

The Graduate School | UNC Charlotte

2021-2026 Strategic Plan

Mission Statement:

The Graduate School functions to advance excellence in graduate and professional studies including research, teaching and service. The Graduate School is the primary advocate for graduate education and for graduate students at the University.

It is the role of graduate education to explore and advance the limits of knowledge and to define the state of the art in every field. Its purpose is to serve society's needs in specific and technical and professional ways, but also to serve the need for intellectual expansion. The central purpose of the plan that follows is to make certain that this commitment to excellence in graduate education and scholarship will continue to characterize the role of the Graduate School at UNC Charlotte.

We intentionally limited the scope of this plan to a few key initiatives within each goal. This does not mean that there are not other equally important initiatives and actions taking place within the Graduate School, but we view these initiatives as important markers for our progress in advancing our overall mission and goals.

Goal #1: Advocate and advance strategic enrollment management through exemplary academic program support.

Aligns with University Strategic Plan Goal B3; Expand post-baccalaureate education, doctoral studies and postdoctoral training and achieve the highest recognition for exemplary programs.

Lead efforts to utilize technology and best practices to support collaborative communications and marketing, responsive recruitment and admissions practices, student funding, responsive student retention strategies, creative program delivery, and training to provide graduate faculty with the essential tools and data needed to effectively support their students and programs.

Key Initiatives:

Objective 1: Grow our graduate programs in size and quality to meet University goals to reach the next tier in research, scholarship or other creative activity.

Actions

- Increase doctoral enrollment in existing programs that have the capacity to grow and/or advocate for additional resources to support increases in enrollment
- Increase enrollment in master's degrees that have the capacity to grow
- Increase the number of UNC Charlotte undergraduates who enroll in a graduate certificate or degree program as early entry and persist through to graduation
- Advocate for collaborative, interdisciplinary research that addresses problems and needs in

the state

Targets

- 7,613 graduate students enrolled by 2031
- Average, annual increases of 164 students distributed across 175+ programs
- Increase doctoral enrollment by 2% annually
- Increase early entry enrollment by 3% each year

Results

- FA21 enrollment increase +361 students
- FA21 early entry enrollment decreased -38 students (primarily in master's enrollments)
- FA21 doctoral enrollment increase +25 (2%)
- New Ph.D. in Nursing approved

Objective 2: Deliver responsive, exemplary support and training for Graduate Program Directors (GPDs) and affiliates

Actions

- Recognize outstanding GPDs annually for their excellent work
- Celebrate graduate exemplary programs
- Create technology tools that provide accessible information, data, analytics, and other resources to programs and students

Targets

- Increase awards like the annual Harshini de Silva Award and Reynolds Leadership Award Competition over time
- Identify a program exhibiting best practices and share their key wins in GPDNet
- Enhance, develop and maintain systems to support GPDs, including Slate, GPDNet, eGA, eGPS, DegreeWorks, Banner, eGFA and Academic Petition

Results

- Award and communicate new recipients and share news of additional award funding and best practices
- Graduate Admissions migrated from AdmissionPros to Slate in November 2021, and both DegreeWorks and eGA were enhanced to provide improved functionality (Year One)

Objective 3: Develop collaborative marketing and communication plans to effectively recruit, admit, enroll, retain and graduate students

Actions

- Build, maintain and enhance graduate-level marketing and communication plans for prospective and enrolled students
- Identify creative programming and course delivery opportunities to continually respond to the unique needs of enrolled students and support regional and state-wide business, industry and education needs

Targets

- Collaborate with University partners to brand/market programs with external campaigns
- Advocate for the expenditure of marketing dollars and analyze campaign efforts for engagement and brand awareness
- Build and maintain unified communications with prospective students using Slate and Salesforce with engagement above 30%
- Maintain and increase engagement for enrolled students above 50%

Results

- Supported success of University Communications brand awareness media flight with data related to look-a-like and retargeting audiences (Year One)
- Built four communication campaigns for prospective, admitted and enrolled students (includes emails, SMS and print) (Year One)
- Partnered with OneIT to utilize Salesforce for strategic communications outreach with enrolled students (Year One)

Objective 4: Advocate for sustainable funding sources and policies to adequately compensate doctoral and master's students and help create competitive compensation packages to enroll and retain exemplary students.

Actions

- Advocate for and cultivate more scholarship funds to support graduate students
- Increase transparency in the administration of Graduate School core functions that support funding
- Increase the number of students supported on institutional, extramural, philanthropic, and federal funds by award type and amount
- Expand training to help programs secure more training grants to support graduate student education

Targets

- Improve time-to-degree and graduation rates by 3% in five years

- Given adequate funding, increase funds available to support additional students on GASP year-after-year
- In five years, all programs will meet the minimum graduate student compensation package
- Increase the number of students awarded extramural grants, traineeships, fellowships and other awards and honors

Results

- For the first time since GASP began in 2005, the Chancellor gave the Graduate School authority to pay the E&T and Health Services fees to select doctoral students
- 10% increase in the amount of tuition to support GASP for nonresident tuition increase and resident tuition for select master's students

Goal #2: Develop and expand quality initiatives and services to support graduate student and postdoctoral scholar success and well-being.

Aligns with University Goal A5: Provide graduate students and postdoctoral trainees with high-quality mentoring, teaching, research training and professional development

Develop programs and approaches that contribute to student progress, enhance professional development and career readiness, build strong mentor/mentee relationships, and support student mental health and well-being.

Key Initiatives:

Objective 1: Offer timely and relevant professional development that prepares students and post-doctoral fellows for success in their fields

Actions

- Collect and analyze robust data on student success and competencies to inform the creation of professional development and training
- Support and expand programs like *Accelerate to Industry* that offer graduate students more opportunities to explore and prepare for career options outside academia
- Engage and cultivate alumni to train, support and hire graduate students
- Increase access to career advising and mentoring to prepare UNC Charlotte graduate students and postdoctoral trainees to become leaders in their fields and professional communities

Targets

- Benchmark student success and professional competencies against peer schools (Year One)
- Add two additional employers to *Accelerate to Industry* each year
- Engage four alumni annually to foster networking and professional development with

- current graduate students
- Improve the faculty mentoring experience for graduate students
- Establish a Postdoctoral Scholars Office by year two

Results

- Train 60 faculty and students in best mentoring practices
- Analyze climate survey to demonstrate improved satisfaction with mentoring
- Academic Analytics and Career Services First Destination survey show improved job attainment or growth for graduate students

Objective 2: Identify and deploy tools that improve student access to information and resources

Actions

- Utilize new and existing tools to increase operational transparency and remove barriers in academic programs and policies
- Support graduate students by addressing equity gaps, streamlining policies and procedures, and improving transparency
- Expand availability of Ombuds services to support graduate students

Targets

- Increase applications for underrepresented students
- Complete equity audit of graduate admissions policies (Year Two)
- Hire an additional 20-hour/week dedicated Ombuds to support graduate students

Results

- Completed equity audit of graduate academic policies (Year One) and shared results with key stakeholders
- Improved on-time degree completion in 50% of our programs in five years
- Decrease in relevant academic petitions based on policy improvements

Goal #3: Ensure high-quality graduate education.

Aligns with University Strategic Plan Goal C4; Serve as an intellectual center for our students, employee, alumni and region

Continually assess stakeholder perceptions of graduate education at Charlotte and identify improvement strategies, if needed, to ensure programs meet the highest standards.

Key Initiatives:

Objective 1: Evaluate graduate student achievement metrics to identify best practices and areas for improvement

Actions

- Identify and build measurements that reliably track quality perceptions among students, post-graduates, alumni, faculty and employers with University partners
- Develop a strategic action plan to address the issues identified in the biannual Graduate Student Needs Assessment
- Expand and support training and interventions that improve responsible research
- Conduct systematic program reviews to improve graduate education outcomes

Targets

- Increase positive perceptions of graduate programs by 10%
- Increase student satisfaction and sense of belonging by 5% in five years
- Offer two or more educational training seminars around responsible research
- Monitor the usage of authorship agreements between faculty and students
- Review 10 programs annually to provide systematic program reviews

Results

- Increase of student satisfaction by 10% in five years
- Enrollment increases in eligible programs year-over-year
- Decrease in complaints related to responsible research
- Increase in adoption of authorship agreements

Objective 2: Educate programs on best practices and compliance requirements related to graduate education

Actions

- Develop an action/advocacy plan to deliver greater support and training for the GPD role
- Ensure that graduate faculty have appropriate experience and credentials to successfully teach and train graduate students
- Review curricula for clarity, compliance and transparency

Targets

- Provide regular training on core processes that support graduate education
- Provide just-in-time training on emerging issues in graduate education
- Annually evaluate graduate student compensation packages by program

Results

- Offered a Holistic Admissions Workshop to GPDs and affiliates that was attended by 42 faculty and staff (Year One)
 - Increase compliance of student compensation policies year-over-year
 - Fewer exceptions to graduate faculty employment policies
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Goal #4: Cultivate an environment of inclusion and support.

Aligns with University Goal D1; Foster a thriving culture based on integrity and respect that values all people and the planet

Foster an inclusive environment of support for diverse faculty and students to help ensure graduate programs actively build and support a robust climate for research and learning.

Key Initiatives:

Objective 1: Promote best practices for creating inclusive cultures in academic programs

Actions

- Collaborate with university partners and advocate for increased support for graduate students mental health and wellness
- Identify barriers that may impede the recruitment and retention of underrepresented graduate students and promote best practices to build an inclusive community of scholars
- Create a position in the Graduate School to focus on diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives
- Expand mentor and mentee training to address strategies for diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI)
- Advance the research mission by growing, supporting, examining and retaining a diverse class of doctoral students

Targets

- Convene doctoral program faculty to share challenges and opportunities to recruit a diverse class of scholars annually
- Establish a Bouchet Honor Society Chapter
- Attend recruitment opportunities to engage diverse students interested in graduate education and enroll at least two McNair Scholars annually
- Increase participation in diversity scholarship showcase annually
- Increase in enrollment, retention and graduation of students of color annually

Results

- Attended SACNAS, ABRCMS, and McNair Scholars recruitment fairs; new enrollment TBD in fall 2022
- Doctoral student data to be collected/reports in July 2022 (after summer graduation data is synthesized and added to the Fact Book)
- McNair enrollment to be collected in September 2022
- Improve retention rates for underrepresented students by 10% in five years
- Record 29% URM enrollment in fall 2021

Objective 2: Advise, advocate and train graduate student leaders to support inclusivity on campus

Actions

- Hold an annual leadership retreat for the incoming GPSG board
- Recruit a diverse group of students for the GLF program
- Collaborate with campus partners to train leaders of graduate student organizations
- TAs are trained to lead and respond to a diverse student population in the classroom

Targets

- GPSG leaders will be able to run effective meetings and delegate appropriately to achieve their goals.
- Graduate student organizations grow their membership and expand the diversity of their members
- GLFs reflect the diversity of the student body
- TAs are identified and trained each semester
- Enrollment in GRAD courses increases over time

Results

- GPSG is seen as the voice of the graduate student body by campus leadership
- Graduate students sense of belonging increases on the Needs Assessment survey
- More students engage with the CGLL programming as a result of the GLFs (increase of 10% by year five)
- TA evaluations improve over time
- More graduate students develop professional competencies as a result of GRAD courses