

Crosscutting Committee Planning Document

Graduate Student Experience
Crosscutting Committee

June 16, 2004
Date

Signature of Crosscutting Committee Chairperson

I. Environmental Scan

External trends that offer threats yet opportunities for creative solutions were noted as follows: cuts in state funding, rising tuition and fees, intense competition from public and private institutions including for-profits where service and convenience to students are high priorities. In order to provide support and service to graduate students, the graduate experience needs to be a well-defined and cohesive experience.

The committee consulted peer institutions by phone or exploration of Web sites to define this experience. From discussions related to peer contacts, the committee concluded that students need to be made aware of why a graduate degree is being pursued; how it differs from an undergraduate experience; what professional roles, goals, and professional dispositions are expected of graduates; what are the stages of graduate education, and how the University can facilitate all of the above through improved campus climate for the “customer to receive the best product for the price”.

In the past, the University has not clearly identified nor communicated these elements with graduate students or staff. Strategic planning funds have not been geared toward these specific roles, goals, dispositions, or stages. Therefore, this crosscutting committee felt these elements needed to be defined, shared with the institution and shared with students. Strategic planning should direct activities and funding goals in support of many of these items.

The statements below are modifications from identified sources. The Graduate Council, Graduate Studies and Research staff, Graduate Coordinators, nor academic departments and deans have not vetted this document. It is this committee’s attempt to define these elements to foster dialog and support future planning efforts.

Graduate Education Mission (Provost’s vision statement, item #2, May 2004): Graduate programming at Eastern Michigan University emphasizes applied programs that meet regional needs, are occupationally relevant and blend a strong base of theoretical knowledge with practical skills. Nevertheless, students in University graduate programs are recruited nationally and internationally. All graduate programs include a research component that ensures that students are aware of the tools of discovery within their area of study. As a result, graduate programs stress the scholarly interests of the research-active faculty. Most programs are designed to meet the needs of part-time as well as full-

time students. Graduate program number and size is consistent with faculty and facility resources.

Graduate students seek advanced degrees because of an affinity for their discipline of choice. Beyond the discipline content, what does EMU want to teach these students about being a professional? What do we want them to be like when they graduate and represent us in the world? Are there some overarching elements that apply to all professionals who have one or more graduate degree? How does this differ from persons who have completed the bachelor's degree? The crosscutting committee believes there is a difference and has defined the following for all EMU graduate students: professional roles, program goals, personal/professional dispositions, and stages in the graduate student experience. It is hoped that this document will generate campus conversation and encourage programs to detail these items for their own students.

Aristotle: "Where your talents and the needs of the world cross, there lies your vocation."

Professional Roles: Graduate programs at EMU will prepare students for the following professional roles:

Leader

Graduates are leaders. A leadership role takes many forms, such as advocate, discoverer of new knowledge, and a person who guides, develops, motivates, creates, explores on the cutting edge, or is a unique thinker. Leaders not only take in information but also move it to the next step of interpretation and exploration.

Reflective Inquirer

Graduates of EMU programs are expected to be reflective practitioners and to understand the importance of inquiry in their roles as professionals. Reflective inquirers must be able to understand and use current research/scholarship/artistry to plan and carry out their own creative endeavors.

Application-oriented Practitioner

Graduates focus their professional decision-making and activities on applied, service-centered outcomes.

Collaborative Community Member

Through the exchange of ideas and knowledge, graduates will be informed, collaborative participants in education, industry, government, and communities at the local, state, national, and international level.

Program Goals: To prepare students for the above-mentioned professional roles, programs should have specific outcomes that reflect specialized bodies of knowledge and skills, and in addition, all graduate programs should share three core student outcomes.

- 1. Students will solve problems and make decisions in professional practice through the use of:**
 - Research and scholarly information
 - Reflective inquiry
 - Knowledge of diversity and cultural context
 - Subject matter content and professional practice knowledge (e.g., the politics, the how-to).

- 2. Students will demonstrate leadership by effectively:**
 - Communicating (oral, written and nonverbal)
 - Working collaboratively
 - Using technology
 - Engaging in exemplary professional practice
 - Advocating for organizations or populations tied to their disciplines
 - Engaging in continuous professional development

- 3. Students will demonstrate professional dispositions.**
 - Beyond the cognition of content material, affective goals of a professional deal with ones' frame of mind, demeanor, management strategy, process for handling problems, issues or challenges. These are the dispositions identified below.

Professional Dispositions:

Graduates of EMU's graduate programs are change agents in education, industry, government and communities. They must demonstrate collaborative partnerships with clients, constituents, colleagues, and the community at large. Professional dispositions for graduates are elaborated as follows:

- 1. Adherence to professional ethics:** demonstrates adherence to standards of ethical conduct, fulfills professional obligations, assumes responsibility for own decisions
- 2. Collaboration:** works effectively with others including inter and multidisciplinary initiatives for problem solving
- 3. Commitment to diversity:** values multiple aspects of diversity by respecting persons of various cultural backgrounds, ethnicities, religions, sexual orientations, age, social classes, abilities, political beliefs, etc.
- 4. Leadership and Initiative:** assumes leadership roles in improving professional practice, goes beyond what is expected, actively seeks new knowledge and solutions to problems
- 5. Professional advocacy:** serves as an advocate in the work environment and the broader community
- 6. Professional demeanor:** deals with conflict appropriately, demonstrates poise and professional behavior, and is responsive to collegial feedback

7. **Self-reflection:** reflects on and evaluates one's own experience and work, is willing and able to recognize difficulties or deficiencies in one's professional practice, seeks information and professional development
8. **Sensitive to population needs:** focuses professional decision-making on population needs beyond ones own personal needs or preferences.

(Professional roles, program goals, and professional dispositions adapted from EMU College of Education's *Graduate Programs in Professional Education: An Introduction*.)

Graduate Student Experience

Graduate students progress through graduate education in three stages. The stages identify inherent challenges associated with graduate study, and we believe that articulating these stages to students will help them realize they are not alone in dealing with these issues. Items identified in the campus climate sections offer suggested elements for strategic programming or funding.

1. Entry Stage (new graduate student)

a. Three Main Goals

- Learn about professional roles, program goals, and professional dispositions for all graduate students and those specific to the program of study, thus helping to develop a clear sense of purpose and direction for the degree program
- Manage academic demands and personal schedule
- Maintain motivation

b. Challenges

- Admission issues
- Initial lack of direction
- Finding an advisor and determining a program of study
- Increased isolation and decreased independence
- Sense of inferiority and self-doubt
- Income reduction
- Financial dependence on program requirements
- Loss of pre-graduate school professional self-esteem
- Intense scrutiny and competition
- Decrease in personal autonomy due to increase in responsibilities and expectations
- Feeling that other students come to the program with more experience and skills
- Can't pull all-nighters like undergraduates
- Fear of not being able to keep up with everything

c. Additional entry stage challenges for international students

- Culture adjustment (4 common adjustment phases)
 - Euphoria
 - Culture shock
 - Recovery

- Autonomy

d. Campus Climate to respond to Entry Stage

- Improve marketing strategies to attract students who fit the programs
- Improve efficiencies with the Admission process
- Improve efficiencies with the financial aid and assistance/G.A. process
- Timely offers of aid along with admission notification
- Competitive stipends and more graduate assistantships and doctoral fellows – faculty incorporation of positions in grant/contract proposals
- Offer dental insurance option for all students
- Provide health and dental insurance coverage for G.A.'s and doctoral fellows
- More or expanded orientation programs at the department, college, University levels
- Enhance advising at the local level
- Enhance reporting tools to provide critical data to effectively admit and advise students
- Clarify and improve Web services for tracking admission, viewing financial aid offers, accepting aid, activating student ID, course enrollment, viewing bill and paying online, viewing academic record.
- Offer housing opportunities for graduate and international students
- Assist international students with campus transitions: academic and social
- Offer student services in the evening and on weekends, including childcare, access to computer labs, etc.
- Support mechanisms to improve student writing skills
- Communicate mental health support options across campus
- Clarify issues of plagiarism early on in the student's program of study
- Support diverse student needs for full or part-time enrollment, master's versus doctoral programs
- Offer flexible course scheduling on and off campus
- Establish connections, contacts, and a network on campus and within the program

2. Engagement Stage

a. Two Main Goals

- Self preservation (primary focus)
- Achievement (secondary focus)
 - Roles are established, responsibilities routinized, confidence restored

b. Challenges

- Comfort can turn into complacency
- Procrastination may emerge as a way of dealing with fear of failure
- Sense that one is in a holding pattern
- Too far into the program to turn back now
- May discover new career goals, more options to think about

- May become more involved in academic discipline through publishing, professional organizations, conferences, etc.
- May get more involved in extra-curricular, professional activities
- Balancing personal needs with family life, work, course and faculty expectations
- Faculty's focus shifts to new advisees and exit-stage students – limited mentoring
- Transition into role of independent researcher/scholar from consumer of knowledge to producer of knowledge
- Financial challenges
- Lack of milestones familiar to those not in academia
- Distrust among colleagues working on similar projects
- Sense of being in a tunnel or box but with no light apparent at the end
- Unhealthy patterns for survival in graduate school may become guiding principles in life (i.e., poor sleeping or eating habits, mistrust of others, short fuse, etc.) affecting the student, his/her family and friends.

c. Campus Climate to respond to Engagement Stage

- Enhance reporting tools to effectively advise students as a retention mechanism
- Offer flexible course scheduling both on and off campus for traditional and non-traditional graduate students
- Internationalize academic programs, co-curricular activities, and student experiences
- Expand research/scholarly involvement/opportunities
- Support faculty and student infrastructure for research and creative work
- Enhance library services and resources to support scholarly and creative work
- Support a community of scholars/artists
- Modify grade grievance process to be more student friendly
- Support to assist students with statistics and data analysis
- Provide career services for advanced planning of professional path
- Enhance faculty workload to foster time for student mentoring

3. Exit Stage

a. Two Main Goals

- Disengagement
- Reintegration

b. Challenges

- Begin to protect personal time, pull back from extra-curricular activities
- Need to manage parental/spousal/family expectations (When are you graduating?)
- Continue the search for life balance in the final phase/crunch time of the program
- Financial challenges continue including covering expenses for scholarly work, publication, presentations
- Pressure to make rapid progress on thesis, dissertation, or capstone/final project
- Sense of self-preservation, managing advisor's expectations for publishing, presentations, exhibitions, etc.
- Search for career alternatives – professional goals may have changed (academic/non-academic, promotion, new employment)

- Reorientation to reality
 - Sense of social skill atrophy as one emerges from isolation
 - Disillusionment with job market (Does the payoff exist?)
 - Imposter complex (Is this all there is? Is this the best I can do? I have no skills for the real world.)
 - Sense of loss in being a student – role to change; some would prefer to remain a professional student
 - Fear of the future beyond graduate school
- c. Campus Climate to respond to Exit Stage
- Strengthen capstone requirements for all graduate students – promote market competitiveness of skills
 - Provide career services with job change or new employment search
 - Provide professional development opportunities – internship, practicum, job shadow
 - Mentor students regarding dissemination of scholarly work – also offer in-house/on-line publication opportunities
 - Facilitate graduation audit process – implement C.A.P. (Banner) program tracking system (system replacing Degree Navigator)
 - Enhance reporting tools to track graduates
 - Improve alumni relations
 - Use student scholarly dissemination as a marketing tool for new students
 - Strengthen corporate and community relations for marketing graduates while recruiting new students.

(Model adapted from MIT *Graduate Student Perspectives*

<http://web.mit.edu/nonnama/www/GraduateStudentDevelopment.pdf> Adapted from Stewart, Donald W. (1995). Developmental Considerations in Counseling Graduate Students. *Guidance & Counseling*, 10, 3, 21-24.)

II. Strategic Issues That Need to Be Addressed

From the above model and sections titled, *Campus Climate to respond to ____ Stage*, the following broad categories have been identified by the committee as important for EMU to address. These items are not in priority order.

1. Marketing. Internal and external marketing of programs and services needs continuous effort and funding. A holistic marketing plan needs development and nurturing. In the past two years, we have had a small infusion of funds to support a few programs on a competitive proposal basis. Academic departments are so over-worked that they have a hard time following through on these projects. There ends up being a flurry of activity with an ok product as the fiscal year-end approaches. We need prospect management, a recruitment strategy, alumni and corporate support for Web development and recruitment materials to move our 90 graduate programs to the competitive forefront.

2. Student support. Supporting students improves enrollment, retention, and tuition revenue.

- a. **Reports.** Academic departments and advising/service offices are hungry for student data. A reporting tool is needed to view and use admission, enrollment, records, financial aid, and employment data to improve advising and service to students. Silo reporting doesn't paint the full picture for complete answers. Wayne State University has such a tool that is a secure, end-user-friendly, online system. The ERP Tactical Committee will be exploring its purchase. Such a tool would support staff in the divisions of Academic Affairs, Enrollment Services, Student Affairs, and Business and Finance. This aligns with the University's strategic initiative #6 to improve university efficiencies.
- b. **Financial support.** EMU is woefully behind our competitors with the number of graduate assistantships available to offer students. In addition, the stipend rates for G.A.'s and doctoral fellows have not been increased for three years. At other universities, G.A.'s and doctoral fellows receive health and dental insurance coverage along with the stipend and tuition package. We do not offer these benefits. In addition to expanding the number of base budget positions, faculty and staff must include such positions in grant and contract proposals for funding support from external sources.
- c. **Student services.** Attention needs to be given to the flexible scheduling of courses, office hours, and times when service centers, computer labs, library, etc. are open for the non-traditional student (80% of the EMU graduate population and an increasing number of the undergraduate population). Childcare in the evening and weekends is needed for children of all ages, including homework or playtime for older school-aged children. Career service support and co-curricular activities for graduate students are limited or not perceived as appropriate for graduate students. Services should be greatly expanded and promoted at the program level.

3. Scholarly/creative work. The University infrastructure needs to improve support for faculty scholarly/creative work so graduate students can be mentored and included in those projects. Faculty workload needs to be addressed as we stress capstone project assessment of graduate work. Supervising a thesis or dissertation project along with one's personal scholarly agenda is time consuming. Student writing and data analysis skills need remediation to aid successful project completion. Students need an opportunity for internal publication of their work (i.e., an online University journal). This would provide another form of student-work dissemination beyond the annual Graduate Research Fair.

III. Best Practices and Creative Innovations

The following are examples from other universities for the strategic issues described above.

1. Marketing. Research indicates that most graduate schools struggle with how to make best use of their Internet Web sites for recruitment and marketing. Schools with superior Web sites report increases in inquiries and applications. Surveys of prospective students indicate that a poor Web site can prevent students from investigating a university further, or can cause the

student to drop the school from consideration. Information on what constitutes a superior Web site is available from the following sources: the National Association of Graduate Admissions Professionals (NAGAP), the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO), the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS), and the Graduate Management Admissions Council (GMAC).

In addition to Web marketing, e-mail correspondence has become an important tool in graduate recruiting. Research indicates that e-mail can be more effective than telephone contact because it is not dependent on the student being available at the same time as the recruiter. Response rates are also higher. Information on e-mail message format, e-mail communication programs, and tracking results are available at the above organizations' Web sites.

Studies have shown that another important marketing tool is student communication directly with faculty. Many universities have developed successful faculty participation models and information on them is also available at the following sources:

<http://www.nagap.org/research/index.asp>

http://www.aacrao.org/recource_center.index.htm

<http://www.cgsnet.org/VirtualCenterResearch/policyanalyses.htm>

<http://www.gmac.com/gmac/default.htm>

2. Student Support.

a. **Reporting.** Wayne State University's Student Tracking Advising Retention System (STARS) may be viewed at <http://stars.wayne.edu/>. Persons may demo the reporting tool by clicking on "demo site". The login is "advisor" and the password is "STARS".

b. **Financial Support.** An FY'02 EMU study of peer institutions found the number of G.A. positions to be double that of our base-budget positions (average number of positions was 625 compared to 360 @ EMU). Average stipend was \$9,523 compared to EMU \$7,117. Many schools offer a health insurance contribution of \$150; EMU makes no contribution.

c. **Student Services.** Areas to enhance the graduate and non-traditional experience include, but are not limited to: post-graduate career resources; expand new graduate student orientation program; promote opportunities for graduate students and their families to be actively engaged with faculty, students and the campus community; increase awareness of University Health Services' programs including mental and physical health care and child care opportunities. Examples of best practices can be found at the follow Web sites:

National Association of Graduate-Professional Students <http://www.nagps2.org/>

University of Maryland, Graduate Student Involvement Office <http://www.union.umd.edu/GSI/>
An office dedicated to:

- Provide programs that help create a tangible graduate student campus community.
- Foster graduate student conversation and collaboration across disciplines.
- Encourage, recognize and celebrate the uniqueness of graduate students.
- Promote existing campus services and encourage service areas to be more inclusive of graduate student needs.
- Grow and maintain a graduate student presence in institutional decisions that affect the quality of life for graduate students.

- Help departments share ideas about programs and support structures for graduate students.
- Conduct regular assessments of graduate student quality of life on campus.
- Advocate for graduate student needs across campus.

University of Michigan, Rackham Graduate School @

<http://www.rackham.umich.edu/StudentInfo/Publications/> offers these publications and others:

- *The Guide: The Guide to Campus and Community for Graduate and Professional Students*
- *Enhancing the Academic Environment for Doctoral Students*
- *How to Get the Mentoring You Want: A Guide for Graduate Students at a Diverse University*
- *How to Mentor Graduate Students: A Guide for Faculty at a Diverse University*

The Midwest Association of Graduate Schools' annual meeting April 2004 had a session devoted to graduate student career services and professional development. Presenters from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Iowa State University, and University of Missouri shared information about services and programming co-sponsored by Offices of Career Services and the Graduate School. For an example see: <http://www.grad.uiuc.edu/careerservices> .

3. Scholarly/creative work.

One idea was to explore an online journal of student work. Here are some examples that include undergraduate and graduate research dissemination:

<http://www.jyi.org/resources/ugradPubs.html>

<http://www.nyu.edu/pubs/jilp/> (NYU Law and Politics)

<http://www.loyno.edu/~history/journal/> (Loyola Historical Journal)

<http://www.qcpages.qc.edu/DMNS/Nucleus/mission.html> (Queens College Student Science Journal)

<http://www.mtsu.edu/~scientia/> (Middle Tennessee State Science Journal)

IV. Opportunities for Systemic, Cross-College and/or Cross-Divisional Collaboration

Opportunities for collaboration include:

1. **Marketing** initiatives from Admissions, Graduate School, Continuing Education, University Marketing, and ideas from the Department of Marketing should join forces to propose a multi-faceted plan combining efforts and ideas given limited resources. One-time funding for academic programs is having a marginal impact.
2. **Student support.**
 - a. **Reporting.** To obtain and implement a reporting tool such as STARS will require campus-wide contribution of silo Banner information to quickly complete a data dictionary, determine best variables from which data should be pulled, and modify STARS to fit EMU needs. Wayne State developed the system through the work of two faculty members, and maintains it through the efforts of one administrator and a G.A. (with STARS not being their only responsibility).
 - b. **Financial support.** Grants and contract proposals prepared by faculty and staff from across campus need to promote funding for graduate student positions. Many proposals could cross colleges or divisions.
 - c. **Student services.** Career Services, the Graduate School, and academic departments need to work together to promote currently offered career preparation services for graduate students. In addition, seminars, workshops or professional development

sessions should be crafted to assist students with current or future career changes. A student survey could identify needs and programming opportunities.

3. **Scholarly/creative work.** Promote inter-departmental, college and divisional grant and contract development to support scholarly/creative work.

EASTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

Strategic Planning Process

**Crosscutting Committee:
The Graduate Experience**

March 2004

Chairperson:

Dr. Deb deLaski-Smith, Associate Dean, Graduate Studies and Research

Committee Members:

Tamara Craig, Leasing Coordinator, University Apartments

Paula Dykstra, Assistant to the Vice President, Enrollment Services

Dr. George Liepa, Department Head, Human, Environmental and Consumer Resources

Geraldine Panelo, Program Coordinator, Commuter Student Services, McKenny Union and Campus Life

LaVonda Robinette, CAS Placement Coordinator, Career Services Center

Jeremiah Shinn, Assistant Dean of Students

Dr. Alane Starko, Department Head and Professor, Teacher Education

Dr. Ronald Williamson, Associate Professor, Leadership and Counseling

Dr. Patricia Zimmer, Professor, Communication and Theatre Arts, and Chairperson of the Graduate Council