

Annual Chancellor's Report of the Graduate School 2022-23

As we continue the process of re-thinking the university and specifically graduate education in post-pandemic phase, the Graduate School has been engaged in a variety of endeavors and re-examination of various elements to ensure the continued vitality of our graduate offerings ranging from doctoral degrees through to credit-bearing certificates. During the past year, the Graduate School has worked diligently to continue at the forefront of various processes, approaches, and policies to continue to enhance the graduate culture and the re-engagement of our community in the graduate experience. The report below highlights some of the Graduate School's major contribution dedicated to promoting the success of NC State's graduate students as well as graduate education more broadly framed within the context of Wolfpack 2030: Empowering the Extraordinary. Of note, although elements are listed under a single goal within the context of the strategic plan, the vast majority of the elements presented here span more than the goal under which they are described.

Goal 1: Empower students for a lifetime of success and impact.

- One of the most critical issues that higher education has been facing and which was exacerbated by the pandemic and especially during its aftermath is the issue of the mental health and well-being of our students, staff, and faculty. The Dean was a member of the Student Mental Health Task Force, and, in that context, served as a major voice for considering graduate students and their issues and needs as differing to a degree from those of the undergraduate population. Given the recommendations of that committee, the Graduate School in collaboration with the Administrative Board of the Graduate School have already initiated a range of elements in response to this:

- In partnership with the Wilson College of Textiles, we created a new embedded counselor position, and it was filled in February, 2023.
- Piloted a successful wellness event with SKY, an international organization devoted to wellness, in May 2023. We will hold the second iteration of their three half-day workshops over Fall Break.
- Preceding the task force and also based on suggestions from a subcommittee of the task force, we have begun the process of reviewing various policies and procedures in the Graduate Handbook to ensure, where possible, that may have impacted student well-being.
- After approval by a wide range of different constituencies ranging from the Graduate Student Association to Student Government to the Faculty and Staff Senates as well as the Council of Deans, “NC State University's Commitment to a Positive Graduate Education Culture” [<http://catalog.ncsu.edu/graduate/graduate-education-culture/>] was promulgated within the framework of the graduate catalog. It is devoted to developing a set of principles that should guide the interactions between graduate students, faculty, and staff with an emphasis on improving channels of clear communication and expectations.
- We continue to work with Enterprise Application Services (EAS) to roll out the degree audit for graduate degree programs. We have completed this for graduate certificates and a number of non-thesis master’s program. The aim is to finish the remaining degree programs by the end of next year.
- The Professional Development team has been boosted by the hiring of a new Assistant Dean, Rhonda Sutton. She has reinvigorated the group and has begun the process of rebuilding the broader team as the area in the Graduate School most

impacted by the Great Resignation.

Goal 2: Ensure preeminence in research, scholarship, innovation and collaboration.

- The addition of the Goodnight and Mansour Doctoral Fellowships has had a profound impact on the institution's ability to recruit and enroll the most qualified PhD students. To promote the maximum impact of these fellowships, the Graduate School worked with the Provost's Office as well as Central Advancement to develop an approach where these 'top-up' funds could be used without incurring GSSP costs. We developed an initial Goodnight cohort of 30 enrolled students for the 2022-23 academic year, and with the change in the approach adopted in Spring 2023, the 2023-24 cohort consists of 47 new PhD students from a broad range of STEM programs. We have also recruited 25 new international students with the funds provided for the Mansour awards from countries across the globe.
- The Graduate Student Support Plan (GSSP) is a pivotal program to attract and retain top graduate students to NC State. The program supports over 3500 graduate students with total funding exceeding \$63.3 million. Related to this and given the national pressure to lower stipend minimums, the Graduate School and the Provost Office conducted an assessment of the GSSP eligibility requirements, which have remained unchanged since its inception. Based on this review and to accommodate inflationary/cost of living increases, effective Fall 2023 the Graduate Assistantship (GA)/Fellowship minimum stipend to receive GSSP support was increased from \$8,000/year to \$10,000/year for Masters' and

\$15,000/year for doctoral students, respectively. Effective Fall 2024, the GA/Fellowship minimum stipends for GSSP eligibility will further increase to \$15,000/year for master's and \$20,000/year for doctoral students. While many of our academic programs meet and exceed these minimum stipend levels, the increase in minimum stipends will enhance the competitiveness of GA stipends and support to our graduate students.

- Under the direction of our Director for Communications and Marketing re-examined our approaches on a wide range of different fronts ranging from materials being produced for recruitment to revamping the Graduate School's website to partnering with central advancement, largely through our collaboration with Paul Brown, to develop a number of new approaches to engaging with alumni and other constituencies to support graduate education.
- The Provost's Fellowships and University Graduate Fellowships were used to recruit a total of 258 top applicants to our doctoral programs. In addition, the Graduate School awarded 21 Diversity Recruiting Fellowships as well as 68 and 66 grants were awarded using UNC Campus Scholarship and Diversity Graduate Assistance Grant funds, respectively.
- To diversify the composition of our international student population, the Graduate School has initiated a new approach that focuses on developing recruitment strategies
- The eight-year strategic program/department reviews were re-initiated initially in a virtual mode, but during Spring 2023, they returned to an in-person format, although the ease of engaging alumni and other constituencies through Zoom was maintained to improve participation of those important voices.

Goal 4: Champion a culture of equity, diversity, inclusion, belonging and well-being in all we do.

- In addition to offering fellowships and grants designed for URM recruitment and retention, the Graduate School engaged in other primarily diversity-focused recruiting efforts as well. Graduate School representatives participated in 26 diversity-focused recruiting fairs and conferences; at 19 of these Assistant Dean Shafer gave presentation designed to demystify the graduate application process as well as other topics. We also made initial contacts with some new institutions such as the University of the Virgin Islands, which was visited in January, 2023.
- The Graduate School continued to organize the Committee on Diversity, Equity and Inclusiveness (DEI) in Graduate Education comprised of representatives from a number of colleges and units to develop collaborative activities to recruit and retain graduate students from underrepresented groups.
- The Graduate School in coordination with the DEI Committee continues to organize "Crosstalks". These are designed to promote diversity in graduate education and to build a stronger community by giving students the opportunity to network with other graduate students from diverse backgrounds.
- The Graduate School partnered with University Human Resources to provide 6 weeks of paid parental leave for postdoctoral scholars. NC State employs approximately 500 postdoctoral scholars, and they were the only leave earning employee group without this benefit. The approval of paid parental leave for postdocs brings them in equity with not only other employee groups but also with similar postdocs at other UNC institutions and increases our competitiveness for

this group. They were also included in the FASAP, which gives them access to a range of benefits.

Goal 5: Drive institutional effectiveness through transformative technologies, cutting-edge processes and actionable data.

- The Graduate School has also been very engaged with continuing to refine both Curriculum Inventory Management (CIM) application for Courses and Programs – these are the software packages that underlie our processes associated with developing, updating, and using these pieces to provide the basis for our catalog. The accuracy of these pieces is critical to the effective, informed, and smooth functioning of the academic degree programs our graduate students enroll in. During the course of the past academic year, we oversaw the review and administration of 5 new programs and certificates, 3 program discontinuations, 75 program modifications, 57 new graduate courses and 103 course modifications.
- We actively contributed to the revision of how new academic program proposals are processed and supported on campus, together with a team from the Office of Instructional Programs and headed by SVP Helen Chen.
- We also worked with the Office of Accreditation and Assessment toward the implementation of a new assessment software in 2023-24 (this was delayed because of the reaffirmation process).
- Through conversations with the Administrative Board of the Graduate School, we led a conversation devoted to new authorship guidelines for graduate students, which was further complicated by the rise of accessible AI, especially ChatGPT (to

be finalized in early fall 2023).

- Contributed to the development of new standard operating procedures regarding posthumous degrees together Registration and Records.

Goal 6: Be recognized as the leading university for innovative partnerships, entrepreneurial thinking and applied problem solving.

- In partnership with the Provost's Office, the initiation of the use of Smartsheets to improve Graduate School processes: The Graduate School adopted the Smartsheet application to overhaul, automate, and modernize multiple processes. These include:
 - GSSP Exception process: The new application streamlines the process to manage the GSSP Exception requests from the departments and facilitates review and approval and timely communication of exception decisions.
 - Professional Development Registration: Application to create and manage workshops hosted by Graduate School's Professional Development Team.
 - Fellowship system: The application completely revamps the Fellowship request, approval and payment process to the new Smartsheet platform that integrates the front-end Fellowship nomination process with the back end awarding and recordkeeping function. The application enables significant efficiency through generation of data files that can be uploaded onto the Financial Aid system replacing the need for manual entry for each award. It will also allow streamlined collaboration with the Provost Office for more effective resource management related to Fellowships.
 - DGAN system: System for graduating students to record their names to

enable accurate pronunciation during graduation ceremonies by presenters.

- Data Request System: Developed a new Smarsheet application to replace the Asana system for departmental data request for graduate information.
- Within the context of our Accelerate to Industry (A2i) formed new partnerships with Toyota Battery Manufacturing, AgBiome, BD Technologies and Innovation, and the Environmental Protection Agency as well as re-initiating connections with other industry partners that had weakened during COVID.

Goal 7: Elevate the national and global reputation and visibility of NC State.

In the past year, we have implemented many new initiatives for the recruitment of international students building on some of the lesson learned from COVID as well as the continuing reduction in the applications and enrollment of Chinese students. This has led to the identification of specific countries that we will focus given their documented ability to produce students with strong academic abilities. Currently, we are focusing on Vietnam, Thailand, and Indonesia in Asia, Colombia, Chile and Brazil in Latin America, and Ghana and Nigeria in Sub-Saharan Africa. To date visits have been initiated to Vietnam, Thailand, and Colombia, with planned trips to Africa early in the 2023-24 academic year.

Administration: Changes and Achievements

Changes: Over the course of the past year, from a personnel standpoint the Graduate School has largely focused on rebuilding the Professional Development Dean. Assistant Dean Rhonda Sutton started in February, 2023 and has carried out searches for a new director of career advancement – filled by Kelly Rownd, who previously worked in the Career Center at LSU – and is working to finalize the hiring of a new director for teaching and communication. In addition, we have added a new position of a special projects/liaison

person to work on a variety of initiatives that we have and also to accommodate increased enrollment associated with Engineering Expansion. This position has been filled by a current employee, Jessica Whittier, and we have successfully filled her liaison position with Annette Adkison, the former Graduate Services Coordinator in Poultry Science/Physiology.

Selected Achievements

- Dean Peter Harries served as Treasurer for the Conference of Southern Graduate Schools (CSGS). Additionally, he ran workshops at both the annual and summer meetings of the Council of Graduate Schools. He also submitted to research publications with co-authors. He served on a myriad of university committees including, but not limited to: the Student Mental Health Task Force, the SACSCOC Reaffirmation Committee, and the Non-Degree Credentials Task Force (where he also chairs one of the subcommittees). He also served as PhD committee for a student who successfully completed his degree this past Spring.
- Associate Dean Pierre Gremaud participated served as PI on two NSF awards totally over \$2M and served as the advisor for a PhD student, who completed this year. He also published two research papers.
- Assistant Dean David Shafer was recently elected to the CSGS Executive Committee and serves as a Regional Specialist for Institute for Broadening Participation and on the Advisory Committee for the Southern Regional Education Board in addition to various committees at NC State.
- Savita Sharma, Assistant Dean for Fiscal Affairs, Operations, and IT was invited to serve on the Smartsheet review committee. She continues to serve on the EAC IT Steering team and HR Steering committee. Furthermore, her IT Team were engaged in the following external conference and presentations: Raj Bhosale (Director of Information

Management) was appointed as a co-chair for Leadership, Careers and Planning at SESUG 2023 and was selected as one of the three-member alumni team at University of Baltimore's Merrick School of Business to participate in a "Leadership Coaching" workshop. Vindhya Hegde, Data Analyst, presented a conference paper on Data Modeling and Visualization at the 2023 NCAIR Conference.

Recommendations: The dual elements of increasing the GSSP minimum stipends for master's and doctoral students and the additional resources of the Goodnight and Mansour PhD fellowships will continue to positively impact NC State's ability to compete globally for the best graduate-level talent. As we continue to build on these efforts, we further to increase the standing of NC State in an increasingly competitive environment. We also need to insure that as the graduate population grows, especially within in the increases projected through Engineering Expansion, that the Graduate School has the necessary increase in the graduate population.

Concerns: The most-recent SCOTUS decision, which ended affirmative action in admissions, will continue to reverberate through not only graduate admissions, but potentially through a variety of different areas. It is clearly going to disrupt the diversification of the graduate student population that has been a focus of the Graduate School given its importance to an effective education. Furthermore, the change in the state's funding model, which no longer provides appropriation for out-of-state and international students, will have an impact, but there are still considerable 'unknowns' within what this change will entail; clarification of that would be important from a variety of perspectives ranging from impacts on GSSP to planning new programs. A fear is that this will stymie attempts to continue to evolve the graduate offerings at NC State.