THE UNIVERSITY OF WYOMING CGS STRATEGIC CONSULTATION REPORT

Final Report
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Review and Site Visit
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Consultants

Cheryl Addy
Vice Provost & Dean of the Graduate School
University of South Carolina

Ranjit Koodali
Dean of the Graduate School
University of South Dakota

Scott Lanyon
Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Education
University of Minnesota

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Introduction

The University of Wyoming (UW) has a rich and long history of providing world-class education in several disciplines. Founded in 1886, the University of Wyoming has been offering classes since 1887, three years before Wyoming became a state.   As Wyoming's only university, the University of Wyoming is uniquely positioned both as a flagship and as a land-grant university to offer high quality on-campus and online graduate programs. Per the fall 2017 census, UW had an enrollment of 12,397 students.   With a total graduate enrollment of 2,606, graduate and professional students comprise about 21% of the student population.   UW holds a Carnegie classification of "Doctoral Universities: Higher Research Activity." The university's website states that 90 graduate programs are offered http://www.uwyo.edu/uwgrad/.   Per data reported to the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), about 25% (24.3%) of the first major degrees awarded in 2016-2017 were graduate and professional degrees. Graduate programs are offered primarily through eight colleges/schools. Most graduate programs are located at the main campus in Laramie. In addition, some courses are offered at UW-Casper and some exclusively through online delivery methods.

The dissolution of the Graduate School as a central administrative unit in 2009 created severe gaps in operations and administration of graduate programs. The current administration has recognized that extreme decentralization coupled with ineffective communications and duplication of services and functions have led to missed opportunities in strengthening graduate education at UW. The number of graduate/professional students enrolled in fall 2017 was 2,606 students. This level of enrollment reflects a decline from 2,941 enrolled in fall 2007 and captures one dimension of the university's graduate-level enrollment management challenges. In addition, the lack of a central unit having overall administrative oversight of graduate education lends itself to inconsistencies in application and enforcement of university wide policies and procedures. A 2015 UW Graduate Council report proposed to re-establish a Graduate School or an Office of Graduate Education. The report suggested that some administrative tasks be centralized in order to strengthen graduate and professional education at UW. With a goal of streamlining operations and promoting growth and excellence in graduate education, Dr. Jim Ahern, Associate Vice Provost for Graduate Education at the University of Wyoming contacted the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) in the spring of 2018 and requested a strategic consultation for administering graduate education at UW

that is aligned with best practices. Cheryl Addy, Vice-Provost and Dean of the Graduate School, University of South Carolina, Ranjit Koodali, Dean of the Graduate School, University of South Dakota, and Scott Lanyon, Vice Provost for Graduate Education and Dean of the Graduate School, University of Minnesota were enlisted by CGS Senior Vice-President Robert Augustine to visit UW on behalf of CGS. The consultation team was asked to focus on three areas of review. These included: Area 1: Administration of Graduate Education, Area 2: Graduate Enrollment Management, and Area 3: Graduate Assessment

The consultation team visited the University of Wyoming, Laramie on November 4-7, 2018, and conducted a detailed on-site analysis. During the site visit, the consultants met with various stakeholders representing administrative leadership, Office of Graduate Education staff, deans, department heads/chairs, senate members, directors and coordinators of graduate programs, staff, students, and other concerned parties on campus providing services to graduate students. The consultants express their gratitude to the university stakeholders for their time, openness, professionalism, and passion for promoting excellence in graduate education and ultimately their commitment to the success of Wyoming's only university of higher learning.

This report is based on institutional documents provided prior to and during the visit, and information gathered at various meetings. The suggested recommendations are aligned with CGS research and provide a blueprint for the emergence of a new era in graduate education at UW.

Current Status of the Office of Graduate Education (OGE)

The Office of Graduate Education at the University of Wyoming currently has three full-time staff members who include: 1) Dr. Jim Ahern, Associate Vice Provost for Graduate Education; 2) Ms. Michelle Peck, Senior Program Coordinator, and 3) Mr. Eric Penicka, Information Specialist.

The senior program coordinator has helped with graduate education for the past several years and thus has established very good relations with other offices. The coordinator provides some level of assistance to all graduate programs and serves as a business manager for graduate teaching assistant funding. In addition, the senior program coordinator is responsible for processing the paperwork for interdisciplinary graduate programs (biomedical sciences, ecology, hydrologic sciences, molecular and cellular life sciences, and neuroscience). The position of information

specialist is a relatively new one and provides data support for OGE. At the time of the site visit, the consultants were informed that OGE has approval for a new position to oversee and coordinate aspects related to marketing communications. Collectively these three staff work with other units such as enrollment management, registrar's office, financial aid, office of global engagement, and research and economic development. Graduate and professional students constitute about 21% of the student population and with just three full-time staff; OGE is understaffed to accommodate the needs and demands of graduate education at the university.

The recommendations that follow each area of consultation are made recognizing that resources are scarce in terms of personnel hiring. Consequently, the consultants emphasize the importance of maintaining effective collaborations and leveraging expertise available in other units to ensure consistency in operations and overall success.

Area 1 Review of Administration of Graduate Education
Charge to the Consultants

*The Associate Vice Provost noted that prior to 2010 the university's graduate mission was organized and administered by a Graduate School. Leadership for graduate study was then decentralized. Currently, graduate education is administered primarily by one administrator, the Associate Vice Provost for Graduate Education, who is assisted by two full-time staff who reside in other units. The university is not satisfied that the organizational structure adopted in 2010 is meeting its expectations for mission-focused excellence. It now seeks a consultation to review the limitations with the current administrative model in order to establish a new model of graduate education administration that will offer renewed potential to strengthen graduate education and strategically position the university to advance its graduate mission and goals as appropriate for its unique role as a land grant flagship university. Therefore, **the first priority for the consultation is to assess where and how all of the key functions of graduate education are administered in the current model and then provide an alternative organizational structure that will promote best practices for achieving, strengthening, and enhancing the overall graduate mission at the University of Wyoming. The desired outcome is a plan to clearly identify key graduate education responsibilities in order to align these with the long-term staffing and budgeting needed to reflect a successful model for graduate education administration.** The plan may provide guidance on ways to achieve the enrollment goals, yield rates, competitive student funding packages, diversity, best approaches for external funding and scholarships, program assessment and review, and other elements essential to graduate education excellence. The proposed administrative structure will foster faculty engagement, professional development and graduate student support services, and graduate alumni engagement that reflect the quality of the graduate experience needed to further enhance the reputation of the university.*

Area 1 Overview of Administration of Graduate Education at the University of Wyoming

In 2009 the University of Wyoming Graduate School was dissolved in response to a budget crisis. Unfortunately, the dissolution occurred before there was a plan to determine which units would take on the responsibilities of the former Graduate School. A plan was hastily developed soon after, but some details were missed, and implementation was incomplete, or at best inconsistent, especially as functions moved out of Academic Affairs. Central units such as admissions and the registrar stepped up and did what they thought was necessary as best they could. Individual graduate programs and departments came up with many unique solutions in response to their new responsibilities. However, not all of these solutions were compliant with policy and not all were aligned with best practices in graduate education. The result is that there is now significant variance in quality and degree of compliance, great uncertainty regarding the roles and responsibilities of graduate study, no central voice (until recently) for graduate education, and a lack of uniform processes and procedures.

The majority of university representatives who participated in the site visit discussions with the consultants now recognize the need for a central authority in graduate education. However, the consultants also heard that there was dissatisfaction with the performance of the former Graduate School. As a result, there is some concern about returning to a "centralized" model for graduate education. There is also a general distrust of administration and skepticism that sufficient new resources will be provided to allow a central office to be effective. The consultants note; however, that this concern is not a comment about current Office of Graduate Education (OGE) personnel but rather this is a general lack of trust in administration. Based on the site visit, the consultants concluded that the most successful way to improve graduate education is through a combination of actions that include restructuring graduate education, enlisting the collaborative efforts of administrators, and engaging the cooperation and participation of faculty and staff.

With more than 500 institutions awarding post-baccalaureate degrees across North America, there has been ample opportunity for experimentation regarding the most effective structures for post-baccalaureate education. A clear conclusion is that it is essential that there be one central unit, whether called a Graduate School or Office of Graduate Education, which is responsible for

advocating for graduate education and assurance of quality in graduate education. The Council of Graduate Schools 2004 monograph *Organization and Administration of Graduate Education* (pages 4-9) has concluded that the following responsibilities are best assigned to a central office for graduate education:

- *Articulate a vision of excellence for the graduate community*
- *Provide quality control for all aspects of graduate education*
- *Maintain equitable standards across all academic disciplines*
- *Define what graduate education is and what it is not*
- *Bring an institution-wide perspective to all graduate endeavors*
- *Provide an interdisciplinary perspective*
- *Enhance the intellectual community of scholars among both graduate students and faculty*
- *Serve as an advocate for graduate education*
- *Emphasize the importance of adequately training future college and university teachers*
- *Develop ways for graduate education to contribute to and enhance undergraduate education*
- *Support graduate student services*
- *Serve as an advocate for issues and constituencies critical to the success of graduate programs*

A common theme in conversations with faculty, staff and administrators was whether graduate education should be centralized or decentralized. The reality is that neither extreme has proven effective. As mentioned above, there are many responsibilities that are critical to graduate education that can only be done by a central office. At the same time, every discipline has unique strengths, challenges and opportunities. As such, and in the spirit of faculty governance, it is essential that decisions about the curriculum, student support, and admission be largely decentralized. For graduate education to thrive there must be an effective partnership between a central office for graduate education, colleges, departments as well as a variety of other central service-providing offices. The consultants are recommending that the University of Wyoming develop such a partnership, and the consultants will provide suggestions on how to identify the balance of centralization and decentralization that is most appropriate for the University of Wyoming.

Definitions Related to the Administration of Graduate Education

As is the case with most institutions, the term "graduate" can have multiple very different meanings. It is used at UW to refer both to all of post-baccalaureate education and to refer to the restricted set of programs that award research masters degrees and the PhD degree. The consultants believe that this dual meaning results in poor communication and hinders efforts to reach consensus about the best structure for post-baccalaureate education and the ways to implement that structure. Faculty and administrators desire different services and central oversight for research-based degree programs more than they do for the remainder of their programs. The consultants recognize that the Office of Graduate Education is intended to oversee all of post-baccalaureate education. But in the interests of clarity, in this report the consultants will use "academic graduate" to refer to research-based masters programs and PhD programs, the term "professional" to refer to all other advanced degree programs, and "graduate" to refer to the totality of "academic graduate" and "professional" programs.

While the consultants do not feel strongly about the name of the centralized office in support of graduate education; they do feel strongly that there should be one. At most institutions this central office in support of graduate education is referred to as the "Graduate School." However, the UW office is currently called the Office of Graduate Education and, for simplicity, in the report the consultants will refer to a strengthened central office as OGE.

Area 1 Recommendations for Administration of Graduate Education

As the consultants contemplated the future of graduate education at the UW, they struggled with the inherent conflict of the need for significant new resources to support graduate education and the significant financial constraints facing the university today. Their solution is to organize the recommendations into two phases. Phase I includes actions that can be taken largely within existing recurring resources and in some cases a modest non-recurring investment. Phase II includes actions that will require allocation of new recurring resources and allow for promoting excellence in graduate education and growth.

Area 1 Phase I Recommendations

1. **Clarify Current Roles and Responsibilities.** Initiate this goal by developing a comprehensive list of roles and responsibilities for graduate education. Working with the provost, directors of graduate studies (DGSs), associate deans, and deans, determine which roles and responsibilities for graduate education should be assigned to which offices or organizational levels. The consultants encourage the university to consider assigning to OGE the suite of responsibilities listed above as specified by the 2004 monograph *Organization and Administration of Graduate Education* (pages 4-9). There are several specific responsibilities that should be in OGE based on the description of current practices at the UW.

    a. **Faculty Appointment Process**. The consultants recommend centralization of the process for approving individuals to be members of the graduate faculty defined as those approved to serve on graduate committees and to teach graduate level courses. The appointment process should include a formal procedure for approving the appointment of individuals who are neither tenured nor tenure-track to serve either on graduate advisory committees or as instructors of graduate courses. This appointment process should also include eligibility guidelines for chairing thesis and dissertation committees. The appointment process should require final approval by OGE and should be consistent with the Higher Learning Commission (HLC), guidelines for determining qualified faculty.

    b. **Admission Criteria**

        i. **Standards**. The Office of Graduate Education should be responsible for establishing university-level standards for graduate admission and should monitor program compliance with the established standards.

        ii. **Exemptions**. The Office of Graduate Education should develop a formal procedure for requesting an exemption to the university and program-level graduate admissions criteria. This procedure should include final approval by OGE for any admissions exception.

c. **Admissions Offer Authority**. The OGE will collaborate with admissions to ensure that the official offer of admission comes from a central unit, ideally from OGE. The central offer of admission is followed by a letter from the degree program or department that includes details to prepare the candidate for initiating study.

d. **Academic Program Review**. With recognition that the provost has initiated a new cycle of academic program reviews and that these reviews include evaluation of graduate education, the consultants recommend that OGE be involved in planning those reviews and participate in the final exit interview of the external review team.

2. **Dean of Graduate Education.** In institutions where much of the responsibility for graduate education is decentralized, it is very important that the person in charge of OGE have excellent collegial relationships with the deans. At many institutions, a strong tie between OGE and collegiate deans is facilitated by appointing the head of OGE as a dean. The consultants recommend this change be implemented at UW.

3. **Charge the Graduate Council**. The Graduate Council has been working diligently to support graduate education at UW but in the absence of any clear charge to define actual responsibilities. Following Phase I Recommendation 1, a new charge for this group should be written and bylaws framed. The consultants encourage the university to consider the following recommendation included in *Organization and Administration of Graduate Education* (page 12)

> *"Each institution should have a group of faculty members, active in graduate programs, who are elected or appointed to a graduate council that has legislative authority over academic matters pertaining to graduate degree programs (e.g., curriculum proposals, university-wide standards for academic conduct of graduate programs, admission of students, creation of new programs, overall policies and procedures for the effective administration of graduate degrees, etc.). The graduate council also can act as an adviser to the dean on administrative issues that pertain to graduate education, such as priorities for resource allocation. Faculty who serve on the council should reflect the range and diversity of disciplines offering graduate degrees, but it is important that they understand that their responsibility is to represent the interests of graduate education as a whole, not of specific departments or programs."*

4. **Communicate Roles & Responsibilities.** Communicate the new roles and responsibilities matrix to graduate education constituents. Done properly, this will set appropriate expectations. The result will be an increase in the relevance of requests/complaints received by OGE and other offices involved in supporting post-baccalaureate education.

5. **Strengthen OGE Partnership with Other Central Service Offices**. Consider how people in central service offices (e.g., admissions, communications, marketing, registrar etc.) are aligned with graduate education. Currently, it appears that rather than having one person assigned to support graduate education, multiple individuals support both undergraduate and graduate education. The advantage of the former approach is that it results in someone becoming expert on graduate education issues. The advantage of the latter approach is that a cross-trained staff is better able to provide good service when people are on vacation or sick leave. Regardless of whether UW follows the "expert" or "cross-trained" approach, it would be beneficial to the community if individuals serving graduate education in these other offices had a clearly defined relationship with the OGE. Many institutions formally represent this partnership using a "dotted-line" in the institutional reporting charts to formally communicate the connection between these individuals and the OGE.

6. **Strengthen Graduate Learning Outcomes**. The consultants recommend that the *Assessment Coordinators Group* be re-established and that an explicit link between the Assessment Coordinators and OGE be established. In general, OGE should also be involved in developing procedures for internal assessment of student learning. Post-baccalaureate learning outcomes will be discussed in more detail in Area 3 Assessment of Graduate Student Learning Outcomes below.

7. **Develop a Community of Graduate Program Staff.** Each graduate program has a staff person who provides support as a portion of the job responsibilities assigned to this position. In most cases, the graduate-program expertise constitutes less than 50% of the staff member's effort, which makes it difficult for the staff member to acquire the range of graduate education expertise needed. To support these individuals, the consultants recommend the formation of a graduate staff network, which would meet monthly to discuss challenges and share best practices. Once formed, this network provides an efficient way for OGE to communicate with staff.

8. **Protect Interdisciplinary Graduate Programs**. When universities implement a Responsibility Center Management (RCM) budget model, resources and resource flexibility are primarily in the academic colleges – not central units. Assuming the UW implements this model, graduate programs reporting to a central service unit, such as OGE, will be at a disadvantage. Therefore, the consultants recommend that for each interdisciplinary program

currently reporting to OGE, the university consider 1) identifying the academic college that is most appropriate to serve as the administrative home and 2) developing a memorandum of understanding (MOU) outlining the obligations of each unit that is active in that program (Appendix B provides an example of an MOU template). The Office of Graduate Education would not be the administrative home for such programs but would monitor that colleges abide by the MOU. An additional advantage of this approach is that students are part of a larger community of scholars.

9.   **Graduate Student Surveys**. Develop and implement a plan for regularly surveying graduate students in a manner that provides program-level feedback but protects the students from retaliation. Some survey topics to consider include advising, career goals, campus climate, health & wellbeing, professional development, and sexual harassment. Providing colleges and programs with survey data, identifying areas of concern, and providing potential solutions based on best practices is a vital role of the central office.

Area 1 Phase II Recommendations

10.   **Professional Development.** As a smaller percentage of graduate students are interested in pursuing a career as a faculty member, the need for professional development training beyond the disciplinary graduate curriculum increases. The desire for training in "transferable skills" is growing rapidly and will soon become an important criterion when students select which graduate institution to attend. While it is likely that units across campus will deliver professional development workshops and seminars, it would be very helpful to have someone in OGE who is responsible for oversight and coordination of these activities. In many cases, centralized programs may be more efficient and effective at delivering these opportunities.

11.   **Diversity.** Increasing the diversity of students receiving graduate degrees from the UW will take a long-term investment and yet it must become a priority for the institution. While this is also an enrollment management issue (see Area 2 Graduate Enrollment Management) the consultants believe that it has implications for administrative structure. No effort to increase student diversity is likely to be successful without a concurrent effort to increase faculty diversity.

     a.   **Staffing.** While the Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Office will take the lead on these issues for the campus generally, targeted progress in graduate education will only happen if there is also a staff person in OGE who is focused on this goal.

     b.   **Recruiting Fellowships**. To augment the existing program that awards graduate assistantships to applicants from under-represented populations, the consultants recommend the establishment of a competitive fellowship program, managed by OGE. While the existing GA program is excellent, UW is competing with institutions that are offering fellowships and may need to do the same to be successful.

12.   **Recognizing and Rewarding Excellence.** The Office of Graduate Education should expand the recent Barkhurst Writing Fellowship Program for identifying late career graduate students and rewarding them with writing fellowships as a very effective means of both rewarding outstanding students for their contributions but also helping those students finish their degrees. Similarly, a competitive process, managed by OGE, for recognizing and rewarding professional students would be very popular.

13.   **Postdoctoral Scholars Office.** At many institutions, the Graduate School also oversees postdoctoral scholars. Given the small number of postdoctoral scholars on campus, this does not have to be tied to significant resources. The consultants recommend that a portion of an existing full time equivalent (FTE) member of the graduate community, ideally a faculty member, be assigned the responsibility to advocate for postdoctoral scholars.

14.   **Lowering Barriers to Interdisciplinary Scholarship**. While most faculty want the institution to support interdisciplinary scholarship, the reality is that scholarship that crosses organizational structural boundaries tends to be more difficult. This is even more likely to be true with the implementation of an RCM budget model. The consultants encourage the OGE to play an active role in planning RCM implementation. An important role will include the development and oversight needed to curtail mission-limiting efforts such as discouraging interactions across multiple colleges. Even in a supportive interdisciplinary environment, scholarship that crosses administrative boundaries is inherently more difficult. Once RCM is implemented, the consultants encourage the OGE to be proactive in identifying the barriers to graduate inter-unit scholarship and to provide resources to help students overcome those barriers.

Area 2 Graduate Enrollment Management
     Charge to the Consultants

*While some graduate programs are meeting their enrollment expectations; others are experiencing enrollment declines. The proposed model of graduate education administration must integrate its admissions responsibilities with graduate program admissions committees by outlining practices for successful recruitment, admissions, and matriculation and specify any strategic investments needed for success. Graduate faculty should receive professional development on best practices in graduate recruitment tools and admissions practices including the use of holistic review of applicant files. In addition, faculty should be guided by mentoring practices that reduce conflicts and strengthen degree completion and job placements. **The consultants should complete an analysis of current admissions practices in order to re-envision the processes, outline efficiencies and highlight collaborations that will streamline, enhance, and yield a best-practice model of graduate admissions and include any new resources that may be needed. This review should include implementation of CGS best-practice models and guidelines for management of admission data from recruitment/initial inquiry to graduation.   In conjunction with the admissions assessment, the consultants will conduct an analysis of the current systems, processes and resources in place to track graduate progression and completion within the university.** The review should determine if its current Customer Relations Management (CRM) tools can successfully track student progress from inquiry/application to graduation and beyond. The outcome will be a long-term plan for seamless recruitment, admission, and degree certification that includes guidelines for staffing and development programs for faculty.*

Area 2 Overview of Graduate Enrollment Management

The mandated budget cuts of 2009 resulted in elimination of personnel in the Graduate School and eventual delegation of responsibilities to various units at UW. The restructuring and reallocation of resources in terms of budget and personnel seems to have stalled growth at the graduate level. Further, the decision to limit development of new graduate programs has led to missed opportunities for the creation of new graduate programs in areas of faculty expertise available at UW. The dissolution of the Graduate School in 2009, led to decentralization in operations with several units charged with carrying out tasks that were previously handled centrally. The lack of a central governing body overseeing graduate enrollment management directly (or indirectly through a defined relationship that is sometime represented in organizational charts as a "dotted line" with the Office of Graduate Education staff) led to variations in admission practices and lack of enforcement of uniform university-wide graduate education polices. These limitations ultimately impacted operational aspects of graduate education related to enrollment management.

The recommendations in the next section are aligned with UW's strategic plan, "Breaking Through 2017-2022," specifically focusing on the following objectives:

1. *"Promote academic programs that address workforce needs of the state and region".*
2. *"...expand recruitment of international students and broaden the exposure of faculty and students to international events and culture".*
3. *"Grow interaction with historically black, Hispanic-serving and tribal colleges, as well as international institutions of higher learning".*
4. *"Grow the number of students at a distance enrolled in hybrid and fully online degree programs"*
5. *"Expand and grow quality of undergraduate and graduate scholarly experiences"*
6. *"Engage alumni in student recruitment and mentoring"*

Area 2 Recommendations for Graduate Enrollment Management

Graduate Admission Standards

Observations

The minimum standards for admission to graduate programs are indicated in the university catalog. The minimum cumulative grade point average (GPA) is 3.0 on a 4.0 U.S. scale. The graduate catalog indicates minimum scores in the verbal reasoning and quantitative reasoning sections of the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) for programs that require submission of standardized test scores. In addition, there seems to be a minimum score for programs that accept Graduate Management Admissions Test (GMAT) scores, but options exist for programs to set higher standards and some do.

Recommendations

The minimum cumulative GPA requirement of 3.0 is in the range of 2.7 to 3.0 recommended by CGS. While the minimum standards for test scores (where applicable) set by OGE, also seem to be fine, programs should be advised not to use an arbitrary cut-off test score and eliminate students. A test score should not be the *sole* criterion for an admission decision. Programs need to be informed of ensuring equities when comparing scores from multiple attempts. Programs may be encouraged to use GRE's and the Graduate Management Admission Council's Validity Services for GRE and GMAT that

are provided free of charge or should conduct their own studies to identify students. Selection committee members should be apprised of *Guidelines for the Use of GRE Scores* and *Guide to the Use of GMAT Scores*. Graduate selection committees need to be trained in holistic admission practices to ensure that multiple criteria are used before an informed admission decision is reached. Multiple criteria must be considered, especially when evaluating applicants from economically and socially disadvantaged backgrounds, non-traditional, and international students to increase diversity in the graduate programs.

English Proficiency Admission Standards (Tests) for International Students

Observations

The minimum Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) score is 540 for the Paper Based Test (PBT) and 76 for the internet Based Test (iBT). A total TOEFL score of 76 equates to a percentile rank of 26. The International English Language Testing System (IELTS) is 6.5.

Recommendations

There seems to be a disconnect between the minimum TOEFL and IELTS score. Per the comparison tool available from Educational Testing Service (ETS), at, https://www.ets.org/toefl/institutions/scores/compare/, a TOEFL total score in the range of 60 to 78 is equivalent to an IELTS band score of 6.0. A TOEFL total score range of 79 to 93 is considered equivalent to an IELTS band score of 6.5. Thus, the specified minimums are not equivalent and need to be adjusted accordingly. It is also recommended that programs consider minimum scores in each of the four sections, 1) listening, 2) reading, 3) speaking, and 4) writing to ensure that international students have adequate competencies and skills in all these areas to be successful, particularly as a graduate teaching assistant. Students lacking skills in any of these areas may not make adequate progress in their graduate program in comparison to their peers. A generally accepted threshold is a score of 20 in each of the four sections, with a total minimum score of 80, that is equivalent to an IELTS band score of 6.5. It is also a standard admissions practice to accept a Pearson Test of English-Academic (PTE-A) minimum score of 53 instead of TOEFL or IELTS.

The consulting team suggests this be included as well to satisfy the English proficiency test scores.

Admission Processes

Observations

Programs use Sales*f*orce as the Customer Relations Management (CRM) software to review all applications. Several programs conduct a "pre-review" and indicate decisions to students, whether to submit an official application, pay the application fee, and complete the application. There seems to be variance in the selection process itself; in some instances, selection committees are involved in making decisions, whereas in other cases, individuals are making and communicating decisions to the applicant directly, bypassing a central admissions unit. The consultants understand that some students have their application fees waived selectively. There seems to be exceptions provided to students by the program/individual rather than by a central admitting authority. In addition, the consultants were told that the decision letter to applicants comes from the programs or individuals (as indicated before), rather than from a central admitting authority. These actions lead to inaccuracies in documenting and reporting admission numbers, in calculating selectivity, yield rates, and related admission metrics. UW is signatory to the CGS April 15 resolution regarding acceptance of financial support to graduate students. It is not clear if the Office of Graduate Education (OGE) can ensure that UW complies with this resolution when the office is not involved in the admissions process. This extremely decentralized version of graduate admissions is likely to lead to poor compliance with university policy; especially in light of the minimal training that is provided to graduate program coordinators/directors and the admissions team.

Recommendations

Review by the consultants revealed that the current admissions processes and practices have created admission inequities. Because OGE is not involved in most decisions, quality assurances provided by a central unit on campus is sorely missing. The CGS best practices for graduate admissions must be followed to ensure that admission standards are uniformly

and equitably applied to all prospective students. While it is understandable that individual faculty may identify prospective students to their groups and be eager to accept students to remain competitive, it is essential that a central office oversee admissions. The consultants recommend that primary admissions recommendations be made by the program faculty but that the admission processing functions, including collecting applications, evaluating credentials, entering admissions data, monitoring progress and informing students, should be delegated completely to a central admitting body. Staff housed in the enrollment management/admissions may provide services to OGE. The consultants recommend the following:

1. Only an administrator, usually designated as the dean of graduate education, must communicate graduate admission decisions officially. These decisions should be conveyed in writing or by e-mail as a letter. Soon thereafter, a letter from the program/faculty can be sent outlining the assistantships available and the program expectations.

2. Faculty/Chairs/Program Directors should not offer admission, verbally or in writing at any time.

3. A second level of thorough review should be conducted by central admissions staff, and waivers to program requirements including minimum test scores or other admission criteria, may be granted on a limited case-by-case basis and only by the OGE.

4. UW must ensure that students admitted to the fall semester with a financial award have time until April 15 to make an informed decision as signatory to the CGS April 15 resolution.

5. All faculty and staff members who are involved in any manner related to graduate admissions should receive annual training conducted by OGE. OGE staff may request guidance from CGS for resources.

6. The Dean of Graduate Education (see Area 1 Administrative Structure of the Graduate School) should be the sole authority to make a final decision regarding full admission granted to students who do not meet the minimum standards.

Credential Evaluation

Observations

The UW graduate catalog provides information regarding requirements for submission of official documents such as transcripts, degree certificates, and official English translation, where applicable. These are standard practices, however in recent years, a number of cases of submission of fraudulent documents for admissions to graduate programs at U.S. universities have been reported. These challenges call for UW to be proactive in applying quality assurance practices, especially for applications from mainland China.

Recommendations

In response to growing concerns of a significant number of cases involving submission of false records, the Chinese Ministry of Education through their designated agencies, China Academic Degrees and Graduate Education Development Center (CDGDC) and China Higher Education Student Information and Career Center (CHESICC), provide services to certify the authenticity of the degrees obtained and verify the transcripts issued by universities in mainland China. The consultation team suggests that UW strongly consider requiring international students to use service providers credentialed by the National Association of Credential Evaluation Services, preferably World Education Services (WES) or Educational Credential Evaluators (ECE)) to verify and authenticate the official documents required for graduate admission from students who are applying based on their degrees obtained from universities in China. While these may add extra costs to prospective students and may pose an additional barrier in recruitment efforts, given the increase in the number of reports of submission of counterfeit documents, it is imperative that quality assurance practices are in place to avoid any potential problems. This is aligned with practices that are in place at many universities in the region.

Admission Policies

Observations

The current catalog contains detailed information about *Graduate Student Regulations and Policies*. Graduation requirements and procedures also seem to be clearly outlined.

Recommendations

Graduate admission policies should be clearly communicated to the university stakeholders. The consultants recommend that a sub-committee of the Graduate Council be formed to examine, on a regular basis, current graduate regulations and policies, and make appropriate changes to allow for flexibility and growth given that the graduate education landscape is changing dynamically. This recommendation is aligned with one of the strategic goals, "*Implement new policies, as necessary to serve university's mission.*"

Recruitment and Retention Practices and Strategies

Observations

The current number of graduate and professional students is lower than the fall 2007 census. The UW President has a goal of 13,500 students by 2022. The graduate and professional student population target is 2,835, which is 383 more students than the current enrollment in fall 2018. A majority of students are part-time. Utilizing IPEDS 2016-2017 completion data, the number of doctorates awarded to minorities is 6.0%, compared to the national average of 26.7%. The number of doctorates awarded to women is 48.7%, quite comparable to the national numbers of 53.3%. The number of doctorates awarded to international students is 14.7%, slightly greater than the national average of 12.2%. The number of international students (both undergraduate and graduate) in the fall 2017 was 785. The target in this category for 2022 is 1050.

Recommendations

There seems to an absence of concerted strategies and tactical plans to highlight, market, and promote niche areas, where UW has strengths.

1. The Office of Enrollment Management should be assigned to coordinate efforts with individual programs to strengthen each program's digital presence in order to improve website discoverability of UW by implementing Search Engine Optimization (SEO) techniques. Using SEO will ensure that graduate programs can display their unique research strengths and that potential graduate students can

discover the important features that differentiate these programs from other regional competitors.

2. Program websites should be up to date with detailed information about admissions, funding, research interests, as well as faculty, alumni, and student achievements. Three key priorities for students are: 1) quality, 2) cost/affordability (with information regarding assistantship/scholarship) and, 3) career pathways.

3. Individual program webpages should be enhanced with visual data that contain information related to degree costs, career pathways, time to degree completion, and student testimonials.

4. A "Request for More Information" (RMI) tool on graduate programs should be placed and automated to respond to enquiries from students.

5. Efforts should be made to include more graduate programs under the Western Regional Graduate Program (WRGP) (https://www.wiche.edu/wrgp) that provides access to resident tuition for graduate students outside their home state who are residents of Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education (WICHE) member states. Currently, there are only three UW graduate programs, natural resources and conservation, nursing practice, and social work, available through this link. Now that the Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education (WICHE) does not require graduate programs to be "distinct," UW should capitalize on this initiative and expand the number of graduate programs available through WRGP.

6. Efforts should be made to attract international students by involving international faculty and students as "ambassadors" and providing marketing materials when they visit their home countries.

7. UW should explore opportunities to expand its online presence at the graduate level.

8. Social media strategies should also be explored to attract students.

9. In order to recruit underrepresented minorities, UW should consider participation in recruitment fairs at annual meetings of the American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES) and the Society for Advancement of Chicanos and Native Americans in Science (SACNAS).

10. Faculty participating in career fairs to promote their graduate programs should be encouraged to build inquiry pools. Names of participants should be shared with central marketing to initiate an e-mail campaign.

11. Faculty attending conferences in their disciplines should be provided with recruitment materials, including slides and brochures, to further promote their graduate programs as well as UW graduate education generally. Names of interested students should be shared with central marketing to initiate an e-mail campaign.

12. A graduate diversity fee waiver program may be implemented to attract economically disadvantaged students and underrepresented minorities.

13. Open house and other recruitment events should be held and coordinated with OGE. High-achieving UW juniors, seniors, and summer research program participants may be encouraged to apply for graduate studies.

14. OGE should assist departments with conducting surveys of students who declined offers in order to inform the faculty about program features or recruitment initiatives that motivated the decision to decline an admission offer.

15. Use GRE, GMAT, and TOEFL search services to obtain prospective names of students.

16. Implement competitive Graduate Dean's Fellowship/Scholarships in targeted disciplines.

17. Professional development, advising and mentoring initiatives will help both with recruitment and retention.

Student Records

Observations

During the review the consultants learned that that there are institutional-level limitations with obtaining accurate information related to student records. Examples include the number of students matriculated and advanced to candidacy, student demographics, standardized test scores, time to degree completion, attrition rates, placement data, and other important metrics. While the professional programs seem to have reliable data

regarding their programs, there seems to be some level of uncertainty with obtaining this information for several graduate programs.

Recommendations

The Office of Graduate Education staff must have access to a central database with information regarding the number of inquiries, applications (including demographics, name of institutions, undergraduate GPA, standardized test scores), enrollments, and other important metrics. In partnership with Institutional Research, such data must be continually maintained and shared with programs to evaluate admissions policies and identify pipelines. This information may also help in predicting enrollments. In addition, OGE must have access to data related to the number of graduate students who advanced to candidacy (for Ph.D. programs), time to degree completion, attrition rates, and other metrics as appropriate that will support program planning and decision making.

Area 3 Assessment of Graduate Student Learning Outcomes
Charge to the Consultants
*A final area of review for the consultants will include an assessment of the processes used for the assessment of student learning outcomes and how those practices relate to graduate program review practices and improvement. The focus of this area of consultation will be **to determine how graduate programs currently use student learning outcomes to identify program strengths, weaknesses and important institutional distinctions.** Creating a strong student learning outcomes assessment program that can highlight institutional strengths and alumni achievements is essential for attracting high-quality students and faculty, for sustaining program enrollments, for ensuring degree completion and placements, and for documenting evidence of the overall health and sustainability of programs. The analysis should also **examine the processes used for outcomes assessment and program review and the linkage to the institution's success with achieving the graduate mission.** The review should consider **how programs are using guidance from external advisory boards** to further enhance program quality and promoting networking activities for matriculating students to foster placements. Also included would be **consideration of best-practices for creating graduate programs of distinction** that differentiate some of the UW's graduate programs from others in the region and state. Finally, the analysis should identify **policy improvements and institutional investments** that are crucial to the success of the university's learning outcomes assessment practices.*

Area 3 Overview of Assessment of Graduate Student Learning Outcomes

The current institutional academic assessment is supported by the director of the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL). Historically the focus of these efforts has been on undergraduate programs, at least in part because the person responsible at the time had other administrative

responsibilities specific to undergraduate programs. In the current structure, there is new emphasis on developing appropriate assessment plans for graduate and professional programs. All programs have learning outcomes, although the consultants did not review them in the context of linkage to curriculum, compliance with best practices for graduate learning outcomes or accessibility to students.

Based on various meetings with different stakeholders, the consultants observed the following:

- All programs have student learning outcomes, although the quality (e.g., Bloom's taxonomy) is unknown.

- Professional programs with external program accreditations are much more advanced in understanding of academic assessment and implementation of appropriate processes. In particular, the graduate program in pharmacy has a very sophisticated academic assessment program.

- Other faculty, including graduate program directors, had much less understanding of the value of the assessment of learning outcomes, typically describing indirect assessment measures and program outcomes such as course completion, exam completion, licensure, and job placement.

- Those with less understanding see assessment as needless work. Faculty could not articulate how to use results for program improvement.

- Current assessment plans are categorized into three tiers based on the quality of the assessment plans. Becoming a Tier 1 Assessment Plan has the obvious advantages of qualifying for a two-year assessment cycle rather than the annual assessment cycle and earning eligibility for GA funding. Other than these advantages, the rationale of the three-tier system is unclear.

- A few programs have external advisory boards with various structures and levels of engagement. Other programs have informal relationships with community stakeholders, including alumni, employers, and internship sponsors. In general, these external relationships are more common to professional programs.

- The university has just implemented a new system for external department review. Based on discussions with stakeholders, the external reviews and academic assessments are not linked.

Area 3 Recommendations for Assessment of Graduate Student Learning Outcomes

1. The Center for Teaching and Learning should provide more education and training about academic assessment, both specific training about how to do it well and general training about the overall purpose and value of assessment. In particular, faculty need to understand that quality assessment is an ongoing cycle of continuous program improvement, not a process with a distinct beginning and end.

2. One strategy to facilitate this basic understanding might be to work backwards initially: have faculty identify a recent program change and then discuss why that change was made. In many cases, what is cited will likely include informal assessment such as student or employer feedback, not direct assessment of student learning, but the linkage of an assessment observation to a program change is the important realization. While having an explicit learning assessment is extremely important, it should not be the only input into program review. Faculty should also include alumni satisfaction, job placement, employer satisfaction and needs, and feedback from other constituents. In particular, the learning assessment should be linked to the external department review process.

3. Students need to understand the program's learning outcomes and how they link to specific program requirements. Students should understand that their work is evaluated both for its individual achievement or outcome and also aggregated for the program's overall evaluation or outcome.

4. Faculty need guidance and structure for the learning assessment process. At minimum, a schedule and format/template for submission of assessment reports should be provided. Ideally infrastructure for the assessment data collection and report submission should be provided. However, the process must allow that the details of each assessment plan will vary by level and program discipline as there is no single correct way of completing academic program assessment. In addition, the process should be reasonably flexible for programs with external program accreditations. As noted in Area 1 Administrative Structure of the Graduate School, the consultants recommend that the *Assessment Coordinators Group* be re-established. Organizationally, the infrastructure for program assessment could be managed as it currently is within the CTL. To ensure success, the CTL must have adequate resources to support the full complement of graduate programs at the university and it must recognize differences among graduate programs. The CTL

will need to balance institutional requirements with external requirements and will need to support the unique challenges associated with assessment of research programs. While the consultants would not advocate for a totally separate structure for assessment of graduate programs, one variation for ensuring successful assessment of graduate programs is to assign a staff person, qualified to support the assessment activities to the OGE, with the responsibility of serving as a liaison to the CTL. Another variation is for the assessment programs to be linked with reviews of institutional effectiveness reflected in the institution's regional accreditation.

5. In addition to helping faculty understand that assessment is a continuous cycle, the institution should provide feedback to faculty on the evaluation process itself. Examples where feedback would further strengthen the assessment process include the evaluation of learning outcomes and assessment methods. Feedback on the metrics used to inform learning outcomes, the methods of learning assessment, and the use of assessment data to improve program quality are also needed to guide the assessment process.

6. The consultants recommend consideration of a two-year assessment model for all graduate programs. In addition to improving efficiency by completing fewer reports, the longer assessment period would allow for collection of assessment data over four rather than two semesters. A data set based on a two-year (four semester) period could provide enough aggerate data to inform program improvements and will be especially valuable for smaller programs. Organizing graduate program assessment into four submission cycles distributes the workload for those who are evaluating the reports more effectively. For example, Group 1 would collect data beginning with the fall 2017 term and submit a two-year report in the fall of 2019. Group 2 would start collecting data in the spring of 2018 and submit a report in the spring of 2020. The final cycles would include Group 3, starting data collection in the fall 2018 and submitting reports in the fall 2020 and Group 4 starting collecting data in the spring of 2019 and submitting their report in the spring of 2021. This two-year model and four-group report cycle would allow every program to complete two assessment cycles for each regional accreditation review period that includes the five-year review followed by the full self-study each ten years.

7. As noted above, advisory boards can provide valuable information to programs about preparation of the program's graduates and the evolving needs for that discipline in the

professional setting. The use of advisory boards is more common for professional programs but could be considered for any graduate program. The specific composition and charge of an advisory board can vary based on needs of the program and intended membership, but constructive feedback on academic programs could always be one component. The consultants noted that developing and maintaining advisory boards requires an investment of time. Therefore, programs are encouraged to be explicit about what they want the boards to accomplish and then to carefully evaluate the costs and benefits before deciding to pursue the formation of such a group.

8.   Demand for and reputation of programs depend on numerous internal and external variables. When a program is recognized as being of particularly high demand or quality, or as having enough potential to be worthy of institutional investment, the institution can choose to prioritize resources to maintain or improve this program. However, in the reality of constrained resources, these resources may have to be redirected from smaller or weaker programs to the identified stronger programs. The feedback from the 2019 Gray and Associates Study should be helpful in assessing the market demand for various programs.

Acknowledgements

The Council of Graduate Schools acknowledges the leadership of Dr. Cheryl Addy, Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School at the University of South Carolina; Dr. Scott Lanyon, Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Education at the University of Minnesota; and Dr. Ranjit Koodali, Dean of the Graduate School at the University of South Dakota for providing the University of Wyoming with multiple pathways for advancing graduate education. The recommendations have been developed to achieve the university's mission of offering premier programs of graduate study as the state's land-grant university by serving the educational needs of Wyoming's diverse population through comprehensive programs of education, research, extension education, and public service.

Appendix A

Resources

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Appendix B
Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Template

University of Minnesota
Memorandum of Understanding
[REVISED DRAFT TEMPLATE]

The parties to this Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) are *[specify the particular colleges/departments/research centers and institutes, as appropriate]*. This MOU documents agreements regarding funding, and administrative and academic oversight for the *[name the graduate program to which this MOU applies]*.

Program Description

[Provide a brief description of the program, including its purpose (academic rationale) and objectives. State the degree(s) and/or postbaccalaureate certificates the program awards.]

All parties to this MOU agree that the *[graduate program]* aligns with and contributes to aspects of their respective missions and goals, that they willingly commit their support to the program in the specific ways described below, and that the terms and conditions of this MOU articulate the most appropriate model for supporting the program.

Administration, Oversight and Governance

1. The *[department]* agrees to act as the administrative home department for the *[graduate program]*.
2. The *[department]* agrees to provide administrative oversight and support to the *[graduate program]*, including: *[specify the particular oversight and support—e.g., financial and administrative staff support to assist the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS)/graduate program coordinator, as needed; graduate assistantships; program operating support; marketing and recruitment, etc.]*.
3. Academic oversight for *[specify the relevant oversight functions—e.g., admissions, review and approval for new and changed courses, review of graduate student academic progress, maintenance of the roster of individuals holding graduate faculty responsibilities, selection of the DGS/program director]* will be the responsibility of *[specify the particular unit or body].[1]*
4. The program's administrative college has been decided by *[specify the process by which the administrative college has been determined]*.
5. Submission of changes in the academic program will be the responsibility of *[college]*.
6. The DGS/program director will be selected according to the following process: *[specify the process]*.
7. The DGS will report to the *[college dean—e.g., Dean of the College of Science and Engineering]*.
8. In addition to University-wide policies governing the admission, degree progress and degree completion of graduate students, the academic policies attached to this MOU will

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[1] Different duties within this broad category may be assigned to different parties, subject to different governance mechanisms. These details should be specified in the MOU.

apply to students admitted to the program *[in an attachment, specify academic policies governing, for example, admissions, degree requirements, etc.].*

9. The commencement ceremony will be the responsibility of *[college]* and will occur in the *[fall/spring/both].*

10. The *[colleges]* will participate in joint program administration through *[specify the particular ways in which the colleges will jointly participate—e.g., annual consultation in preparing college compacts, collaboration in periodic program review, etc.].*

Finance and Budget

11. An administrative budget will be assigned to the program, including support for *[specify particular positions and provide the salary and fringe for each position listed]* and *[specify the budgeted amount]* in operating funds. The parties to this MOU have agreed to an initial five-year plan (attached) for financially sustaining the program. Once established, any changes in permanent budget must be approved by *[specify the bodies, unit(s), or individuals who must approve].*

12. If the program is ever disbanded, these funds will be reallocated in a manner determined and agreed to by all parties to the MOU (e.g., funds will be returned to the source that provided them in the proportion that they were provided, including any augments to the funds that may have occurred).

13. The course designator, *[specify the program course designator, if applicable]*, will be attached to *[college].*

14. Tuition generated through enrollment in courses with the *[specify the program course designator where applicable]* will be attributed and allocated in the following manner: *[specify how tuition will be allocated].*[2]

15. The following terms will apply in the case of faculty who teach in the program: *[specify the terms and conditions that will apply in the case of teaching in the program; a separate teaching MOU may be used to document agreements regarding teaching contributions to the program].*

16. Per-student cost pool charges will be paid by *[specify the college of enrollment].*

17. Per-student collegiate fees will be charged according to *[the college of enrollment and received by that college, as appropriate].*

18. The program will be physically housed in [*specify the name of the unit where program records will be maintained and where day-to-day program operations will be located; include the unit's building name and street address].*

MOU Review and Amendment

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[2] Tuition revenue is automatically divided into two parts: For any course in which a student enrolls, 75% of the tuition is allocated to the college that owns the course designator and 25% of the tuition is allocated to the college that owns the student's academic plan. In the case of an academic plan or course with more than one college owner, the revenue is divided, usually equally. The MOU may also be used to document agreements to transfer funds between units beyond the standard tuition allocation formula.

19. All signatories to this MOU (or their successors) will participate in an initial, informal review of the MOU's terms and conditions within three years of the date of the original agreement to assess how the MOU is working and to make adjustments, as appropriate. Any modifications to the original MOU resulting from this review will require approval by all of its signatories (or their successors). A second review, involving all signatories (or their successors), will take place within *[specify the number of years—normally, within five years]* of the approval date of the original MOU. Any changes resulting from the second review will also require approval by all of the original signatories to the MOU (or their successors). Additional stakeholders who were not signatories on the original MOU, including the Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Education, may also be invited to participate in the review at the request of any signatory.

20. Should a signatory to this MOU (or that individual's successor) decide to withdraw from the agreement, the following process and notification period will apply: *[specify the process to be followed, including the notification period required].*[3]

21. If any issues arise that the signatories (or their successors) are unable to resolve, the signatories may appeal to the Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Education for support in negotiating a solution.

22. If the signatories (or their successors) decide to dissolve the MOU, the following process and timeframe for dissolution will apply: *[specify the process to be followed, including a timeframe for dissolution that ensures the continued support of graduate students to degree completion].* The Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Education will be given timely notice of the signatories' intent to dissolve the MOU and afforded an opportunity to provide input or assistance, as needed.[4]

SIGNATORIES:

We, the undersigned, concur with the above agreement, which is binding upon us and our successors:

_____   _____

[Collegiate Dean 1]
Name, Title   Date
Affiliation

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[3] Notification must be in writing, should reflect input and agreement by others who contributed to the initial decision to sign the MOU, and should allow sufficient time for other signatories to assess their obligations to the program and their ability to continue to support it subsequent to the withdrawal. A minimum of one academic year's notice will be normally be expected.

[4] The possibilities that follow a decision to dissolve an MOU are likely to vary and may range, for example, from a decision by multiple stakeholders to assign sole responsibility for the program to a single college and department, to a decision to discontinue the program—in which case University policies and procedures apply (see https://policy.umn.edu/education/academicprogram). Parties to the MOU are thus encouraged to consult the Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Education to discuss their planned process and timeframe for dissolving the MOU once the decision has been made to invoke the process.

_____   _____

[Collegiate Dean 2]
Name, Title   Date
Affiliation

_____   _____

[Department/Program Chair or Head]
Name, Title   Date
Affiliation

_____   _____

[other signatories, as appropriate]   Date

List of potential attachments

1. Appendix of academic policies applicable to students in the program to which the MOU applies.

2. Five-year budget plan outlining commitments for financially sustaining the program, to include specific contributions from the different parties to the MOU. Table 1 may serve as a template for outlining financial contributions.

Table 1: Contributions by each participating party

Budget Category	Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 3	Unit 4	Total
DGS/Program Director Salary and Fringe					
Student financial support					
Operating expenses (e.g., technology, facilities)					
Total					
% Contributed					