

PROGRESS ON INSTITUTIONAL PLANNING OF GRADUATE PROGRAMS

Based on UAA's March 2020 *Ad Hoc Report to Address Recommendations 1 and 2 from the NWCCU Fall 2018 Year Seven Evaluation Report*, on July 22, 2020 NWCCU informed UAA that both recommendations have been fulfilled.

***Recommendation #1:** Expand efforts around institutional planning of graduate programs to demonstrate their academic quality and role in mission fulfillment. (Standard 2.C.12) - Fulfilled*

Although UAA fulfilled Recommendation 1, the March 2020 ad hoc report promised to describe the results of hiring a new dean for graduate studies, as well as progress on developing and implementing a strategic plan, and selecting and presenting data collected for graduate students and programs in its *Mid-Cycle Self-Evaluation Report*. Continued progress in these areas is described below.

The Results of Hiring a New Dean

UAA conducted a national search and hired a dean of the Graduate School who began August 4, 2020. The dean was charged by the provost with developing a master plan for the Graduate School to inform a subsequent strategic plan. As a result, graduate education is achieving a more prominent role in the institution's identity and the dean is systematically launching a comprehensive array of both internal and external initiatives in support of graduate education.

Developing and Implementing a Strategic Plan

The provost's first charge to the new dean was to propose a master plan for the Graduate School to, in turn, inform a strategic plan. Campus-wide interviews thus were conducted, which centered on three main questions about the present and future of graduate programs. Analysis of interview data produced eight themes from which the dean derived two goals and nine strategic questions to focus the Graduate School's direction. The strategic questions determined the following AY2021 activities:

1. Established five ad hoc committees within the Graduate Advisory Council for the following:
 - Cost of Graduate Education Ad Hoc Committee to conduct a comprehensive cost analysis of graduate education that makes explicit the variables unique to graduate education (i.e., stacked courses, research dollars, higher tuition, apportioned faculty salary) to, in turn, inform new program development.
 - Website Redesign Ad Hoc Committee to enhance recruitment efforts. This work is now linking to the university-wide website upgrading efforts.
 - Bylaws Ad Hoc Committee to update principles guiding the Graduate Advisory Council in its institutional-level role supporting graduate education.
 - Graduate Student Exit Survey Ad Hoc Committee to review existing program-level exit surveys and determine the need for additional exit survey data regarding the efficacy of Graduate School services.
 - Administrative Scholarship Awards Ad Hoc Committee to distribute first-time funds to the Graduate School, awarding 15 total \$2000 student scholarships from 93 applications.
2. Developed Seawolves Offer Support mentoring program pilot to offer graduate students an academically and professionally supportive relationship with Graduate School alumni. This mentor program currently pairs 42 students with alumni, and the pilot will continue through spring 2022 to determine its efficacy in supporting student success beyond the pilot.

3. Established a partnership with active military at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson to recruit and enroll students in various graduate degree programs through providing live webinars, circulating flyers, and developing future face-to-face information sessions.
4. Planned the “Return to Learn” amnesty program to incentivize students to return to finish their degrees. This program was prompted by institutional data reporting close to 900 graduate students not currently enrolled and not yet graduated. Waived application fees along with tailored advising will be offered to support returning students’ efforts in degree completion.
5. Initiated two faculty development opportunities, including a series on teaching graduate students, which will be co-sponsored with CAFÉ in the 2021 Fall Teaching Academy, and a faculty peer mentoring program focused on enhancing research productivity, which will be co-sponsored with the Office of Research.
6. Started a video testimonial project featuring interviews conducted by the dean with current students and alumni discussing their UAA experiences. These videos are being prepared for website spotlights.
7. Conducted a comprehensive review of forms, processes, and procedures for the purpose of streamlining required tracking of graduate student admission, enrollment, program advancement, and program completion.
8. Assessed the scopes of duties for current Graduate School personnel to determine ways in which the infrastructure of the Graduate School might be rightsized to fulfill its mission and maximize its potential.

Selecting and Presenting Data Collected for Graduate Students and Programs

Data collection regarding graduate students and programs is ongoing and continues to advance. Currently, the Graduate School has selected the following for its program review and accreditation metric and rationale:

Metric

The average (median and mode) number of semesters taken by students to complete any graduate degree or certificate program. Determined by students who have graduated with a graduate program as their primary degree. Based on a 5-year trend.

Rationale

Looking at the number of semesters graduate students take to complete their degrees illustrates how students progress through their degree programs (full-time, part-time, stop-out). This information on student behavior and completion can inform program structure and help the institution support students in a way that honors the time needed for rigorous intellectual engagement and growth, while it also ensures that students can complete in a timely manner.

As the Cost of Graduate Education Ad Hoc Committee continues its work and reports its findings, additional metrics will be identified to inform further data collection and analysis, including enrollment trends and optimal class sizes, feasibility of co-teaching, efficacy of various structural models for interdisciplinary programs, and rates of return after leaves of absence as it relates to the time to graduation metric.