

CREATING A WORLD OF GOOD

GRADUATE EDUCATION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

2015-2020 STRATEGIC PLAN

FROM THE OFFICE OF THE DEAN

Graduate education has been a mainstay of higher education in the United States for more than 100 years. Its purpose and value have been shaped by evolving economic and social environments. As eloquently stated in [“The Path Forward: The Future of Graduate Education in the United States,”](#) a 2010 report by the Council of Graduate Schools and the Educational Testing Service, graduate education remains foundational to the nation’s economic, social and political needs.

*Finding innovative solutions to many of the challenges facing the United States and the world in the 21st century will depend upon a creative, knowledgeable, and highly skilled workforce. The application of knowledge and skills to these challenges will help maintain our country’s future economic prosperity and growth, foster social well-being, and assure our leadership position in the global economy. Undergraduate education is important to the creation of a stable economy because it provides students with foundational knowledge and work skills and prepares college graduates for a wide range of employment options. **But it is graduate education that provides students with the advanced knowledge and skills that will secure our future intellectual leadership in the knowledge economy.***

We are now at a turning point in graduate education. While the need to prepare the next generation of college and university professors persists, graduate education must educate and train students for the many diverse careers beyond academia that increasingly require advanced degrees.

As science, medicine, and engineering advance faster than ever before, the demand for experts and innovators in these areas is unprecedented. Moreover, assuring socially and culturally responsible developments and public engagements require investments in social sciences, arts and humanities.

We recognize that some question the value of a graduate education, with national debates lamenting “too many Ph.D.s,” given that the number of doctorates awarded outpaces the rate at which academic positions requiring them become available. Many also argue that graduate students are often not trained properly for current and future career opportunities. Others protest that rapidly rising tuition and growing undergraduate student debt no longer make graduate school feasible, affordable, or a good return on investment.

Clearly, as public investment in higher education continues to waver at the state and federal levels, and the cost of higher education to students continues to climb, so does student debt. While these are real concerns, they do not undermine the integral value of graduate education for the individual and society, which have much to gain from both master's and doctoral degree training.

This evolving environment requires that graduate schools be responsive to the dynamic needs of society and the marketplace, as well as the changing demographics of the student body and workforce, while simultaneously promoting scholarly excellence. It is abundantly clear that solutions must continue to cross national and disciplinary boundaries. Increasingly, and not without controversy, universities are charged with providing flexible, just-in-time, market-relevant education to individuals who view themselves as consumers as much as seekers of knowledge.

Graduate education is an essential component of what makes the University of Washington a great research and teaching institution. In many of our top research programs, graduate students are the fuel that fires the research engine, and the research training they receive as graduate students is crucial to innovation in the future. Across the UW, graduate students serve as respected teachers and mentors for our undergraduates. But graduate education is confronting many new challenges — and opportunities — especially in the following areas:

- ▶ Demand for multidisciplinary approaches to graduate education
- ▶ Opportunities for global partnerships in graduate education
- ▶ Need for innovative and timely approaches in delivery of graduate education for changing demographics and workforce
- ▶ Imperative to expand the diversity of graduate students to better reflect, engage and lead our diverse society
- ▶ Necessity for increased professional and career development in graduate education to better prepare students for the array of available jobs

In alignment with the University's overall Sustainable Academic Business Plan, we have identified five major priorities that will shape our initiatives to advance the University of Washington's graduate enterprise and propel its leadership and vision for the next five years. As with the University's strategic plan, our priorities will be developed further with an eye towards the changing terrain of higher education over the next two decades. The Graduate School is committed to providing the crucial, innovative and collaborative leadership that is necessary to confront the changing landscape of graduate education in an increasingly technology-driven, information-intensive world. We seek to partner with stakeholders, including community leaders, graduate programs, deans and chairs, graduate and professional students, faculty, staff and UW and national leaders, in promoting the excellence of our graduate students who are the next generation of discoverers, innovators, leaders and change agents in a local-global environment.

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OUR VISION

All graduate students, faculty, and staff at the University of Washington are supported by a collaborative community that actively promotes their success and fosters an environment of opportunity and excellence as they pursue fulfilling futures as leaders and innovators through the scholarly pursuits of arts, humanities, and the sciences. The excellence of graduate education is essential to the reputation and impact of the University of Washington.

OUR MISSION

The Graduate School, in partnership with faculty, staff and other advocates throughout the University, champions innovation and excellence in graduate education. Graduate students strengthen the University of Washington's state and global reputation and impact. The University of Washington Graduate School promotes the academic, research, teaching and professional success of every graduate student. The Graduate School leads the University's efforts to recruit and retain the most promising graduate students of diverse backgrounds and cultures. We collaborate with partners on all three campuses to provide our graduate students with professional development opportunities and the services to manage their academic progress from application through commencement and beyond into a vibrant alumni community.

SUMMARY OF OUR PLAN

After a year-long process of engaging the UW's graduate education stakeholders — students, faculty, administrators, staff and community members — the Graduate School has identified five areas on which to focus our attention, leadership and resources over the next five years.

GRADUATE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

We will align the University's graduate student programs and services with faculty- and student-identified needs, attending to critical junctures across the graduate student experience from application to graduation. We will also ensure all graduate students at the UW receive outstanding academic advising, mentoring, and professional development opportunities that prepare them for professional success.

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

We will promote and enhance diversity, equity and inclusion across graduate student, faculty and staff populations and in campus environments. We will work to ensure that disparities are eliminated in the recruitment, enrollment, retention and graduation rates of graduate students, and to advance the recruitment and retention of faculty and staff such that the UW's demographics is representative of a world-class institution.

INNOVATION AND EXCELLENCE

We will support and expand the Graduate School's current interdisciplinary programs to ensure that they flourish and represent the wide range of disciplines at the UW necessary to solve the world's most vexing problems. We will also develop and promote innovative pathways to graduate education that are increasingly dynamic in structure and responsive to changing societal needs. We will promote the existing value of humanities graduate education while exploring opportunities to increase its impact within academic and non-academic communities.

ADVOCACY AND ADVANCEMENT

We will broaden awareness among stakeholders and the public at large of the value and impact of graduate education on society and in transforming lives. We will also increase financial support for graduate students, support services and research initiatives across the UW.

ADMINISTRATIVE INFRASTRUCTURE AND CORE PRACTICES

We will identify and adequately support major administrative systems, services and processes that are vital to excellence in graduate education at the UW, especially those that are central to improving the graduate student experience and student outcomes.

GRADUATE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

Today's graduate students are more diverse than ever before, as are their reasons for pursuing graduate education. Because each graduate student has unique aspirations, motivations and goals, universities must remain relevant and responsive to the needs of individual students. Universities and graduate schools play a pivotal role in providing graduate experiences that prepare students for productive, meaningful futures. In particular, students and academic leaders have identified an increased need for additional programs and support services, especially in the areas of professional development, mentorship, and wellness.

1. GOAL: The UW's graduate student support services and programming serve as a model for other flagship research universities across the country.

OBJECTIVE: Align the University's graduate student programs and services with faculty- and student-identified needs.

STRATEGY: Work with the Graduate School's institutional research team to identify strengths, gaps, and opportunities for improving programs that facilitate student success.

STRATEGY: Partner with the University's academic and administrative units to coordinate professional service and program delivery, reduce redundancy, and promote efficiency.

STRATEGY: Align the Graduate School's services and programming consistent with a coordinated delivery model. Monitor and curate best practices in service and program delivery and regularly disseminate them to academic programs to promote their adoption.

2. GOAL: The UW's graduate students are among the country's best prepared to launch successful, meaningful and impactful careers with confidence.

OBJECTIVE: Ensure that all graduate students at the UW receive outstanding academic advising and professional development opportunities that prepare them for professional success.

STRATEGY: Monitor and curate best practices in academic advising and work with faculty leadership to promote their adoption throughout the University. Monitor student feedback mechanisms to track progress.

STRATEGY: Coordinate with graduate program advisors, the Core Programs Advisory Board, and alumni to identify gaps in professional development opportunities on campus and focus the Graduate School's efforts to fill those gaps.

STRATEGY: Develop a strategic plan to ensure that postdoctoral fellows, who frequently serve as first line mentors to graduate students, are provided career development and mentor training that will foster mentoring skills and enhance the graduate student experience.

3. GOAL: The UW provides a welcoming and supportive environment that attracts the most talented graduate student population from across the country and around the world.

OBJECTIVE: Cultivate a culture of inclusion where ALL students can thrive.

STRATEGY: Work with graduate student leaders to ensure the Graduate School continues to be seen as a welcoming and relevant resource.

STRATEGY: Improve the student onboarding process to encourage engagement and a sense of connection to the Graduate School and the UW.

STRATEGY: Review and revise all public-facing documents and web materials to ensure a strong message of inclusion and support.

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Fostering diverse and inclusive graduate communities is a paramount responsibility of universities. A diverse representation of ideas, students, faculty, staff and leadership is essential to the excellence and success of graduate education and its function of advancing knowledge that benefits a broad range of local, national and international populations. To attract and retain the world's most diverse and talented graduate students, faculty, and staff, universities must establish and maintain welcoming and supportive classroom and campus environments that allow each individual to thrive.

1. GOAL: The UW is recognized as a national leader in research, teaching, mentorship and public service related to equity, diversity and inclusion.

OBJECTIVE: Promote and enhance diversity, equity and inclusion across graduate student, faculty and staff populations.

STRATEGY: Enhance and support frequent structured conversations with university partners and constituencies that address current affairs and structural barriers to inclusion, surface and promote the broad dissemination of exemplary practices and identify and embrace opportunities for growth.

STRATEGY: Identify and support specific pipeline programming opportunities that will help the university recruit and retain a diverse graduate student population.

STRATEGY: Collaborate with relevant stakeholders to standardize the Graduate School's and University's diversity data tracking and reporting practices and establish standard metrics of success.

STRATEGY: Support the development and implementation of innovative programs, seminars, trainings, and resources to promote faculty and staff skills in engaging diversity.

STRATEGY: Collaborate with University leadership to increase relevant resources, funding, and support to promote diversity and inclusion in graduate education throughout the UW.

2. GOAL: The UW Graduate School is known nationally as a model academic and administrative unit for its adoption and dissemination of diversity-related best practices.

OBJECTIVE: Ensure that disparities in the recruitment, enrollment, retention, and graduation rates of graduate students are eliminated and that the University's racial and ethnic demographics of graduate students, faculty and staff are representative of a world-class institution.

STRATEGY: Develop and maintain an internal diversity plan for the Graduate School that guides and informs its activities and actions, including hires.

STRATEGY: Use existing working groups and convene new ones when needed to sustain and advance the school's internal plan and strengthen collaboration and messaging of activities across programs and units within the school and across the UW.

STRATEGY: Promote workplace environments where a broad spectrum of physical and visual elements of culture are presented and welcomed.

STRATEGY: Develop and implement an advancement strategy focused on diversity and inclusion in partnership with relevant stakeholders.

INNOVATION AND EXCELLENCE

The nature of graduate education is evolving rapidly, and universities must adapt and innovate to ensure that graduate degree and certificate programs remain relevant and are responsive to society's needs. Societal challenges and workforce changes require graduates to work across sectors, professions, and disciplinary lines in ways that traditional educational models do not always accommodate.

1. GOAL: The UW builds on its reputation nationally and internationally for interdisciplinary excellence.

OBJECTIVE: Support the Graduate School's current interdisciplinary programs to ensure they succeed.

STRATEGY: Foster the exchange of information and promote best practices in teaching, learning, and research among interdisciplinary programs.

STRATEGY: Work with faculty to expand outreach efforts, including lecture series and graduate student engagement with the community and other stakeholders.

OBJECTIVE: Expand the range of interdisciplinary programs across all disciplines at the UW.

STRATEGY: Identify opportunities for new and innovative interdisciplinary programs that address specific societal needs, and provide the support necessary for them to succeed.

STRATEGY: Encourage the development of new models for dissertations and other intellectual outcomes of graduate education that better demonstrate intellectual accomplishment and its relevance to individual and societal advancement.

2. GOAL: The UW is known nationally and internationally for innovative approaches to increasing access to graduate education.

OBJECTIVE: Develop and promote new pathways to graduate education that are increasingly dynamic in structure and responsive to changing societal needs.

STRATEGY: Work with faculty to explore collective certificate programs, academic clusters, modularized degree programs, and new joint bachelors/master's degree programs, among others.

STRATEGY: Review and modernize the Graduate School's policies and practices to support the development and maintenance of new educational delivery models.

3. GOAL: Humanities graduate education at the UW is broadly recognized and celebrated for its disciplinary value to society and its contributions to the interdisciplinary creation of knowledge across all fields of study.

OBJECTIVE: Promote the existing value of humanities graduate education while exploring opportunities to increase its impact within academic and non-academic communities.

STRATEGY: Partner with Simpson Center for the Humanities, UW deans, and other leaders to identify outreach and advocacy opportunities related to the value of graduate education in the humanities.

STRATEGY: Foster the expansion and development of new models for dissertations that better demonstrate intellectual accomplishment and relevance to individual and societal advancement.

ADVOCACY AND ADVANCEMENT

Over the last several years, state and federal resources dedicated to higher education, and especially graduate education, have been significantly constrained relative to historical standards. As state and federal economies recover, most public reinvestment has been focused on undergraduate education. The need for universities and graduate schools to articulate the societal value of graduate education to a broad array of stakeholders is more critical now than ever before.

1. GOAL: The UW's graduate programs and the research conducted by UW graduate students are robustly supported by an expansive network of engaged stakeholders including elected officials, donors, and graduate education advocates.

OBJECTIVE: Increase financial support for graduate academic programs, support services, and graduate research initiatives across the UW.

STRATEGY: Partner with other UW deans and advancement officers to increase fellowship and scholarship funding opportunities for a diverse population of graduate students.

STRATEGY: Promote the value of interdisciplinarity among stakeholders and donors and cultivate increased investment in interdisciplinary academic programs and initiatives.

2. GOAL: Graduate education at the UW is internationally recognized as an essential and leading contributor to addressing society's most challenging issues, and to generating its most promising solutions.

OBJECTIVE: Increase awareness among critical stakeholders and the public at large of the value and impact of graduate education on society and in transforming individual lives.

STRATEGY: Leverage relevant data and share the stories of our graduate students and alumni through a comprehensive communications strategy.

STRATEGY: Increase the Graduate School's leadership role on campus and nationally in promoting excellence in graduate education through presentations, events, and contributions to new and existing initiatives.

STRATEGY: Improve the Graduate School's branding and visibility through a comprehensive, multifaceted approach that aligns with the University's brand, as well as the school's mission, vision, and priorities.

ADMINISTRATIVE INFRASTRUCTURE AND CORE PRACTICES

The quality of graduate education is established in classrooms, research labs and other academic settings under the leadership of outstanding graduate faculty. However, educational excellence also depends on the quality of administrative processes, services and core practices, which enrich and sustain graduate programs and students. To achieve and maintain excellence in graduate education, academic and administrative units must invest in strong administrative infrastructures and establish well-researched and outcomes-focused core practices.

1. GOAL: The UW is recognized nationally as a leader in providing state-of-the-art administrative services and systems and maintaining core practices that enrich and sustain excellence in graduate academic programs and improve the graduate student experience.

OBJECTIVE: Identify and adequately support major administrative systems, services and processes vital to excellence in graduate education at the UW.

STRATEGY: Identify, inventory, and map administrative services, systems, and processes at the UW that are crucial to building and sustaining quality graduate education programs.

STRATEGY: Partner with other administrative units to monitor best practices in the administration of graduate education services, systems, and processes and share them broadly among graduate academic programs and administrative units.

STRATEGY: Partner with academic and administrative units to align financial and other resources with gaps and needs identified through the inventory and mapping process.

STRATEGY: Leverage Graduate faculty and allies as ambassadors who can advance administrative priorities within the UW and among its institutional peers.

OBJECTIVE: Identify and adequately support major administrative systems, services, and processes essential to improving the graduate student experience and student outcomes.

STRATEGY: Identify, inventory, and map administrative services, systems, and processes at the UW that are crucial to improving and sustaining excellent graduate student experiences.

STRATEGY: Partner with academic and administrative units to align financial and other resources with administratively-supported student needs identified through the inventory and mapping process.

STRATEGY: Take advantage of new and existing feedback tools, including the Graduate School's accept offer survey, decline offer survey, and exit survey; the Office of Educational Assessment's alumni survey; and input from graduate program advisors and coordinators.