

Annual Report of the Graduate School 2025-26

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

Wolfpack 2030: Empowering the Extraordinary

The Graduate School continues to be the unit that focuses on the success and development of graduate education at NC State in partnership with departments, programs, and other units that comprise the university. These partnerships are critical to our ability to continually upgrade the nature of graduate education at NC State. To accomplish those goals, we have pursued a broad range of initiatives that involve a spectrum of elements that impact not only graduate students, but also graduate faculty and the over 300 degree programs and graduate certificates that comprise the institution's graduate offerings. The most significant elements, although by no means all of these efforts, are outlined in the report below. They are placed within in the primary goal from NC State's 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.

- We continued the evolution of the GradPath system; it is an annual evaluation platform used by doctoral students and their advisors to evaluate progress towards degree completion. Version 2 allows programs to add up to three additional evaluative questions and allows Graduate Service Coordinators to view completion progress of their respective students to help in ensuring timely completion. For this academic year, almost 2,500 doctoral students completed their evaluation representing a ~21% increase from last year. These evaluations are critical to ensuring that doctoral students and their advisors are “on the same page” and that the students are proceeding to degree completion in an effective manner.

- 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).
- Interstride, a platform that assists international and domestic students with U.S. and international career opportunities, was officially launched in Fall 2025. As of June 30, 2026, 1,114 graduate students have registered to use the platform. It is important to note that the funding is a collaborative as all of the colleges provide financial support for the program.
- The Office of Postdoctoral Affairs is housed in the Graduate School and we have worked extensively with the NC State’s Postdoctoral Association to develop and provide programming for that cohort. We also work in partnership with those equivalent offices across the UNC System to provide professional development opportunities for postdocs, including a System-wide post-doc research symposium as well as the Postdoctoral Readiness to Enter the Professorship Program (PREPP – let by NC State). These offerings included 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.

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

- The Graduate Student Support Plan (GSSP) provided tuition and health insurance support to over 3,781 students for a total cost of \$71.1M (~71% or \$51.0M was funded through

Provost allocations). GSSP continues to provide critical financial resources to attract and retain top graduate students (primarily doctoral students) to support NC State's research and teaching missions.

- Although this certainly has significant overlap with Goal 1, in 2025-26, the Graduate School administered interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary fellowships, traineeships, and award programs estimated at \$10.2 million across 37 projects. This included \$2.7 million for 16 matching commitments provided by the Office of the Provost.
- Provost's Fellowships and University Graduate Fellowships were used to recruit a total of 242 top applicants to our doctoral programs. In addition, the Graduate School received 31 nominations for the Mansour Doctoral Fellowships. Awards in the amount of \$10,000 each were made to 22 top in-coming international students representing 13 countries. We also welcomed 40 incoming students as the fourth cohort of the Goodnight Fellowship program. 11 fellows from the initial cohort of 30 continued to receive funding, as well as all 50 from the second cohort and all 59 from the third cohort.
- The Graduate School planned and managed the 19th annual research symposium, which featured 192 posters from 63 graduate programs from all colleges. A total of 46 faculty and other experts served as judges.
- The Graduate School also undertook significant recruitment activities both domestically and internationally. These involved engagement with 13 different recruitment fairs across the country as well as direct engagement with 10 institutions to meet with students. These efforts are critical to finding the academic talent needed not only for NC State's academic programs but also for the research objectives of the institution. In terms of international effects, those include in-person recruitment in Latin America allowing interaction with ~15,600 prospective students and also visiting 10 "pipeline" universities to establish

long-term relationships. In addition, strategically collaborated with EducationUSA host over 10 joint webinars and Instagram Lives, reaching thousands of international students virtually.

- To promote Prospective international Student Engagement: Scaled virtual, the Graduate School hosted monthly prospective student webinars (drawing ~3,000 total attendees) and launching a dedicated WhatsApp channel, including a highly active admitted-student community of more than 500 members.
- The results of these activities have shown significant growth and continued diversification of our international student population. We have expanded our geographic footprint with significant growth from 2025 to 2026 in final admissions from priority and emerging markets, including Canada (+100%), Nepal (+75%), Vietnam (+63%), Peru (+50%), Sri Lanka (+33%), Kenya (+33%), and South Korea (+16%).
- The Graduate School also provides two tiers of funding to promote the recruitment activities of individual departments/programs. In 2025-26, The Graduate School partnered to fund 33 department-level proposals for 2026-27 recruitment. The unit also funds five larger-scale Innovation Recruiting Grants, which promote a comprehensive overhaul of recruiting processes to increase the quality of students applying and enrolling at NC State.

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

- The Graduate School is constantly evaluating and developing data-rich dashboards to provide the information needed to manage and promote graduate education. For example, given the issues surrounding the recruitment and enrollment of international

students, one of this year's efforts was focused on creating a dashboard to show the details of those changes.

- Launched a new Fellowship system within SIS which fully streamlined the fellowship nomination, review, approval and payment process for over 16 fellowships managed by the Graduate School. The new system made a wholesale change in managing fellowships, providing prompt communication of nomination status, and significantly improving how readily students obtain the funds awarded.
- The admissions transcript validation process has been updated to streamline the student's admission experience and the ability to readily identify those students entering doctoral programs who have completed master's degrees. Now final degree stated transcripts are noted during the admissions process and loaded into SIS. This indicator drives the student checklist item in SIS in addition to the previous master's credit flag used for a variety of processes. A new liaison dashboard page has been implemented in SIS to display checklist items, documents, etc. This is a page that will be expanded over time to become a one-stop shop for administrators allowing ready access to a broad range of data and milestones associated with graduate student success.
- There were several other changes that were implemented to ensure better tracking of student progress. These include: 1) a new committee page that has been implemented in SIS; 2) as we progressively move an increasing number of our forms and processes away from paper, the addition of external and interdisciplinary committee members as well as consultants to advisory committees is now a paperless process and it also includes their CVs which are then routed for approval; and 3) an updated milestone process. They will now display "just in time" as opposed to being loaded immediately upon admission. This

will more accurately reflect students' progress towards degree.

- We have been moving from the Plan of Work to a new degree audit process that, once it is in place for all programs, will make many aspects of overseeing programs and graduate certificates much more efficient. At this point, the process has been completed for all graduate degree programs as well as graduate certificates.
- Significant work has been done by the Graduate School in response to the revised UNC-SO Policy 400.1. In partnership with the Office of Assessment and Accreditation and with University Data and Analytics building the relevant dashboard, the unit has played a significant role in translating the System Office requirements into collectable data elements. At this point, the pilot project with the Wilson College of Textiles has been completed and those with the Poole College of Management as well as the College of Veterinary Medicine are underway.
- The Graduate School has also played a substantial role partnering with faculty and the Office of Academic Strategy, Innovation, and Solutions to complete the approval for several new master's degrees, including the Masters of Science in Cybersecurity, the Masters of Science in Wide-Band Gap Semiconductors, the Masters in Global One Health, and the Masters in Agricultural Business Management. All of these degrees will be admitting their initial cohorts in Fall 2026.
- Co-hosted an inaugural Innovate with Slate event to bring together leaders across campus to share and learn how Slate helps admissions and communication professionals recruit and enroll top students at NC State.
- Given the new rules associated with the changes in ADA requirements, the Graduate School now requires that our Electronic Theses and Dissertations (ETDs) conform with those

requirements. This required updating templates for both Word as well as LaTeX to make the process relatively seamless for students.

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 graduate programs. As things currently stand, we house three interdisciplinary programs and are in current conversation about adding a fourth.
- Driven by a coloration between a number of units within the Graduate School, we launched an initial foray to better understand how social media can be used to effectively recruit graduate students. This pilot study is still on-going, but initial results have provided important information as how to do this effectively.
- 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 to expand and enhance our offerings.
- A further example of innovative partnerships that extends nationally and beyond has occurred 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.

- In the past year, we have built on several new initiatives for the recruitment of international students, including:
 - Together with the Office of Global Engagement, we went to DC and had meetings with various embassy staff (including Oman and Indonesia) as well as country level funding groups (e.g., the Saudi Arabia Cultural Mission) focused on education. This was an opportunity to discuss NC State's abilities to given their funded students graduate degrees in areas national need.
 - Recruitment trips to Asia and Latin America to focus on recruiting graduate talent in Indonesia and Vietnam as well as Brazil.

Administration: Changes and Achievements

Changes: The biggest change within the Graduate School was the departure of the former Assistant Dean for Business Operations, Savita Sharma, who moved to the Poole College of Management. The decision was made for a range of reasons to not replace that position, but instead to elevate a range of employees with significant expertise in their respective domains. Furthermore, the Graduate School is in the process of hiring a new Interdisciplinary Graduate Services Coordinator who will support the Foundation of Data Science and Global One Health master's degrees.

Selected Achievements of Graduate School Senior Leadership

- Dean Peter Harries serves as Treasurer of the Conference of Southern Graduate Schools, the President-elect of the North Carolina Council of Graduate Schools, serves on the Institute of Emerging Issue's National Advisory Board and chairs their Program and Policy Committee, and was recently nominated to be the chair-elect for IDEA's Executive Cabinet as a member. In addition, he serves on a broad spectrum of

university committees ranging from the Mental Health Implementation Team focused on advising to the Data Governance Committee to the University Housing Committee.

- Associate Dean Pierre Gremaud serves on various committees across the university, especially representing the Graduate School on those that have an AI focus.
- 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 represents Graduate School interests on a broad range of university-level committers, including the Slate users' group and data governance committee.
- Assistant Dean David Shafer has given many presentations at various recruitment events across the state and nationally over the past year, including at various recruitment fairs designed for TRIO/McNair students and also at institutions both in NC and beyond.
- Assistant Dean Rhonda Sutton continued her service as a CARES Partner focused on graduate students. She also served on several other university committees, which included the High Impact Experiences committees that involved graduate students and on the Engagement Operations Council.

Recommendations: AI continues to have an ever-increasing impact on the academic and research enterprises as the effectiveness and scope of tools continues to rapidly evolve. It is critical that we think of those impacts and what is needed to ensure that our degrees remain at the cutting edge and effectively train our students to be workforce ready. Therefore, it is critical that we have a cohesive, holistic approach to promote informed curricular changes that can help our degree delve into the range of competencies needed by students in a given discipline.

We also need to address the nature of the Graduate Student Support Plan (GSSP) within in the context of a dramatically changed model for appropriation funding in combination with

Engineering expansion. The funding model under which it was initially formulated was dramatically different, although the critical importance of graduate students, especially doctoral students, to the research expectations remains.

Concerns: Continuing from last year, the long ‘tail’ of post-COVID conditions remains a significant challenge for graduate education. The repopulation of campus has been quite gradual, and the reduction of ‘accidental learning’, which is a critical component of especially doctoral education, remains a challenge for NC State and virtually every other institution.

The other concern is impact that new regulations and rules, both in place and proposed, governing international students are going to have on our graduate student enrollment. Given the new duration of status constraints, we need to ensure that we have well-articulated pathways for our doctoral students to complete their degrees. Furthermore, these new rules will undoubtedly negatively impact both application and tuition revenues, which will negatively impact NC State’s financial health.