

Renewing Graduate and Professional Education at the University of Minnesota
President Robert H. Bruininks
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Earlier this year, an analysis of the Graduate School identified a high priority opportunity for the University to refocus and renew our success in graduate and professional education by restructuring and streamlining operations to preserve and further promote academic excellence, enhance student services and support, and lower operating costs, particularly during this time of great fiscal challenge and increasing competition for students and research. There is great potential for realigning responsibilities and accountability for graduate programs in a way that provides greater local control of graduate programs to the deans, faculty, and the Duluth campus while maintaining central leadership and oversight where most appropriate. This level of analysis is not limited to the Graduate School. Given the changing landscape of higher education today, all academic and support units face similar challenges and opportunities. Graduate and professional education is, however, one of the most important and distinguishing aspects of our academic responsibilities, and it is critical that we work together to strengthen this essential area of our mission.

On February 29, 2009, the University's Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost charged a Committee on Graduate and Professional Education, consisting of deans, faculty, staff, and students, to formulate recommendations for restructuring graduate and professional education. On April 24, 2009, the Committee on Graduate and Professional Education submitted its "Recommendations on the Oversight and Support of Graduate Education at the University of Minnesota." A majority of the University community was of the opinion that the committee did an outstanding job of assessing the University's graduate and professional education policies, processes, and services, reviewing practices of peer institutions, and consulting broadly with the academic community in a compressed period of time. I personally want to commend Dean Steven Crouch for his leadership and the entire committee on the collective wisdom and personal dedication they contributed to this comprehensive effort.

The committee report was posted online for a 30-day public comment period, and we received numerous responses from the University community. The recommendations in the report were also discussed at length with deans, faculty, and student governance leaders across the University system. A majority of the final decisions outlined in this document are consistent with the committee's recommendations and are made in consideration of the input we received from the broad engagement of the University community throughout the consultation process. After careful consideration of the recommendations of the Committee on Graduate and Professional Education, as well as previous University reports for improving graduate and professional education, comments submitted during the public comment period, and consultation with the Provost and other senior officers, deans, and faculty, staff, and student leaders throughout the University system, this document outlines my final organizational decisions regarding the administrative restructuring of specific functions in the Graduate School and the implementation of other key recommendations of the Committee on Graduate and Professional Education.

Clearly, there are a number of changes that can and will be implemented in the near term, but others will require further work over the next several months before longer-term decisions are made. I want to stress the importance of maintaining continuity in the University's oversight and support of graduate and professional education, particularly in this next academic year, with the expectation that we will continue to enhance services and processes that impact the quality and reputation of our graduate and professional programs. Working together, I am confident we can strengthen the competitiveness, quality, and level of services of graduate and professional education at the University.

The following responsibilities are delegated to the Office of the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost:

1. The Graduate School will retain its current name and reporting line to the Office of the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost. This decision respects the considerable support in our academic community for the historic leadership and identity of the Graduate School. However, it is important to note that significant support exists in our academic community to adopt a different name (e.g., Division of Graduate Education, used by UC-Los Angeles and UC-Berkeley) to reflect the importance of a strengthened culture of leadership, innovation, and service in support of our responsibilities in graduate and professional education. I believe that it is important that this widely held alternative viewpoint be respected as we seek to strengthen graduate and professional education across our campuses and programs.
2. The title for the leadership position overseeing the Graduate School will be Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Education. This title can be conferred consistent with Board of Regents policies on the president's authority to align titles with clear responsibilities and reporting relationships. This title aligns the position with other academic and administrative units with a similar leadership oversight, governance, and service and support relationships to the University's academic programs. It preserves system-wide leadership responsibilities, maintains current arrangements and relationships and many of the current responsibilities, and reflects the importance of graduate and professional education.
3. The Provost will appoint Tim Mulcahy, Vice President for Research, as Interim Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Education, beginning July 1, 2009, until such time as a newly hired Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Education can assume the responsibilities of the position. Vice President Mulcahy will retain all responsibilities of the Vice President for Research while serving in this interim capacity to insure a high level of leadership and continuity in the Graduate School.
4. The Provost will initiate immediately an internal search for a Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Education. An internal search will be critical to ensuring continuity in the Graduate School leadership by recruiting candidates who are knowledgeable about the University of Minnesota system. The Provost will conduct our normal open and transparent search process in which the search committee membership includes appropriate faculty and graduate student representation, and in which deans, faculty, staff, and students will be invited to participate in the public interview process to provide input on the qualifications of the final candidates (public interviews of the finalists will take place in the beginning of fall semester to provide students and 9- and 10-month faculty and staff with an opportunity to meet the final candidates and provide input). I anticipate that a final appointment will be made shortly thereafter, likely in early- to mid-fall.
5. The Provost will lead the process of charging and overseeing working groups comprised of faculty, staff, and students to focus on improving services and support of graduate and professional students while significantly reducing administrative overhead and costs and redirecting resources to strengthen impact. The use of pilot projects is encouraged to test and refine ideas, where appropriate. The structure of the working groups will be determined by the Provost, who will deliver charges, including providing framing principles and key questions to guide the work, by September 1, 2009. The Provost will request that initial recommendations be delivered to him by the end of December, 2009, for review and discussion with the Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Education. I do not anticipate any changes to our existing processes or practices supporting graduate and professional education – other than in those areas noted in this document – before July 1, 2010. The following areas require further exploration by working groups appointed by the Provost:

- **Administrative Processes / Student Services** – I support the underlying principles, and many of the recommendations, of the Committee on Graduate and Professional Education in this area. The University must institute a seamless process that serves and supports graduate and professional students at all levels throughout their education – from recruitment and admissions through graduation. This work will include an administrative redesign and workflow process analysis and the necessary planning to achieve highly streamlined, effective, and user-friendly services to our students and stakeholders (i.e., admissions, student records, and other student services). Part of this process should include the decentralization of selected aspects of the administration of masters’ degree and professional and advanced professional degree programs to the colleges and the Duluth campus (to include an option and process for colleges and the Duluth campus to make the case for retaining the central administration of their programs following completion) and the central administration of all Ph.D. degrees (not professional doctorate) by the Graduate School. This system must align existing student, human resource, and financial enterprise systems. Based on the outcome of the workflow analysis and redesign, the Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Education, the Provost, and the deans will develop a streamlined central and local staffing plan that eliminates redundant operations and maintains a high level of continuity of staffing, services, and support to faculty and students.
- **Advising Standards / Training Programs for University Faculty** – I support the recommendation of the Committee on Graduate and Professional Education to enhance the quality, consistency, standards, and accountability of graduate and professional student advising and mentoring, including the development, support, and mentoring of research and teaching assistants.
- **Fellowships, Block Grants and Other Student Financial Support** – I support the recommendation of the Committee on Graduate and Professional Education to preserve the strength and value of the critical peer review process and merit criteria for these awards along with the recommendation to review the impact, efficiency, transparency, and accountability of the award process for graduate fellowships and block grants.
- **Metrics / Measurement** – I support the position of the Committee on Graduate and Professional Education that the quality, satisfaction, and other issues impacting graduate and professional education must be researched, measured, monitored, and reported in a more systematic way. There is too little coordination now with the official University institutional research and reporting office. We must review existing studies related to establishing appropriate reporting metrics on graduate and professional education and develop a plan to align, measure, monitor, and report overall program quality (with the new director of the Office of Planning & Analysis). It is also important that we clarify existing institutional reporting, survey, and research responsibilities across central University offices.
- **Policy & Review Councils / Council of Graduate Students** – I support the position of the Committee on Graduate and Professional Education regarding the critical importance of peer review of academic policies for graduate and professional education by a faculty/student governance system, but I also believe issues surrounding the Policy and Review Councils merit additional consideration and review. We must identify ways to streamline the policies, processes, and responsibilities currently associated with the work of the Policy and Review Councils. The Council of Graduate Students is an important advisory group in the governance system. I urge its continuation and consultation with the Provost and the Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Education to ensure strengthened leadership and accountability for the University's graduate and professional programs.

6. I am asking the Provost to insure that changes in the administrative operations of the Graduate School preserve financial support for students and reduce administrative costs by approximately \$1M over the next two fiscal years (administrative expenditure reductions for FY10 may be counted toward this total). The Provost and the Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Education will reinvest these administrative expenditure reductions in graduate and professional education.
7. The Provost, with the Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Education and the deans, will also implement the following decisions:
 - **Commencement** – The Committee on Graduate and Professional Education recommended that the Graduate School commencement ceremonies be reduced from two to one per year. However, I believe that commencement ceremonies should more appropriately take place at the collegiate level. Consequently, I believe that the Graduate School should phase out of its own commencement ceremonies over the next two years. For 2009-10, the Graduate School will host and continue two separate commencement ceremonies. I recommend that beginning 2010-11, the Graduate School discontinue hosting its own commencement ceremonies altogether, and that the University graduate program commencements transition completely into collegiate level commencement ceremonies. While I am reflecting widely held views on this issue, the final resolution of this issue will rest with the Provost, in consultation with the Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Education, the deans, and the Faculty Consultative Committee.
 - **Directors of Graduate Studies** – The directors of graduate studies will be appointed by the Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Education, in close consultation with the dean and academic leadership of the respective collegiate unit(s) and/or academic interdisciplinary programs. This will ensure, among the academic leadership in the colleges and interdisciplinary programs, better alignment of responsibilities with the academic priorities and budget resources. This practice is consistent with practices at other institutions of the CIC.
 - **Graduate and Professional Education Policies** – The Provost and Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Education, in coordination with representatives from the University's Senate Committee on Educational Policy (SCEP), will conduct a comprehensive review of the graduate and professional education policies as part of the University's established administrative policy review process. We must ensure that our current policies do not create administrative burden, reduce quality and accountability, or limit our competitiveness in any way.
 - **Interdisciplinary Programs** – Interdisciplinary programs will continue to be protected and nurtured centrally in the Office of the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost by the Provost and the Provost's Interdisciplinary Leadership Team. This team, including the Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Education, Vice President for Research, Vice Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Education, and Vice Provost of Faculty and Academic Affairs, will continue to work with deans and faculty governance to advance interdisciplinary scholarship.
 - **University of Minnesota Duluth (UMD)**– I support the recommendation of the Committee on Graduate and Professional Education. The Graduate School will continue to administer all Ph.D. degrees for the University of Minnesota system, including the new Ph.D. in Integrated Biosciences (IBS). To promote and support local autonomy, UMD will administer its own master's degrees, including those that are currently under the auspices of the Graduate School, and all professional doctoral degree programs.

We recognize that the IBS master's degree is intricately related to the new Ph.D. program in IBS, and thus UMD may exercise the option to make the case for central administration of this master's degree, together with the Ph.D. in IBS, through the Graduate School. In order to provide seamless integration of graduate education on campus, UMD should ensure that it has in place the proper administrative oversight for all of its own graduate programs, including those under the auspices of the Graduate School. The plan for making this a seamless transition and integration must be approved by the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost and the Senior Vice President for System Academic Administration during the 2009-10 academic year.

The following responsibilities are delegated to the Office of the Vice President for Research:

The following current functions within the Graduate School will be reassigned to the Office of the Vice President for Research, effective July 1, 2009, with a clear expectation of continued adherence to rigorous peer review and high quality and service standards:

1. **Faculty Award Programs** – I support the recommendation of the Committee on Graduate and Professional Education to reassign the Faculty Award Programs from the Graduate School to the Office of the Vice President for Research. These awards include the Grant-in-Aid of Research, Artistry and Scholarship Program, and the Distinguished McKnight University Professorship and McKnight Land-Grant Professorship programs. Involvement of University-wide faculty peer review committees in the selection processes for these awards must be maintained. The Office of the Vice President for Research will also assume responsibility for the management of the nomination and selection processes in identifying institutional nominees for prestigious research awards from external Foundations and agencies.
2. **Office of Postdoctoral Affairs (OPDA)** – The Committee on Graduate and Professional Education recommended that this function continue to be administered centrally in the Graduate School. The OPDA will continue to be centralized, but will be reassigned from the Graduate School to the Office of the Vice President for Research to strengthen alignment with the broader research and educational functions of the University. Because postdoctoral students function in an advanced research training capacity – on track to research independence – alignment with the Office of the Vice President for Research makes sense from the perspective of their continued professional development. To ensure a strong sense of community with other graduate students, the Vice President for Research and the Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Education will develop a shared vision and work plan to ensure effective coordination of post-doctoral student affairs.
3. **University of Minnesota Press** – I support the recommendation of the Committee on Graduate and Professional Education to reassign the University of Minnesota Press from the Graduate School to the Office of the Vice President for Research, retaining all of its elements of peer review and editorial control in faculty committee(s).
4. **21st Century Graduate Fellowship Endowment** – I support the recommendation of the Committee on Graduate and Professional Education to reassign the administration of this endowment from the Graduate School to the Office of the Vice President for Research.

The following responsibilities are delegated to the Office of the Vice President and Vice Provost for Equity and Diversity:

I support the recommendation of the Committee on Graduate and Professional Education to reassign the diversity functions currently in the Graduate School Diversity Office (GSDO), including recruiting and all diversity activities and programs such as the Community of Scholars and DOVE fellowships, some of which were designed and assigned by the central Office for Multicultural Affairs several years ago, from the Graduate School to the central Office of the Vice President and Vice Provost for Equity and Diversity. This reassignment will be effective July 1, 2009.

While serving as Provost many years ago, I approved the transfer of certain diversity functions from the Provost's Office of Diversity to the Graduate School at the request of then Vice Provost Robert Jones and Associate Vice President Rusty Barceló. Much has changed in the University's structure for equity and diversity since that transfer. In 2006, upon strong recommendation of the faculty and the senior vice presidents, I created a new Office of the Vice President and Vice Provost for Equity and Diversity. The University was one of the first nationally to elevate its chief diversity officer to this level, providing heightened leadership for the University's system-wide equity and diversity agenda. The reassignment of diversity functions from the Graduate School back to the central office represents a change in reporting line, but not a diminishment of resources allocated to this important function. Rather, it is intended to provide the greatest alignment and coordination of the extraordinary diversity activities already successful in the Graduate School with the broader University equity and diversity efforts.

The Vice President and Vice Provost for Equity and Diversity and the Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Education, in consultation with directors of graduate study, graduate faculty, and deans, will submit a shared vision and work plan to ensure continuity of impact and service in the ongoing support for graduate and professional education, including a plan for evaluating the quality and effectiveness of the new structure, to the Provost, Senior Vice President for System Academic Administration, and President by the end of March, 2010.

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Recommendations presented in the Committee on Graduate and Professional Education report that are not discussed in this document are referred to the Provost and the new Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Education, upon his/her appointment, for consideration and further review and discussion with the academic community.

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I want to take this opportunity to extend my sincere appreciation to the members of the University's academic community for their ongoing dedication to graduate and professional education and for their thoughtful contributions to this critically important effort. I look forward to continue working with senior officers, deans, and faculty, staff, and student leaders to preserve areas of excellence and success in graduate and professional education and to drive improvement efforts where needed so that the University's graduate and professional students receive the highest quality education and experience possible.