

## First Professional Subcommittee Report

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**Charge:** Review our current practices and programs related to the graduate school guiding principles and [2020-2025](#) university graduate and professional education strategic priorities and form recommendations to move our institution towards becoming a globally-recognized leader in graduate and professional education.

- **Graduate and Professional Strategic Priorities**

- ***Elevate***. Strategically enhance our graduate and professional programs and elevate their visibility and prominence, both nationally and internationally.
- ***Recruit and Retain***. Attract, retain, develop, support, and graduate outstanding and diverse graduate and professional students.
- ***Creative Funding***. Commit to providing multi-year competitive funding for all full-time doctoral (Ph.D.) students, including increasing individual and institutional graduate training grants and foundation support; provide suggestions for equitable funding models to improve monetary support of graduate students.
- ***Innovative Programs***. Improve interdisciplinary graduate and professional education, reducing barriers and fostering collaborations; expand professional master's programs, including integrative bachelor's and master's programs; cultivate academic innovation in graduate and professional programs; address opportunities for graduate certificates and micro-credentials that are innovative and accessible.
- ***Culture of Mentoring***. Build a culture of inclusive advising, mentoring, and professional development, providing mentor and mentee support and training that seeks to institutionalize the value of the mentor/mentee relationship; equip faculty and staff to better advise, mentor, and teach graduate and professional students and promote their professional growth.
- ***Professional Development***. Expand our offerings of graduate student professional development programming to enhance career success; and deepen our engagement with graduate and professional alumni as life-long learners.
- ***Culture and Climate***. Nurture a diverse, inclusive, and respectful environment between and among faculty, staff, and students; address climate and culture issues proactively; and improve transparency and accountability.
- ***Career Guidance***. Improve career guidance and placement resources for graduate and professional students while articulating the value of diverse career pathways both in and outside of academia.

- **Transparent Data.** Provide greater transparency of graduate and professional student data and career outcomes to foster continuous improvement and innovation of programs.
  - **Student Experience.** Develop infrastructure and learner support services to ensure a high-quality digital learning environment, foster graduate and professional student community, ensure teaching effectiveness in the discipline and appropriate evaluation and feedback practices, and propagate the “Aggie” experience for all students.
  - **Professional Advancement.** Establish innovative credentialing opportunities for professional advancement and to meet emerging career opportunities for traditional students and adult learners; create an educational advancement program and policies to provide opportunities for employees to achieve their dreams through additional education.
  - **Lifelong Learning.** Enhance professional and personal development programs for lifelong learners, including a focus on core values such as leadership while highlighting professional development opportunities that value the graduate student from a holistic perspective.
- **Graduate and Professional Key Performance Indicators**
    - Increase URM graduate and professional enrollment to 30% of domestic students, and degrees awarded to 25%.
    - Decrease median time to degree to five years and increase five-year and 10-year completion rates to 50% and 80%, respectively, for Ph.D. students across all demographic groups.
    - Increase the number of institutional external training grants by 100% [T32, NRT, GAANN, etc].
    - Increase the percentage of graduate students participating in university graduate professional development experiences by 20% each year.
    - Improve graduate student climate as indicated by GradSERU climate survey for the following two metrics: (i) I feel that I belong at Texas A&M University; (ii) I feel welcome at Texas A&M University.

**Summary of Subcommittee Activities:** co-chair meetings ( $n = 2$ ), committee meetings ( $n = 2$ ), open forums ( $n = 2$ ), data collection from individual schools, emails received, and website portal for feedback; and review of supporting documents and materials (see final section).

**Highlights of Review of Data:**

- Many stakeholders reported difficulty navigating university resources. The stakeholders interpreted the resources as only available for other parties, including College Station campus students, undergraduate students, or international students.
- Students reported a lack of disability support and psychological support services.
- Stakeholders reported an opportunity for the professional school programs to collaborate more closely with one another. The collaborations could take several forms, including

professionalism and leadership training, events among students, and advocating together for topics that affect all professional programs.

- Students expressed a desire to receive messages and to find connections to campus that were relevant to their interests, stages in life, and needs.
- Faculty and administrators expressed concern about the lack of recognition of specific professional school standards and practices mandated by their own accrediting bodies. There was recognition for University-wide standards and practices, but that implementation should take into account where professional schools had existing standards and practices some of which could not change to fit University standards.
- Stakeholders urged university administrators not to assume that all units, and particularly professional schools, could comply with the same standards and practices that might have initially been developed for undergraduate education or academic degrees.

### **Recommendations to Task Force:**

1. Convene an interdisciplinary committee on professionalism and leadership training in TAMU professional schools to explore opportunities for collaboration in teaching, scholarship, and service. This effort would recognize that each professional program might have discipline-specific requirements in this area imposed by accrediting bodies. There also may be opportunities, however, for joint work on topics of convergence, such as leadership, emotional intelligence, resilience, ethical decision-making, wellness, and others.
2. Anxiety, depression, and other mental health challenges are widespread in professional education, and professional programs located outside of College Station should be supported in a manner similar to those in College Station. Explore and prioritize the hiring of one or more licensed counselors who would split time among various TAMU professional programs located outside College Station so that on multiple days every week, each professional program would have a licensed counselor on campus.
3. Ensure that requirements pertaining to College Station students, faculty, and staff are altered, when necessary, to reflect the unique nature of the professional schools. Examples include:
  - a. Academic Calendar, as professional schools might have different start times and different semester lengths.
  - b. New Course and Program Requirements.
  - c. Minimum Syllabus Requirements, which contains alternatives for Galveston, Qatar, and Law, but not other professional schools.
4. Form a Professional School Working Group to serve as advocates for professional school/student needs and concerns within TAMU graduate programs. Examples of where advocacy or awareness might be useful:
  - a. Flagging University-wide communications that may not be appropriate for the professional school community, such as those pertaining to academic calendars or minimum syllabus requirements as listed in (3) above.

- b. Ensuring that University-wide services, such as wellness and career development programs, are developed to include professional school interests and needs.
  - c. Ensure that University-wide services, such as Education Abroad and International Student Services, are aware of any particular needs of professional schools in supporting exchange activities, field courses, and the like.
5. Develop appropriate representation from professional schools and engagement with the central administration to ensure that:
- a. University-wide practices and policies do not intrude into or conflict with the autonomy needed by professional schools to comply with their accrediting bodies and standards;
  - b. Compliance with University-wide standards, like SACSCOC, is carried out in ways that do not duplicate or add to the reporting requirements that already exist in professional schools. This may include considering how data collected can be most efficiently and effectively used for multiple reporting purposes.

**Recommendations for Other Subcommittees:**

Though the focus of this sub-committee was on first professional programs, many of the schools also offer master's programs. As with other systems, the programs within the schools influence one another. Thus, the committee arrived at other recommendations applicable for other subcommittees.

- 1. Develop career counseling and development services and programs for master's students in professional schools who may not seek the formal accreditation of a J.D. or other professional degree, but who are pursuing a degree as part of general career development or acquisition of new skills.
- 2. Find ways to connect students enrolled in online or one-year degree programs with students in similar programs and to the wider Aggie community. The A&M brand is what attracts many students to join these programs, but they may have little opportunity to actively engage with the wider Aggie community.

## **Supporting Sources and Documents**

Council of Graduate Schools. (2018). *The organization and administration of graduate education; A guide for university leaders*. Washington, DC:

Council of Graduate Schools. (2005). *Task force report on the professional doctorate*. Washington, DC.

Texas A&M University Graduate Student Mental Health Sessions Summary Report.