**UNM Council on Academic Priorities**

**Graduate Education and Research Committee**

The UCAP Graduate Education and Research Committee met on 2 February 2012 and again on 2-16-2012 to discuss the future of graduate education and research at the University of New Mexico. Members of the committee are Julia Fulghum and Gary Harrison, co-chairs; Holly Barnet-Sanchez (Fine Arts); Holly Buchanan (Health Sciences Library); Chuck Fleddermann (Engineering); Jean Giddens (Nursing); Don Godwin (Pharmacy); Tim Gutierrez (Student Affairs); Gene Henley (Public Admin); Kevin Malloy (A&S); Deborah Rifenbary (Education); Lawrence Roybal (GRC, OGS); Diana Sargent (OVPR); Elly van Mil (OVPR); Linney Wix (Faculty Senate Graduate and Professional Committee); and Travis McIntyre and Matt Rush (Graduate and Professional Student Association).

The focus of our discussions has been upon "Excellence in Graduate Education,” covering all aspects including administering graduate education; funding, recruitment, retention, and degree completion; and the image and identity of graduate studies and graduate students at UNM. The committee recognizes that the recent change in the state funding formula for higher education provides an opportunity for the faculty and administration to improve graduate education at UNM as a means to enhance recruitment, retention, and degree completion, as well as to raise the quality of graduate degree programs. Keeping in mind the goal to enhance graduate education at New Mexico’s flagship university over the next five years, the discussion settled upon the following interrelated themes.

**Academic Priority for Graduate Studies:** The University of New Mexico should strive to enhance the proportion of graduate degree production relative to undergraduate degree production; to increase the number and quality of minority, under-represented, and international graduate and professional students to augment UNM’s diversity measured against national standards; and to develop more innovative, better managed, interdisciplinary graduate programs to enhance the graduate curriculum.

**Increasing Graduate Degree Production and the Quality of the Graduate Student Population:** One mark of a flagship research university is a high proportion of graduate student relative to undergraduate student population. At the University of Pennsylvania, for example, graduate students comprise 51% of the total university enrollment; at the University of Southern California, 53%; the University of Wisconsin, Madison and University of California, Berkeley, 28%; and at the University of Texas, Austin 25%. In Spring 2012, UNM’s graduate and professional students comprise 21% of UNM’s total student enrollment. The committee believes the Univeristy should aim to increase that percentage to 25% or more in the next five years. Keep in mind that growing the graduate population need not be at the expense of the undergraduate population. Rather, the graduate research enterprise will strengthen undergraduate programs and the opportunities for undergraduate students to participate in research. A robust graduate research enterprise and higher numbers of graduate students promote intellectual discourse, generating new scholarship and creative work, new centers and institutes, and new symposia and curricula that benefit the entire university and lead to economic development within the state. The new initiatives following graduate research and creative work will also attract stronger undergraduates—resident, non-resident, and international—to UNM and help to develop a culture of scholarly and creative work at UNM. Since the graduate research enterprise to a great degree mirrors faculty research, a growing graduate program also means and must be accompanied by an increase in first-rate faculty at the university.

**Recruitment**: To increase the numbers of graduate and professional students and the production of graduate degrees, UNM must develop a robust recruitment effort. Recruitment is two tiered: to attract a competitive and diverse applicant pool and to matriculate graduate students at the top ranks of that applicant pool. To attract top quality graduate students a concerted effort needs to be made to improve the compensation packages for graduate students; to recruit and retain first-rate and diverse faculty at the cutting edge of their fields; to develop innovative curricula, including cutting edge interdisciplinary degrees; and to enhance the image of UNM. The Office of Graduate Studies should work collaboratively with departments to support discipline-specific recruitment efforts, while at the same time initiating centralized recruitment strategies, particularly focused upon attracting, and then matriculating, international, minority, and underrepresented graduate students of high academic merit.

 *Competitive Graduate Student Financial Support*.Any recruitment effort will be hampered if UNM cannot meet or exceed the minimum compensation packages offered by competing institutions. It is not enough to get students to the door, we must be able to matriculate, retain, and graduate them by supporting them adequately with fellowships and scholarships, not just with assistantships. Lack of adequate financial support proves to be a barrier to graduate recruitment and retention, as departments across the university often lose top applicants to universities that can offer better compensation packages. UNM should not offer any assistantships below .25 FTE so that all graduate students with assistantships have benefits. Academic affairs at UNM should commit more I&G money to expand the number of assistantship opportunities as well as work with the UNM Foundation, business and industry to create some named fellowships and/or scholarships.

 *Tuition*. Eliminating non-resident tuition for graduate students, at least for doctoral students, should be a priority. While a prevailing view is that non-resident graduate students generate substantial income for the university, relatively few nonresident graduate students pay non-resident tuition. In Spring 2012, of the total 1422 nonresident graduate students (including international students), only 112 pay full tuition. While these students generate about $935,384.42, if these same students paid resident tuition they would generate $268,016.00 if they were charged resident rates (assuming 9 hours of enrollment and no differentials). Eliminating nonresident tuition for graduate students—at least for doctoral students—would help in our recruitment efforts by offering nonresident students a better financial compensation package, as well as recognizing that for doctoral students in particular UNM needs to draw upon a national and international pool of candidates in order to attract top candidates who will diversify and strengthen the quality of our graduate student population. The committee believes that graduate students should not be seen as a source of revenue, but as a source of academic and cultural capital.

 *Innovative Curricular Initiatives.* Graduate recruitment could be spurred by promoting and supporting the development of 3+2 or 4+1 Bachelor’s/Master’s programs. These programs could serve as a pipeline to graduate programs for top undergraduate students from UNM, including top minority and underrepresented students, and could help them eventually move on to Ph.D. programs here or elsewhere. Other innovative programs, such as the Professional Science Master’s degree, which has seen accelerated growth since its inception two years ago, as well as a stand-alone interdisciplinary degree program administered by OGS or a College of Interdisciplinary Studies could help UNM attract first-rate graduate students. In addition, a university-wide effort to promote internships and training grants would lead to innovative research and professional opportunities for graduate students, enhancing both recruitment and curriculum.

 *Graduate Academic and Professional Support Initiatives*. The Graduate Resource Center (GRC) and Graduate Student Funding Initiative (GSFI), now in their second year of operation, in collaboration with longer standing graduate student organizations such as GPSA and PNMGC, as well as the ethnic centers, have begun to expand and solidify the sense of community among graduate students from various disciplines. With only three years remaining on the Title V PPOHA grant that currently funds the center, I&G and external funding will be needed to ensure the longevity of what have become vital services whose constituencies have grown among graduate students. The academic and professional development services, including thesis/dissertation boot camps, writing support groups, writing and statistics consultations, workshops and consultations on grant writing and research ethics, along with the Latina/Latino Graduate and Professional Student Fellowship and UNM Graduate and Professional Student Academy can be promoted as a recruitment feature for UNM graduate programs. The Teaching Assistant Resource Center (TARC/I-TARC) should be enhanced and the training of teaching assistants should be more robust, with certificate programs and workshops integrated into our current programs for faculty teaching enhancement.

 *Enhanced Communication and Marketing*. OGS has updated and redesigned its website and plans to profile graduate faculty and graduate student accomplishments on the site. While OGS once produced brochures for departments, currently it does not have a staff position for marketing. Appropriately staffed, OGS, in collaboration with University Communications and Marketing, could lead an effort to help graduate programs update their websites, develop individualized recruitment materials, and coordinate a team of “graduate ambassadors” among the graduate students who could contact or meet with prospective applicants and prospective matriculants.

**Development**: The UNM Foundation must take graduate education seriously and increase its efforts to find support for graduate programs. The Graduate Resource Center, named fellowships and scholarships, and named internships could be targeted for a campaign. We need to distinguish between graduate *education* and graduate *school* (OGS); that is, make clear we’re not trying to finance OGS, but graduate students and programs. OGS could work with the UNM Foundation, colleges and graduate programs to find distinctive graduate programs that would attract donors. The UNM Foundation, in collaboration with OGS and the Alumni Association, should develop a campaign targeting former students who received financial support for their graduate study at UNM. Appointing a foundation officer specializing in graduate education to work with OGS, the Provost’s Office, colleges and departments might help to meet these objectives.

*Image, Identity, and Community:* It must be recognized that graduate research and graduate education invigorates, rather than detracts from, undergraduate education at the university. Adopting the position articulated in the UCAP Values Committee, the committee believes that the graduate research enterprise guides the undergraduate experience at UNM. Therefore, UNM must educate the community and state leadership that research is key to higher education at all levels and that placing more emphasis in and dedicating more resources to graduate research will benefit not only graduate and undergraduate programs, but the community and the state of New Mexico.

 Creating a graduate/post-doctoral center to coordinate scholarly activities and the exchange of ideas could be a way to promote and highlight graduate research across disciplines. The current collaboration between the OVPR and OGS in the Graduate Student Funding Initiation and the Graduate Resource Center could be the core from which such a center would grow. Graduate student initiatives, including the current research symposia and program-sponsored peer and faculty mentoring among GPSA, PNMGC and the ethnic centers could also be a major part of this community building project. In addition, UNM should grow its outreach and service learning programs so that leaders in our community, in business and industry recognize the value of graduate education.

 *Graduate Housing and Commons*. Some universities have a designated graduate residential hall for first year graduate students. A common residential space for first-year graduate students located on central campus could help to build a sense of shared purpose among graduate students and help contribute to a sense of community and place. UNM should seriously consider establishing housing designated for first-year graduate students. As a step toward a graduate commons, UNM should consider opening the Faculty Club to graduate students so they have a space on campus to socialize and hold events.

**Administration:** A comparison with the administrative structure of peer institutions shows that proportionate to graduate enrollments the Office of Graduate Studies at UNM has been working lean relative to its peers, especially with regard to faculty presence (i.e., Associate and Assistant Deans drawn from the faculty). While OGS has expanded some of its services to the graduate community over recent years—the Graduate Resource Center, the Graduate Ombuds, and the Graduate Student Funding Initiative in collaboration with OVPR—it has lost its Associate Dean position, a senior staff person charged with recruitment and marketing, as well as an in-house IT support staff person. In order to address the issues discussed here, the committee believes that OGS must be more adequately staffed to meet the growing needs of UNM’s graduate students and programs.

 *Collaboration*. In the last two years, in part because of the GRC and GSFI, OGS has strengthened its collaborations with graduate student groups, the OVPR, and OSET. By Fall 2012, OSET and TARC will merge to form the Center for Excellence in Teaching for Learning (CETL). OGS needs to work more closely with colleges and graduate units, however, to grow and support graduate recruitment efforts, to oversee (if not administer) interdisciplinary programs, and to coordinate data gathering and reporting on graduate student recruitment, retention and placement.

 *Data Management*. To support data-driven decision making, OGS must produce and maintain robust data about our graduate programs. While OGS collaborates with Enrollment Management and Institutional Research to produce reports about enrollment and graduation trends, a wider net must be cast working with departments and colleges to gather accurate data on graduate retention, time to degree, and job placement. Synchronization of data systems and reporting is essential to efficient data management for graduate programs, and a concerted effort to coordinate among stakeholders—including OGS, IR, Enrollment Management, Payroll, Bursars, colleges and departments—is key to success. Both the new state funding formula for higher education and assessment of the impact of the improvements described here will require accurate data on graduate programs and graduate students, coordinated among departments, colleges, and even state institutions, such as NMSU and NM Tech.