

Provost's Task Force on Graduate Education
and the Graduate Student Experience

March 24, 2006

This Task Force originates through the Provost of West Virginia University at the urging of the Implementation Team for the 2010 Plan.

West Virginia University is designated under the old Carnegie Foundation classification as a Doctoral/Research University—Extensive institution where graduate education is a critical part of its teaching and research missions. [The new Carnegie classification designates WVU as a Research University (high research activity)]. By either classification, graduate education helps define and differentiate WVU from other institutions and is highly valued by the faculty and the institution. WVU's grant activities and the number of doctoral degrees awarded annually place the university among a select group of higher education institutions nationally. Given that graduate students are trained both through their scholarship and the experience of teaching undergraduates, our graduate programs and the students they attract are central to advancing WVU's status as a uniquely student-centered institution.

The education and experience that graduate students receive at West Virginia University was identified by many members of the original Strategic Planning Committee and later by the Deans of the colleges and schools as an area worthy of examination relative to the goals 1 and 4 of WVU's 2010 Plan to build the foundation for academic excellence. Moreover, the quality of our graduate students and our graduate programs is a significant factor in faculty recruitment and success central to goal 4. To this end, a Task Force is established. The Task Force will be chaired by Larry Hornak and Fred King. Members include: Pat Callery, Liz Fones-Wolfe, Andrew Hawkins, Bob Stitzel, Chris Plein, Curt Peterson, Judy Abbott, Thomas Saba, Brian Woerner, and Kimberly Fisher.

The Task Force is to report to the Strategic Planning Implementation Team by mid-September, 2006.

The work of this Task Force will address the recently endorsed recommendation of the Faculty Senate – namely, *to undertake a comprehensive assessment of WVU's treatment of graduate education and research and make concrete recommendations for a more holistic approach to achieving effective linkages, enhancing quality, and sustaining growth.*

Furthermore, the work of the Task Force needs to take into account the forecast in enrollment growth in graduate education for each college and school.

The Task Force is charged with defining the role of graduate education at West Virginia University, as well as addressing the following four topics.

Topic 1. Make recommendations regarding the Organization of Graduate Education

- Evaluate the role of graduate education administration centrally
- Evaluate the relationship between graduate education and research
- Evaluate the function and role of graduate education administration within colleges/schools

Topic 2. Define “Best Practices” for Program Growth and Student Success

- Identify the best marketing and recruitment strategies
- Identify new programs that reach out to WVU’s undergraduate population (4 + 1 dual degrees; direct PhD programs, for example)
- Lay-out issues related to poor retention and long time to graduation
- Identify indicators of success of graduate student career placement

Topic 3. Evaluate Student Support and Development

- Define measures of satisfaction with student experience
- Examine options that lead to a student-centered academic environment and reputation
- Identify opportunities for professional development

Topic 4. Suggest Criteria for Programmatic Assessment and Evaluation

- Provide a framework/guidelines for program assessment
- Assess the use of external evaluators in the five-year program reviews
- Determine how to define national indicators
- Review institutional policy for graduate faculty status
- Assess the use of advisory boards, especially for professional programs
- Suggest ways to report actions relative to the strategic planning goals into program reviews