

CY2019/FY2019-2020 / COLLEGE/UNIT STRATEGIC PLAN

Graduate School

This view always presents the most current state of the plan item.

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Template:

Unit/College Annual Report (Highlights)

Name of College/Program/Department:

Graduate School

Start:

7/1/2019

End:

6/30/2020

Progress:

Continue Into Next Strategic Plan Year

Providing Department:

Graduate School

NON-ACADEMIC AFFAIRS UNITS ONLY: Highlights of the Year:

Since a projected budget shortfall in 2018 that required severe cost-cutting measures, the Graduate School has stabilized finances and continued to perform all core functions and responsibilities, including enrolling a record number of graduate students in fall 2019 (5,545) and setting an all-time record of 1,430 underrepresented minority students which is 26% of the total student population.

A new Director of Finance and Business Affairs, Mr. Steve Penouilh, was appointed in the fall as well as our first full-time faculty member, Dr. Lisa Russell-Pinson, for the Center for Graduate Life. Dr. Manuel Perez-Quinones joined the Graduate School this year as a Faculty Fellow to help move the recommendations from the Graduate Student Funding Task Force into implementation.

The spring of 2020 has been unlike any other we have ever known. How we manage the COVID-19 pandemic continues to require planning, assessment, stamina, and flexibility to what has been a constantly changing environment.

ACADEMIC AFFAIRS UNITS: Goal #1:

Graduate enrollment increased by 222 students in fall 2019 (5,545 compared to 5,323 in 2018). Enrollment in the fall was up in every category (doctorate, masters, certificate) except post-baccs, which were down by 3. Overall, graduate applications were flat for fall 2019 (6,546 compared to 6,548 in 2018). Domestic applications were up by 223, while international applications were down by 225 compared to 2018.

Although applications have not increased, the number of admitted students who actually enrolled was the highest it's been in five years resulting in a record enrollment of new students and a record total graduate enrollment for fall 2019.

International admissions for fall 2019 were only down 34 students (1,388 compared to 1,422 in the fall 2018), but our ability to enroll more admitted students this year compared to 2018 kept our total number of enrolled international students more stable. Enrolled domestic students were up by 256 (4,157 compared to 3,901).

The number of underrepresented minority graduate students reached an all-time record in 2019 of 1,430, which is 26% of the total population.

Following the outbreak of COVID-19, the Graduate School took several initiatives to mitigate potential decline in graduate enrollment in fall 2020, including:

- Allowing applicants to request their application for admission be updated/deferred from summer or fall 2020 to a term in 2021 without the applicant incurring an additional cost.
- Accepting official scores from the Duolingo English Test in support of English language proficiency. Prospective students can take the test anytime, or anywhere, and get results in less than two days, at a cost of \$49. This is a low cost, easily accessible way international students can show their proficiency in English.
- Programs have maximum flexibility to waive GRE, GMAT, and MAT requirements for summer/fall 2020 applicants, and we continue to encourage holistic review of admissions applications to determine applicant "fit" with graduate programs.

- GradConnect, a platform that allows enrolled graduate students and staff “connect” with prospective students to help move them along the enrollment funnel, from prospect to enrolled student, and we continue to connect with as many individuals as possible.
- Graduate Academic Affairs created a non-credit, placeholder course, which may be used by students who were planning to graduate in May 2020 but, due to closings, could not complete a course. If they take an incomplete, they may complete the work in the fall semester, register for GRAD 6777 at no cost, and apply to graduate in December.
- Continued to partner with Academic Affairs for the Provost’s Master’s Enrollment Incentive Funding Program to increase the number of enrolled domestic and international master’s students by making funding awards to students earlier in the cycle and focusing on students who would otherwise not receive support (e.g., part-time working professionals). The program was funded as a cost-share between the Graduate School and Academic Affairs.
- Partnered with University Communications, Undergraduate Admissions, the colleges, and the Office of Academic Affairs to market educational opportunities primarily through social media.

The Center for Graduate life expanded educational opportunities beyond professional development. After starting in 2010 with 2 GRAD courses and 15 enrolled students, in spring 2020 the CGL offered 16 GRAD courses with 157 enrolled students. There are now 38 GRAD courses offered for academic credit, and a new certificate in Workplace Competencies has been approved. While the CGL boasts several part-time faculty, this year it has hired its first permanent position, an Assistant Professor of Teaching, Dr. Lisa Russell-Pinson.

The CGL recently added several new courses including: Leadership Essentials, Creating Best Classroom Practices Using Psychological Theories of Learning, and Making Dissertations Happen. In fall 2020 they will add a course called Navigating Graduate School, and in spring 2021 there is a plan to add Multi-disciplinary Topics in Diversity.

Other Important Accomplishments and New Initiatives by the CGL include:

- Doubling the number of 3-Minute Thesis participants since the event launched 3 years ago.
- Significantly expanding writing support, there is now a day-long Write-A-Thon and a dissertation support group, along with expanding the scope of Weekend Writing Retreats. So far this year, there have been 274 writing interactions with students, including attendance at a writing retreat, participation in a write-a-thon, attendance at a writing workshop, membership in the dissertation support group, receiving one-on-one coaching with Dr. Lisa Russell-Pinson, and participating in a writing tutoring session with the University Writing Center in the CGL. The CGL is on track to reach 450 writing interactions by the end of this academic year.
- Launched Accelerate to Industry (A2i), a program in which regional corporate partners deliver professional development training directly to our graduate students. In addition, we have joined the first cohort of Accelerate to Industry graduate schools to participate in NC State's NSF Innovations in Graduate Education grant.

In terms of graduate student programming, the CGL offers more than 55 workshops and events each academic year, and we've built an annual usage of about 5,000 visits from almost 1500 unique students.

The CGL also developed the Graduate School Teaching Fellows Program that will be implemented for the first time in fall 2020. This is a two-semester training opportunity for doctoral students interested in careers that include college-level teaching. During the first semester, students receive classroom training in course design, teaching methodology, and classroom best practices. The second semester consists of classroom observations, support, and constructive feedback from the Center for Graduate Life's Teaching Faculty Associate, Dr. Judith Krauss.

The CGL offers three credit-bearing courses specifically to support GTAs:

- GRAD 6201/8201 Teaching at the College or University Level (3 credits)
- GRAD 8011 Teaching at American Colleges and Universities: Perspectives for International Students (3 credits)
- GRAD 6000/8000 Creating Best Classroom Practices Using Psychological Theories (3 credits)

There were 151 new Graduate Faculty appointments since July 1, 2019. There were also 32 reappointments during that time.

Attached Files

There are no attachments.

Types of Accomplishments Discussed Above::

New Educational Programs, New Student Support Programs, Student Access (new or increased online delivery, number of course offerings, time to degree), Faculty Development, Other Accomplishments

ACADEMIC AFFAIRS UNITS: Goal #2:

In 2018-19 we conferred a record number of graduate degrees, 2,250 compared to 2,139 in 2017-18, of which there were 177 doctoral degrees (a record number) and 1,740 master's and post-master's degrees (also a record). There were 333 graduate certificates awarded compared to 109 in 2017-18.

The graduate student Graduation Initiative is focused on improving graduation rates and time to degree, utilizing the "student progress report" in DegreeWorks. This report provides faculty and students with critical information about degree progression and provides a roadmap for completion. Faculty have immediate access to a data portal for each student in the program and can flag students who may not be making sufficient progress toward the degree.

Connecting with and training Graduate Program Directors and Coordinators continues to be an important objective. In addition to group and individual meetings with Program Directors, we continue to add content to GPDnet <https://egem.uncc.edu/> as a resource to support their efforts.

With the completion of the Graduate Student Funding Task Force report, we have moved forward with the formation of the Graduate Funding Committee, which is composed of both members and non-members of the Graduate Council. <https://graduateschool.uncc.edu/graduate-funding-task-force/graduate-funding-committee>.

Dr. Manuel Perez-Quinones chairs the Committee, which has been meeting regularly throughout the academic year and has provided updates using Canvas. A draft set of definitions for graduate assistantship positions has been prepared and is awaiting review by the Graduate Council.

The central pool of funds held by the Graduate School and allocated to the colleges for graduate assistantships has been reconfigured to a set number of positions. Each position carries a 9-month stipend of either \$14,000 for a master's student or \$18,500 for a doctoral student. Each position also carries fringes in the form of resident tuition, non-resident tuition if necessary, and the health insurance premiums.

These changes were recommended by the Graduate Student Funding Task Force and serve as a model for future student support.

The Electronic Graduate Payment System (eGPS) was implemented in 2019 to provide a funding portal for Graduate Program Directors and Affiliates. The system allows GPDs to make funding awards and nominations to their students in real-time. Faculty can see their total number of students, the number of offered funding, the number who have accepted funding, and the number who have declined funding. It also tracks types of funding, student eligibility, students' time in the program, and funding history. Graduate Program Directors can communicate with their students through the portal, which also streamlines the funding award process.

Three undergraduates were named NSF Graduate Research Fellows this year; two in mechanical engineering, one in computer science. These three students will enter graduate programs this fall at UNC Charlotte.

Last summer the Graduate School funded 9 Dissertation Completion Fellowships. This program is designed to support students who are, or recently have been, on grant-funded RA's, especially those whose advisor arranged for the grant to pay tuition, fees, and/or health insurance. It's a summer fellowship paying \$8,000.

A new summer fellowship opportunity was introduced this year to provide students with financial support during a time when they may be most productive, yet have the fewest funding options. This program funded 38 students \$6,000 each during the summer. This action is in response to the finding in the Graduate Student Funding Task Force Report that many of our students, including doctoral students, find it difficult to make progress in the summer due to lack of funds.

The Proposal Development Summer Fellowship provided 40 doctoral students \$5,000. This summer fellowship is for doctoral students who have completed their qualifying/comprehensive exam but need summer support to help develop or complete their dissertation proposal. The Center for Graduate Life offers these students online writing assistance to support these efforts.

In 2019-2020, we funded 682 GASP students and 528 master's and certificate students.

This year we held the first completion for the Claudia M. Reynolds Graduate Student Fellowship. There were over 250 nominations for this award. In fact, we had the largest number of nominations ever for our philanthropic funding; more than 750 graduate students were nominated for \$250,000 in awards.

Graduate Student Parental Leave Policy was approved by the Graduate Council and Faculty Council and implemented March 12, 2020. <https://provost.uncc.edu/policies-procedures/academic-policies-and-procedures/parental-leave-accommodations>

As of March 3, 2020, 112 faculty representing each college have participated in Graduate School Mentor training during 2019-20. Mentor training is part of the effort to improve the research climate at UNC Charlotte. This training comes from the evidence-based practices of the CIMER Institute (Center for Improved Mentoring Experiences in Research) at the University of Wisconsin. Training is intensive and limited to 25 per session. Sessions will continue to be offered at least three times per year, but can also be made available to a program by request.

As Lead Principle Investigator, Dr. Lisa Rasmussen led the revision and resubmission on February 19, of our NSF grant proposal Fostering a Culture of Openness and Transparency with Institutional Authorship Policies in Cultivating Cultures in Ethical Stem. Additional PI's include Dr. Katherine Hall Hertel, Dr. George Banks, Dr. Elise Smith, and Graduate School Dean Tom Reynolds.

As the University Research Integrity Officer, Dean Reynolds completed one on-going case, but a new case has developed that will go to the Inquiry phase once the University opens campus access. Most of the queries received to date relate to authorship disputes, and while these do not rise to the level of research misconduct, they are nevertheless serious issues for those concerned.

Plagiarism detection software iThenticate was implemented last year. Graduate students submitting a thesis or dissertation as part of the degree requirements, are required to assess their documents for potential cases of plagiarism prior to final submission. Students are given access to iThenticate when they begin writing their dissertation and must provide an evaluation of their document at the time of final submission. This has been seen by students and faculty as a resource, and we hope to roll it out to all graduate students entering a degree program so they may access it for other professional documents such as manuscripts and grant proposals.

The third Doctoral Hooding Ceremony was held on December 12 at McKnight Hall in the Cone University Center. This was to be the last Doctoral Hooding Ceremony since the Graduate School was scheduled to hold its own commencement ceremony in May. Unfortunately, that first ceremony was canceled due to COVID-19.

Dr. Florence Martin was named the first Thomas L. Reynolds Graduate Leadership Award recipient at a reception on September 11, 2019. This award recognizes the important work of our Graduate Program Directors in graduate education at UNC Charlotte.

Dr. Suzanne Leland was named the 2020 Harshini de Silva Graduate Mentor Award recipient on February 26, 2020.

Attached Files

There are no attachments.

Types of Accomplishments Discussed Above::

Student Success (Retention, graduation, high impact experiences, publications, scholarships, awards), New Educational Programs, New Student Support Programs , Student Access (new or increased online delivery, number of course offerings, time to degree), Faculty Development , Improvements in Student Advising, Other Accomplishments

ACADEMIC AFFAIRS UNITS: Goal #3:

In response to the Coronavirus pandemic, an understanding that currently enrolled students are facing unprecedented and unanticipated challenges, we established the Graduate Student Support Request portal. Students who have exhausted support from their immediate network (family, friends, community sources) and still need assistance, can complete and submit the form through this portal. The response to this outreach has been excellent, and staff have worked diligently to connect students to resources available either through the University network or the community.

Through the Center for Graduate Life, the Graduate School launched Accelerate to Industry (A2i), a program in which regional corporate partners deliver professional development training directly to our graduate students. In addition, we have joined the first cohort of Accelerate to Industry graduate schools to participate in NC State's NSF Innovations in Graduate Education grant.

To date, the Graduate School has raised more than \$2.7 million through the Capital Campaign. Most of these funds are for graduate student Fellowships.

Other community initiatives:

- Support and manage the annual competitions for the First Citizens Bank Scholars Award (Dr. James Walsh 2020 recipient) and the Harshini de Silva Graduate Mentor Award (Dr. Suzanne Leland 2020 recipient).
- Search committee member for the Associate Vice Chancellor for University Communications position; hired Ms. Collen Penhall.
- Invited speaker for a conference entitled The Role of Research Integrity in Promoting Excellence: Tools for College and University Leaders sponsored by the U.S. Office of Research Integrity (ORI) and the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) on May 22-23, 2019 at Northwestern University.
- Representation on the UNC System Graduate Council, UNC Charlotte Graduate Council, UNC Charlotte Faculty Council, National Association of Research Integrity Officers, Bosnian-Herzegovina American Academy of Arts and Science, Honorary member, and Consultant for the International Atomic Energy Agency and Food and Agricultural Organization (agencies of the United Nations)

Attached Files

There are no attachments.

Types of Accomplishments Discussed Above::

External Partnerships (internships, joint ventures, community engagement), Student Success (Retention, graduation, high impact experiences, publications, scholarships, awards), New Student Support Programs , Student Access (new or increased online delivery, number of course offerings, time to degree), External Public Relations/Outreach,

Examples of Data-Based Improvements :

- International admissions for fall 2019 were only down 34 students (1,388 compared to 1,422 in the fall 2018), but our ability to enroll more admitted students this year compared to 2018 kept our total number of enrolled international students more stable. Enrolled domestic students were up by 256 (4,157 compared to 3,901).
- The graduate student Graduation Initiative is focused on improving graduation rates and time to degree, utilizing the “student progress report” in DegreeWorks. This report provides faculty and students with critical information about degree progression and provides a roadmap for completion. Faculty have immediate access to a data portal for each student in the program and can flag students who may not be making sufficient progress toward the degree.
- The Graduate School completed its Self-Study and met with a group of external reviewers. With the Reviewers’ report, we are now working on developing our next five-year Strategic Plan. The Self-Study and Report are available for review at: <https://egem.uncc.edu/category/gpd-only/policies-and-plans/>

Other Major Accomplishments: :**Diversity Initiatives:**

- The Center for Graduate Life (CGL) hosted human resources consultant Ivanna Garibaldi Campbell for a presentation on “Working Smarter on Diverse Teams”
- Dr. Manuel Pérez-Quiñones hosted an informal discussion about diversity and how to learn to build and work effectively on diverse teams.
- Johnna Watson participated in a panel discussion on International Recruitment Opportunities
- Published GPDNet articles examining the role holistic admissions in supporting diversity and promoting industry seminars on strategies for increasing diversity

Supporting Documentation:

Attached Files

There are no attachments.

Responsible Roles:**Related Items**

No connections made