

# **Review of the Operations and Functions of the Graduate School at the University of Maryland**

**Submitted by the Graduate School Review Committee  
December 19, 2016**

In August 2016, Provost Mary Ann Rankin charged Graduate School Review Committee with the task of reviewing the operations and functions of the Graduate School at the University of Maryland. (See Appendix A for the charge and committee membership.) The last comprehensive review of the Graduate School occurred in 2005 following the establishment of the Graduate School as a unit distinct from the Division of Research in 2004. The Provost's charge recognized that much has changed with respect to graduate education on this campus since that time. We have experienced significant growth in graduate professional degree offerings, modes of program delivery, and international partnerships. The Graduate School at the University of Maryland has also been engaged in broader national conversations about the future of graduate education, professional doctoral education, and the need for centralized professional development services for graduate students and postdoctoral scholars. Our review of the Graduate School is informed by this changing context.

In the sections below, we provide: (1) an overview of the data we consulted, (2) a summary of our general findings and recommendations, (3) a description of the findings and recommendations related to each element of the charge, and (4) a discussion of resource implications.

## **Data Sources**

In conducting the review, our committee consulted widely with the University community and we surveyed graduate schools at a number of peer institutions. Taken together, our data collection efforts included the following activities, which are detailed in Appendix B:

- Background documents on the UMD Graduate School, including a self study completed in early fall 2016;
- A meeting with the Interim Dean of the Graduate School;
- Nineteen meetings with 27 offices and units on campus;
- Nine open forums, including two with each of the following groups: Directors of Graduate Studies (DGSs, n=15), Coordinators of Graduate Studies (CGSs, n=31), faculty (n=21), and graduate students (n=49);
- Individual meetings with six faculty and staff members who requested them;
- Information collected on graduate schools at peer institutions;
- Survey of graduate students about their interactions with the Graduate School and their graduate education experiences (n=325);
- Survey conducted by GAAC on graduate student employment (n=1,025).

## **General Findings and Recommendations**

The Provost's charge guided our work and included 10 specific topics regarding the roles, responsibilities and organization of the Graduate School. We focused our data collection activities on these issues, and we also considered several "big picture" questions about the primary roles, strengths and challenges of the Graduate School. Generally speaking, members of

the campus community agree that the Graduate School plays an important role at the University of Maryland. While the Graduate School is involved in many activities toward fulfilling its stated mission “to advance graduate education and enhance the graduate student experience,” we identified the following as its primary areas of responsibility:

- Advocating for excellence in graduate education and enriched graduate student experiences across units and offices on campus, and promoting the stature of our graduate programs among external groups;
- Facilitating creation and overseeing implementation of policies that establish minimum standards and promote the excellence and integrity of graduate programs;
- Coordinating fellowship funding and awards for graduate students and, in some cases, graduate faculty;
- In collaboration with Enrollment Management and the Office of the Registrar, providing administrative support for admissions and enrollment management;
- Providing or partnering with other units across campus to provide support services to graduate students in two broad categories:
  - “General” services that are common to all graduate students (e.g., writing center, career center)
  - Programs and services to help promote diversity and inclusion for specific student populations (e.g., URM, LGBT, international students, and students with disabilities).

Most stakeholder groups agreed that the Graduate School plays an essential role on this campus, and some argued that the University of Maryland must have a *strong* Graduate School to be competitive with our peer and aspirational peer institutions. Some viewed the Graduate School as a service unit, while others regarded it as an academic unit; this reflects the hybrid nature of the unit, which has integral service functions, but also facilitates the development and implementation of policies by the graduate faculty. In all cases, members of the campus community felt that the Graduate School should coordinate and collaborate with academic units and administrative offices across campus. They agreed that the Graduate School must be structured to work productively with others to achieve shared goals. In conversations with stakeholder groups, individuals recognized and expressed appreciation for the improvements that have been made under the previous and interim deans. However, the recommendations in this report reflect the sentiment that additional steps should be taken to better integrate the Graduate School into the overall infrastructure of the campus, and specifically with the Office of the Provost, to support its academic and research mission at all levels. Our first three recommendations reflect these general findings:

***General Recommendations:***

- The Graduate School should re-examine its mission statement and develop a strategic plan that guides priorities, activities, resource allocation, and staffing.
  - All activities should be clearly traced to its mission statement and plan.
  - Priority should be placed on improving basic functions (e.g., processing admissions and petitions in a timely manner). Many faculty, staff, and students agreed that, despite recent improvements, the Graduate School needs

- to do a better job with some of its basic responsibilities related to serving students and academic units in a timely, responsive and supportive manner.
- The Graduate School should enhance effectiveness through stronger collaborative partnerships and improved communication with the Office of the Provost, with academic units, and with other administrative offices across campus. Specifically, the Graduate School should:
    - Engage graduate faculty, students, DGSs and Coordinators, and other core constituencies on an ongoing basis in discussions of major issues in graduate education (e.g., time to degree), and broadly disseminate the outcomes of these deliberations;
    - Find more efficient ways to work with other units by (a) enhancing collaborations (e.g., Office of International Affairs, Office of Extended Studies, ISSS) and (b) identifying functions that can be given more local discretion at the operational level (e.g., admissions and petitions);
    - Improve communication about policies and services to faculty, staff and students;
    - Train staff across campus on policies, procedures and systems.
  - Greater distinction needs to be made in policies and practices for various types of graduate programs (research doctorate, professional doctorate, research masters, terminal masters, professional masters, certificate programs). A working group should be convened to examine this set of issues.
  - The Dean of the Graduate School should be a strong, collaborative leader from the academic ranks who is well respected internally and externally. A key qualification is the ability to form partnerships and work collaboratively with other units on campus. The Dean should be engaged in both operational and academic aspects of the Graduate School, with sufficient resources to be able to have a meaningful impact on the course of graduate education. The Dean also should be a strong representative of the University in national conversations about graduate education.

## **Findings and Recommendations on Specific Elements of the Charge**

Our findings and recommendations with respect the specific elements of the Provost’s charge are provided below. We recognize that some initiatives are underway that have begun to address several of our recommendations.

### ***1. Examine and make recommendations regarding the relationship between the Graduate School and individual units in the admission, support, training, and mentoring of graduate students. What functions are best handled centrally and what functions should be handled at the college or department level?***

The Graduate School interacts with departments and other units on campus on a variety of matters. For example, while academic program and curriculum changes are initiated at the unit level, they must be reviewed through the PCC process, which includes Graduate Council review. The Graduate School also interacts with individual units around training and mentoring of graduate students, policies related to graduate education and the appointment of graduate faculty, and centralized services for graduate students (e.g., the graduate career and writing centers). One recurring message from stakeholders was concern about the strongly insular nature of the Graduate School, which not only leads to confusion about policies and

slow resolution to some student issues (e.g., unique challenges faced by international students), but also to duplication of some processes. For example, while several constituencies recognized the graduate writing center as a valuable asset, many questioned why it was established independently of the writing center within the English department. Going forward, the Graduate School should be more collaborative with individual departments and other campus units such as the Office of International Affairs, the Office of the Registrar and the University Senate.

The Graduate School plays a significant role in the graduate student admissions process. While decisions on graduate admissions are primarily made at the unit level, the Graduate School serves in a supporting role by upholding minimum criteria for admission, reviewing petitions for exceptions to policy, and providing expertise and resources to the units in matters such as transcript interpretation and translation. The Graduate School also coordinates the processing of applications. Many stakeholders recognized the advantages of a coordinated admissions system and students expressed appreciation that they are admitted to the “Graduate School;” however, basic operations related to the admissions process were typically viewed by unit faculty, staff and students as cumbersome and time consuming.

Another significant concern relates to the lack of IT support from the University and the Graduate School in keeping track of graduate student records. Outside of the admissions process, the University currently provides little or no support for a centralized graduate student record keeping system. As the Division of IT discontinues support for MEGS, individual programs have resorted to keeping track of their graduate students on their own spreadsheets and databases, and in some cases on paper. Many aspects of keeping student records would most logically be handled through a centralized repository, because of efficiencies of scale and the need for uniform reporting and data governance. That said, any centralized IT system would need to permit distinctive requirements for each program (e.g., the audio file function of the admissions software currently in use is not satisfactory for the Music School so it has opted for a separate system).

***Recommendations:***

- The Graduate School should collaborate more closely with individual programs and other administrative units to build pipelines for two-way communications that:
  - minimize duplication of effort among units;
  - improve communications about policies and services;
  - provide frequent and comprehensive training for CGSs and DGSs.
- The graduate student admissions process should be streamlined and more efficient.
  - Some units have unique admissions challenges, and might benefit from increased autonomy, provided they have the capacity to handle the process. However, under current policy, students admitted to any graduate program are eligible to take any graduate class, so any movement away from centralized admission standards should be handled with care.
  - Consideration should be given to consolidating graduate admissions processing with that for undergraduate admissions. While many aspects of graduate admission differ from undergraduate admission (e.g., scope, locus of decision making), moving the logistics of admissions processing (e.g., the software programs) out of the Graduate School may permit efficiencies of

scale, and may allow the Graduate School to focus more fully on its academic mission.

- It is necessary and *urgent* for the University to improve its data collection functions for graduate programs. Recordkeeping for graduate students should be flexible enough to serve the needs of different programs and avoid duplication of effort. The Graduate School should work with the Office of the Registrar, IRPA, and the Division of IT to provide centralized, adequate record keeping for programs. The Office of the Registrar is most naturally suited to be the lead, but the Graduate School needs to be a strong partner.

**2. *Examine the role and functions of the Graduate School, including its administrative structure, in maintaining and elevating the stature of the University, in fostering the continual improvement of graduate education, and in furthering the university's strategic goals for diversity and inclusion.***

The Graduate School plays an essential *supporting* role in promoting the goals of elevating the stature of the University, fostering the continual improvement of graduate education, and furthering the University's strategic goals for diversity and inclusion. While units play the primary role in achieving these goals, the Graduate School should facilitate program efforts by setting minimum standards, ensuring program integrity and quality, and providing supports for programs and students, including fellowship funding to support student recruitment and program completion goals. As noted below, our review identified some missed opportunities, particularly with regard to collaboration with other campus units.

The Graduate School plays a fundamental role in ensuring the quality and integrity of graduate programs. The Graduate Council PCC seems to be working well. However, the graduate outcomes assessment, discussed later in section #7, needs attention (and is currently being reconsidered by the Interim Dean). By upholding minimum standards set by the graduate faculty, the Graduate School is well positioned to promote high quality graduate education and to identify graduate programs that fall short of standards and expectations, and work with the Dean of the college/school in question.

The Graduate School role is particularly important with respect to diversity and inclusion, and especially in the areas of recruitment, financial, and logistical support. Ideally, the Graduate School is in a position to develop initiatives that support individuals from underrepresented and vulnerable groups through their entire educational arc, from prospective student through post-graduation. The University is currently missing opportunities because units and programs have limited support from the Graduate School in terms of (a) outreach and training to help students understand what is expected of them, (b) community building so that students in small programs and from underrepresented groups don't feel isolated, and (c) other forms of support and professional development. In collaboration with other units, the Graduate School should provide more coordination and central support for these kinds of efforts. The Graduate School could also make major contributions to student success by creating forums for graduate student support and interaction. Such support is important for all graduate students but is particularly critical for URM, LGBT, and international students, students with disabilities, and students from other vulnerable groups.

The Graduate School should also consider appropriate minimum stipends for graduate assistants that take into consideration the financial constraints students may experience living in the DC area, and specify minimum stipends for all levels of assistantships. Our data indicate that graduate students often feel overworked and undercompensated, and that the University does not provide enough mechanisms to address their concerns (though the new Statement of Mutual Expectations for Graduate Assistants and Faculty Supervisors is a step in the right direction). Appropriate financial support and expectations are crucial for allowing graduate students to focus on their academics, and can enhance recruitment, particularly for the highest quality students and those from disadvantaged backgrounds. While fully cognizant of the challenges involved with increasing graduate stipends, we also recognize that appropriate financial support mechanisms are crucial to achieving the University's strategic goals in graduate education and in diversity and inclusion.

***Recommendations:***

- The Graduate School should continue to maintain and uphold standards set by the graduate faculty to ensure the quality and integrity of graduate programs.
- The Graduate School should provide or coordinate with other units to provide more and better:
  - Opportunities and programs for students to develop a more centralized graduate student community that is inclusive of international students, students from underrepresented groups, students with disabilities, and graduate students with families;
  - Services that support the social and emotional well being of graduate students (e.g. transitioning students to the area, mental health and wellness).
- The Graduate School should pay special attention to individuals from underrepresented groups in its efforts to recruit and support students. More funding, support services, and programming should be targeted toward these groups. In addition, attention needs to be paid to the unique circumstances and needs of international students.
- The Graduate School should facilitate a campus-wide conversation about student compensation and other sources of financial assistance (e.g., loans, need-based tuition reduction, and fellowships), with a particular focus on appropriate assistantship stipends and associated work expectations. It would then be responsible for advocating both internally and externally for any recommended changes. The Graduate School should establish minimum stipends for all levels of assistantships.

***3. Consider whether the resources of the Graduate School are optimally directed towards recruitment of the best students into our graduate programs and facilitating the timely completion of degrees.***

Uniformly, committee members and stakeholders felt that targeting funds towards recruitment and providing incentives for high quality and timely degree completion are important elements of the mission of the Graduate School. In 2016, a subcommittee of the Graduate Council carried out a review of the fellowship allocation process; findings and recommendations were provided in a report to the Dean and the Provost. Some of the recommendations have already been implemented. Most notably, the new process allows for greater flexibility in terms of award amounts and when awards can be used in a student's

program (i.e., recruitment, retention, degree completion). These changes are intended to address concerns among faculty that the award structure was inflexible, and not necessarily tailored to department needs (e.g., prioritizing financial support of PhD students over master's students, although in some cases the master's degree represents the terminal degree in a given discipline).

The review committee agrees with the many stakeholders who indicated that the amount of funding available for graduate student fellowships and scholarships needs to be increased if the University is to remain competitive with peers. The University of Maryland has substantially less funding for graduate fellowships and scholarships than many of its peer institutions. Adequate stipend packages are a key factor in recruiting the best students to the University, and moving them through to degree completion in a timely manner. One avenue for increasing available fellowship funds is through private donations and gifts targeted to support graduate fellowships – this is discussed further in charge element #8 (development). Stakeholders also raised concerns about the lack of transparency in the current Graduate School fellowship allocation formula and the basis for merit-based awards (such as the Wylie). The increased flexibility in the use of fellowship money for recruitment, retention, and completion is an improvement and reflects common practice at other institutions (e.g., at UC-Berkeley each graduate student receives a semester of fellowship money if they advance to candidacy in time, based on field-specific standards). Finally, in the absence of comprehensive data on financial support for students, little is known about the levels, distribution, and impact of fellowship funding on graduate student outcomes.

The Graduate School could play a stronger role in efforts to recruit students from underrepresented groups. Though recruitment is often best done at the program level, a number of individuals from smaller programs indicated that the Graduate School could provide more information to units about minority student recruitment conferences and work collaboratively with individual departments to increase department representation at those conferences. The Graduate School is also well positioned to identify best practices and develop a general plan for graduate level minority student recruitment and degree completion. The Graduate School's primary activities in this area are currently supported by external funding, and although excellent in some ways, they are not consistent across units and underrepresented groups.

Finally, several issues central in other sections of this report are also relevant here. The Graduate School should collaborate with the Office of Undergraduate Studies to build a pipeline for graduate education (see section #5). In addition, the Graduate School should work with IRPA and the Office of the Registrar to provide a centralized graduate student record keeping system that departments could access to track student progress, and to observe trends in degree completion rates, time to degree completion, and quality of placement (see section #1). Such data would help departments notice declines and improvements in graduate education, and would also help departments along with the Graduate School strategize on how to improve outcomes.

***Recommendations:***

- More internal funding is needed to support the recruitment of diverse and high quality graduate students (see section #8).

- In addition to funding for recruitment, the Graduate School should provide financial incentives for timely degree completion and quality outcomes.
- The Graduate School should have clear priorities and transparent processes for allocating its limited pool of fellowship funding to colleges/schools and/or programs. It should also be sensitive to the unique financial needs of programs across campus where the master's degree remains the terminal degree.
- In order to identify and promote best practice in student funding, the University should maintain and make available comprehensive data on internal and external support for graduate students.
- The Graduate School should collaborate with individual units to coordinate attendance at recruitment events for graduate students from underrepresented groups.
- The Graduate School should work with other offices on campus to develop and maintain a centralized record keeping system that enables units to adequately track student progress in order to ensure students are completing their degrees in a timely manner (see section #1).

**4. *Consider the role of the Graduate School in facilitating the development of new academic programs responsive to workforce needs and economic development.***

Our review suggests that the Graduate School should play a supporting role with respect to facilitating the development of new academic programs that are responsive to workforce needs and economic development. Primary responsibility for the development of new academic programs resides within academic units. The appropriate roles of the Graduate School are: (a) to review programs through the PCC process to ensure the integrity of graduate programs, and (b) to uphold minimum admission standards. Beyond these basic functions, Graduate School policies should be flexible enough to allow for innovative programs at the masters and doctoral levels. This includes a transparent and expedient process for reviewing innovative programs that might deviate from Graduate School standards. The challenge is balancing minimum requirements with enough flexibility that allows academic units to develop programs to meet market demands.

***Recommendation:***

- The Graduate School should have policies in place that balance minimum standards that ensure program integrity with the flexibility for units to develop innovative programs that are responsive to workforce needs and economic development.

**5. *Should the Graduate School be a facilitator of relations among different graduate programs or between graduate and undergraduate programs?***

The committee reviewed whether the Graduate School should facilitate relations among different graduate programs as well as relations between undergraduate program and graduate programs. The main findings of the committee were that the Graduate School does not play a major role in facilitating relations between graduate programs or between graduate and undergraduate programs.

Graduate School staff, Directors of Graduate Studies, faculty, and other groups expressed uniformly low interest in having the Graduate School facilitate relationships across graduate programs. That said, the Graduate School should play the role of neutral arbiter, when

needed, by helping to broker agreements and resolve disputes that may arise across programs. This is of particular importance when programs are multi-unit or interdisciplinary.

The review committee sees the potential for a stronger relationship between the Graduate School and the Office of Undergraduate Studies than currently exists. In cases where undergraduate majors prepare students for graduate study, the Graduate School can play a role in facilitating communication between undergraduate and graduate programs. The Graduate School could collaborate with the Office of Undergraduate Studies and the Career Center to provide information seminars for undergraduate students about what graduate education is, and could promote linkages to REU and related undergraduate research programs, perhaps including FIRE, and facilitate undergraduate participation in research-focused activities. Finally, the University lags in providing summer programs that serve URM and first-generation undergraduates. These programs serve an important role in familiarizing prospective students with the campus, and serve as a vital mechanism for recruitment among our peer institutions.

***Recommendations:***

- The Graduate School should play a supporting role in fostering inter-program cooperation as well as cooperation with undergraduate programs. This role should be as a neutral arbiter of disputes and a facilitator of agreements.
- The Graduate School should partner with the Office of Undergraduate studies to improve communication with undergraduate students, provide information about graduate education, and facilitate undergraduate participation in research activities.

**6. *Should the Graduate School lead initiatives in global partnerships?***

The center of gravity in global partnerships should reside within the Office of International Affairs. The individual units and the Office of International Affairs are in better positions to take leadership roles on such initiatives. When these partnerships involve graduate programs, the Graduate School should be engaged in the discussions so that University policies regarding graduate education are adhered to. The Graduate School should play a supporting role in facilitating and maintaining these partnerships as well as coordinating and managing logistics.

The recent lack of coordination has been seen to cause confusion, which results in missed opportunities. Coordinated efforts among research initiatives, graduate student exchanges, and scholarly collaborations have the potential to lead to deeper and longer-lasting relationships.

Many stakeholders also perceived current Graduate School support for international activities to have restrictive conditions. For example, the International Graduate Research Fellowships provide support for travel and living expenses, but not research, tuition, or health insurance costs, and are limited to 1-3 months, which is typically less than one term.

***Recommendations:***

- The Graduate School should establish a strong collaborative relationship with the Office of International Affairs, which is similar to the relationship between OIA and the Office of Undergraduate Studies.

- The Graduate School should work with the Office of International Affairs to coordinate services for international graduate students. These students often are “slipping through the cracks” and don’t know where to go for support services and assistance.

7. *Examine and make recommendations on the role of the Graduate School in leading efforts to improve program quality through outcomes assessment.*

Development of program outcomes and assessment of them has become a central focus of both regional accreditors (in our case the Middle States Commission on Higher Education) and of professional accrediting organizations. It is therefore a reality that there should be some kind of centralized infrastructure for facilitating the development of outcomes and assessments. The University now has a relatively mature outcomes assessment process for undergraduate programs, which are largely course-based, somewhat uniform in delivery methods, and that have common elements such as General Education requirements. Several units have now made use of the assessments to redesign their programs. However, graduate programs, unlike undergraduate programs, rarely have any well-defined learning outcomes in their respective fields due to wide variations in style and purpose and/or the lack of a professional organization at the national or international level to develop universally accepted standards. For example, a generally accepted outcome within almost all academic disciplines may define the need for a basic understanding of professional ethics at the undergraduate level, but may not likewise emphasize the same outcome at the graduate level. Rather, it is often assumed by the professional community that learning outcomes were adequately achieved through the general undergraduate educational program, and graduate programs should focus more on advanced knowledge and skills instead of adopting learning outcomes which align with or reinforce those at the undergraduate level. As a result, masters programs typically have well-defined curricula and are often, but not always, linked to particular career paths; doctoral programs have much less focus on formal coursework and more focus on individual mentoring and scholarly development. Thus, the creation of outcomes and assessment strategies will not only vary widely between units, but even between degree programs within those units without any outside guidance from the general professional community.

While the Graduate School has had an outcomes assessment committee since 2011, there has yet to be strong campus buy-in to the process as it has been implemented. The general sentiment we heard expressed by faculty, Directors of Graduate Studies, and from some students is that, while there is a schedule for submission of materials, the review process is unclear and the feedback provided is of limited use, if there is any at all. We heard particular frustration among faculty in programs that have specialized accreditations, who feel their GOA submissions are duplicative of what they already need to do for their accrediting bodies. In fall 2016, in consultation with the CADGE group (associate deans for graduate education), interim dean Franke decided to take a “pause” and re-evaluate the process. **The Graduate School is and should be a facilitator of a faculty-led Outcomes Assessment Committee**, which is currently part of the Provost's Commission on Learning Outcome Assessment that covers both undergraduate and graduate programs (see <https://www.irpa.umd.edu/Assessment/LOA.html>). Through this existing relationship, the Graduate School could help develop a stronger infrastructure around review and feedback, such as creation of rubrics and templates for assessment reports, implementation of best

practices, and streamlining of the process for professional programs. Enough flexibility should be built into the submission and review process so as not to duplicate efforts of the professional programs that have assessment requirements as part of their professional accreditation.

***Recommendation:***

- The Graduate School should continue to help facilitate and advance strategies for outcomes assessment in graduate programs, but with the following elements:
  - The review process for submitted materials should be clearer and more timely;
  - There should be more involvement of faculty in establishing criteria, designing rubrics, and identifying best practices;
  - There should be more collaboration with the undergraduate outcomes assessment process so that the campus as a whole develops coherent and unified approach, with joint accountability to the Provost; and
  - There should be enough flexibility in the process to make use of any outcomes assessment requirements established through professional and specialized accrediting bodies to which programs are accountable.

**8. *What should be the role of the Graduate School in development, most specifically in raising external funding for graduate students and programs?***

Support for graduate students, particularly graduate fellowships, has not kept up with our peer schools. Units are facing greater difficulty attracting top students due to the combination of stagnant fellowships and the high cost of living in our region. However, there is a limited role for the Graduate School in direct fundraising.

We recognize that it is challenging to raise money for general graduate education, versus specific programs, but one of the strongest messages we received from our interactions with many focus groups was the effect that more funding could have on improving recruitment and outcomes for their graduate students. Therefore, financial support for graduate education should not be neglected by development activities. Fundraising for endowed chairs, research centers, and departments could include allocating some of the funds to support graduate students who will support those faculty, centers, and programs.

Another role for the Graduate School could be to provide more incentives and support for graduate students to seek external support. There are indications that in the past, internal fellowship funding, which typically provides only partial support or support for only part of the time a student is working toward their degree, lacked incentives for seeking additional external fellowship support that could augment financial resources for these students. Internal and external fellowship funding should be complementary, not substitutes.

Graduate School development activities might also focus on supporting new programming to enhance the graduate student experience at the University of Maryland. The University of Michigan Rackham School can be seen as a best practice. While they benefitted from a significant donation in the 1930s, their development practices more recently have been to appeal to donors' interests in supporting services such as the writing center, career services, and mentoring programs rather than fellowships.

***Recommendation:***

- The Graduate School must play a role in developing additional funding for graduate student fellowships and for new programming to enhance the graduate student experience, but this activity should not be a primary responsibility of Graduate School.
  - This should be a partnership with University Relations and Colleges and Schools to raise external funds for general graduate education, but that pool is limited (support tends to be directed to specific programs).
  - University Relations staff need training on the role and value of graduate education. Raising funds for research centers and endowed chairs should involve raising money for graduate education. The Provost's influence on how University Relations could add support for graduate students through centers and chaired positions would be invaluable.
  - The University may need to allocate additional funding to support graduate education until additional development success is realized.

***9. Assess the role and effectiveness of the Graduate Council in overseeing graduate policies, programs, and curricula, in particular relative to the functions of the University Senate.***

Most stakeholders on campus agree that the Graduate Council is working well, in part, because it is structured in a way that council members are knowledgeable about graduate education and the policies and issues at stake. This model is also observable at peer institutions. That said, greater clarification is needed to define the role of the Graduate Council in making graduate education policy. Currently, there is some confusion about the roles of the Graduate Council, the Graduate School Dean, and the University Senate (which was perceived by many stakeholders as primarily focused on undergraduate education). Because the Graduate Council is an advisory body to the Dean, there is no formal mechanism to ensure that policy recommendations are vetted and approved by the Provost and/or President and widely communicated. Many stakeholders commented on the confusion around various policies and procedures (e.g., dissertation committee policies, contradictions between the graduate catalog policies and the website, etc.), either the policy or procedure itself not being widely communicated, or it being unclear who holds the authority for decisions. Furthermore, a number of individuals recognized that closer coordination between the Graduate Council and the University Senate could increase awareness of graduate education and integrate graduate education into broader campus discussions.

***Recommendations:***

- Attention should be given to clarifying the policymaking roles and responsibilities for graduate education, and strengthening the relationship between the Graduate School and University Senate. For example, one model would establish the Graduate Council as a formal council of the University Senate. Membership on the council could be determined consistent with current practice, and the Graduate Council would oversee policy and issues related to graduate education, and would continue to be advisory to the Dean of the Graduate School. Incorporating the Graduate Council into the Senate would create a natural avenue for the Graduate Council to bring policy changes and recommendations through the appropriate Senate committee, through the

University Senate to the President. Another option would be to include a representative from the University Senate on the Graduate Council. These models don't necessarily conflict and should be carefully considered.

- The Graduate Council could be used to improve communication of policies and changes to policy to academic units, while the Graduate School could provide more training as needed to foster effective implementation of new policies. Comprehensive review of Graduate School policies and how they are presented on the Graduate School website should be undertaken, with provision for periodic review. The Graduate School should consider augmenting the annual orientation for Coordinators for Graduate Studies, Directors, and/or their Chairs to accomplish this goal of improved communication.

***10. The Graduate School has recently forged a partnership with the Office of Faculty Affairs to provide more structure and services for postdoctoral researchers. However, at UMD postdocs are officially appointed as faculty, and are most often supported through external research grants to PIs within academic and research units. Is support for postdoctoral researchers an appropriate role for the Graduate School, and if so, what services should be provided?***

Nationally, there has been a growth in a call for support systems for postdoctoral scholars, and evidence of such a system is becoming a requirement for some grant opportunities. The requirement of a mentoring plan in NSF proposals is an example. Across our peers, strategies for support of postdocs have typically been taken up by graduate schools. The rationale for having the Graduate School involved in providing centralized support for postdoctoral scholars comes from the thinking that postdoctoral scholars can benefit from some of the same support systems that the Graduate School provides for graduate students: career mentoring, professional development, writing, networking, etc. However, in fields in which postdoctoral scholars are prevalent, their roles and functions are less like graduate students and more like junior faculty, as employees with similar onboarding and mentoring needs.

Beginning in summer 2016, a partnership between the Office of Faculty Affairs and the Graduate School was created that seems to be a good working model for providing implementation of policies and procedures and strategies for mentoring (from Faculty Affairs) and programming around professional development and social networks (from the Graduate School), with an Office of Postdoctoral Affairs residing in and supported by the Graduate School. This partnership appears to be a good strategy, moving forward. For example, the Office can assist in the development of written expectations and annual assessment for postdocs by working in conjunction with their faculty mentors. Opportunities for shared resources also become viable, such as implementation of tracking systems common to graduate student, postdoc, and faculty achievement. There are also common interests in enhancement of diversity in which programs can be developed that appeal across the spectrum of graduate students to junior faculty, where potential URM and female faculty may be recruited from within the ranks of postdocs and postdocs from within the ranks of graduate students. The Office of Research, which has provided some structural support for postdocs in the past but has a lesser role now, could be an additional valuable partner by helping connect postdocs to fellowship opportunities, to positions at federal laboratories, at non-profit organizations, and with industrial research partners. The VPR's office could also take ownership of compliance for postdoc mentoring that is part of some research contracts.

Because both graduate students and postdocs are often supported by research grants, it would be valuable for there to be closer collaboration and cooperation between the Office of the VPR and the Graduate School.

***Recommendation:***

- The new Office of Postdoctoral Affairs, as jointly configured between the Graduate School and the Office of Faculty Affairs, is a good development for the campus. To work well, this partnership needs to remain close with shared responsibilities as outlined above. The Office could also benefit from additional collaboration with the Office of Research around issues of grant compliance and identification of professional placements.

**Resource Implications**

Most of the recommendations made above can be accomplished within existing resource constraints. As noted in the first general recommendation, the Graduate School should re-examine its mission statement and develop a strategic plan that guides priorities, activities, and staffing. Resources should be reallocated, as necessary, to support the most fundamental operations and most important priorities. Wherever possible, the Graduate School should collaborate with other units to reduce duplication of effort and realize greater efficiency.

The major exception is financial support for graduate student recruitment, retention, and completion. Students and faculty agreed that greater funding is needed to attract and support talented and diverse graduate students. The available funding for Graduate School fellowships is low compared to many of our peer institutions, and graduate students expressed major concerns about the compensation associated with graduate assistantships. These findings and the recommendations that we have made will require a greater investment of resources internally and a stronger advocacy for support for graduate students externally (state and other funding sources).

## **APPENDIX A**

### **Charge and Committee Membership**

#### **Charge**

##### **Review of the Operations and Functions of the Graduate School 2016**

Thank you for agreeing to serve on this review committee. It has been over 10 years since the Graduate School was created as a unit distinct from the Office of Research, and since the functions and responsibilities of the Graduate School were given a comprehensive review. Much at the University has changed since then. Two colleges have merged and others have reorganized, and doctoral programs have been strengthened. The University now has an accredited School of Public Health. There has been a significant growth in graduate professional degree offerings and in mode(s) of delivery, particularly at the master's level, as well as a growth in international partnerships. The national landscape for professional doctorate education is also evolving. The need for centralized professional development services for graduate students and postdoctoral scholars is now recognized nationally.

As you conduct this review, I ask you to keep this changing environment in mind as you consider the following:

1. Examine and make recommendations regarding the relationship between the Graduate School and individual units in the admission, support, training, and mentoring of graduate students. What functions are best handled centrally and what functions should be handled at the college or department level?
2. Examine the role and functions of the Graduate School, including its administrative structure, in maintaining and elevating the stature of the University, in fostering the continual improvement of graduate education, and in furthering the university's strategic goals for diversity and inclusion.
3. Consider whether the resources of the Graduate School are optimally directed towards recruitment of the best students into our graduate programs and facilitating the timely completion of degrees.
4. Consider the role of the Graduate School in facilitating the development of new academic programs responsive to workforce needs and economic development.
5. Should the Graduate School be a facilitator of relations among different graduate programs or between graduate and undergraduate programs?
6. Should the Graduate School lead initiatives in global partnerships?
7. Examine and make recommendations on the role of the Graduate School in leading efforts to improve program quality through outcomes assessment.
8. What should be the role of the Graduate School in development, most specifically in raising external funding for graduate students and programs?
9. Assess the role and effectiveness of the Graduate Council in overseeing graduate policies, programs, and curricula, in particular relative to the functions of the University Senate.

10. The Graduate School has recently forged a partnership with the Office of Faculty Affairs to provide more structure and services for postdoctoral researchers. However, at UMD postdocs are officially appointed as faculty, and are most often supported through external research grants to PIs within academic and research units. Is support for postdoctoral researchers an appropriate role for the Graduate School, and if so, what services should be provided?

In carrying out your work, please consult widely with the University community and survey other graduate schools among our peers, including but not limited to, Big Ten partners. Please consider the financial implications of any proposed changes and the potential impact on other campus units. I would also value your comments on the implementation of your recommendations. I would like to receive your recommendations by the end of the fall 2016 semester.

### **Review Committee Members**

Jennifer Rice, Professor of Teaching and Learning, Policy and Leadership, and Associate Dean for Graduate Studies and Faculty Affairs in the College of Education (CHAIR)

Elizabeth Beise, Professor of Physics and Associate Provost (Provost's Representative)

Hugh Bruck, Professor and Associate Chair for Graduate Studies, Mechanical Engineering

Charles Delwiche, Professor of Cell Biology and Molecular Genetics

Michael Faulkender, Associate Professor and Director of the Master of Finance Program

Holly Brewer, Professor, History

James Hanson, Professor and Chair, Agricultural and Resource Economics

Ethan Kaplan, Associate Professor of Economics

Adria Schwarber, Graduate Research Assistant in Atmospheric and Oceanic Science

Chuck Wilson, Associate Vice President for Records, Registration, and Extended Studies

**APPENDIX B**  
**Data Collection Activities**

**Meetings with UMD Administrators, Offices and Units**

- Deans and Associate Deans
  - ARHU/BSOS/CMNS
  - ENGR/BMGT/EDUC
  - ARCH/INFO/JOUR/PLCY
  - AGNR/SPHL
- Graduate School Staff
- Graduate Council Leadership
- Office of the Registrar
- Office of International Affairs
- Office of Faculty Affairs
- Office of University Relations
- University Libraries
- Teaching and Learning Transformation Center
- Office of Research
- Office of Diversity and Inclusion
- University Senate Executive Committee
- Office of Extended Studies
- Office of Undergraduate Studies
- Enrollment Management
- Maryland English Institute

**Open Forums**

	Meeting 1	Meeting 2	Total
Directors of Graduate Studies	7	8	15
Coordinators of Graduate Studies	10	21	31
Faculty	11	10	21
Graduate Students	19	30	49
Catch-All			9

**Peer Institution Comparisons**

*Comparisons of Enrollment, Staffing, and Organizational Structures (Big 10)*

- Indiana University
- Michigan State University
- Northwestern University
- Ohio State University
- Penn State University
- Purdue University
- Rutgers University
- University of Illinois

- University of Iowa
- University of Michigan
- University of Minnesota
- University of Nebraska-Lincoln
- University of Wisconsin-Madison

***In-depth Qualitative Descriptions:***

- Michigan State
- Northwestern University
- Rutgers University
- University of Illinois
- University of Michigan
- University of Wisconsin

**Survey of Graduate Students (n=325)**

***Survey Questions:***

1. As you understand it, what does the Graduate School do?
2. How often do you interact with the Graduate School?
3. How could the Graduate School improve your graduate student experience?
4. Select all the Graduate School services or committees you are familiar with.
5. Select each Graduate School service you have used.
6. Select each committee you have been active on or contacted in the past six months.
7. How would you rate your experiences with the following services or committees offered by the Graduate School?
8. How likely are you to consult the Graduate School versus your department for issues you face or services you require?
9. What issues or services do you seek from the Graduate School compared to your department?
10. Please leave any additional comments or concerns.