

Strategic Plan: FY 2017-FY 2020  
The Graduate School

Processes Used to Develop the Strategic Plan

- May 12: At a Graduate School retreat, the dean reviewed the strategic plan for FY 2013-2014 to FY 2015-2016, informed participants of the update in the plan due June 30, and asked them to be thinking about future directions for the Graduate School.
- May 16: The dean notified Graduate School staff that their supervisors would be asking them for items for the strategic plan and feedback was received.
- June 2: Graduate School associate and assistant deans met to discuss strategic priorities.
- June 3-6: Initial version of strategic plan was drafted.
- June 8: Associate and assistant deans met to revise the draft.
- June 10: Further revisions of the draft were made.
- June 13: Dean and associate deans meet to prioritize items in the plan and revise it.

Vision and Mission of the Graduate School

***Guiding Vision:***

Leadership and Innovation in Graduate Education

***Mission Statement***

The mission of the Graduate School is to serve as a catalyst for excellence in graduate education at NC State by:

- Promoting the highest-quality education for students and postdoctoral scholars, including outstanding academic experiences, opportunities to engage in cutting-edge research, and professional development that prepares students and postdocs for success in their fields
- Advancing the diversity of graduate education at NC State and of the professoriate nationwide through recruitment, retention, and support of underrepresented minority groups
- Fostering an environment in which graduate faculty can reach their potential as teachers researchers, and mentors to graduate students
- Encouraging research and graduate programs that address the critical issues that challenge our state, our nation, and our world
- Achieving recognition of NC State as a model for leadership and innovation in graduate education in North America.

Strategic Priorities of the Graduate School Aligned with University Goals

1. To enhance the success of graduate students by improving mentoring at NC State (University goal 1)
2. To encourage a diverse university community that welcomes a variety of perspectives through partnerships to diversify graduate education (University goal 4)
3. To invest in Graduate School development activities in order to enhance scholarship and

- research by improving the competitiveness of NC State for the best qualified doctoral applicants through increasing the number of doctoral fellowships (University goal 2)
4. To enhance the success of graduate students by offering outstanding co-curricular professional development so that graduates are highly competitive in achieving their career goals (University goal 1)
  5. To enhance the success of graduate students by developing a web and mobile application designed to provide a “one-stop shop” where students can easily monitor their academic progress as well as their co-curricular professional development activities (University goal 1)
  6. To build on and continue to strengthen the relationship between faculty and students and the Graduate School to enhance graduate education at NC State (University goal 4)

### Strategic Actions and Measures for Success

#### **Strategic Priority 1: Improving Mentoring**

To enhance the success of graduate students by improving mentoring at NC State (University goal 1)

##### *Need*

As the Council of Graduate School’s Ph.D. Completion Study showed, faculty mentoring ranks with funding as the two top reasons given by graduate students for both completing their dissertations and not completing them. Mentoring is one of the keys to success for doctoral students and it is reasonable to assume the same of thesis master’s students.

##### *Strategic Actions*

- Develop and implement a series of mentoring workshops for junior tenure track faculty
- Develop and implement mentoring workshops for Graduate Faculty at associate and full professor levels
- Produce online mentoring materials
- Improve Mentoring Metrics software and apply it to improving mentoring
- Fund annual awards for excellence in mentoring and initiate an “Academy of Mentors”

##### *Measures for Success*

- Overall mentoring metrics: percentage of graduate faculty who are active in graduate education (chairing or co-chairing committees; participating on committees), time to submission of plans of work (thesis master’s and doctoral) and to successful prelim (doctoral), time to degree and completion rates (thesis master’s and doctoral)
- Number of faculty attending mentoring events
- Number of different graduate programs represented among faculty attending mentoring events
- Number of hits on online mentoring materials

#### **Strategic Priority 2: Partnerships to Diversify Graduate Education**

To encourage a diverse university community that welcomes a variety of perspectives though partnerships to diversify graduate education (University goal 4)

##### *Need*

Assuring diverse points of view at NC State is critical to improving learning outcomes,

decision-making, and problem solving. This goal is especially important to graduate education because it produces the innovators who will shape the future. Our university must be a leader in achieving greater diversity among graduate students, post-docs, and faculty.

#### ***Strategic actions***

- Develop workshops and partnerships with programs/faculty for recruiting underrepresented populations
- Increase the number of recruitment proposals from colleges
- Reinvigorate existing programming to promote diversity
- Develop partnerships with external stakeholders (e.g., Gates Foundation and Meyerhoff Scholars)

#### ***Measures for Success***

- Increase in the proportion and academic success of underrepresented students
- Increase in the number and quality of recruitment proposals as well as the yield of underrepresented students through funded proposals
- Yield from partnerships with external stakeholders

### **Strategic Priority 3: Development**

Invest in Graduate School development activities in order to enhance scholarship and research by improving the competitiveness of NC State for the best qualified doctoral applicants through increasing the number of doctoral fellowships (University goal 2)

#### ***Need***

In nearly every external review of graduate programs, the directors say that they are not competitive for the best students because of better offers from other universities. The main problem is that there are so few full-ride fellowships (stipend, health insurance, and fees from 6 and 7 accounts) to offer to top candidates for their first year. If NC State is to be competitive with other universities in recruiting, we need to be able to offer more university-level fellowships to top doctoral applicants.

#### ***Strategic Actions***

- Increase communication to reach the graduate alumni population
- Initiate direct interactions with graduate alumni for individual donor cultivation
- Encourage alumni interaction with currently enrolled students in networking and informal mentoring activities to create industry and entrepreneurial relationships.
- Promote interdisciplinary graduate fellowship funding opportunities in alignment with the Chancellor's Faculty Excellence program
- Assist colleges and central advancement officers in making the case for graduate fellowships.

#### ***Measures of Success***

- Participation in Graduate School-specific cultivation activities and donor events
- Number and amount of contributions to the Graduate School
- Amount of funding directed toward graduate student success

## **Strategic Priority 4: Professional Development of Graduate Students and Post-Docs**

To enhance the success of graduate students by offering outstanding co-curricular professional development so that graduates are highly competitive in achieving their career goals (University goal 1)

### ***Need***

NC State provides its graduates a superb education in their disciplines. However, to distinguish themselves from graduates of other universities, NC State graduates must be able to show that they have the professional skills essential for career success.

### ***Strategic Actions***

- Hire an assistant dean and additional staff for professional development
- Establish a guiding vision and plan to make professional development at NC State among the best in the nation.
- Interface and network with employers to determine the skills, abilities, and characteristics students need for successful careers and develop relevant professional development programming
- Create new certificates of accomplishment to highlight particular sets of skills of graduate students
- Redesign responsible conduct of research training to ensure that NC State's offerings in this area are effective

### ***Measures of Success***

- New assistant dean and additional staff in place
- Implement a comprehensive plan for professional development at NC State
- Students value and participate in programming and certificates offered by the Graduate School
- Developed improved responsible conduct of research programming

## **Strategic Priority 5: Web and Mobile Application—GradPath**

To enhance the success of graduate students by developing a web and mobile application designed to provide a “one-stop shop” where students can easily monitor their academic progress as well as their co-curricular professional development activities (University goal 1)

### ***Need***

Only about 62% of doctoral students at NC State graduate within ten years, which is close to the national average. This represents a significant loss in the university's investment in those students who do not graduate, not to mention the loss of the students' own investment in time and resources. Among the reasons for this loss is insufficient transparency in the graduate educational process. Currently there are multiple systems for student information (SIS, GSOARS, professional development website), and this new system will combine all of them. To promote retention and timely completion of both doctoral and master's students, we must do a better job of making them aware of academic requirements, assuring they achieve key milestones, and encouraging them to take advantage of opportunities to further their professional development.

### ***Strategic Actions***

- Determine functions for GradPath

- Create software specifications
- Hire student programmers to create software for GradPath according to specifications
- Test the software functions against specifications and revise as necessary
- Test usability of software with potential users

***Measures for Success***

- Completion rates and time to degree
- Satisfaction of users

**Strategic Priority 6: Enhancing the Understanding of the Role and Value of the Graduate School within the University**

To build on and continue to strengthen the relationship between faculty and students and the Graduate School to enhance graduate education at NC State (University goal 4)

***Need:***

Though the Graduate School interacts with faculty and students on a regular basis, there remains some mystery among these groups about what the Graduate School actually does and the benefits it provides. We will embark on a concerted effort to understand what conceptions and misconceptions are held about the Graduate School. Then we will work through campus channels and direct contact with our audiences to make sure they know how we can improve their work environment and their educational experience.

***Strategic Actions:***

- Use focus groups to determine how we can better serve faculty and students and to learn the most effective ways of communicating with them
- Develop a communication plan to help share relevant information with these audiences.
- Integrate key information into student newsletters to enhance students' understanding of how the Graduate School can assist and enhance their graduate experience.
- Redesign and improve graduate student orientation to more effectively promote student success as well as their understanding of how the Graduate School assists them in achieving that success.

***Measures for Success***

- Page views of newsletters and other Graduate School communication
- Number of students who find orientation informative and valuable
- Survey responses of faculty and students to determine effectiveness of communication plan
- Separate, biennial surveys to evaluate the level satisfaction of DGPs and GSCs with services provided by the Graduate School