

THE GRADUATE SCHOOL STRATEGIC PLAN: 2020-2025

Mission:

The mission of the Graduate School is to offer the highest quality graduate education that prepares interdisciplinary leaders who advance knowledge and understanding, drive innovation, and contribute to the resolution of complex national and global problems to meet societal needs.

Vision:

Penn State will be one of the nation's preeminent universities in graduate education, teaching, learning, and research, and a "first choice" university for graduate students.

University Values:

INTEGRITY - We act with integrity in accordance with the highest academic, professional, and ethical standards.

RESPECT - We respect and honor the dignity of each person, embrace civil discourse, and foster a diverse, inclusive, and safe community.

RESPONSIBILITY - We act responsibly and hold ourselves accountable for our decisions, actions, and their consequences.

DISCOVERY - Through advanced research and scholarship, we seek and create new knowledge and understanding, and foster creativity and innovation, for society's benefit.

EXCELLENCE - We strive for excellence in all of our endeavors as individuals, an institution, and a leader in higher education and research.

COMMUNITY - We work together for the betterment of our University, the communities we serve, and the world.

Values:

- PENN STATE COMMUNITY: The Penn State graduate education community is comprised of scholars who are creative, generate new knowledge through rigorous inquiry and critical analysis of evidence, and are continually open to new information in advancing understanding and practice within our disciplines and our local and global communities.
- RESPECT: We honor the dignity of each person and treat each individual accordingly, engage in civil discourse, and foster an inclusive community. As scholars, we seek the broadest diversity of thinking, exchange ideas informed by evidence, and avoid assumptions, preconception, and subjectivity.
- RESPONSIBILITY: We meet our obligations and hold ourselves accountable for our decisions, our actions, and their consequences.
- INTEGRITY: As scholars, we are constantly open to changing or rejecting our hypotheses based upon new evidence, in the interest of advancing knowledge; we effectively incorporate that new knowledge into our professional practice. Although our decisions are informed by evidence, they are guided by the highest ethical standards, assuring that our behavior reflects our values.
- DISCOVERY: We seek and create new knowledge and understanding, and foster creativity and innovation, to apply that new knowledge and understanding for the benefit of our communities, society and environment.
- EXCELLENCE: We strive to give and do our best in all our endeavors.

Goal: Education Quality

Enhancing graduate education quality by identifying and modifying any problem areas, clarifying ambiguity, promoting consistency, and encouraging fairness to ensure that students understand upon matriculation what is expected for degree completion.

Objective: Support Graduate Council

Support and extend efforts of Graduate Council in enhancing the quality of graduate education by ensuring that academic policies are clear, fair, and transparent to graduate students and support student success (Graduate Council makes policy; the Graduate School implements and enforces those policies, with the Dean of the Graduate School given the authority to provide exceptions).

Action Items:

- Collaborate with Graduate Council leadership to identify graduate academic policies in need of review and potential revision.
- Review and update Graduate School procedures to more efficiently implement academic policies in support of graduate education and student success.

Objective: Data-Driven Decision Opportunities

Extend efforts to compile and provide outward facing, value-driven graduate education-related data beneficial for decision making by internal University units as well as external audiences such as other higher education institutions and corporate/industrial entities so that decisions can be driven by fully-informed and up-to-date data.

Action Items:

- Execute Graduate Program Reviews in accordance with existing ongoing efforts in concert with Graduate Council's Sub-Committee on Program Review and Evaluation.
- Establish a robust process for longitudinal tracking of doctoral alumni career placement data over a minimum ten-year period after graduation in order to provide data for programs, current students, prospective students, and alumni.
- Develop reporting to reveal trends and make data-driven funding decisions in order to fully utilize and maximize funding opportunities for graduate students and provide funding data to colleges and programs.

Objective: Advising and Mentoring

Collaborate with University colleagues in efforts to enhance quality advising and mentoring for all graduate students, including establishing a strong baseline effort for new students in order to ensure appropriate resources early in their educational journey.

Action Items:

- Implement and integrate Starfish as a supportive advising tool to utilize while also providing information for the Graduate School to monitor milestone requirements, and therefore to ensure students have appropriate resources early in their educational careers
- Provide training on effective mentorship practices for all graduate faculty that incorporates inclusive mentoring
- Provide training on being a mentee for all graduate students in order to provide critical tools and prompts for those beginning their advanced-degree education to better ensure their ability to benefit from an effective mentoring relationship

- Design and implement an Ombudsperson program for all graduate students

Objective: Process Enhancements

Evaluate and enhance internal administrative Graduate School operations and process efforts, in line with Penn State 2025 as well as reflecting upon enhancements and efficiencies gained or transformed during COVID19 remote work efforts

Action Items:

- Develop a business process redesign for doctoral comprehensive and final examinations
- Improve automation, workflow, and ease of the Thesis and Dissertation processes through the Electronic Theses and Dissertations System (eTD) and LionPATH
- Analyze and automate policy exception tracking, communication and alerts
- Replace existing paper forms with online forms and associated workflow systems automation; undertaken in support of enhancing internal efficiencies and service to academic units and students, as well as in support of the Sustainability Institute's effort

Goal: Diverse World

Fostering and Embracing Diversity in Graduate Education

Objective: Graduate Education Funding

Evaluate funding efficacy for underserved populations with the goal of enhancing recruitment and retention of student populations that have historically been disadvantaged, to include Bunton-Waller, Dean's Distinguished Graduate Scholarship, University Graduate Fellowship-Distinguished Graduate Fellowship, scholarship awards, and college-based programs if applicable

Action Item:

- Partner with the Office of University Development and Corporate Engagement to realize funding of STEM PhD Enhancement Award program endowment and institutionalize the Sloan Scholars program.

Objective: Programming Support

Coordinate and enhance programming to better support diverse students, domestic and international, throughout their graduate careers.

Action Item:

- Develop a recruitment tool to capture student information at recruitment events
- Develop and implement Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion training
- Establish a Graduate Educational Equity Programs Advisory Group

Objective: Alumni Community Support

Create an alumni community and support structure that reflects the diverse nature of Penn State's educational and professional environments.

Action Item:

- Seek out nominations to the Graduate School Alumni Society Board of Directors of graduate student representatives with diverse perspectives and backgrounds
- Encourage colleges and campuses to consider diversity when nominating alumni for At-Large and College Representative seats on the Graduate School Alumni Society Board of Directors
- Foster alumni support of programs administered by the Graduate School Office of Graduate Educational Equity Programs (OGEEP)

Objective: Enhanced Funding Initiatives

Explore continued funding initiatives to support the implementation of enhanced recruitment initiatives aimed at increasing the diversity of our graduate student population

Action Items:

- Support the expansion and coordination of the Fall STEM Open House
- Increase student recruitment efforts and visibility at national conferences
- Increase and expand recruitment efforts of the Ronald E. McNair Scholars Program
- Provide training and resources for graduate program admissions committees on holistic review

Goal: Professional and Career Development

Advancing Graduate Student Professional and Career Development

Objective: Enhanced Opportunities

Coordinate and enhance opportunities to assist students in developing professional skills that are inherent to success in graduate school, independent of degree program.

Action Item:

- Collaborate with academic partners to support students in building professional skills and tools to enhance success
- Ensure Graduate Writing Center is providing needed services and offerings
- Provide students with programming and resources needed to develop competitive grants and other external funding proposals

Objective: Central Resource

Serve as a central resource for career development opportunities for graduate students to help them prepare for their professional lives after graduation.

Action Items:

- Collaborate with Corporate Engagement and Career Services
- Establish Career Development web content
- Leverage expertise of Graduate School Alumni Society

Objective: Enhancing Teaching Effectiveness

Develop, in collaboration with the Schreyer Institute for Teaching Excellence and the colleges, a robust suite of offerings to prepare graduate student teaching assistants and graduate students with an interest in pedagogy to employ evidence-based teaching practices for diverse learners.

Action Item:

- Develop a series of workshops on key components of pedagogy

Goal: Interdisciplinary Opportunities

Promoting Interdisciplinary Opportunities in Graduate Education

Objective: Task Force Recommendations

Build on University IGDP Task Force recommendations, when received, to identify opportunities to better enable Intercollege Graduate Degree Programs (IGDPs) and academic colleges to work together.

Action Item:

- Implement recommendations in relevant systems to support the findings of the Task Force in strengthening the impact and importance of interdisciplinary education (Graduate Admissions Decision System/GRADS, Graduate Awards Tracking System; LionPATH)

Objective: Promote Interdisciplinary Opportunities

Promote interdisciplinary opportunities by expanding existing IGDPs and developing new IGDPs when appropriate.

Action Item:

- Create well-defined pathways to expand existing IGDPs and create new IGDPs when appropriate