

**Graduate Education Task Force
Final Report
Presented to the Vice President for Academic Affairs
May 10, 2001**

Committee Charge:

Appointed by the Vice President for Academic Affairs, the Task Force was asked to review current policies and make recommendations pertaining to masters degree programs, graduate certificate programs, and graduate courses. The review and recommendations will address the following:

- Ongoing oversight of graduate programming, including the relationship of the oversight body to the Academic Senate and College Graduate Committees.
- Credentials of faculty teaching graduate courses.
- Expectations of faculty teaching graduate courses.
- Graduate program admission standards - including GPA, performance on standardized exams, etc.
- Academic expectations for graduate courses.
- Curricular matters such as thesis/coursework/project options, general examinations.
- Requirements for graduate degrees and graduation requirements.
- Requirements for graduate certificates.
- Numbering of graduate courses.
- Other relevant issues identified by the Task Force.

Task Force membership:

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GRADUATE EDUCATION TASK FORCE
REPORT TO THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS
May 10, 2001

The Graduate Education Task Force submits the following recommendations to VPAA Barbara Chapman for consideration. This report is divided into four main categories: 1) Institutional Graduate Program Guidelines; 2) Products/Students; 3) Faculty; and 4) Graduate Body Oversight. When these recommendations are considered, it is also recommended by the Graduate Education Task Force that the "University Guidelines for Developing Graduate Programs" also be considered, as these 1998 guidelines played an important role in this committee's recommendations.

It should be stated that this Task Force was a well-focused and committed group that worked many hours in discussion, research and consideration of graduate issues. Three concerns became central to our discussions, and these should be noted as overarching issues across the recommendations. First, the recommendations submitted in this report cannot be implemented without adequate staffing resources.¹ Second, Ferris State University is in a phase of transitioning toward an academic culture that includes graduate programs. This changing culture will need to consider and recognize such aspects of all graduate programs such as graduate loading, research, and scholarship. And third, FSU will need to develop institutional practices that provide equity across the graduate programs in regard to faculty loading, enrollment, tuition, and students.

I. Institutional Graduate Program Guidelines

Application Process

- Applications for graduate degrees may be obtained from FSU Admissions Office, Regional centers, Office of International Affairs, on-line through the FSU website, or the particular graduate program office.
- FSU applications shall include an insert specifying specific graduate program admission requirements.
- Program specific application requirements should be inclusive and explicit (see Section I. Admission Requirement from "University Guidelines for Developing Graduate Programs", pp. 1-2).
- All applications for graduate program admission, except for international students, will be sent to the specific graduate program office for assembly of required materials and admission decision/s. International graduate student applications will be assembled by International Affairs and forwarded to the specific graduate program for the admission decision once all University application documents are collected.
- A designated person within the admissions office (e.g., secretary) should be assigned to assist in graduate application/admissions procedures (e.g., phone queries; application processing; appropriate mailings).
- Permanent oversight body should periodically review all graduate policies.

Graduate Program Admission

- Each graduate department/program shall establish a graduate admissions committee charged with the application review and admission/denial decisions.
- Acceptance or denial will be evaluated based upon a defined admission criteria checklist created within each graduate unit.
- Acceptance or denial letters, except for international students, will originate and be sent from the individual graduate program/department office to the applicant.

¹ Staffing, in this context, is multiply implied: re-designated assignments; new positions; reallocations.

Admissions packets with letters of acceptance will be forwarded to Admissions for processing. Denied applicants will be stored for one calendar year from the date of admission decision in the particular graduate department/office. Letters of acceptance or denial of international students will be sent along with application materials to International Affairs, which will distribute all necessary information to applicants.

Financial Aid/Student Employment/Graduate Assistant Employment

- Graduate students may apply for student employment through the FSU's Student Employment Office.
- Financial aid inquiries will be referred to FSU's Financial Aid Office.
- Graduate assistant employments are those opportunities specifically aimed at attracting the skills of a particular graduate program. Graduate Project Assistant employment opportunities may include in any combination of hourly wage, tuition payment, tuition waivers, book reimbursement, etc. All matters and processes involved in hiring graduate students is the responsibility of the hiring unit. Refer to Graduate Project Assistant policy, October 2000.

Housing

- On-campus resident graduate students include both non-traditional and international students whose need for housing span those time periods during the academic year when the dorms are normally closed. Accordingly, FSU residence services need to ensure that housing at these times are available.

Academic Schedule

- Graduate programming offered in non-traditional formats such as weekends, Internet, multiple all-day sessions, accelerated semesters, etc. should not be confined by the institutional calendar that defines starting and ending dates for semesters, nor restrictions for submitting and reporting course grades.

Tuition/Fees

- Graduate tuition should be comparable to other state non-research state universities.
- Activities and digital initiative fees should not be applied to graduate students pursuing studies through a regional center.
- Tuition rates should be charged based upon course numbering. Graduate tuition rates should be charged for enrollment in any course numbered at the 500 levels or above. Conversely, undergraduate rates should be charged for any course numbered less than 500.

Marketing

- Marketing of academic programs needs differentiation between undergraduate and graduate programs. Graduate programs wishing program exclusive promotion initiatives need to use their college or program's S&E budget, development funds, or UCEL and/or FSU/GR incentive dollars. The Division of Academic Affairs also has dollars available to individual programs for "programmatic marketing". Programs can also work with UCEL and/or FSU/GR on initiatives and materials for marketing graduate programs.

Library/Instructional Media

- Each graduate program must identify its library and instructional media needs. Procurement and additional resources should follow established budgetary initiatives process. Library services, use, schedules, and access need to be incorporated into the instruction of every graduate program. Students at off-campus sites must be afforded the same library/instructional media access and privileges as on-campus students.

Addendum

- All academic programs inherently have some amount of overhead costs. For graduate programs these include, in part, substantial responsibilities in the areas of admission and records management. Additionally, there are marketing, program development, and program equipment costs. In addition to UCEL and FSU/GR incentive dollars, consideration should be given to allocating graduate admission fees for the support of these functions. In general, broader promotion of graduate programs and development of comprehensive marketing materials covering all graduate programs should be undertaken on a University-wide basis.

II. Product/Students

Degree Requirements

- A master's degree should contain a minimum of 30 content-related semester hours (practica/internships would be beyond these 30 hours).
- Timelines to complete a master's degree should be a maximum of five (5) years, and a timeline of 18 months for thesis/capstone course/project completion within the five-year requirement.
- A "Continuing Enrollment Fee" should be institutionalized (e.g., 1 graduate credit/hour) for each semester students are not enrolled in courses.
- Each masters program should contain at least one type of culminating/capstone experience (e.g., thesis; project).

Course Quality and Enrollment

- Each graduate program should determine graduate enrollment and entrance.
- Graduate enrollment will minimally be established by an earned bachelors degree unless permission is obtained by graduate program.
- Evaluation of program and courses should be determined by oversight bodies and programs (e.g., advisory committee; accreditation; APRC; Human Subjects Review Committee)
- Internships, practicum, etc. should be connected to the academic course endeavors.
- All graduate courses must meet the minimum FSU standards of semester requirements of 2250 minutes per 3-credit course offering. Pre-approvals for areas such as workshops will be needed to check for adequate contact and transferability/applicability to masters program.

Certificate Programs

- Application process for certificate offerings will be determined and granted by the graduate program.
- All graduate level certificates will be graded.

- Certificate programs must be considered as "programs" that count for a unit's enrollment for loading, etc.
- Certificate courses do not have to be part of a graduate degree; they can be stand-alone offerings/programs.
- The institution and/or FSU UCEL/GR campus centers should produce the certificates for students who have completed the program offering.

Retention

- Academic Support Services are needed for graduate programs (e.g., graduate student orientation) in all offered campus sites.
- All graduate programs should make it known that they abide by federal regulations for those with special needs.

III. Faculty

Loads

- Graduate faculty should be given a 3-course load per semester. This is an appropriate recommendation based on comparison with other institutions and in lieu of any research component. This also serves to recognize scholarship.
- The definition of graduate faculty should be faculty whose teaching load is a majority of graduate courses by semester.
- Each graduate program should establish a graduate program coordinator who receives release time to maintain the program.
- Load structures should be such that a faculty's annualized loading is not penalized (e.g., uncompensated workload) and considers a graduate loading aggregate of teaching, service, and research.

Thesis and Remuneration

- Advanced application of principles may be demonstrated by thesis, project, or comprehensive examination as determined by the individual graduate program
- Thesis and Project Committees should have three-members, a chair and two additional members. The graduate program should approve all members of the committee.
- Thesis and Projects are not to be counted in faculty load.
- The Thesis and Project Committee members should receive remuneration for their review and advisement. Such remuneration should be a one-time payment upon the student's successful completion of the thesis or project.
- Upon completion of the thesis or project, the Thesis and Project Committee Chair should receive compensation of \$500 per thesis or project.
- Upon completion of the thesis or project, each remaining Thesis and Project Committee member should receive compensation of \$200 per thesis or project.
- A thesis/project should have a 6-credit minimum requirement.
- The University Graduate Council should develop institutional guidelines for thesis/projects. The former task committee for "University Guideline for Developing Graduate Programs" submitted excellent considerations toward this focus.

Credentials

- Faculty who teach in graduate programs must meet minimum requirements for terminally degreed faculty as defined by the accrediting body for that degree's programs. In lieu of no specialized accrediting body, the graduate governing bodies should develop such minimum requirements.
- The University Graduate Council should develop the expectations of graduate level faculty (e.g., evidence of continuing scholarship, professional development).

Adjuncts

- Adjunct faculty must meet the graduate program's defined qualifications to teach a graduate course.

Advising

- Graduate Faculty (approved by individual department graduate committees) will advise graduate students.

Related Recommendations

- Publication support: It is recommended that an individual at FLITE be designated as the graduate publications liaison with responsibilities for assisting on matters involving document format, binding, submission, copyrighting, and cataloging.

IV. Graduate Body Oversight

University Graduate Council

- It is recommended that the University establish a graduate oversight committee. This "University Graduate Council" (UGC) is charged with overseeing:
 - General policies and procedures that cannot be resolved at the unit level, Graduate Curriculum Committee (GCC), or have institutional implications. Recommendations should go to VPAA.
 - Curriculum approval of all graduate level curriculum. Recommendations and reports on curriculum should go to Senate.
 - Each graduate program unit should establish a GCC.
 - Each College hosting one or more graduate programs should establish a College Graduate Committee (CGC).
 - As the work of the UGC increases, provisions should be made to give the UGC Chair time-release to oversee the committee's work.

Membership

- One representative from each College Graduate Committee (CGC).
- One Chair - from faculty.
- Ex-officio members from Academic Affairs, FSU UCEL/GR campuses, library.
- Graduate student representative.
- Graduate secretary - for reporting and storing of all graduate documents [Note: This person may or may not be a member of this committee.]