

Annual Report of the Graduate School 2024-25

The Graduate School's Efforts Devoted to Advancing the University's Strategic Plan:

Wolfpack 2030: Empowering the Extraordinary

The Graduate School continues to be a productive unit focused on the success of graduate education at NC State and in supporting the post-doctoral population at the institution. To that end and as outlined in the document below, we have pursued a broad range of initiatives that positively impact and support not only graduate students, but also graduate faculty and the numerous programs that comprise the institution's graduate offerings. These include a wide range of programming, approaches, and technological innovations and elements to enhance the experience of our graduate students. The most significant of these, although by no means all of the efforts undertaken by the Graduate School, are outlined in the report below. They are placed within in the primary goals of the Strategic Plan that they address, but, given the holistic nature of much of what we do and develop, many of them encompass elements of numerous goals.

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

- One of the major accomplishments was the completion of the Degree Audit, which replaced the prior Plan of Work, for the approximately 300 NC State graduate programs and certificates. This was a significant effort and involved working with various units across campus as well as with each program to ensure that they are correct. This also involved updating the catalog such that the program's perceived degree requirements were

congruent with those. This effort also overlaps with Goal 5, given the important role these elements will play in students determining a successful pathway to their degrees, it is included here. This system allows students working with Directors of Graduate Programs (DGPs) and faculty to much more effectively and efficiently outline the courses and milestones needed for degree completion within a distinct time frame. Furthermore, this included the creation of a new committee page and also a clearer designation of the various milestones needed for degree completion.

- Another major accomplishment was the successful launching of GradPath during the Spring 2025 – an annual evaluation system used by PhD students and their advisors to evaluate progress towards degree completion developed ‘in house’. Annual reviews have been a required element, however, prior to the launch of this application we had no systematic mechanism that we could employ to assess whether these have been done by an advisor or committee. We did know that in many cases this was not happening. The lack of review has created too many instances where students and advisors are not effectively communicating, especially when expectations are not being met, and can and has led to students being suddenly dropped by their advisors with little warning.
- An important element of the Graduate School’s offerings includes professional development (PD) for both graduate students and post-doctoral scholars. During the past year, our PD team delivered a total of 217 programs to over 2800 participants (Note: these include individual sessions as well elements of a larger “program” such as the Accelerate to Industry PLUS (A2i+) Immersion Week or the Leadership Learning Institute).

- Mentoring and the development of skills of both our faculty advising/mentoring graduate students as well as the students themselves is a widely recognized issue in graduate education. In the past year, the Graduate School in collaboration with the Office of Faculty Excellence has developed *Mentoring Matters*, a program that is focused on improving those elements in both of those populations.
- Developed and the Administrative Board of the Graduate School approved an Accelerated Bachelor's to PhD program which would allow undergraduates with a GPA of at least 3.500 and with research experience share 12 credits between their undergraduate and doctoral degrees. This will assist us in attracting some of our most talented undergraduate students into our doctoral programs and also provide them access to some of our most prestigious fellowships, such as the Goodnight Doctoral Fellowship, available at NC State.
- Instituted a new orientation for graduate assistants to help GA's understand their benefits and requirements.
- Developed an approach to deal with authorship in the context of doctoral dissertations and master's theses. This was approved by the Administrative Board of the Graduate School this past April.
- The Office of Postdoctoral Affairs is housed in the Graduate School and an example of programming that was developed specifically for them includes the Postdoctoral Readiness to Enter the Professoriate Program (PREPP). For the 2024-2025 academic year, a total of 411 postdoctoral scholars from NC State University, UNC-Chapel Hill, UNC-Charlotte, NC A&T State University, East

Carolina University, NC Central University and UNC-Wilmington attended these seven seminars.

- Working closely with various units across the university, including the Provost's Office and the Office of Research and Innovation, to develop plans to deal with funding delays and grant terminations that have impacted graduate students and post-doctoral scholars.

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

- The Graduate Student Support Plan (GSSP) provided tuition and health insurance support to over 3500 students for a total cost of approximately \$70M. The GSSP continues to provide critical financial resources to attract and retain top graduate students (primarily doctoral students) to support our research and teaching mission.
- The Graduate School continue to administered interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary fellowships, traineeships, and award programs estimated at ~\$10M.
- Provost's Fellowships and University Graduate Fellowships were used.
- The Graduate School received 50 nominations for the Mansour Doctoral Fellowships. Awards in the amount of \$10,000 each were made to 25 top incoming international students representing various countries from across the globe. We also welcomed 50 incoming students as the third cohort of the Goodnight Fellowship program.

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

- Significant work has been done by the Graduate School in response to the revised UNC-SO Policy 400.1. This mandates the review of academic programs using metrics associated with financial considerations, student outcomes and state economic needs. This has been done in partnership with the Graduate School and the Office of Assessment and Accreditation, University Data and Analytics, the Office of Instructional Programs and many other units. This has involved adding a new process to the assessments that we are already undertaking, and has included the development of a new PRR. We are currently working with the Wilson College of Textiles to initiate and refine the process. Other colleges will undergo the process in the future.
- Developed a new Fellowship system in MyPack portal to fully streamline the fellowship nomination, review, approval and payment process for over 16 fellowships managed by the Graduate School. The new system also incorporates a process for colleges/departments to award fellowships from their internal sources.
- Launched “Grad-HR Now” within the “HR Now” system as part of One-HR Initiative. The platform serves as both a knowledge repository for graduate assistantship HR actions and service request platform.
- The Graduate School has also played a substantial role partnering with faculty and the Office of Academic Strategy, Innovation, and Solutions to create a new Master’s of Science in Cybersecurity (COE) and the initial steps necessary for the approval of a new Master’s in Agricultural Business Management (CALS).

- During the 2024-25 academic year, the ABGS approved 96 program revisions and 196 courses. This reflects the continual evaluation and improvement of our academic offerings.

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

- Given the importance of interdisciplinary efforts, The Graduate School has been playing a lead role in conjunction with the Provost's Office to develop and implement cutting- edge programs. This includes the development of two new programs/certificates during the past year: Master's of Global One Health and the Graduate Certificate in Real Estate. The former will be housed under The Graduate School when it launches in Fall 2026 joining the Master's of Science in the Foundations of Data Science.
- Collaborations of various types are critical the effective and successful functioning of The Graduate School. In the realm of professional development, we regularly partner with the Libraries, the Office of Faculty Excellence, the Office of Assessment and Accreditation, the Office of Interdisciplinary Programs, DELTA, the University Career Center, along with many others.
- A further example of innovative partnerships that extends nationally and beyond has been catalyzed by the NSF Innovations in Graduate Education grant that we received. Currently, our Accelerate to Industry (A2i) network has expanded to 41 partnering institutions. It also involves novel collaboration with industry, and new

the addition of new industry partners, such as Toyota Battery Manufacturing, Hitachi Energy and Milliken.

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

- Staff met with prospective students one-on-one at various recruiting events, and, given the reputation of those from NC State, gave 25 presentations on various issues related to graduate education. These range from “Making Your Scholars Competitive for Graduate School” McNair Promising Practices Institute to “Being the Best Applicant” Virtual Presentation to NIH RISE Scholars at the University of Puerto Rico-Cayey.
- In the past year, we have built on several new initiatives for the recruitment of international students, largely focused on recruiting students from a range of specifically targeted countries, including Vietnam, Indonesia, and Thailand in Southeast Asia, Colombia in Latin America, and Nigeria, Kenya, and Ghana in Sub-Saharan Africa. We continue to see pronounced increases in applications through enrollment from prospective students from those countries.

Administration: Changes and Achievements

Changes: The Graduate School hired a new Director of Communication Skills Development, Dr. Malaka Friedman, which represented an expansion of this role to encompass more than writing. She replaces Dr. Katie Homar, who moved to be closer to family. In addition, we hired Bailey Southard as our Admissions CRM Specialist, who replaced Lauren Liston and Luisa Rincon as our Admissions & International Clearance Processor, replacing Katherine Dils, who pursued other option. Finally, we added a new Support Specialist, Celia Settlemyer, to assist the Graduate School, particularly our Professional Development group, with event planning.

Selected Achievements:

- Dean Peter Harries started his second three-year term as Treasurer of the Conference of Southern Graduate Schools (CSGS) meetings and serves on the Advancement Advisory Committee for the Council of Graduate Schools . He also published two papers related in paleobiology and has one further manuscripts under review. In addition, he serves on a broad spectrum of university committees representing graduate interests.
- Associate Dean Pierre Gremaud has given several research presentations; he was one of the leaders of the SAMSI program on numerical analysis in data science and served on NSF panels. He also was intimately engaged with a range of initiatives associated with the further development of assessment on campus.
- Assistant Dean Lian Lynch continues to serve on a variety of standing committees including the SIS Steering Team, the Academic Calendar Committee, and Commencement Advisory Committee. In addition, she also has served on the Student Mental Health Task Force Implementation Team for Policies & Regulations as well as that for Academic Advising.
- Assistant Dean David Shafer has given many presentations at various recruitment events across the state and nationally over the past year. He also serves on the Executive Board for the Conference of Southern Graduate Schools Membership Committee.
- Assistant Dean Savita Sharma chairs the Enterprise Applications Committee. Members of The Graduate School's IT Team presented their work at numerous conferences/seminars, including at the 2023 Southeast SAS User Group and at the North Carolina Association for Institutional Research Conference.

- Assistant Dean Rhonda Sutton received a grant from the NC State University Foundation to support A2i. She also published two contributions in Inside Higher Education's Carpe Careers column. She was engaged with a range of committees across campus and was a critical partner and leader of a variety of post-doctoral scholar activities that ranged across the UNC System.

Service Environment Changes: Given the unprecedented changes that have occurred since the start of the year, graduate education is grappling with and attempting to plan in the face of a range of unprecedented unpredictable conditions. One of the most prominent of these are the potential reductions in the funding available from a range of agencies, including the National Science Foundation and the National Institutes of Health. Furthermore, changing in the lending environment for domestic students, largely due to changes in the Grad+ Loan Program, is a further potential threat to enrollment, especially in certain programs. Finally, reductions in embassy staffing and the concomitant slowing in the ability to access visa appointments are disrupting elements of our international population. On the academic front, the rise of AI is forcing programs to rethink their curricula to ensure that our graduates are career ready.

Recommendations: We need to start scenario planning to model how graduate enrollment may be impacted by fluctuations in some of the components outlined in the previous section. This would allow us to be more proactive in terms of responding to changes if and when they may be implemented. This is also critical to developing a plan to continue NC State's research-intensive legacy. Furthermore, there needs to be greater clarity behind the graduate component of Engineering Expansion so that the Graduate School and other entities can plan for the changes associated with that effort.

Concerns: Beyond those voiced above in terms of the broad range of uncertainty under

which we are currently trying to mitigate, some other concerns revolve around developing increased budgetary transparency, especially around enrollment, so that there are incentives for the development of new, cutting-edge graduate programs. We also need to ensure that as the graduate population continues to grow that resources are allocated to various aspects of graduate education to ensure the continued student success of this cohort.