

GW Strategic Planning Final Committee Report

Distinguished and Distinctive Graduate Education March 29, 2020

Executive Summary

The Committee on Distinguished and Distinctive Graduate Education was charged with developing a university-wide plan for excellence in graduate education that includes strategies for the ongoing creation, evaluation, and, where appropriate, termination of graduate programs and for the elevation of up to ten doctoral programs to national preeminence. The Committee centered its work around the following overarching goals:

- Challenge graduate programs across GW to aspire toward high standards of excellence and achieve greater distinction and distinctiveness in our nation's capital and the world. [See Addendum: Graduate Education Quality Criteria, and Goals 1a, 1c, 1d]
- Carry out a special review of GW's doctoral programs, both research and professional, and identify a select number of preeminent and near-preeminent programs for enhancement while assuring continued improvement in other programs. [Goal 1b]
- Strategically strengthen graduate student services, professional development opportunities, and the overall student experience. [1e]
- Empower a new Vice Provost for Graduate Studies to lead a series of University-wide initiatives that will elevate the quality and reputation of graduate education at GW and enhance the overall graduate student experience, among them determining the desired interplay of central and school administrations in graduate education, facilitating greater interdisciplinarity in graduate education, strengthening GW's market research capability and utilization of employment data, increasing the availability of data for decision making, and improving the financial management of graduate education. [Goal 2a-f]

Current State

To better understand GW's graduate programs, the Committee sought and reviewed a wealth of data gathered from the Office of Academic Planning and Assessment; the graduate deans; a public forum; meetings with the Graduate Enrollment Management Committee, Graduate Marketing & Recruitment Group, CCAS Graduate Studies Committee, and Career Services Council; a review of available ranking data; an analysis of the Graduate Student Graduation Survey (GSGS), admitted student surveys, and the committee's own anonymous survey of current students. Appendices A (enrollment data) and B (student satisfaction and concerns data), and supplementary data informed the following observations about the current state of graduate education:

1. Graduate and professional education (hereafter referred to as “graduate education”) is a major enterprise at GW. In fall 2019, we had 15,205 graduate and professional students distributed across 10 schools (10,484 master’s students, 4,239 doctoral and professional students, and 482 students in graduate certificate programs or unclassified). Of these, 9,556 were at Foggy Bottom, 1,175 at other campuses, and 4,474 online.
2. GW has a fairly typical number of graduate programs for a research university of its scope and size. Using the number of distinct federal IPEDS CIP codes (fields of study) in 2018 as the indicator, and comparing GW to its 12 undergraduate market basket schools, we conclude that GW has a below average number of research doctoral programs (41 vs. an average of 48). It has more professional doctoral programs (12 vs. 6) and master’s programs (134 vs. 97) than average. However, GW also awards a larger total number of graduate degrees than all but these three market basket schools: BU, NYU, and USC. An independent count of GW’s programs based on our own program codes yielded similar numbers: 39 research doctoral programs, 11 professional doctoral programs, and 134 master’s programs.
3. Most graduating students are satisfied with their programs and many aspects of their broader GW experience; 75% of graduating students in 2017 and 2018 said they probably or definitely would recommend GW to someone considering [their] field of study, and most of the rest said “maybe.” High proportions also expressed satisfaction with their program’s support of their career goals and the quality of the faculty; levels of satisfaction were lower regarding faculty mentoring and academic advising. Although satisfaction with library resources was high, graduates were less impressed with health and mental health services, financial assistance, help with job search, and administrative responsiveness to student concerns. Similarly, our survey of graduate student uncovered room for improvement not only in the student experience university wide but also within many individual programs and schools (see Appendix B).
4. GW lacks strategic focus in fostering excellence in graduate education, promoting cross-school synergy and interdisciplinarity, and advocating for graduate students. Perhaps not coincidentally, *GW is the only one of nine market basket schools investigated that currently lacks a graduate dean and graduate school or a vice provost or associate vice provost for graduate studies*. It also does not have a strategy for identifying signature programs and boosting them to preeminence. Moreover, regular Academic Program Reviews (APR) of academic departments/units to stimulate program improvement are not carried out consistently in all schools, take too long, and often fail to have tangible consequences. These observations call for additional strategic oversight of graduate programs at the University.

Principles

1. **Quality is paramount.** Great faculty and students want to be at universities with eminent graduate programs that contribute to knowledge and the public good. Financial goals must not be pursued by compromising admission standards,

reducing program resources or quality, or sacrificing excellent programs in favor of those that are mediocre and revenue-enhancing in the short run but reputation-eroding in the long run.

2. **World-class faculty are essential to the development and conduct of distinguished graduate education.** High-quality graduate education ultimately depends on the decisions and efforts of high-quality faculty adequately supported to fulfill their mission. Through shared governance, the faculty share responsibility with deans and other administrators for creating, nurturing, reimagining, and eliminating graduate programs.
3. **Good graduate and professional students are integral to the University's success.** Graduate students advance the University's research, education, and service missions and enhance its reputation by: assisting, collaborating with, and inspiring faculty scholars and researchers; elevating the quality of undergraduate education; serving the community through clinics and other service activities; attracting world-class faculty eager to train the next generation of top graduate students; and, after graduation, contributing to society through their varied accomplishments.
4. **Comprehensive global research universities provide a broad array of disciplinary offerings and rich opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration and innovation.** GW aspires to preeminence across the humanities and arts, social sciences, physical and natural sciences and engineering, and multiple professional fields. By exploiting its strengths—its intellectual diversity and the opportunities afforded by the Washington area—GW is already accomplished in some fields and is well-positioned to become distinguished and distinctive in additional fields and to bring its disciplinary strengths together in transformative ways (see National Academies of Science, Engineering, & Medicine, 2018).
5. **Assessment of graduate program quality must be multifaceted.** High rankings can be informative but they are also too simple and, at times, misleading. Programs should be judged in terms of inputs, educational processes, and outputs. Broad criteria should be applied to all programs, but measures and metrics must also be tailored to the mission, goals, and nature of specific programs, programs should be judged in relation to appropriate market basket programs in their fields, and programs should not be judged solely on the basis of financial returns.
6. **Excellent graduate programs require substantial resources.** In aspiring to distinguished and distinctive graduate education, the University must ensure that it provides the physical facilities, library holdings, equipment, faculty, support staff, student services, financial assistance, and other critical resources that high-quality graduate programs require.

Proposed Goals & Initiatives

The goals of this strategic plan are derived from the Principles enunciated above and from our analyses of the current state of graduate education.

1. Improve the quality of graduate education at GW

- a. **Use criteria across schools that define distinguished and distinctive graduate education to evaluate graduate programs.** In response to its charge, the Committee developed eight Graduate Education Quality Criteria that it deems applicable to master's programs and both research and professional doctoral programs and that it offers as a roadmap for continuous program improvement (see **Addendum**). The Criteria are: (1) well-defined mission and appropriate learning goals, (2) prominent positions and/or achievements after graduation, (3) success of students during the program, (4) faculty qualifications, (5) program national ranking and recognition, (6) student qualifications, (7) student satisfaction with their experience, and (8) demand for program and selectivity. Indicators of each criterion allow for appropriate tailoring of metrics to the nature and goals of particular programs. *We recommend that these Graduate Education Quality Criteria be reviewed and adopted by the faculties and implemented across GW's schools.*
- b. **Design and implement a process for identifying, funding, and elevating select doctoral programs to national preeminence.** The Committee chose as its overarching goal not elevating only 10 doctoral programs at the expense of others but lifting *all* worthy doctoral programs and doing so in a way that respects their diversity of missions and roles in their schools. *We therefore recommend a review of all GW doctoral programs, research and professional, using the Graduate Education Quality Criteria.* This review would be carried out by each dean of a school with doctoral programs, with faculty participation, and would designate programs as: (a) already distinguished programs deserving of recognition and continued support, (b) excellent programs with the potential to rise to preeminence if given additional support, (c) solid programs that should be maintained and encouraged to continue improving, and (d) deficient programs that should be considered for remediation or elimination. Programs seeking designation as a "Distinguished Doctoral Program" or as a program on the cusp of distinction would have the opportunity to submit a proposal with budget indicating what (if any) resources the program most needs to achieve a significantly higher level of preeminence and what changes in metrics it would achieve, and how, if funded. A program identified as deficient would be asked to develop a plan for either remediating or phasing out the program; any phase out plan should ensure that current students would be able to finish. Deans would submit the materials for those programs judged to have the potential for preeminence or greater preeminence to the Provost. The Provost and Vice Provosts, advised by a select panel of deans and faculty, would decide which of the program enhancement proposals the Provost wishes to offer cost-sharing support. Subsequent annual progress reports by the selected programs would document actions taken and improvements made on key metrics and inform future funding decisions.
- c. **Revise and institutionalize processes for the ongoing review of both doctoral and master's programs.** The University's APR guidelines call for an every five-year self-study, external review, and recommendations for improvement and they appropriately examine each graduate program in the context of the department's faculty, resources, and other programs and activities. *We strongly recommend that guidelines and processes be strengthened such that APRs: (a) are a high priority for the Provost and the deans, (b) review graduate programs within their departmental*

- and university contexts on a regular schedule; (c) incorporate the Graduate Education Quality Criteria; (d) be coordinated with accreditation review where relevant and feasible, with recognition that APRs and accreditation reviews have different foci; (e) be made easier through streamlining and provision of required institutional data; and (f) culminate in decisions designed to improve program quality or, where necessary, phase out programs, with follow up as appropriate. Both the special doctoral program review and the ongoing APR process should aim to phase out programs that lack both quality and financial viability, enhance worthwhile programs with the potential to become outstanding, enhance outstanding programs that are under-enrolled and/or running inefficiently, and provide the foundation for more intentional and strategic investment in graduate programs that are mission critical.*
- d. **Strengthen new program approval processes.** To optimize the chances that new graduate programs will be excellent: (a) appropriate resources should be invested in program planning and development; (b) reviews of competing programs within and outside GW and an assessment of market need should be conducted; (c) the Graduate Education Quality Criteria should guide decision-making; (d) programs should be supported to develop sound marketing and recruitment plans; and finally, and most importantly, (e) school faculty and administrators and university administrators should hold to high standards in granting approval.
- e. **Enhance the University climate and overall student experience for doctoral and master's students.** Feedback we received from graduate students (see Appendix B) compelled us to call attention to needs in the area of graduate student services and supports. Greater attention to the broader University environment for graduate students is sorely needed; it promises to enhance their educational progress, well-being, and life outcomes, make prospective students more likely to attend GW, and make graduates of GW happier with their choice. *Therefore, a review of graduate student survey data collected by Academic Planning and Assessment and this Committee (see Appendix B) and other evidence should be undertaken by a task force appointed by the Provost and composed of deans, faculty, staff, and student members. The task force would then formulate recommendations for making the University's climate, resources, and services more responsive to graduate students' needs and interests.* Based on our analysis, recommendations for improving the graduate student experience should center on expanding opportunities for networking and interaction across programs and schools; increasing student financial support; optimizing health and mental health services and insurance coverage; improving career advising at the program, school, and University levels; expanding and upgrading facilities (especially, providing dedicated graduate student office and lounge/study spaces and improved classrooms); accommodating campus services to the needs of working professionals (e.g., by expanding evening hours); and increasing access to affordable graduate student housing. The task force should also encourage and support best practices and innovation at the school and program levels in advising, mentoring, and communicating with students; pedagogy; and educational and professional development (e.g., instructional training, diversity training). Finally, schools and programs should tailor their approaches to the distinct needs of students in GW's various master's, research doctoral, and professional doctoral programs.

2. In order to make the planning and management of graduate education more strategic, rational, intentional, and coordinated, empower the new Vice Provost for Graduate Studies to lead University-wide initiatives that will elevate the quality and reputation of graduate education at GW and enhance the graduate student experience.

- a. **Appoint and resource a well-qualified Vice Provost for Graduate Studies.** The Committee recommended in its Interim Report appointing a Vice Provost for Graduate Studies (or similar title) to serve as the central point of contact for graduate education at GW and to provide strategic and collaborative academic leadership in developing, evaluating, and promoting graduate programs of excellence. The Provost has committed to making this appointment as soon as possible. Because the success of the initiatives outlined in this plan hinges on the new Vice Provost's leadership, *the Committee now recommends that the Provost proceed to hire a highly qualified Vice Provost and endow the position with the required authority and resources.*

The holder of this position should be a tenured full professor with vision and strong research and education credentials, along with solid administrative skills, who can serve as a distinguished intellectual leader in graduate education. The Vice Provost would convene the deans and graduate deans regularly to facilitate discussion and joint planning of strategic priorities in graduate education, as well as cross-school information sharing, coordination, policy making, service enhancement, and development of interdisciplinary initiatives. He/she would consult as well with the vice president for research and school deans for research to strengthen the critical symbiosis between graduate education and research (see *GW Strategic Initiative Research Ecosystem Review. Work Force Development. Final Report*, November 22, 2019) and with the Vice Provost for Enrollment Management to attract top graduate students to GW and manage enrollments. The Vice Provost is envisioned as an advocate for GW's graduate students and a coordinator and catalyst of change to benefit graduate programs and their students; primary responsibility for the management of graduate programs should continue to rest in the schools.

Our analysis of the current state of graduate education suggests that it will be important for the Vice Provost to:

- Develop, implement, and monitor progress toward the attainment of university-wide standards of quality in graduate education and policies and programs supporting graduate students (for all programs except the JD and MD).
- Stimulate interdisciplinary programs and other cross-school initiatives and opportunities.
- Help reduce counterproductive program duplication and competition.
- Foster coordination of student support services across GW aimed at enhancing the overall experience of graduate students.
- Oversee or interact with, as determined by the Provost, the existing offices of Graduate Enrollment Management and Graduate Student Assistantships and Fellowships and ensure that central graduate staffing is optimally organized and sufficient to achieve critical missions on behalf of multiple schools in areas such

as marketing, recruitment, and admissions; enrollment analysis; graduate student advocacy, services, and programming; and graduate student financial support and advising.

- Strengthen the University's market research capacity.
- Chair a newly formed Council of Graduate Deans that will serve as a primary vehicle for cross-school coordination, and serve as a central point of contact with other campus offices serving graduate students, multi-school committees such as the Graduate Enrollment Management Committee, and student representatives.
- Advocate for and help create enhanced student services and professional development opportunities that can be provided more effectively centrally than through scattered school- or program-specific efforts.

b. **Achieve consensus on the desired interplay of central and school administrations in graduate education.**

This Committee appreciates that the University's administrative and financial models are currently in transition, most notably with respect to divisions of labor, authority, responsibility, and resources between the central administration and the schools. Therefore, *the Committee recommends as a first important step in planning that the Provost and Vice Provost work with the deans, their faculties, relevant staff, and graduate student representatives to reach consensus on broad centralization-decentralization issues and the critical question of how GW's central and school administrations can best work together to improve the strategic planning and management of graduate education.* Care must be taken to ensure that university-wide standards of quality in education and student services are met or exceeded in all schools, despite differences in the schools' resources.

- c. **Facilitate greater interdisciplinarity in graduate education.** Stimulating the development of innovative interdisciplinary graduate programs and other cross-school learning opportunities for graduate students was one of the most important drivers of our recommendation of a vice provost position. We had observed that launching new programs in interdisciplinary areas such as sustainability and helping students take advantage of educational opportunities in other schools were more challenging than they should be. To achieve more cross-school, interdisciplinary innovation and interaction at GW, it needs to be incentivized, nurtured, and made easier. *The Vice Provost for Graduate Studies and Council of Graduate Deans should: (a) review GW's current interdisciplinary graduate programs and their promises and problems; (b) develop plans to grow the number of such programs, ensuring that they have distinct goals and markets relative to existing programs; and (c) open up opportunities for students to access courses, faculty, fellow students, and research or service opportunities in other schools, starting by making it easier on GW's website to find all the courses on a topic of interest, regardless of school and whether on-site or online.* These efforts would ideally be embedded in a larger interdisciplinary strategic initiative aimed at strengthening not only graduate education but our world-class faculty, research, and undergraduate education—for example, involving the creation or strengthening of interdisciplinary institutes in areas of faculty strength that advance research and education simultaneously.

- d. **Strengthen GW's market research capability to increase knowledge of appropriate job markets and competitors, improve alignments between GW's graduate programs and the knowledge and skills needed in relevant jobs, and enhance career advising.** A stronger market research capability at GW would benefit education by improving the vetting of new programs, increasing the career-relevance of the skills and knowledge featured in existing programs, and improving advising of prospective and current students about employment opportunities. *We recommend that the University: (1) hire either a market researcher or a contractor on retainer to provide market research services and consultation to schools and programs seeking it, as well as to the Offices of Academic Planning and Assessment and Career Services; and (2) enter into a licensing contract for a strong market research tool.* By making both program faculty and students more aware of promising career paths and employment opportunities and enriching career advising, this initiative will also seek to enhance internship, research, fieldwork, and service opportunities relevant to desired career paths.
- e. **Increase the availability of data for decision making.** *The Committee recommends that the Vice Provost's office, in collaboration with the graduate deans and Office of Academic Planning and Assessment: (a) make available to faculty and administrators on a regular and timely basis data pertaining to the Graduate Education Quality Criteria to inform ongoing program improvement and APR reviews; (b) develop and encourage programs to use alumni surveys and other tools for assessing the employment and notable achievements of graduates after graduation, including participating in the Council of Graduate Schools project surveying research doctoral graduates up to 15 years after graduation and increasing the number of programs that collect such data; (c) examine the strengths and weaknesses of various program ranking and indicator systems; and (d) identify and satisfy other unmet data needs as identified.*
- f. **Analyze and improve financial management of graduate education at GW.** *The Provost and Vice Provost should work with the deans and graduate deans achieve the following: (a) a sound and uniform method of analyzing program revenue and expense in the context of school and program goals and the extent to which a program is intended to be self-supporting. Graduate programs that are not expected to be self-sufficient or revenue generating should provide other net benefits to the University; (b) regular studies of tuition rates in light of competitors' rates and demand for graduates to ensure that rates are appropriate and well-justified; (c) changes in the University's budget model and accounting processes to incentivize and facilitate cross-school collaborations; and (d) more strategic, competitive, and flexible awarding of graduate student support funds in light of educational goals, student needs, support patterns in competing programs, and analyses of the effectiveness of financial support.*

Metrics

Most metrics below are process metrics; more outcome metrics should be specified as proposed initiatives take shape (e.g., selection of particular doctoral programs for strategic investment) and should include indicators of success specified in the Graduate Education Quality Criteria.

1. Hiring of a Vice Provost for Graduate Studies (or similar title) by October, 2020 so that aspects of the plan that depend on this leadership position can be implemented.
2. Provost- and Vice Provost-led meetings to reach consensus on central/school roles by December, 2020.
3. Approval of the Graduate Education Quality Criteria by the schools by March, 2021.
4. Incorporation of the Criteria in new program approval processes by Academic Planning and Assessment and graduate deans by January 2021.
5. Revision of Academic Program Review guidelines led by Academic Planning and Assessment and a committee of graduate deans and faculty, including some who have recently prepared APRs, by May 2021.
 - a. Increase to 80% over the five-year Plan the percentages of programs scheduled for APRs completing the self-study, dean's review, and culminating Provost's review.
6. Elevation of up to ten distinguished or near-distinguished doctoral programs:
 - b. Announcement of the upcoming selection review by the deans by August 2020
 - c. Preparation of institutional data for use in the review by Academic Planning and Assessment by October 2020
 - d. 2020-2021 review of all doctoral programs within the schools with doctoral programs by June 2021
 - e. Distinguished Doctoral Program selections and funding by November 2021
 - f. 2022-2023, 2023-2024, 2024-2025 implementation and assessment of improvement plan metrics; 2025 decisions about renewal
7. Hiring of market researcher and market research tool contract by Provost by August 2021; report on services provided annually thereafter in June; analysis of changes in employment outcomes in programs using vs. not using market research services by May 2025
8. Plans to be led by the Vice Provost for Graduate Studies
 - a. Based on student survey data, a task force will develop priorities for enhancing the University climate/services for graduate students by June 2021; metrics will be relevant GSGS student satisfaction items.
 - b. Increase collaborative interactions and joint initiatives involving central graduate offices, multi-school advisory groups such as the Council of Graduate Deans and GEMC, and relevant campus offices.
 - c. Increase interdisciplinary programming and reduce cross-school competition and duplication by having the Vice Provost and Council of Graduate Deans review current interdisciplinary programming and develop a plan for creating new model programs by June 2022; track number of new interdisciplinary initiatives per year.
 - d. Increase the ongoing availability of data for decision making, including a package of institutional data for APRs by June 2022; assess department satisfaction with data provided.
 - e. Analyze and improve financial management of graduate education through planning meetings with the deans and graduate deans; assess improvements achieved yearly.

Capabilities

1. **This plan's goals cannot be realized without commitment and investment by both the central administration and the schools.** Resources, yet to be determined, from central administration budgets and/or university reserves or new philanthropy, will, for example, be required to help the schools elevate some number of doctoral programs to greater preeminence without weakening other doctoral programs. Each selected program's plan for improvement will detail its most important needs, whether for additional lab facilities, library holdings, a new faculty position, support staff, equipment, more and/or larger doctoral student support packages, or other critical items. Anticipating that many doctoral programs need more and/or larger support packages to enhance both their research and scholarship and their ability to attract top students, it should be noted that one 9-month CCAS "super" package offering full support at 2019-2020 rates—a package currently competitive in many fields—costs \$277,080 (more if annual increases are figured in): (a) \$30,000 in stipend/salary for each of 5 years (\$5,000 more than the current basic package of \$25,000), plus (b) 72 hours of tuition at \$1,765 per hour, or \$127,080. In addition, doctoral students have expressed desires for more support for professional travel and summer research funding. Some of the cost of graduate student support is borne by faculty research and training grants, fellowships obtained by doctoral students, endowments, and the like; however, opportunities for such external funding vary considerably across fields of study. Analysis of overlaps among the world-class faculty, research, and graduate education goals of the Strategic Plan will help achieve economies (e.g., instances in which a new faculty hire, additional doctoral student support packages, or a new research lab could advance all three goals at once).
2. A Vice Provost for Graduate Studies can be put in place most rapidly and inexpensively by hiring a respected and experienced tenured GW professor for a salary supplement and fringe; if a non-GW person is hired, a vice provost level salary and fringe will be needed. The Vice Provost will need a full-time assistant and part-time student support at minimum, and the VP will need an office suite and operating budget sufficient to support key initiatives in this plan.
3. Market research: (1) a full-time market researcher's salary plus fringe (or a contractor on a retainer), (2) an office, and (3) an annual operating budget, including a half-time assistant and the yearly contract for a leading market research tool designed for universities.
4. An additional staff member for Academic Planning and Assessment to help meet the many ongoing data needs implied by this plan, particularly continuing APRs, provision of doctoral program review data, and compilation of metrics.
5. We also anticipate that further analysis of graduate student and concerns and gaps in service will reveal a need for additional investments in graduate student services staff and graduate student support funds.

References

GW Strategic Initiative Research Ecosystem Review. Work Force Development. Final Report, November 22, 2019.

National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (2018). *The Integration of the Humanities and Arts with Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine in Higher Education: Branches from the Same Tree*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. doi: <https://doi.org/10.17226/24988>.

Addendum: Graduate Program Quality Criteria

Strategic Planning Committee for

Distinguished and Distinctive Graduate Education

We propose eight criteria to consider in evaluating the quality of a master's or doctoral program with regard to whether it is relatively more or less distinguished and/or distinctive. In addition, we lay out several "Other Considerations" that are relevant to the success of graduate programs. There may be different types of indicators of the same quality appropriate to different types of programs. For example, metrics related to students' scholarly contributions are important in research doctorates, while competencies for licensure and practice may be more relevant in professional doctoral programs. Similarly, emphases may differ between academic master's programs and professional ones. Many measures commonly available for graduate and professional programs provide only partial insights. The Strategic Plan calls for making more of the data called for below more readily available to programs to simplify the self-study process.

The ordering of the criteria below reflects, first, the need to consider a program's mission and goals in applying the remaining criteria and, second, our high prioritization of students' short- and long-term outcomes in evaluating the quality of graduate programs. The eight criteria are:

- 1. Well-defined mission and appropriate learning goals**
- 2. Prominent positions and/or achievements after graduation**
- 3. Success of students during the program**
- 4. Faculty qualifications**
- 5. Program national ranking and reputation**
- 6. Student qualifications**
- 7. Student satisfaction with their experience**
- 8. Demand for program and selectivity**

1. Does the program have a well-defined mission or focus and learning goals appropriate for a program of its type?

- A. Clear mission or focus related to the school and university's strategic goals
- B. Major program learning goals
 - a. Appropriate competencies (e.g., discipline-specific conceptual knowledge, research skill development, communication skills, professionalism, ethics, and leadership and management skills)
 - b. Additionally, for certain professional graduate degrees, competencies required by accrediting bodies
- C. Articulated career path expectations for graduates, including further degrees or qualifications as appropriate (e.g., master's students who pursue PhD, PhDs who pursue postdoctoral work)

- D. Program distinctiveness (e.g., uniqueness, interdisciplinarity, area of special academic strength, edge on competing programs, and the like)
- E. Capitalization on the distinctiveness of our DC location (e.g., where possible and desirable, and whether the program is on-campus or online, incorporation of people, places, and other resources available in the DC area)

2. Do alumni attain prominent positions and/or achievements in degree-relevant employment?

- A. Job placements/promotions of all graduates (or a random sample of graduates) from the program immediately upon graduation, and 10 years (or more) after graduation, including: (a) job titles and organizations, (b) proportions in various career sectors (including academia, government, industry, business, cultural institutions, NGOs, etc.), (c) salary range, and (d) job's relevance to the graduate program's mission and goals
- B. Alumni prominence and/or achievement in relation to norms in specific career sectors and fields (e.g., scholarly contributions, professional achievements, contributions to society, recognized innovations, awards, leadership positions, or other evidence of recognition and achievement within a field)

In a high-quality program, a majority of matriculants are expected to achieve the program's stated career outcomes. Programs may need assistance to systematically collect outcome data from public databases such as LinkedIn, PubMed, NIH Reporter, and other aggregators and/or confirm with new approaches to alumni censuses.

3. Do students achieve the goals of the program?

- A. Evidence that students achieve (and some surpass) the program's learning goals (including publication of dissertation/thesis research and other evidence of scholarly productivity while in the program, percentages attaining specific competencies required by accreditors, and passing licensure or professional certification exams where relevant)
- B. Percentage of matriculants who complete the degree within time expectations; average time to degree; and percentage who withdraw or earn lesser degree, with attention to special reasons for slow progress if appropriate (e.g., full- or part-time work)
- C. Percentage of students who receive individual external fellowships, grants, accredited internships, dissertation awards, and honors while in the program

In a high-quality program, nearly every student will achieve all the stated goals of the program, complete the degree requirements, and evidence achievements while in the program that position them for later success.

4. Are faculty well-qualified to provide high-quality graduate education?

- A. Sufficient number of faculty with terminal degree in relevant fields, and with research and teaching experience to provide outstanding graduate-level instruction and mentoring
- B. Faculty capacity to provide outstanding research and training opportunities to students, beyond coursework (e.g., regular and constructive advising, mentoring, and feedback, research assistantships, professional development, internship supervision, job placement support)
- C. Impactful scholarship as benchmarked to field of study
- D. Financial support for faculty scholarship as benchmarked to field of study
- E. Faculty professional leadership in the field (national, international, and within professional organizations)
- F. Faculty external recognition for scholarly work and other contributions to society
- G. Diversity of faculty backgrounds and perspectives

In a high-quality program, nearly all faculty are productive and recognized scholars and many are outstanding. Outstanding faculty are essential to strong graduate programs.

5. Is there relevant external evidence of the quality of the graduate program with respect to national standards of excellence?

- A. Available national ranking data such as the periodic NRC doctoral program rankings, U.S. News & World Report rankings, and field-specific rankings (e.g., of international affairs programs by APSIA)
- B. Recognition of program excellence by external organizations (e.g., positive accreditation outcome, receipt of a prestigious training grant, or recognition of the program by a professional organization)
- C. Quality of programs and institutions with competing offers for GW matriculants
- D. Results of most recent academic program review (APR), including assessments by external visitors

National recognitions and rankings, where they exist, contribute to a program's reputation. The relationship of any rankings to program evaluation criteria and the total number of similar programs ranked should be considered.

6. Are highly qualified and diverse students matriculating to the program?

- A. Outstanding and relevant prior experience (e.g., research experience, professional practice, prior degrees, coursework relevant to potential for success, skills of value to the program)
- B. In context, undergraduate grade point average and/or grades in specific fields of study
- C. Where required, test scores (e.g., average percentile GREs, MCATs, or LSATs)
- D. Diversity of student backgrounds and perspectives
- E. Other special assets of students that enrich the program and the University

In a high-quality program, all students will reflect a holistic excellence. Outstanding students are drawn to, and essential for, distinguished graduate programs.

7. Are students satisfied with their graduate experiences?

- A. Student evaluations of their learning experiences in the program (e.g., core course evaluations; GW Graduate Student Graduation Survey including responses to items on satisfaction with currency and quality of curriculum and instruction, learning community, faculty intellect and respect for students, and mentoring/advising)
- B. Evidence of students' satisfaction with program-relevant university services reflecting university climate (e.g., Graduate Student Graduation Survey, including responses to items on facilities, health and mental health coverage, climate, intellectual community, and response to student input); although programs lack control of many of these factors, they can impact students' satisfaction with their educational experience.
- C. Evidence of students' satisfaction with their overall experience at GW, especially the percentage saying that they would recommend GW to someone considering their field of study (e.g., Graduate Student Graduation Survey)

In a high-quality program, the majority of students and alumni will recommend the program.

Student satisfaction with their overall experience is important, and it is important for the University to also consider factors that are beyond an individual program's control (e.g., cost of local housing, campus climate).

8. Is there sufficient demand for the program and is it selective?

- A. Number of applicants to the program interpreted in light of number of program openings, number of graduate degrees in the field conferred nationally, demand for the program's courses by other students in the University, adequacy of recruitment and marketing resources, and the like.
- B. Percentage of applicants admitted (acceptance rate)
- C. Percentage of admitted students who matriculate (yield)
- D. Percentage of first choice students who matriculate

In a high-quality program, the applicant pool is adequate and a majority of desired applicants matriculate. These metrics are often available for academic programs, but need to be interpreted carefully in light of administrative factors such as resources for appropriate recruitment and marketing and availability of funded slots and where possible compared with admissions and selectivity data for similar programs at benchmark schools.

Other Considerations:

- A. Does the department or unit have the physical facilities (including labs and student work spaces), library resources, equipment, graduate student support, and other resources required to provide high-quality graduate education in its field, and the ability to sustain these resources?
- B. What additional contributions do program faculty and students make to the University and how important are these contributions? (e.g., roles in key

interdisciplinary research and/or educational collaborations; teaching of courses needed by other graduate programs; providing teaching assistance and/or mentorship for undergraduate and/or master's programs; and contributions to university service activities)

- C. Do program faculty and/or students generate external financial support for students at a level expected for this field?
- D. What is the program's financial status with respect to revenue and expense in relation to the goals and objectives of the school and program? Not all graduate programs are expected to be self-sufficient or to generate margins. Quality programs that contribute to a school's resource base should be recognized for that contribution; programs that are not self-sufficient should provide other net benefits to the University, whether by helping the University move toward preeminence, serving as keystones that support other important programs, or other means.
- E. Do factors or trends in the University, local, national, or international environment create new opportunities or pose challenges for the program?
- F. Is the program improving or declining overall in terms of key features such as demand and selectivity, qualifications of students, or qualifications of faculty?

A number of contextual factors may need to be taken into consideration in assessing graduate program quality and the trajectory a program is on.

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WASHINGTON, DC

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