

## **The Joint Administration / Academic Senate Special Task Force on Graduate Education at UC Davis**

### **Overview:**

The Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor, in partnership with the Chair and Executive Committee of the Academic Senate, hereby establishes a Special Task Force whose primary goal is to recommend ways to advance the excellence, contributions, and vitality of graduate education at UC Davis.

### **Rationale:**

It is clear that graduate education is fundamental to our mission and identity as a top research university. Top graduate students in top graduate programs are essential to the University's ability to provide a first-rate education to undergraduates, to conduct cutting-edge research, to foster an intellectual climate appropriate to a leading research university, and to recruit and retain top faculty, students, and staff. It is crucial, therefore, that the University take stock of the current state of graduate education across the campus and make recommendations for maximizing its benefits to all members of the UC Davis community.

### **Charge:**

The Task Force is charged with conducting investigation, consultation, analysis, and deliberation in order to recommend ways to advance the excellence, contributions, and vitality of graduate education at UC Davis. Rather than being a standard review of either the existing Graduate Studies unit or our many graduate and professional degree programs, the charge of the Task Force is to engage in a visioning process that aims to articulate what we want graduate education at UC Davis to be or become as we approach 2020. The charge is to answer the question "what" much more than "how."

The Task Force is further directed that its recommendations must be consonant with the historic mission and beloved character of UC Davis; with our University's core values, including diversity and interdisciplinarity; and with the preservation of the unique educational symbiosis between graduate and undergraduate students. Lastly, the Task Force is directed to take a strategic approach to its work, in keeping with the greater future for UC Davis outlined in *A Vision of Excellence*.

More specifically, the Task Force will seek to answer the following questions:

1. How can we improve the ways we support and advance graduate education in harmony with the recently adopted *A Vision of Excellence* and in line with the recommendations of our own campus's Committee on the Future?
2. How can we ensure that our top graduate programs remain field-leaders and that we have the means to make fresh investments so that other programs may be created and/or reach new heights at a time when multiple sharp reductions in direct State support are negatively impacting graduate programs and graduate students alike?
3. Conversely, do we have the means to determine when a graduate degree has outlived its usefulness, or does not deserve continued institutional investment, and do we have the discipline to implement such decisions once made?
4. Is the balance between graduate programs offered in departments and those in graduate groups the right one?
5. How do we best respond to the growing interest in many areas of the University, by no means limited to the professional schools, to expand self-supporting degree programs and create new degrees?
6. How do we best respond to the increasing demand for higher degrees at home and abroad as well as to the rapid rise of competitive graduate programs in many parts of the world?
7. How can we identify and access significant new resources to support graduate education?
8. Should the ratio of graduates to undergraduates at UC Davis remain constant, or might there be reasons to adjust this in the coming years?

### **Activities and methodologies:**

#### *Outside committee generates report*

- The Provost and Chair of the Senate, with advice from many quarters (including the Dean of Graduate Studies), will arrange for a committee of outside specialists to visit UC Davis with a twofold purpose: first, to share with the Task Force (and, at a public panel sponsored by the Provost and Dean, larger audiences) their views on the current state and future of graduate education in general, as well as best practices from their own home institutions or other institutions known to them as specialists in graduate education; and second, to receive information about the ways graduate

education is currently supported at UC Davis, including institutional structures, by interviewing the Dean of Graduate Studies and members of Graduate Council and representative samplings of the following: members of Graduate Studies and graduate program staff, other deans and administrators, graduate program chairs, graduate group directors, and faculty and graduate students at large.

This external visiting committee, invited to campus jointly by the Provost and the Chair of the Senate, will consist of four individuals and ideally include: a graduate dean from another UC campus, a graduate dean from a non-UC university (either a peer or aspirational peer), a senior staff or comparable representative of the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS), and a UC faculty member from another campus who has had deep involvement with graduate education. The committee may visit UC Davis more than once.

- The outside committee will formulate one or more reports—reflecting on both the current state and organization of graduate education at UC Davis, and offering suggestions for its future shape and organization—and submit it/them to the Provost, Senate Chair, and Task Force.

#### *Task Force builds on report of outside committee*

- The Task Force will study the external committee's findings and suggestions and, building on these and its own observations and any consultations it chooses to make, will present its conclusions to the Provost and Academic Senate Chair. The Task Force will also prepare a written summary of its findings and recommendations to be circulated, along with the external committee's final report, for comments from the larger community.

#### *Dean of Graduate Studies formulates and advances proposals*

- The Provost will consult with the Dean of Graduate Studies, the Graduate Council, other relevant Academic Senate committees, and others as appropriate before advising the Dean on any possible initiatives or proposals to change any element of our current arrangements for graduate education. The Dean, consulting closely with the Graduate Council (and other Academic Senate committees, as appropriate) as well as administrative and academic leaders, will then formulate and advance specific proposals.

#### **Timeline:**

May 2011: Establishment of Task Force

November 2011: Outside committee delivers its final report to Task Force

December 2011: Task Force makes its own final report, along with the final report of the outside committee, available to the larger community  
January 2012: Provost consults with Dean, Graduate Council, and Academic Senate; Dean formulates and advances proposals

### **Membership:**

The following individuals were selected to serve on the Task Force by the Provost and the Chair of the Senate after receiving recommendations from the Senate's Committee on Committees:

Mario Biagioli, *Distinguished Professor, Science and Technology Studies*  
Gina Bloom, *Professor, Department of English*  
Ethan Evans, *Doctoral Candidate, Department of Sociology*  
Rachael Goodhue, *Professor, Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics*  
M. Levent Kavvas, *Professor, Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering*  
Kent Lloyd, *Associate Dean, School of Veterinary Medicine*  
Jonathan London, *Assistant Professor, Department of Human and Community Development*  
Cassandra Paul, *Doctoral Candidate, Department of Physics*  
Wolfgang Polonik, *Professor, Department of Statistics*  
Richard Shintaku, *Assistant Dean, Graduate Studies*  
Alan Taylor, *Professor, Department of History*  
Heather Young, *Dean, School of Nursing (chair)*

### **Contact:**

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*May 2011*