



2009-10 Annual Report

The Graduate School

A. HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

Major accomplishments (including student accomplishments) of unit/dept./college during the year. 1 page maximum

- Despite the budgetary restraints the Graduate School did meet its enrollment growth goals. A record number of graduate students enrolled in fall 2009 bringing the total headcount to 5,282 which represents over **21%** of the total headcount and a 5.8% increase from fall 2008. In the spring 5,127 graduate students were enrolled compared to a previous record of 4,975 in spring 2009.
- As of May, 95 doctoral students graduated in 2009-10 bringing the total number to 476 since the first graduate in 1997. In addition to the doctoral graduates, we had 1,151 master's graduates and 265 graduate certificates awarded this year.
- 91% of the full-time doctoral students received GASP funding for 09-10. This compares to 54% of the full-time doctoral students who received GASP in 2005. The health insurance premium payment plan was available to all doctoral students holding assistantships. \$286,552 was paid for a total of 438 students which is up just slightly from last year.
- Under the direction of Associate Dean Johnna Watson, we applied to the Institute of International Education to obtain approval to offer a Fulbright program at UNC Charlotte. Our application was accepted in the fall 2009 and for the fall 2010 the Graduate School has received applications for admission for 20 Fulbright participants in ten different academic programs and 16 different countries.
- Our graduate students continue to receive national and international recognition. As an example NSF Graduate Research Fellow **Sharonda Johnson** was selected to attend the 60th Annual Lindau Nobel Laureates meeting. **Richard Blackmon** a doctoral student in Optical Science and Engineering was named an NSF Graduate Research Fellow and **Acey Boyce** in computer science received an Honorable Mention.
- To underscore the important role our TAs play in our institutional goal of teaching excellence we established the Graduate School Excellence in Graduate Student Teaching Award competition which named **Michael Fairchild**, a doctoral student in applied mathematics as the first recipient in May.
- This year the Graduate School partnered with ITS to develop an electronic procedure for graduate assistantship appointments. Working with other offices including Human Resources, Student Accounts, Student Employment, and Payroll we implemented the electronic Graduate Assistantship form (eGA). The eGA makes it possible for the unit to hire a GA using a web-based tool that is linked to Banner so the award is no longer paper-based thus increasing efficiency and reducing errors and lost paperwork.
- A singular highlight this year was the opening of the Center for Graduate Life. This facility consists of more than 2,000 sq feet of classroom, meeting space, and office space and is housed behind the After Hours section in the Cone University Center. The CGL will provide a unique offering of services and a 'home base' for graduate students and will have a positive impact student retention, success and recruitment.



- Other examples of Graduate School activities for 2009-10 are shown on the Fact Sheet which is attached to this report.

B. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF ANNUAL PROGRESS IN ACHIEVING 2005-2010 STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

1-3 pages maximum

1. OVERALL PROGRESS IN ACHIEVING GOALS IN 2005-2010 STRATEGIC PLAN: Briefly comment on the unit/dept./college's overall progress in achieving goals in the 2005-2010 Strategic Plan.

In spite of a severe economic downturn during the last two years of the 2005-2010 strategic planning period, the Graduate School made excellent progress in achieving the goals described in our strategic plan. Some of the measureable outcomes we have achieved include:

- Graduate enrollment increased in size, quality, and diversity each year of the planning cycle.
- The inventory of new degree programs and graduate certificates increased annually.
- The Graduate Assistant Support Plan was launched which greatly enhanced our ability to attract and support high quality doctoral students.
- Funding in the form of stipends, tuition awards, and health insurance awards increased almost annually.
- New Graduate Fellowships were established.
- The visibility of the quality of our programs and students was raised as evidenced by several students being awarded NSF Graduate Research Fellowships and consecutive invitations to attend the Lindau Nobel Laureates meeting.
- New technological solutions were implemented for a variety of business practices including graduate admissions applications and the processing of graduate assistantships.
- New initiatives to encourage and support graduate student professional development centrally and through the individual academic units were implemented;
- The Center For Graduate Life was founded;
- Graduate education and career preparation of professional master's programs were enhanced;
- Established a new focus to improve the career development and working conditions for post-doctoral scholars.

To further the Graduate School's mission to serve and support students through recruitment, admissions, matriculated student services, graduation and beyond, an outside consultant, Ms. Lynda Wilhelm from Packard Learning Corporation, was brought in to work with the Graduate School staff in facilitating organizational changes in the office. This work began as the result of a comprehensive communications study commissioned last year with the goal is to improve interactions with our internal and external constituents and to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of our operations. The Graduate School Task Force for Change, consisting of ten EPA and SPA staff from the Graduate School, was formed in March 2009, met throughout that spring, and made its recommendations to the Dean in July 2009. The work was complicated however by the state mandated budget cuts to the University. The goal during the budget cutback was to incorporate many of the suggestions provided by the Task Force for Change while maintaining sufficient resources to operate during a projected two-year economic downturn; however, to meet the Graduate School's budget reduction target required cutbacks in student support funding, operating budgets and the elimination of filled and



unfilled positions. One of the major structural changes implemented was to merge graduate and undergraduate international admissions and domestic graduate admissions into a single office of Graduate Admissions and Enrollment Management. This office is directed by Associate Dean Johnna Watson.

Effective July 1, 2010, Senior Associate Dean Kent Curran, will return to the faculty of the Department of Management in the Belk College of Business. Dr. Curran's area of responsibilities was subsumed into a new office of Graduate Academic Affairs led by Associate Dean Susan Sell who also assumed the title of Senior Associate Dean of the Graduate School. Assistant Dean Katherine Hall-Hertel will continue to supervise the office of Graduate Student Affairs and take on new responsibilities as the director of the Center for Graduate Life.

While some of these changes were difficult to make, it was necessary to redistribute staff resources and projects to reflect our changing organization, diversity of projects, and new economic reality. The new structure will reduce duplication of effort, increase efficiency, develop processes that are scalable and lower walls within the office so staff see themselves as a team

2. MAJOR NEW ACTION STEPS PLANNED (IF ANY) TO ACHIEVE GOALS IN 2005-2010 STRATEGIC PLAN:

Describe major new action steps planned (if any) to achieve goals in the 2005-2010 Strategic Plan. Do not include QEP plans in this section. (Note: this section was included in the event that major new action steps became necessary after the 2005-2010 Strategic Plan was finalized. For most units/depts./colleges, this section will be blank.)

3. QUALITY ENHANCEMENT PLAN: Develop a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) for the coming academic year that identifies a major issue in the unit/dept./college or that is critical to enhancing student learning and/or educational quality. The QEP should identify the issue the unit/dept./college plans to address, the action steps the unit/dept./college will take, and the effectiveness measures that will be used to assess the success of the QEP.

Supporting Growth While Enhancing Quality and Competitiveness.

Two years ago the Graduate School developed a Quality Enhancement Plan using two action themes to guide our efforts to improve graduate education: **(1) attracting quality students** and **(2) enriching the academic environment**. We continued to follow these objectives and ultimately used the QEP as the foundation of our discussions for the new 2010-15 strategic plan. While **attracting quality graduate students**, we recognize the complex interplay between the quality of students and the size of enrollment. To educate graduate students for the future, the essential ingredient must be quality in all aspects of graduate education. The University must seek the 'right-size' in the numbers of undergraduates, graduate students, and faculty and then focus on recruiting high quality graduate students.



Plans for **enriching the academic environment** are based on the belief that the success of graduate students during their studies and following graduation is often directly related to the overall academic environment of their graduate school experience. In order to allow graduate students to take full advantage of opportunities to use their expertise to make a meaningful and lasting difference in their discipline and the community, our QEP included a call to establish the Center for Graduate Life where support services that contribute to the development of community for graduate students will be offered. We are pleased to acknowledge the opening of the CGL in May 2010 and look forward to using it as a focus to help graduate students succeed by fostering cross-disciplinary education, examining and removing barriers to students' timely completion of degree programs, promoting graduate students' efforts to disseminate their research, encouraging graduate student participation in the intellectual life on campus, and preparing graduate students to teach and communicate in a variety of venues. Additionally, to enrich the academic environment, the Graduate School strives to reduce bureaucratic barriers and improve operational transparency through such actions as streamlining application and enrollment processes, graduate student funding procedures, graduation clearance, and improving access to financial and human resources. This **enrichment of the academic environment** firmly supports **attracting quality graduate students** by creating a sense among prospective graduate students that at UNC Charlotte they are important, valued, and that this is their academic and professional home.

The strategies to meet the objectives of our QEP align with the goals detailed in the new Graduate School 2010-15 Strategic Plan. We view our Strategic Plan and QEP as catalysts for change and believe it is integral to achieving the University's agenda to become a major research University. But, our actions and assessments will not happen without human and financial resources. Therefore, our plans include structures and mechanisms for monitoring and ensuring the continued development and implementation of our objectives. The primary responsibility for oversight resides with the Graduate School working jointly with the Office of Academic Affairs, the Office of Research Services, Student Affairs and the Academic Colleges.

C. ANNUAL EVALUATIONS BY UNIT:

Briefly describe any annual evaluations conducted by units/depts./colleges to assess outcomes that are not included in the unit/dept./college's 2005-2010 Strategic Plan (.e.g., scholarly productivity.) 1 page maximum

Graduate Student Needs Assessment

The graduate student Needs Assessment was conducted in October and November. This on-line survey was restructured to capture feedback about how important versus how competent a student was within a certain domain. The survey had an 11.1% response rate, and 50% were first year students. The results showed that graduate students are largely satisfied with their programs. Some areas for improvement included funding, development of soft skills, and strengthening of the campus community.

Graduate Assistantship Renewals

In 2009-10 \$517,500 was up for renewal in four doctoral programs and five master's degrees. Each



program was invited to apply for renewal of this funding and asked to respond to the following:

1. The number of students supported during the three year allocation and the amount of funding provided to each student
2. How graduate assistantships were assigned.
3. How the assistantships contributed to the degree program.
4. How the assistantship assignments contributed to the professional development of the students.
5. The impact of the funding on the quality of the program.
6. How the program was able to leverage these funds to increase the financial support of their students.

Below are examples of the evaluations that are conducted on a routine basis:

- Graduate Application statistics (weekly)
- International Undergraduate Application statistics (weekly)
- Graduate Enrollment reports (monthly, bi-weekly)
- International Undergraduate Enrollment reports (monthly, bi-weekly)
- Graduate retention/attrition reports (bi-annually)
- Graduate Applicant survey
- Application for Degree (bi-annually)
- Graduate Student Needs Assessment Survey (annual)
- Post-doctoral Fellow Needs Assessment Survey (annual)
- Graduate Exit Survey (3 times per year)
- Data Integrity survey (reports are run 1-3 time weekly)
- Graduate Certificate Program review (five-year cycle)
- Graduate Faculty review (three to five year cycle)
- Graduate Faculty criteria review
- Graduate Assistantship allocation review (three-year cycle)
- New Graduate Student Orientation survey (bi-annually)
- Graduate Student Professional Development program surveys
- CGS/GRE Survey of Graduate Enrollment and Degrees (annually)
- CGS Survey of International Applications/Admits/Enrolled Students (three times per year)
- Survey of Earned Doctorates (annually)

D. EXAMPLES OF DATA-BASED IMPROVEMENTS DURING THE YEAR

Describe 3 examples of how the unit/dept./college or division has used assessment data for the purpose of improvement during the year.

1. As a result of our strategic planning process the Graduate School developed and defined core competencies all graduate students should attain before graduating with a degree from UNC Charlotte. These competencies will be used to develop outcome measures for the professional development offered through the Graduate School. The competencies are in the areas of



Communication, Leadership, Teaching and Instruction, Personal and Professional Responsibility, and Research and Scholarly Inquiry. The UNC Charlotte Graduate Council considered the competencies and approved a motion to endorse them at the March 2010 meeting.

2. Utilizing data obtained from graduate application statistics, enrollment reports and feedback provided by the Graduate Enrollment Management Working Group the Graduate Educational Opportunities (GEO) committee was established under the leadership of Associate Dean Johnna Watson and Assistant Dean Katherine Hall-Hertel. The goal of the GEO is to increase the number of underrepresented UNC Charlotte undergraduate students who attend graduate School. Partially funded through the Chancellor's Diversity Challenge grant and the Graduate School, GEO will establish a series of one credit hour courses through University College to serve as means to educate and inform ethnic minority and first generation students about the many opportunities for graduate education. The first course UCOL 3401 Graduate Educational Opportunities will be offered in the fall 2010.
3. Graduate Admissions routinely surveys graduate applicants to determine the ease of use of the ApplyYourself application system so that changes/enhancements can be made regularly to optimize the applicant experience. As a result of data obtained in the last application cycle, Director of Admissions Kathy Giddings worked with Brenda Sawyer, Director of the Residency Determination Office, to streamline the residency questions in ApplyYourself so that the information was clearer for applicants. Similarly, in an ongoing effort to reduce telephone and email traffic sent by applicants and increase brand awareness of graduate education at UNC Charlotte, Graduate Admissions sustained and modified the targeted emails (AY "tracks") sent to prospective students, applicants, and individuals offered admission. As of May 11, 2010, 205,697 personalized emails were automatically generated; the open rate for the emails was 41% which is very successful compared to the education industry standard of 15.72% (2008 Email Marketing Metrics by www.mailermailer.com). Initiatives to increase communication with applicants also included a weekly, individual notification to all applicants whose applications for admission were not complete. Previously, this population was notified at the point of initial processing of the file and then once per month.

E. ASSESSMENT OF EVALUATION METHODS

Comment on the strengths and weaknesses of unit/dept/college's assessment methods and describe plans (if any) to strengthen outcomes assessment during the coming year.

The Graduate School will continue to work on expanding the successful implementation of the eGA to include tuition awards, grants, and fellowships. However to be effective we must have access to accurate and relevant data. This is particularly true for financial information especially when funding is limited. In administering graduate student support money, the Graduate School office must have a comprehensive picture of the funding available for graduate students. While this has been a chronic issue, I am hopeful that the work being conducted by the Chancellor's Payments Improvement Committee and the Admissions Business Process Improvement study may improve not only the way we do business on campus but also access to the information we need to do our jobs effectively.



REQUIRED ATTACHMENTS TO 2007-08 ANNUAL REPORT

1. ANNUAL PROGRESS ASSESSMENT OF PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES FOR 2005-2010 STRATEGIC PLAN

GOALS: After completing sections III I. and III J. of your 2005-2010 Strategic Plan (i.e., the annual report section of the strategic plan template), print and attach here your entire 2005-2010 Strategic Plan.

2. OUTCOMES DATA ON STUDENT LEARNING: Attach department/college student learning outcomes assessment plan with assessment data collected since 2005 embedded. All departments and colleges MUST include student learning outcomes assessment data here. **Departments and colleges without student learning outcomes data in the 2007-08 annual report will be contacted by OAA.**

3. (FOR DEANS AND ASSOCIATE PROVOSTS ONLY) MEMORANDUMS TO DEPARTMENT AND UNIT HEADS:

Deans and associate provosts are to attach copies of their written feedback to department and unit heads on the status of outcomes assessment in the department or unit, and identifying any areas meriting priority attention in the coming year.