants

Assessment strategies: Evidence of increased applicant pools and higher yield rates in individual programs, number of programs with annual reports that document their targeted improvements, mechanisms for tracking success of graduates, exit and follow-up surveys and/or interviews of graduate students

Proposed Objective 3: Program Quality and Accountability

Each graduate program has a mission statement and learning outcomes that are clearly defined and models practices that sustain leading-edge quality.

Proposed Activities:

- Each program will develop and submit to the appropriate dean and Graduate School a five-year strategic plan during year one that addresses unique curricular goals; changing cultural, societal and disciplinary needs; and accreditation requirements if applicable. The plan should include:

- A mission statement
- Desired learning outcomes that are consistent with the mission statement
- Activities to achieve those outcomes
- Ways to measure those outcomes
- Itemization of resources needed to achieve those outcomes

Rationale: As recommended by the Graduate Task Force, development of a 5-year strategic plan will assist each program in having a more focused direction for improving program quality.

Units responsible: Graduate faculty and Program Directors; Departments, Graduate School

Timeline: September 2007 - May 2008; to be reviewed annually

Resources required: Time for each program director and graduate faculty member who participates in development of the strategic plan and/or recognition for service in the merit review process

Assessment strategies: Calculate percentage of programs that have completed the 5-year strategic plan.

2. Each program will submit an annual report, based on its strategic plan, to the appropriate dean and the Graduate School at the conclusion of each year subsequent to year one. The report will include an evaluation of identified outcomes, progress towards desired outcomes in the 5-year plan, a description of activities that will be undertaken to improve performance against the program goals, if necessary, and an overall summary.

Rationale: This program improvement mechanism was recommended by the Graduate Task Force and is consistent with campus-wide efforts focused on program evaluation.

Units responsible: All graduate programs, Graduate School

Timeline: May of each year, beginning in 2009

Resources required: Time for each program director, recognition in merit review process

Assessment strategies: Calculate percentage of programs that submit outcome-focused reports each year; conduct focus group discussions with graduate program directors to determine the effectiveness of the program improvement process.

3. Performance targets will be identified and utilized for program continuance review and resource allocation decisions.

Rationale: Establishment and review of targets will help to determine which programs are meeting their objectives and to establish corrective measures for those that are not. Qualitative and quantitative information from all graduate programs also will provide for equitable and systematic distribution of additional resources where most needed.

Units responsible: Graduate programs, Departments, Colleges/Schools, Graduate School

Timeline: Targets identified by May 2009; review process/timeline to be determined

Resources required: Time for graduate program directors and faculty and key administrators

Assessment strategies: Review of annual program reports

Proposed Objective 4: New Programs

New graduate programs at the certificate, masters, and doctorate levels serve the professional, cultural, and economic transformation needs of North Carolina and the region.

Proposed Activities:

1. The Graduate School will create an exploratory process - modeled on the Professional Science Master's degree process - that facilitates dialogue and collaboration to build a case for niche programs, especially those that respond to emerging needs and that cross disciplinary boundaries.

Rationale: New graduate programs should build on available strengths and respond to clearly identified state and regional needs.

Units responsible: Graduate School, Graduate Council

Timeline: 2007-2008

Resources required: Time, staff

Assessment strategies: Defined process in place by Summer 2008

2. The University will provide resources to support planning efforts directed toward the establishment of appropriate new graduate programs.

Rationale: Resources are needed to plan the establishment of new graduate programs.

Units responsible: Academic Affairs, Graduate School, Colleges/Schools, Office of Institutional Research

Timeline: ongoing

Resources required: Survey data; funding and logistical support for needs assessment, external consultants, faculty lines, student support

Assessment strategies: Survey data showing state and regional needs at the graduate level, number and type of new programs under development, number of new programs developed according to the process developed in #1, above

Graduate Programs Committee Members

Erin Boyer	Graduate Student Association Senate
Bryan Brooks	Leadership & Educational Studies
Jeff Doyle	Housing & Residence Life
Tim Forsyth	Accounting
Marie Hoepfl	Technology
Edelma Huntley	Research and Graduate Studies
Pam Kidder-Ashley, Chair	Psychology
Bob Lyman	Arts & Sciences—Council Liaison
Cathy McKinney	School of Music, Music Therapy
Kellie Reed Ashcraft	Social Work
Scott Schneberger	Computer Information Systems
Neva Specht	History
Shea Tuberty	Biology