

May 13, 2009

MEMORANDUM

TO: President Robert H. Bruininks  
Senior Vice President and Provost E. Thomas Sullivan  
Members, Committee on Graduate Education

FROM: Graduate School Executive Committee

SUBJECT: Graduate School Executive Committee Response to Plans for the  
Reorganization of the Graduate School

The members of the Graduate School Executive Committee thank the Committee on Graduate Education for its work to examine the oversight and support of graduate education at the University of Minnesota. We sincerely appreciate the dedication and effort of the Committee on Graduate Education, which allowed it to study the issues and formulate its recommendations in a very compressed timeframe. You will note below several areas of agreement with the Committee's recommendations, as well as Executive Committee resolutions that point in different directions.

This document reflects the deliberations of the Graduate School Executive Committee members who were present at the committee's spring meetings (18 of 22 members). The Graduate School constitution charges the Executive Committee with responsibility to "...consider proposals for and recommend policy, implementation of policy, and changes in programs or administration of the Graduate School; (3) continually review the effectiveness of the structure and performance of the Graduate School in discharging its missions; ... ." Cognizant of this charge, the Executive Committee devoted most of its spring meetings to a discussion of the draft report of the Committee on Graduate Education. The resolutions below reflect the consensus of the Executive Committee, which met successively on May 5 and 6, 2009. Those members of the Executive Committee who also served on the Committee on Graduate Education abstained from voting.

Resolutions of the Graduate School Executive Committee

- 1) The Graduate School is a free-standing academic unit and should continue as such. Its synergies and efficiencies stem from housing multiple functions within a central Graduate School; these synergies stimulate creativity and innovation.
- 2) As a free-standing academic unit, the Graduate School has a shared governance apparatus that includes a guiding constitution and an established set of policies. The

current governance system is the appropriate venue for debating changes in graduate education and has the necessary capacity for reforms that will enhance efficiency, innovation and excellence. The Graduate School should keep its current constitution, body of policies, and shared governance structure. Structural changes to the Graduate School should occur consistent with provisions of the current constitution.

3) In order to continue to promote excellence in graduate education and research, a free-standing Graduate School needs an independent Dean and Vice Provost at its head, empowered with leadership responsibilities. This is critical for local leadership of graduate education, as well as for engagement in national initiatives. The Dean and Vice Provost must have the vision, experience, strategic planning, and other leadership skills appropriate to this position, must be expert in matters of graduate education, and must have the authority to act in these areas. All of the rights and responsibilities of collegiate deans must attend the Graduate School deanship, including leadership of the governance system and fiscal authority.

4) Acknowledging that there has been significant debate and discussion of recommendations regarding the delegation of responsibilities to the coordinate campuses for master's and Ph.D. degrees without a clear understanding of the implications of restructuring, the Graduate School Executive Committee recommends that discussion of these issues continue over the next year through the Graduate School's established governance system.

5) The Graduate School Executive Committee recommends that the Graduate School strive for increasingly higher standards of service to be provided to graduate students, graduate faculty, and graduate programs. The Graduate School is committed to a rigorous examination of its processes, policies, and procedures with an eye toward innovation, improvement, and efficiency. Planned budget cuts must not compromise this commitment.

6) The Graduate School Executive Committee supports maintaining an Office of Diversity within a central Graduate School in order to integrate a commitment to diversity into every aspect of its operations, from admissions and the support of timely progress toward degree to successful completion.

7) The Graduate School Executive Committee supports retention of the following functions within the Graduate School, based on successful past performance and the failure of either the Provost's plan or the Committee's draft report to identify compelling rationales for relocating them: graduate fellowships, McKnight Professorships, Grant-in-Aid program, and other competitive awards, including existing endowments. Similarly, no compelling rationale has been offered for relocating the University Press.

- 8) The Graduate School Executive Committee strongly supports the principle of all-University, merit-based funding programs administered by a free-standing Graduate School, based on competitive, peer review processes across all disciplines of the University.
- 9) As a central academic unit, the Graduate School will be able to continue to deliver innovation and process improvement in both technology and policy that supports our commitment to exceptional service. Examples of recent successes in this area include converting the Grant-in-Aid competition process and the faculty appointment process to streamlined digital systems, and strategic planning initiatives with interdisciplinary units. Continued investment in innovation will advance excellent service in graduate education, as well as in the wider University.
- 10) The Graduate School's central oversight of academic program approval and review is critical to University-wide quality control and should be maintained.
- 11) Colleges could elect to manage terminal master's and professional doctorate programs, following Graduate School review and eventually, Provost and Regents approval.
- 12) The Graduate School Executive Committee expresses its concern about unnecessary conflict generated between the Graduate School and other colleges under the present budget model.

Responses of the Graduate School Executive Committee to the Recommendations of the Draft Report of the Committee on Graduate Education

Recommendation 1. See Resolutions 5., 8., and 9. above.

*5) The Graduate School Executive Committee recommends that the Graduate School strive for increasingly higher standards of service to be provided to graduate students, graduate faculty, and graduate programs. The Graduate School is committed to a rigorous examination of its processes, policies, and procedures with an eye toward innovation, improvement, and efficiency. Planned budget cuts must not compromise this commitment.*

*8) The Graduate School Executive Committee strongly supports the principle of all-University, merit-based funding programs administered by a free-standing Graduate School, based on competitive, peer review processes across all disciplines of the University.*

*9) As a central academic unit, the Graduate School will be able to continue to deliver innovation and process improvement in both technology and policy that*

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Recommendation 2. There is much evidence that ApplyYourself has been successful. Development of the improvements the Committee on Graduate Education is seeking should be an administrative decision, developed in consultation with graduate programs and based on their needs. Final decisions about investments in admissions systems need to be based on a holistic assessment of the costs and benefits of comparative systems, rather than on concerns about a single issue.

Recommendation 3. See Resolution 9. above. A University-wide electronic system to manage all aspects of student program plans was suspended due to the needs of the EFS project, not at the Graduate School's discretion. The Graduate School has been working toward a system in which primary academic oversight is the responsibility of DGSs and the faculty, as anticipated in the Committee's draft report.

*9) As a central academic unit, the Graduate School will be able to continue to deliver innovation and process improvement in both technology and policy that supports our commitment to exceptional service. Examples of recent successes in this area include converting the Grant-in-Aid competition process and the faculty appointment process to streamlined digital systems, and strategic planning initiatives with interdisciplinary units. Continued investment in innovation will advance excellent service in graduate education, as well as in the wider University.*

Recommendation 4. See Resolution 6. above.

*6) The Graduate School Executive Committee supports maintaining an Office of Diversity within a central Graduate School in order to integrate a commitment to diversity into every aspect of its operations, from admissions and the support of timely progress toward degree to successful completion.*

Recommendation 5. The Faculty Grant-in-Aid, Distinguished McKnight- and McKnight Land-Grant Professorship programs operate efficiently within the Graduate School Fellowship Office and awards are decided through a competitive process of faculty peer-review. These programs should continue to operate in this manner. Close coordination with the Provost's Office has existed since fall 2005. See Resolutions 5., 7., and 8. above.

*5) The Graduate School Executive Committee recommends that the Graduate School strive for increasingly higher standards of service to be provided to graduate students, graduate faculty, and graduate programs. The Graduate School is committed to a rigorous examination of its processes, policies, and procedures with an eye toward innovation, improvement, and efficiency. Planned budget cuts must not compromise this commitment.*

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*8) The Graduate School Executive Committee strongly supports the principle of all-University, merit-based funding programs administered by a free-standing Graduate School, based on competitive, peer review processes across all disciplines of the University.*

Recommendation 6. The Graduate School Executive Committee agrees with the recommendations to protect interdisciplinary graduate programs and to develop reliable mechanisms that ensure their support. For additional consideration, see Resolutions 8. and 12. above.

*8) The Graduate School Executive Committee strongly supports the principle of all-University, merit-based funding programs administered by a free-standing Graduate School, based on competitive, peer review processes across all disciplines of the University.*

*12) The Graduate School Executive Committee expresses its concern about unnecessary conflict generated between the Graduate School and other colleges under the present budget model.*

Recommendation 7. The Graduate School Executive Committee agrees with the recommendation to maintain a central Office of Postdoctoral Affairs. This Office should be located in the Graduate School to maximize synergies and efficiencies with related offices.

Recommendation 8. See Resolution 5. above.

*5) The Graduate School Executive Committee recommends that the Graduate School strive for increasingly higher standards of service to be provided to graduate students, graduate faculty, and graduate programs. The Graduate*

*School is committed to a rigorous examination of its processes, policies, and procedures with an eye toward innovation, improvement, and efficiency. Planned budget cuts must not compromise this commitment.*

Recommendation 9. The Graduate School Executive Committee agrees with the recommendation to improve the quality and consistency of graduate student advising. Working closely with the Council of Graduate Students, DGSs, and the Center for Teaching and Learning, the Graduate School will develop strategies for implementation in 2009-10 that address these issues. Improved mentoring is the highest priority of COGS, and their surveys have identified significant graduate student concerns about the quality of mentoring.

Recommendation 10. The move at the University of Minnesota toward data-driven decisions and academic management by metrics requires new staffing within a central Graduate School at the level of Data Analyst to carry out these functions. A wider set of metrics needs to be developed within a central Graduate School, and among graduate schools nationally, to effectively track performance.

Recommendation 11. The Graduate School Executive Committee agrees with the recommendation to maintain faculty governance over matters of graduate education via the Policy and Review Councils and to streamline review processes.

Recommendation 12. Working with COGS, the Graduate School will assess the feasibility of moving to one graduation ceremony per year from the two currently offered. The size of available facilities and graduate student needs are critical issues to be examined.

Recommendation 13. See Resolution 11. above.

*11) Colleges could elect to manage terminal master's and professional doctorate programs, following Graduate School review and eventually, Provost and Regents approval.*

Recommendation 14. See Resolution 4. above.

*4) Acknowledging that there has been significant debate and discussion of recommendations regarding the delegation of responsibilities to the coordinate campuses for master's and Ph.D degrees without a clear understanding of the implications of restructuring, the Graduate School Executive Committee recommends that discussion of these issues continue over the next year through the Graduate School's established governance system.*

Recommendation 15. The Graduate School Executive Committee endorses the Committee's recommendation about current cost pool arrangements. Also see Resolution 12. for additional comments.

*12) The Graduate School Executive Committee expresses its concern about unnecessary conflict generated between the Graduate School and other colleges under the present budget model.*