

September 17, 2009

To: Student Administrative Processes Work Group

Mary L. Nichols, Dean, College of Continuing Education; Chair

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Susan N. Van Voorhis, University Registrar

From: E. Thomas Sullivan, Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost

Re: Graduate Education Administrative Processes/Student Services Work Group

Earlier this year, the University began to examine more closely the way we oversee and support graduate education. As a result of this review, including the work done this past spring by the Committee on Graduate Education, the President found that “[t]here is a great potential for realigning responsibilities and accountability for graduate programs in a way that provides greater local control of graduate programs to the deans, faculty, and the Duluth campus while maintaining central leadership and oversight where most appropriate.” One area of especially high priority is enhancing the provision of student services while reducing redundancies and inefficiencies in a way that will improve service and reduce overhead.

To achieve these goals, it has become clear that we need an in-depth workflow analysis of all tasks and responsibilities that are necessary for the University to effectively and efficiently serve and support graduate students throughout their education. The University’s current model for graduate education provides an infrastructure in each collegiate unit that offers graduate degree programs in addition to the central Graduate School. We have come to realize that the University needs a more seamless process, including the promotion of interdisciplinarity, that serves and supports graduate and professional students at all levels throughout their education – from recruitment and admission through graduation.

I would like you to provide me with the following deliverables:

1. An administrative workflow analysis of key existing processes that support our graduate students from recruitment through graduation, including the admission process, tracking of progress toward degree, verification of program completion, etc. Your analysis should identify gaps, redundancies, and opportunities for improving and administration and delivery of service for our students.
2. A list of principles and standards for improving services and support for graduate and professional students.
3. A redesigned administrative workflow process map/model that achieves highly streamlined, effective, and user-friendly services to our students and stakeholders (i.e., admissions, student records, and other student services). Part of this process should include the decentralization of the administration of masters' degree and professional and advanced professional degree programs. (There may be an option for a program to apply for an exemption to decentralization, but the presumption should be that administration of all but the Ph.D. degrees will be decentralized.) Your plan should clearly designate an appropriate division of responsibility between central and more localized levels of control.
4. The number of FTEs required to implement your proposed model. At a minimum, I would like your recommendations regarding the number of FTEs required centrally. To the extent possible, I also welcome your input regarding the number of FTEs required locally.

The end result should be an efficient, effective, and user-friendly provision of services to students and other stakeholders that is a model in higher education. The final design must not exceed current costs; instead, based on preliminary work done by the Committee on Graduate Education and other estimates, substantial savings should be obtainable. You may want to consider the possibility of cultivating some "early adopters" from whom we can learn before a new system takes effect across all graduate programs.

Based on the outcome of your work, the Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Education, the Provost, and the collegiate deans will develop a streamlined central and local staffing plan that eliminates redundant operations and creates a higher level of service and support to faculty and students.

As background for your work, please review the following reports:

- Committee on Graduate Education Report, April 24, 2009:
http://www.academic.umn.edu/provost/reports/documents/grad_report042409_000.pdf
- Renewing Graduate and Professional Education at the University of Minnesota, a June 26, 2009 report by President Bruininks:
http://www.academic.umn.edu/provost/reports/documents/grad_report062609.pdf

To be clear, you do not need to study or to make recommendations on processes for distributing fellowships and block grants. Another project team will review this area. For your information, a copy of the other work group's charge may be found at:

<http://www.academic.umn.edu/provost/graduate/academicissuescmte.html>.

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I would like you to give this project your highest priority, and provide recommendations to me by December 1, 2009. This should enable us to review, finalize, and begin to implement changes by the start of fall semester 2010.

Dean Mary Nichols will serve as chair of the work group, and Dr. Katherine Himes from my office will provide staff support to the group. Katherine, who recently received her Ph.D. in Neuroscience from our University and her MBA from Wisconsin, will contact you soon to set up a meeting schedule.

Thank you for serving on this important team. I look forward to the results of your efforts as we look to best position graduate education at the University of Minnesota for excellence.

c: Timothy Mulcahy, Vice President for Research, Interim Vice Provost and Dean of
Graduate Education
Kathryn F. Brown, Vice President and Chief of Staff
Sharon Reich Paulsen, Associate Vice President and Chief of Staff to the Provost
Katherine E. Himes, Assistant to the Provost