

A PRELIMINARY MESSAGE FROM THE GRADUATE STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

When the moment comes for a committee to make its deliberations public, those not party to the history of the group and its discussions may well feel that its proposals seem to arrive from nowhere. Who are these people? Who appointed them? And what makes them so qualified to set the agenda? These are not unreasonable questions and, in opening out our discussions for comment by colleagues, we may first owe some answers.

The Strategic Planning Committee was initially appointed by the Dean of the Graduate School and approved as an ad hoc committee of the Graduate Council in fall 2003. Graduate Council then formally established it as a committee in May 2004, as a result of the approval by University faculty of revisions to the Graduate School By-laws. Graduate Council charged the Committee with the task of developing four documents:

- a mission statement (a few sentences that capture the essence of who we are);
- a statement of core values (what is important to us);
- a vision statement (what we would like to be); and
- a strategic plan (how to get there).

Individuals who agreed to serve on the Committee came from the entire range of schools within the graduate community and saw themselves as concerned citizens of the University who shared the goal of advancing graduate education. During academic year 2003-04, the Committee met with a number of graduate directors, department chairs and senior administrators, and read documents from the University and other institutions, before setting about the tasks of drafting a mission statement for the Graduate School, outlining a set of core values and developing a vision statement for the future. A first draft of these documents was presented to Graduate Council. It was then returned to the Committee for further development, based on the feedback received.

The Committee thus understood its charge as one of researching and drafting materials to be delivered to the Graduate Council and to the faculty at large, to be discussed, debated and amended as appropriate. The first aim was to stimulate broad discussion on the role and direction of the Graduate School at Binghamton and what framed the Committee's deliberations was the practical question of how to advance graduate education at a university historically recognized for excellence in undergraduate education. Since its inception in 1961, Binghamton University's Graduate School has seen the number and size of its programs steadily increase, growing from eighteen Master's degree programs and two doctoral programs in the Arts and Sciences in 1964, to include a wide range of disciplines (44 Master's programs and 25 doctoral programs, some of which emphasize research while others focus on the development of professional skills) across six schools (Arts and Sciences, Education and Human Development, Engineering, Management, Nursing, and Public Administration, temporarily housed in the Graduate School). In this period, the organizational structures of the Graduate School have grown in piecemeal fashion, as the range of graduate programs has been built up. Now, however, the University has reached a threshold and the Strategic Planning Committee has viewed this as an opportunity to pause and consider how well the current structures and goals of the Graduate School meet the diverse and increasingly complex needs of graduate education at Binghamton University.

Members of the Committee identified a number of existing strengths in addition to areas that need to be reexamined and strengthened. The particular problems facing graduate studies at this institution seemed to revolve around:

- 1) the structural limits placed on graduate education because of the lack of a voice in decision making and resource allocation;
- 2) the weak link between graduate education and research; and
- 3) the lack of a rational system for allocating resources based upon the performance and relative efficiency of academic units.

A number of ideas came up for consideration in a series of thought provoking discussions that eventually worked towards consensus. Committee members agreed that the University should work toward the steady improvement of the quality of graduate education for students who pursue advanced studies at Binghamton. This central conclusion was not predicated upon a belief that current practices are substandard but, rather, that what is currently being done can be bettered. We agreed that the role of graduate education on campus should be elevated so that, when decisions are made and resources are allocated, the impact on graduate education should be an important consideration. For this to happen, we foresaw that structural changes in the decision-making processes of the University would be necessary. We shared the view that graduate education is a key element in the growing scholarly activities of the faculty, and that this synergy should be advanced. From the Committee's point of view, research and scholarship within the University are not confined to externally funded institutional research programs. They also include individual research and a broad spectrum of creative endeavors that, in the arts and humanities particularly, are often supported by fellowships, foundations and donor grants that bring prestige to the University but are not visible within its present measurements of external funding.

Throughout its proposals, committee members have emphasized "strengthening the role of the Graduate School," and what they mean by "strengthening" is that the Graduate School should have:

- 1) sufficient resources to enable departments to achieve their goals for their graduate programs;
- 2) adequate flexibility to address the needs of graduate education quickly and appropriately, given that the landscape of graduate education has changed so much, nationally and internationally; and
- 3) a substantive role in University decisions that impact graduate education.

We believe, nevertheless, that to strengthen graduate education is to advance the wider interests of the University as a whole. Indeed, our views clearly parallel those expressed in the University's strategic plan, *Implementing Our Strategies: A Roadmap to the Future* (5 May 2005), in particular improving graduate stipends.

Inevitably, the question of resources looms large in any effort to envision future directions. The Committee recognizes the dangers of imagining we can depend on new funding initiatives, just as it recognizes the limits of advice that suggests we should "do more with less." There are, however, changes and new directions toward which we can work now, while fully accepting that predictable resources will be key to implementing the vision outlined in the attached document.

Current Strategic Planning Committee of Graduate Council: Theresa Grabo, Wayne Jones, Tom O'Brien, Ann Stahl, Nancy Stamp, Elizabeth Tucker, Arieh Ullmann

Past contributors: Margaretha Hendrickx, Jake Kilmarx, Richard Plumb, Gale Spencer, John Tagg, Kevin Wright

MISSION STATEMENT

The Graduate School at Binghamton University works with academic schools, departments and programs to provide leadership in graduate education, scholarship, research and professional training. The Graduate School has a diverse, pluralistic and international community of faculty and students who come together to promote: 1) new insights, theory building, and creative endeavors; 2) the dissemination of knowledge through education; and 3) the application of knowledge to solve problems regionally, nationally and globally.

CORE VALUES

- *Learning and scholarship*

To advance the development of scholars, teachers and professionals within the graduate student body.

- *Open inquiry*

To promote high standards of open intellectual inquiry, critical thinking and creativity.

- *Respect for differences*

To value diversity and inclusion within a setting that respects theoretical and philosophical differences within and across disciplines.

- *Broadening opportunity*

To support educational opportunity regardless of race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, socio-economic status, gender, physical ability, sexual orientation or age.

- *Professional ethics*

To foster ethical behavior in teaching, scholarship, research and service.

VISION STATEMENT

We envision graduate education at Binghamton University in the top tier of public universities, with programs recognized at the regional, national and international levels.

We envision graduate education at Binghamton University identified as on a par with the quality, reputation and visibility of undergraduate education at Binghamton University.

EXPANSION: HOW WE ENVISION BU'S GRADUATE SCHOOL

The Role of Faculty

We envision a graduate faculty who:

- Are engaged and active scholars at the local, state, national and international levels
- May include trans- and interdisciplinary approaches to research, scholarship, practice and creative expression
- Are active in seeking external funds to support research and scholarship
- Link their scholarship and service to training, mentoring, education and professional development of graduate students
- Assist graduate students to conduct original research
- Are accessible to graduate students and qualified and willing to mentor them and serve on their thesis and dissertation committees
- Participate and initiate activities such as workshops, programs, collaborations and serve on thesis and dissertation committees in other departments and disciplines
- Assess students progress toward completion of their degrees on a regular basis, evaluating both strengths and weaknesses and responding accordingly
- Are effective, creative, and demanding teachers
- Learn from their students, from the act of teaching and from discipline-related pedagogy
- Evaluate and revise curriculum on a regular basis
- Exhibit ethical behavior in their scholarship, teaching and service.

The Role of Students

We envision a graduate student body that:

- Represents a growing share of the student body on campus
- Includes greater numbers of doctoral students than currently
- Includes a significant number of international students who contribute to a rich discourse
- Is talented, diverse, engaged, motivated, and contributes to the intellectual vigor and scholarship on campus
- Is actively engaged in research, scholarship, creative expression, and teaching
- Is educated, trained and mentored to prepare them for professional roles and develop into scholars who contribute to generating original ideas and solving complex problems
- Exhibits ethical behavior in their scholarship, teaching and service
- Takes responsibility for their own education and actively develops their academic or professional careers
- Is active in their disciplines, writing papers, making presentations, and attending conferences
- Develops skills and experience in seeking external funding to support their research and scholarship, in line with the expectations of their discipline

- Is interdisciplinary and works in teams to solve problems
- Obtains and exhibits as a collective a high level of leadership, scholarship, collaboration, and pedagogical skills
- Has many individuals who obtain careers inside and outside academia

The role of the Administration

We envision an administration that:

- Provides leadership in concert with faculty for graduate education
- Is responsive to faculty and students needs and supportive of faculty initiatives
- Identifies, communicates and promotes best practices in graduate education
- Supports development of students, staff and faculty
- Maintains open lines of communication across departments, schools and administrative units
- Identifies opportunities and assists faculty and units in pursuit of those
- Represents campus to SUNY-system by communicating ideas and needs and advocating on behalf of faculty, staff and students
- Promotes an appropriate level of autonomy of campus

A STRATEGIC PLAN FOR GRADUATE EDUCATION AT BINGHAMTON UNIVERSITY

To realize the goals laid out in the Preamble and the Mission and Vision Statements, the committee proposes the following actions as the foundation of a Strategic Plan for graduate education at Binghamton University

A. Strengthen the Graduate School

1. It is recommended that there be a significant increase and predictable flow of funds provided to the Graduate School to support graduate education, which may at the same time enhance undergraduate education.
2. In consultation with graduate programs, the Graduate Dean requests funds sufficient for competitive stipends to develop critical mass in programs.
3. As advocate for graduate education, the Graduate Dean participates in a consultative role in the process of faculty hiring, renewal, tenure and promotion.
4. In coordination with any required accreditation reviews, the Graduate School works with all graduate programs to establish a regular cycle of self-studies and external evaluations.
5. The Graduate School develops appropriate benchmarks and measures of accomplishment against which the performance of each program may be assessed, working with individual programs in the context of regular evaluation processes.

6. To strengthen existing programs and for the development of new programs, the Graduate School uses these performance indicators and other established criteria for structural planning, quality assessment, and resource allocations.
7. The Graduate School maintains a five-year enrollment plan in consultation with the departments and schools and through an open, rational and transparent process.
8. The Graduate School develops a university-wide recruitment effort and requests sufficient funds to implement it.
9. In consultation with graduate programs, the Graduate School promotes university-wide career and professional development opportunities for graduate students.
10. In consultation with graduate programs, the Graduate Dean develops a plan to increase the visibility of Binghamton University graduate education.
11. The Graduate School supports faculty as models of teaching and mentoring and, in turn, assists in the development of graduate students in these areas.
12. The Graduate School keeps the University apprised of regional, national and international patterns and initiatives in graduate education, recommends appropriate responses by the University and if necessary how to fund those, and orchestrates the responses.

B. Strengthen the Relationship with the Research Division

1. The Graduate School works with the Division of Research to plan and integrate research efforts to support graduate education, the development of new programs and the enhancement of existing programs.
2. The Graduate School develops with the Division of Research a plan that recovers some research-generated funds to be applied to graduate education.
3. The Graduate School works with the Division of Research to improve recognition and integration of research, scholarship and creative endeavors that are not funded or not supported by external sponsors.

C. Create Areas of Excellence

1. In line with the University Strategic Plan, including the interdisciplinary themes, and through an open planning process, the Graduate School identifies and targets several doctoral areas to receive resources beyond the normal allocation, for the purposes of making an impact and receiving national and international recognition.

Adopted by the Graduate Council on 5-8-06