2004-2005 FIRST IN 2009 COORDINATING COUNCIL

Report of the Subcommittee on

Creating a National Presence for Graduate Education

Preface

The Dean of the Graduate School, Dr. John M. Hughes, and the Chair of the First in 2009 Coordinating Council, Dr. Carolyn Haynes, initiated this study with their discussion paper “Graduate Education at Miami University, The Role of Graduate Education at a Distinguished Doctoral Intensive University.” This paper can be found at http://muohio.edu/graduate/resources.cfm under “Information for current students and faculty.” Interim Provost, Dr. John H. Skillings, responded by forming this subcommittee and charging the subcommittee to conduct a campus-wide discussion about graduate education and to present a final report.

The subcommittee’s charge was to engage the university in a conversation that focuses on the following questions:

1. What is the appropriate proportion of graduate students at a university where a liberal arts undergraduate education remains its primary mission?
2. What steps can be taken to elevate the presence of Miami’s graduate programs and students across the nation?
3. How can we best utilize the talents and time of graduate assistants and teaching associates to improve our intellectual climate?
4. What is the role of graduate education in the scholarly efforts of Miami?
5. What steps can be taken to maintain and increase the diversity of the graduate student body, and how can Miami take a leadership role in this area?

Subcommittee Actions. The subcommittee members met during the academic year 2004-05. A variety of sources were used to collect the following information to guide the discussions:
1. Data on the enrollment (by gender and ethnicity) of undergraduate and graduate students at Miami University from Fall 1993 to Fall 2004.
2. The undergraduate and graduate student enrollments at our aspirant institutions.
3. A listing of the master’s and doctoral programs by department.
4. The state subsidy dollars received for the different levels of masters and doctoral students.
5. The stipends paid to teaching assistants and graduate assistants by division.
6. The average stipends for selected fields at 83 institutions in 2003-04.
7. Historical graduate student levels at Miami University.

Using this information as a collective starting point, the subcommittee initiated discussions with various constituents within the university. The chairs, deans, faculty members, and senior administrators at the Provost’s Breakfast had table discussions on November 2, 2004. Chairs and Graduate Program Directors of most departments, and Miami University Graduate Students were consulted between December and February. Two open university forums were held on March 28th and 29th, 2005.
It became evident during these discussions that there is significant support for improving the existing graduate programs and thereby enhancing the contributions already made by the graduate programs to the excellence of Miami’s undergraduate programs. During the discussions, the subcommittee was encouraged to answer the questions in its charge, and also suggest that a strategic plan for graduate education at Miami University be developed. Therefore, the Subcommittee on Creating a National Presence for Graduate Education recommends that the Graduate School develop a Strategic Plan incorporating the conclusions and recommendations of this report and seek endorsement of the Strategic Plan from the Miami University Board of Trustees.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Graduate Education is clearly integral to the overall success of Miami University at every level. For Miami to be First in 2009, several steps must be taken to maintain and enhance graduate programs at Miami University. Fiscal considerations will surely cause tension for the implementation of the subcommittee’s recommendations so the subcommittee members urge that a Strategic Plan for Graduate Education be developed by the Graduate School to set priorities and establish a time table to achieve five major goals by 2009 and beyond:

1. increase the student stipends to nationally competitive levels (and include affordable health insurance);
2. increase the numbers of full-time graduate students to 10% of the total student body (the level last enjoyed in 1995);
3. increase the visibility of Graduate Education within the University, the region, the nation, and the world;
4. increase faculty generated grant support for graduate education;
5. increase the endowment from the Capital Campaign to provide stable support for Graduate Education.

The Strategic Plan should be endorsed by the Provost, the President, and the Board of Trustees to ensure commitment to its goals and objectives throughout the University.
The Role of Graduate Education at a Distinguished Doctoral Intensive University

Miami University is classified as a Carnegie Doctoral Intensive University. As such, the University awards fewer than fifty doctoral degrees per year or awards the doctorate in fewer than fifteen disciplines. The Carnegie classification reaffirms that Miami University is not an institution that focuses exclusively on undergraduate education, nor a research university that concentrates its efforts on doctoral and postdoctoral education; its educational role is more complex. It is important that we recognize this complexity, with its attendant responsibilities, and include graduate study in conversations regarding advancing our university. It is also important that we applaud the recognition that our complex educational role brings to our university. Among all doctoral intensive universities in the United States, Miami University is ranked sixth, following Dartmouth College, Wake Forest University, The College of William and Mary, Pepperdine University, and Worcester Polytechnic Institute. Having such distinguished institutions as peers in the list suggests that Miami has identified a role in higher education that brings it great distinction.

I. The Importance of Graduate Education at Miami University

It is clear that the discussion of graduate education should not be isolated from the other mission areas of Miami University. Although the presence of the graduate programs increases the quality of faculty hired by Miami University, enhances facilities and libraries, provides greater and higher quality research and scholarship opportunities to undergraduate students, and builds the reputation of the university, this has not been effectively communicated to many groups within the University. All these factors are critically important as “First in 2009 starts us down a trajectory toward being, not just a national university as we are now, but rather a nationally renowned university.”

It was apparent from the discussions that graduate education at Miami University has not been a high priority in the past. This may be due in part to the fact that the graduate programs have not had an effective champion to obtain the necessary resources from upper administration. It may be that as a university community we think of ourselves as members of a department; few faculty think of themselves as being corporate members of an interdisciplinary all-university graduate faculty. It may be that older, experienced faculty champion teaching over research and graduate programs; their time is concentrated and dedicated to teaching. It is probably some combination of all of the above. It is the subcommittee’s hope that this report will provide the catalyst for the development of a strategic plan that will produce major commitments from the Board of Trustees and the Administration.

Conclusion #1: Given the retirement/hiring cycle and the stated aspirations of Miami University, it is the subcommittee’s strong belief that the time is now for the graduate programs to receive major commitments that will produce long-term intellectual and financial benefits to Miami University.

A. New Faculty Hires

President Garland has announced there will be 50 new faculty positions created at Miami University. In addition, 200-250 of our existing faculty will be retiring in the next 6-7 years. When we hire, the general principle that departments and programs should use is that they will hire someone better than their last hire. The quality of a faculty can only increase when the existing faculty are committed to
hiring the brightest and best faculty. Miami University is asking faculty not just to be a teacher or not just to be a scholar, but to be a Teacher/Scholar. The President has expressed new aspirations for research and scholarship at Miami University. These aspirations cannot be met without involving graduate and undergraduate partnerships in scholarly activities undertaken with faculty. This will dramatically enhance the opportunities for students to learn in new ways through closely mentored partnerships in research and scholarship. Early entry by undergraduates into research and scholarship projects significantly improves retention of women and underrepresented groups in mathematics, science and engineering.

Given the expectations of the University for new faculty, it is not surprising that new faculty hires in most departments (but especially the science departments) now expect that graduate students will be readily available as partners in their scholarly and teaching agendas. Since these hires often replace faculty members whose research relied less on graduate student partners, there is intense pressure on the University to increase the number of graduate assistantships. We must also realize that Miami University is not the only academic institution seeing high retirement numbers in the next decade. The competition for the best and brightest will be intense.

**Conclusion #2: To compete on the national stage and hire the most talented scholars who ascribe to the Teacher/Scholar model espoused by Miami University, Graduate Education at Miami University must have a significantly larger presence and status than it currently has.**

**B. Facilities and Library**

Graduate programs demand the best facilities, equipment and libraries necessary to support world-class scholarly activity. Graduate science and engineering departments acquire through external funding cutting edge equipment used by both undergraduate and graduate students. Our undergraduates, however, benefit even more because Miami University’s size allows them to use the equipment at levels significantly higher than the levels possible at research-extensive universities. Indeed, without graduate programs, many of the national grants that funded major equipment acquisitions over the past ten years would not have been received or would have been awarded at considerably lower success rates.

The laboratories, offices, IT services and studios needed for graduate education are all available to the undergraduate students at Miami University. Many of these facilities would not exist or would be substantially more meager if graduate programs were not part of Miami. Indeed, more external funding is available for facilities, computers, and other capital items for graduate programs than for undergraduate programs.

Libraries that serve graduate students’ needs are significantly more complete and provide substantial high-tech services. These same facilities are available to undergraduates and faculty from departments that do not have graduate students. Graduate students in other departments routinely work with library personnel to enhance services to all segments of the university.

**Conclusion #3: At Miami University the capital items that graduate programs require and routinely acquire through external funding enhance the opportunities for undergraduates to engage in research and scholarly activities.**
C. Undergraduate Research Opportunities

What better source for this argument than Miami University’s own Research and Scholarship Advisory Committee who stated in their position paper in 2004: “WE BELIEVE that Kepler’s experience exemplifies the validity of Miami University’s dedication to research and undergraduate teaching as mutually reinforcing processes involving inquiry, reflection, discovery, artistic creativity and performance, and the construction of knowledge—processes strengthened through interaction in classrooms among faculty members and undergraduate students. Rejecting the notion that teaching and research are incompatible activities, we celebrate Miami as a dynamic institution where research and teaching enhance each other.”

“TO SUSTAIN and develop Miami as an institution distinguished by its cultivation of teacher-scholars, we insist that scholarship must meet professional standards as defined within disciplinary and interdisciplinary communities. In general, we value work publicly acknowledged by one’s professional colleagues as a positive contribution to one’s field. While we recognize that what constitutes peer acceptance varies by disciplinary and interdisciplinary community, we have in mind such forms as publication, presentation and performance. We also include the affirmation of proposed and ongoing research represented by grants and fellowships.”

Much of this enterprise requires the presence of graduate students and post-doctoral students who raise the intellectual climate of the entire university. Many undergraduates work side by side with graduate students learning how to apply their classroom knowledge to critically think about and solve the difficult and challenging problems of science and society.

Conclusion #4: As our undergraduate student demand for research opportunities increases it is even more important to recognize that undergraduate research opportunities are significantly enhanced by the resources related to graduate programs and graduate students.

D. Enhanced Reputation of Miami University

From the Research and Scholarship Advisory Committee: “WE CELEBRATE a university where undergraduate teaching excellence embraces diversity in scholarship. We accept Ernest Boyer’s notion of scholarship as encompassing general categories of discovery, integration, application, teaching, and (our own category) creativity. In our classrooms, we study existing perspectives, critique them, raise questions and issues, pursue multiple perspectives, and accumulate different kinds of evidence to reach persuasive and reasonable conclusions. Outside of classrooms, we want to learn about the questions, assumptions, and methods of colleagues and students in other parts of the university. A university is a community of teacher-scholars with a wide variety of purposes and methods. Historians work for years to write a monograph that organizes information collected from distant archives into a persuasive interpretive narrative. Scientists labor for years in laboratories to empirically test hypotheses about the operations of the natural world. Some faculty members create music, art, theater, and design whereas others perform or critique others’ compositions. Literary critics analyze texts as intensely as students of pedagogy analyze the dynamics of classrooms or as accounting scholars analyze biases in financial assessments. Some scholars seek general rules whereas others insist that all knowledge is constructed and contingent. Some work individually,
others collaboratively. Faculty members on Miami’s several campuses may develop different relationships between their work inside and outside classrooms.”

A university is judged by the students it produces and the creation of intellectual capital. There is no doubt that the quality of our undergraduates is outstanding. For many there is also no doubt, but little celebration, that our graduate students are outstanding. But potential for the generation of intellectual capital is stunted by the number of those graduate students and level of institutional support for the graduate program.

**Conclusion #5: The lack of support, recognition, and promotion of the graduate programs at Miami University has negatively impacted the national image of the intellectual capital at this university.**

II. **History and Comparisons of Miami University’s Graduate Programs**

A. **Miami University Graduate School History**

The data in Figure 1 clearly indicate that the graduate student proportion of the total student population at Miami, after increasing steadily from 2% in 1950, declined dramatically from a peak of 12% in 1994. During the last 11 years the ratio has fallen to 5.1% based on FTE. When the numbers are translated into full-time students, the percentage drops to 6.3% (see Figures 2 and 3). This change has occurred as a result of an increase in undergraduate student enrollment and some decrease in graduate student enrollment—especially in the number of tuition-paying part-time students—in spite of the fact that the number of assistantships provided by the administration has remained constant.

2. **Comparison with Peer Institutions**

Comparison of Miami University with the peer institutions used for the recently completed North Central Accreditation Study shows that Miami University has the lowest percentage of graduate students (based on FTEs) among these schools: e.g. 8.6% for Miami versus William and Mary’s 14.6% (Fig. 2). The data in Figure 3 show the percentage of full-time graduate students at Miami University versus our peer institutions. Full-time (as opposed to part-time) graduate students on the Oxford Campus comprise just 6.3% of the total student population compared with, for example, schools such as Michigan and Northwestern, institutions with distinctly different missions (Fig. 3).
C. The Reality of Creating New Programs

Historically, Miami University has been slow to add new graduate programs, and this trend is unlikely to change. New programs at the master’s and doctoral level must be approved by the Ohio Board of Regents, and the entire approval process takes between 3-5 years. Under pressure from the legislature, the OBoR is not interested in initiating duplicate programs unless the school has demonstrated a significant level of national and international prominence. It does, however, entertain requests for unique and especially useful programs. For example the Department of Sociology and Anthropology’s new Ph.D. program would fall into that category.

D. Research-Intensive versus Research-Extensive University Status

The subcommittee is aware that Miami University holds a unique position in higher education. As a research-intensive university, Miami’s peers are schools like Dartmouth and William and Mary, schools renowned for their teacher/scholar faculty models. They are schools known for their teaching, yet their faculty are recognized amongst the world’s best scholars. Miami University is ranked sixth in this group of select universities. If Miami’s doctoral programs increased to 15 and we graduated more than 50 Ph.D.’s per year, we would become a Research-Extensive (formerly Research I) University. Any discussion of graduate programs at Miami University must keep these categories in mind and fully consider the ramifications of such a change in status.

III. Summary of Subcommittee Findings

The subcommittee has summarized the information received from the various constituencies in Miami University. Each section is headed by the question originally given the subcommittee and is divided into what we heard and recommendations for action that should be incorporated in a Strategic Plan.

1. What is the appropriate proportion of graduate programs at a university where a liberal arts undergraduate education remains its primary mission?

What we learned: The input from our meetings with faculty, administrators and graduate students indicated there is overwhelming agreement that more graduate students are needed on the Oxford
Campus. Although different concerns were expressed about the effects this action might have on particular programs, a clear strategic plan for each program could be produced to describe the opportunities additional graduate students would create and the resources needed by the department(s) in the program. Existing strong programs should be enhanced before new graduate programs are initiated, and there is already a mechanism in place (Program Review) to address the problems of weaker graduate programs.

Recommendations:

1. Increase the proportion of graduate students to undergraduate students gradually through selective program growth. The target should reach the 10% level in five years most of the increase falling in the full-time cadre. Approximately 200 graduate assistantships will need to be added to achieve this target. In the long term, half this growth should come from additional university-supported positions and the other half from external funding. The subcommittee believes that growth in the graduate student population is best determined by individual program areas. A variety of factors will influence the ability of a graduate program to increase in size without compromising the quality of program delivery, and these include the availability of graduate assistantships, faculty workloads, interest of new faculty hires, availability of new faculty lines, expansion of research facilities, linkage between undergraduate and graduate programs, availability of off-campus sites for instruction (and these could significantly increase the number of tuition-paying part-time students), and a program’s definition of a critical mass of graduate students.

2. Selectively increase the number of graduate assistantships at the university. It is unrealistic to envision an increase in the numbers of graduate students without offering institutional support in the form of tuition remission and living support. Stipends are rarely given without service expectations, and our graduate students contribute significantly to our undergraduate mission in the classrooms and laboratories as instructors and teaching assistants for remuneration far below that of the most junior assistant professor.

3. Offer competitive stipends (including more affordable health insurance) for the graduate students in those excellent programs in which the stipends fall below national competitive levels. It is critical that, if we are to be “First in 2009,” and if we acknowledge that the graduate program is inextricably linked with the excellence of our undergraduate program, we must attract the best graduate students. This means offering graduate students stipends that equal or exceed those offered by our aspirant institutions.

4. Enhance library holdings, sustain electronic Ohio-Link connections, and increase the space required for high-quality research programs. Although the subcommittee recognizes the considerable fiscal constraints on the University administration, it should also be acknowledged that the investment of dollars in start-up packages has been rewarded by dramatic increases in external funding to those programs, and continued
investment in those programs should be similarly successful. When long-range building plans are made, space for quality graduate programs must be included.

5. Take leadership in the State of Ohio for Miami University to develop programs in unique and emerging fields of study. When opportunities for innovation arise they should be seized and supported to ensure that Miami remains First long after 2009.

6. Encourage and provide increased opportunities for graduate programs at off-campus sites (e.g., the Middletown or Hamilton Regional Campuses or other locations), and continue to offer fee certificates, fee reductions, and fee waivers for teachers working full-time and registering for graduate work.

2. What steps can be taken to elevate the presence of Miami’s graduate programs and students across the nation?

What we learned: There is a perception among the university faculty that the graduate programs at Miami University are not fully recognized for their excellence and high quality. This stems from the external perception that Miami University is only an undergraduate institution, and this is facilitated by the promotion of Miami University as a “premier national undergraduate institution.” There is frustration among the graduate faculty that Miami University is afraid to tell the external community that Miami University is an outstanding research-intensive university where graduate and undergraduates learn by doing research and engaging in scholarly activities that include exhibits and performances.

Recommendations:

1. Establish a marketing plan that celebrates Miami University as both a graduate and undergraduate institution of high quality. The Graduate School should work with University Communication to develop the marketing plan as one of the goals within its Strategic Plan, and to provide departments and programs with assistance in web-site development and brochure design. The plan should ensure a strategic and financial commitment from the administration that graduate education will be promoted locally, regionally, nationally, and globally whenever opportunities arise.

2. Continue to establish relationships with potential feeder schools and encourage them to provide high-quality applicants to our graduate programs. Work to enhance the relationships with our traditional feeder schools. Continue to recruit and hire high-quality faculty who will in turn recruit high-quality graduate students.

3. Encourage faculty and professional organizations to host national meetings at Miami University; such exposure to our campus, our faculty and graduate students, and their scholarship will enhance the graduate program’s national and international reputation.

4. Have faculty and administration work to increase travel funds, through grants and reallocation of administrative funds, for graduate students and faculty to attend and present their scholarly work or performances at professional conferences and venues.
3. How can we best utilize the talents and time of graduate assistants and teaching associates to improve our intellectual climate?

What we learned: Graduate students are critical contributors to the intellectual climate of a university; maximizing the talents and time of graduate assistants will serve to increase the quality of program delivery at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Graduate students provide a much needed diversity to the Oxford campus.

Recommendations:

1. Develop a culture wherein graduate students are treated with respect as colleagues and peers and given appropriate responsibilities.

2. Improve and increase the opportunities for professional development for Miami’s graduate students. Mentoring students in pedagogy (as opposed to the formal mentoring in scholarship required from the graduate faculty) and integrating them into appropriate departmental and program committees will give them more opportunities to contribute and, at the same time, learn the workings of academia.

3. Celebrate the achievements of our graduate students and their contributions to the intellectual climate of the University. Our graduate students should understand the importance of their role in the University’s academic enterprise. Opportunities for presenting their scholarly work or performances should at least equal those we give our undergraduates whose own scholarly achievements are so closely linked to the presence of our graduate students.

4. Establish physical sites where graduate students from different disciplines can meet and exchange ideas. Ideally this would be found in a free-standing graduate school/research building where research services like the statistical consulting center, the evaluation and assessment center and the three new IT research positions would reside in conjunction with the Graduate School and the Office for the Advancement of Research and Scholarship. More realistically, this would mean identifying dedicated space in a vacated existing building.

4. What is the role of graduate education in the scholarly efforts of Miami University?

What we learned: Graduate students are critical contributors to the scholarly efforts of faculty at Miami University. As the university increases its emphasis on research, scholarship and creative activities, graduate students will become increasingly valuable in helping faculty meet these expectations. This is especially true for probationary faculty who also have increased expectations for an adequate number of graduate students to assist with their research, scholarship and creative activities. Having sufficient graduate students engaged in with faculty helps recruit top scholars with interests in both teaching and research or creative activities. Graduate education both allows and requires faculty to stay engaged with current research, scholarship and creative activities in their
discipline. Strong collaborative work among faculty and graduate students also enhances external funding support from public and private sources thus ensuring that investment in the graduate program will reap financial as well as intellectual rewards

**Recommendations:**

1. Expand our efforts to recruit nationally and globally for high-quality graduate students and, along with the nationally competitive stipends and health insurance, increased travel and research support referred to above, create more assistantships specifically for research, scholarship, and creative activities. Given the large numbers of new faculty expected over the next few years and the increased expectations of high-quality research from them, it is essential that those in disciplines where success requires close working relationships with graduate students in laboratories have access to the best graduate students we can recruit.

2. Encourage interdisciplinary research for both faculty and graduate students, thus enhancing (yet again) the potential for external funding to support graduate education at Miami University.

5. **What steps can be taken to maintain and increase the diversity of the graduate student body, and how can Miami take a leadership role in this area?**

**What we learned:** Miami University has struggled to achieve and maintain a diverse student population at the undergraduate level because it is our responsibility to allow our students to grow and learn in an environment that represents the world today. The graduate student population is, however, more diverse than the undergraduate population. Students of color comprise 11% of the graduate student population, with 15% of graduate students being international students. Efforts have recently resulted in an entering graduate class of 2004 that is 20% students of color. These percentages all exceed those for the undergraduate student population.

**Recommendations:**

1. Increase recruitment of graduate students from diverse ethnic, racial, socio-economic and national groups.

2. Establish additional agreements with Historically Black Colleges and Universities and other colleges and universities with significant African-American or Hispanic-American student bodies.

3. Provide additional service-free opportunities to minority and economically disadvantaged students. At the same time, graduate faculty should be encouraged to apply for funds from National Science Foundation and Department of Education programs targeting underrepresented groups.
4. Provide special support for foreign students who arrive here without any local knowledge or experience in dealing with American customs. It is especially important that we provide these students affordable housing and opportunities to maintain their cultural heritage.

CONCLUSIONS

Many long-standing members of the graduate faculty expressed their long-term frustration with the second-class standing they and their graduate students have endured over the years. They appreciated this opportunity to finally have an all-university discussion about graduate education. The subcommittee was surprised to see little opposition to and much support for graduate education. It may be that those opposed hypothesized that expansion of graduate education is a given in an expanding research atmosphere and therefore did not want to waste their time. We optimistically believe that the majority of Miami faculty have been hired with the expectation of scholarly activity and understand the need for and the benefits associated with graduate students.

Clearly, it is impossible to read through this long list of recommendations without acknowledging the need for a strong commitment and a significant infusion of dollars to graduate education. The First in 2009 goals and the expectations and financial rewards created by the Ohio Third Frontier Program require that Miami University enhances graduate education. Miami University needs to recognize that the graduate program is integral to the excellence of our undergraduate program and is important to Miami's future reputation. As new faculty arrive with their own and the University's increased expectations for world-class scholarship and creative activity, the numbers and quality of the graduate students must also increase. Just as faculty start-up has produced a significant return on investment, an increase in graduate students will produce a return on investment. The university must invest dollars from both the annual budget and the current capital campaign. The reward will be significant increases in external funding that will purchase equipment, improve faculty productivity and support additional undergraduate, graduate, and postdoctoral students. We look forward to the day when Miami University celebrates its integrated student body from first year to Ph.D. students engaged in scholarly pursuit of new knowledge and finding ways of examining and solving today’s biggest problems.

Respectfully Submitted,
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