Report to Provost Barbara Snyder from the Committee to Review the Graduate School

The Ohio State University

February 1, 2006

Committee to Review the Graduate School

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Melanie Bales, Associate Professor, Department of Dance
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Executive Summary

Promoting excellence in graduate education, especially at the doctoral level, is critical in realizing the goal of the University’s Academic Plan to make The Ohio State University a leading public university. With this in mind, the Committee to Review the Graduate School was created by the Provost to review the Graduate School, but in actuality it had a broader mandate – to review how the University structures graduate education and performs the functions necessary to support it in achieving excellence and to recommend changes for improvement where warranted. The Committee met from March 2005 through January 2006 to perform its task and issue its report. The resulting report is unanimously supported by Committee members.

The report begins with the recognition that there are some serious problems facing graduate education at Ohio State, which limit our ability to concentrate resources and energies as effectively as is necessary to realize our high aspirations for graduate education. The primary problems are financial, involving the failure to fund doctoral education appropriately, especially under the new budget system, and to fund doctoral fellowships at a level that enables us to compete with the nation’s top universities. Additional problems are the uneven quality of graduate programs and the failure to regulate quality in an effective manner. The report contains numerous recommendations to address these and other problems.

Part I of the report, circulated to the University community in November 2005, recommends that the current structure for graduate education be maintained: a Graduate School that is aligned with the academic units of the University in reporting directly to the Provost. This model has served the University well, and it is the preferred model among all but a handful of our peer universities. Part II of the report, which is promulgated for the first time below, recommends that many of the core functions of the present Graduate School also be continued — including its oversight of quality in graduate programs, its investment of University fellowship funds to support graduate students, and its oversight of admissions and recruitment of graduate students – but with some important operational changes. We envision an even stronger role for the Dean of the Graduate School in fulfilling these responsibilities. Among the most important of the recommendations for changes are:

Related to the structure of the Graduate School:
• Appoint the Dean of the Graduate School to the President’s Cabinet.
• Create a new Graduate Council to work directly with the Graduate School and its Dean.

Related to Graduate School funding competitions:
• Increase funding for first-year and dissertation Graduate School fellowships.
• Eliminate the Graduate School’s Post-Doctoral Fellowship Program.
• Give top priority for Graduate School fellowships, fee authorizations, and research grants to PhD students and other students like them who are pursuing degrees requiring original scholarly or creative work that is necessary for faculty or research careers.
  • PhD/MFA applicants would be eligible for University Fellowships.
  • Some terminal masters students would be eligible for Enrichment Fellowships.
• Require a minimum level of program quality for its students to be eligible to compete for Graduate School fellowships.
• Grant eligibility for Graduate School fellowships to incumbent Ohio State students moving from masters to PhD programs if they had not been considered previously for fellowships.
• Decentralize the University Fellowship decisions to colleges, where the number of fellowships and the allocation rules make it feasible; other Graduate School fellowships would continue to be decided centrally.
• Reallocate to University or Presidential fellowships any fee authorization or other funds freed up by following the Committee’s recommended rules for eligibility.
• Discount tuition for graduate students while they are at the dissertation stage, if it is not financially disadvantageous to the University.

Related to Graduate School oversight for graduate education:
• Establish Graduate School criteria for Graduate Faculty status, but local program and college decide who qualifies.
• Eliminate Graduate School Representatives from examination committees, but encourage committees to include faculty from outside the programs as regular committee members.
• Require annual dissertation progress reports to the chairs of graduate studies committees and probation, then termination, for dissertation students earning consecutive U grades.
• Conduct regular program reviews for all graduate programs under the aegis of the Graduate School.
• Require all programs and the Graduate School to maintain up-to-date records on a variety of metrics related to quality and the funding of graduate education.

Related to the Graduate School role in services, recruitment, admissions, and placement
• Move the reporting line of the Graduate Admissions Office to the Graduate School.
• Require separate admission decisions for masters and PhD degree programs.
• Give the Graduate School responsibility for coordinating, maintaining, and enhancing the effectiveness of University-wide programs for recruiting graduate students, especially minority, domestic, and Ohio students.
• Assign the responsibility for nominating graduate student Fulbright Fellows to the Graduate School.
• Provide additional funding to the Graduate School so that it can establish and maintain a career development office for graduate students.