



TEXAS A&M
UNIVERSITY.

GRADUATE SCHOOL TASK FORCE REPORT #1

TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

JULY 2020

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Introduction

Texas A&M is committed to “the discovery, development, communication, and application of knowledge in a wide range of academic and professional fields,” with a focus on “developing new understandings through research and creativity.”¹ Graduate and professional education play a key role in helping the university to realize this mission.

For the past 20 years, Texas A&M has focused on enrollment growth and program expansion. During the same timeframe, the university engaged in several strategic actions to enhance graduate and professional education. First, the university identified strengthening graduate programs as a strategic priority.² In 2009, The Graduate Experiences Task Force identified three areas for improvement: (1) quality of life; (2) compensations and benefits; and (3) professional development. Finally, in 2018-2019, the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies (OGAPS) performed a benchmarking analysis of peer institutions, analyzed the structure and processes of peer institutions, and conducted on-site studies at three universities.³

The capital and energy expenditures have allowed us to attract exceptional graduate and professional students, develop high-quality graduate and professional programs, and substantially contribute to the research enterprise. The strategy has allowed the university to develop a firm foundation from which to build.

Consistent with the 2020-2025 Strategic Plan, the next step is to “become a leading national and international destination for graduate and professional education.”⁴ Making this move requires a focus on three areas: (1) increased funding; (2) improving the student experience; and (3) structural changes and policies that promote best practices in graduate and professional education.

Building from these collective data, as well as the priorities established in the 2020-2025 Strategic Plan, and consistent with SAP 03.02.02.M0.02: Policy and Procedure for Effecting Change in Academic Administrative Structure, Associate Provost Karen Butler-Purry made a formal request to Provost Fierke to establish a Graduate School.⁵ To inform the request, Associate Provost Butler-Purry proposed to convene a Task Force to gather input and provide recommendations on the Graduate School structure, scope, and activities.

The following Graduate School Task Force Report summarizes these activities, findings, and feedback. Specifically, the report overviews (1) the Task Force purpose, charge, and activities; (2) the proposal presented to stakeholder groups across the University; (3) feedback stakeholders provided; (4) input to the Provost; (5) future Task Force activities; and (6) supporting documents.

Based on this collective feedback from the university community, the Graduate School Task Force offers the following input on the establishment of a Graduate School. (1) Texas A&M would benefit from the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies transforming to a Graduate School model. The name of “Graduate and Professional School” for the graduate school would more appropriately reflect the diversity of graduate and professional programs at Texas A&M*. (2) A change to a Graduate School should be made consistent with guiding principles proposed by the task force, including an appreciation of the disciplinary diversity among the graduate and professional programs on campus. (3) The funding is in place to implement each of the changes identified in the report. That noted, future growth or innovations consistent with our peers *may* require additional resources.

*** Note.** The Task Force uses ‘Graduate School’ throughout the remainder of the document as a placeholder for name chosen for the new graduate school.

¹ Texas A&M Mission Statement: <https://www.tamu.edu/statements/mission.html>

² Vision 2020, Imperative 2: <https://vision2020.tamu.edu/The-Twelve-Imperatives>.

³ See Appendix A for a summary of the peer institution data collection.

⁴ Strategic Planning: <https://provost.tamu.edu/Strategic-Planning>

⁵ See Appendix B for a copy of the request.

Task Force Membership, Charge, and Activities

This section outlines the Task Force membership, charge, and the activities in which it engaged.

Membership

The Graduate School Task Force includes 13 faculty members, 5 department administrators, 4 college administrators, 1 interdisciplinary program chair, 2 staff, 3 graduate students, and 8 members of an executive committee representing university administrative units. A complete list is available in Appendix C.

Purpose and Charge

During the spring 2020 semester, the Task Force focused on gathering input from stakeholders on the establishment of a Graduate School and its scope. The task force will continue into the next academic year with a charge to provide recommendations on changes needed to achieve the graduate and professional education goals in the university's 2020-2025 Strategic Plan.

Activities

The Graduate School Task Force convened in February 2020 to develop a proposal and gather input from graduate and professional education stakeholders. The task force reached out to stakeholders across the campus community, including deans, associate deans, department heads, faculty members, and graduate and professional students. Presentations were made by Dr. Karen Butler-Purry. Members of the task force were also in the presentations to provide support and recognition that this was a process that included broad input from a variety of stakeholder groups. The schedule of campus presentations and meetings that took place is shown in Exhibit 1.

Further discussion of issues and changes that do not affect the initial scope of the Graduate School will be deferred to the Fall 2020 task force meetings. Also, during the 2020-21 academic year, the task force will identify issues and changes that the central graduate unit and other university-level units can implement over the next five years to achieve the graduate-related goals of the 2020-2025 university strategic plan.

Exhibit 1. Campus presentations and meetings

Date	Activity
February 26, 2020	Task Force Meeting #1
March 17, 2020	Presentation made to Graduate & Professional Student Government (GPSG) Senate ⁶
April 1, 2020	Presentation made to Council of Deans
April 7, 2020	Presentation made to Department Head Steering Committee
April 8, 2020	Presentation made to Council of Principal Investigators (CPI)
May 4, 2020	Presentation made to the Graduate Operations Committee (GOC) Deans
May 13, 2020	Presentation made to the University Research Council (URC) Deans
June 15, 2020	Presentation made to the Faculty Senate
June 22, 2020	Task Force Meeting #2
July 2020	Task Force Report #1 to Provost Fierke
September, 2020	Task Force reconvenes to address other graduate education topics

⁶ The GPSG Proclamation in support of the establishment of a Graduate School is available in Appendix G.

Graduate School Proposal

A proposal was developed which asserts a rationale for the establishment of a graduate school at Texas A&M University and provides a framework detailing changes in the scope of the existing Office of Graduate and Professional Studies. The proposed changes constitute a basis for a shift from an “Office” of Graduate and Professional Studies to a Graduate School beginning in the Fall of 2020. The graduate school proposal is included in Appendix D and a summary follows.

Background

Several efforts have led to the request to move to a Graduate School model. These include Vision 2020’s imperative to strengthen graduate programs, the Academic Master Plan in 2009, the 2014 Graduate Experiences Task Force, investments made to bolster graduate and professional student financial and programmatic support, and peer analysis collected in 2018-2019.

Rationale

Texas A&M has made considerable progress in strengthening its graduate programs over the past 20 years. To build on this success, we must continue to evolve, embrace bold strategic changes, and invest in the resources necessary to maximize positive change.

One such change is to transform the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies into a Graduate School. Doing so would:

- (1) Signify that graduate and professional education is an integral part of the university mission, and therefore, bolster the university’s identity as a research institution in a manner analogous to our peers.
- (2) Support the enhancement of all graduate and professional programs to build and sustain excellence. This would be accomplished by:
 - (i) improving effectiveness in the administration and delivery of degree programs;
 - (ii) strengthening the graduate and professional community by providing a central hub for current, prospective, and former students, faculty, and staff;
 - (iii) encouraging interdisciplinary collaboration;
 - (iv) enabling appropriate consistency in policies and practices across graduate programs;
 - (v) serving as a central administrative unit for the collection and analysis of data to support decisions, the diffusion of information, and transparency of graduate and professional education;
 - (vi) offering coordination of professional development and well-being initiatives.

Guiding Principles

Training and educating graduate and professional students are complex, and the process continually evolves based on the rapid progression of discovery and the ever-expanding technological landscape. In this dynamic context, the proposed Graduate School is grounded in a set of principles to guide initial and future changes.

- (1) *Service and Excellence* – The school exists to serve students, faculty, and graduate programs and advance excellence in graduate and professional education.
- (2) *A Student-Centered Approach* – The school will lead the implementation of student centered, optimal approaches for student success and well-being across programs.

- (3) *Faculty Governance* – Faculty will retain a critical role in collective decision-making for graduate education.
- (4) *Program Diversity* – Texas A&M administers a wide variety of graduate programs, from professional and research master's, and doctoral degree programs to STEM and Humanities programs. Respect for differences of programs and disciplines in best practices should guide implementation of the school's strategies.
- (5) *Budgeting* – The core of the school's budget will consist of funds currently allocated to the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies. Additional funding should come from new investments.

Proposed Changes to Graduate and Professional Education (to begin Fall 2020)

Multiple changes to graduate and professional education are proposed to begin Fall 2020. Central to these is the primary guiding principle of recognition and appreciation of the diversity of the graduate degree programs across campus. The proposed changes capitalize on that diversity and build on their strengths. The following summarizes the proposed changes:

- *Graduate Unit:* Work currently overseen by the OGAPS will be transformed into work of the Graduate School.
- *Graduate Faculty:* Faculty members currently hold graduate committee faculty appointment/affiliation with academic department(s) or college(s) and the university. With the change, faculty members will also have an appointment/affiliation with the Graduate School. Nominations for graduate committee faculty will continue to originate with faculty in academic department(s) or college(s).
- *Graduate Council:* (1) The Graduate Dean will remain a non-voting member and become chair of the Graduate Council. (2) Three new subcommittees will be formed: master's and doctoral curricular review, first professional doctorate curricular review, and graduate and professional policies and procedures.⁷
- *Graduate and Professional Program Leadership:* (1) The Graduate School will work with the Graduate Council to define a minimum set of functional roles and responsibilities for the individual(s) providing graduate and professional program leadership in departments and colleges [for college level graduate and professional programs]. The title for these individuals varies based on the practice of each academic unit. Some examples of titles used for these individuals include: graduate program director, department head, associate department head, and graduate coordinator. (2) The Graduate School will hold regular meetings with the graduate and professional program leaders to identify opportunities for improvement in graduate program policies, procedures, and operations, and provide opportunities for leaders to share their best practices. (3) The Graduate School will provide regular professional development for program leaders so that they can utilize best practices in graduate education and meet the diverse needs of their students. The professional development structure will also allow for expedient onboarding of new graduate program leaders.
- *Marketing and Student Engagement:* (1) The Graduate School will initiate a unified university-level marketing and communication plan to promote Texas A&M Graduate and Professional Studies globally. (2) Invest in tools to strengthen engagement at university, college, department, and program levels with prospective students, current students, and former students.
- *Interdisciplinary Degree Programs: (IDP)* To address concerns particular among faculty in doctoral IDP programs, (1) the Graduate School will assume responsibility for convening an annual meeting of the Advisory and Evaluation Committee of participating department heads and the IDP Executive

⁷ The Graduate Council is a reporting committee to the Faculty Senate. It concerns itself with the development of graduate programs within the university and the maintenance of standards of excellence in all graduate instruction and graduate activities.

Committee for each IDP doctoral program to ensure that regular interactions occur to support the success of the IDP programs; and (2) the IDP chair or a designee for each IDP program will serve on the College Committees of Graduate Instruction (GIC) of their administrative college to keep IDP faculty apprised of policy and procedural changes.

Practices to Remain Unchanged

Many graduate and professional education practices will remain unchanged, including:

- *Administrative Structures and Governance:* Existing governance structures will remain largely the same, notwithstanding the previous proposed process changes to the Graduate Council. The administrative leader of the Graduate School will continue to report to the Provost and Executive Vice President, and the Graduate Operations Committee⁸ will serve as an advisory body. The same bodies will be responsible for the administration and governance of graduate and professional education, including the Faculty Senate, Graduate Council, Graduate Operations Committee, College Committees of Graduate Instruction, and graduate program directors will continue in their current capacity.
- *Roles and Responsibilities of the Graduate School Unit:* The primary roles and responsibilities currently maintained by the OGAPS, including oversight of policies and procedures for graduate certificates, and master's and doctoral degree programs, would remain unchanged and shift to the Graduate School. Specific roles and responsibilities include (1) official student records; (2) student matriculation processes, such as new student orientation, Graduate Teaching Assistant Training and English Language Proficiency compliance, degree plans, proposals, and preliminary and final exam processing, theses and dissertations, university degree clearance and dismissal processes, and doctoral hooding; (3) non-resident waivers; (4) university-level recruitment; (5) university-level fellowships and recognition awards; (6) professional development; (7) ombuds services; (8) advisor workshops and development; and (9) graduate committee faculty membership process, among others.
- *Roles and Responsibilities of Departments and Programs:* The roles and responsibilities of departments and programs will continue, including: (1) establish and manage academic programs and curriculum; (2) oversee graduate admissions and recruitment, whereby faculty will establish admissions standards, make decisions, and perform discipline-specific recruiting; (3) award fellowships and assistantships; (4) provide department and program orientations; (5) nominate and evaluate graduate committee faculty; (6) offer courses; and (7) advise and mentor graduate and professional students.
- *Graduate IDP Oversight and Operations:* Primary responsibilities for graduate IDPs will reside with the intercollegiate faculty, IDP Executive Committee, and the Advisory and Evaluation Committee of participating department heads. Each IDP will be administratively housed in a college.

⁸ The Graduate Operations Committee (GOC) serves as an advisory body to the Associate Provost for Graduate and Professional Studies, with a primary focus on operations and procedures regarding administration of graduate education throughout the university. Each academic college is represented on the GOC by the associate dean (or named individual) responsible for graduate studies in that college.

Feedback from the University Community

From March-June 2020, the Task Force met with various stakeholder groups. At each meeting, Associate Provost Butler-Purry made a presentation to the attendees which offered highlights of the Graduate School proposal. The purpose of the presentation was to provide the rationale behind a move to a Graduate School, present the vision for what changes would take place, what would not change, solicit input on the proposal from a diverse set of stakeholders, and answer questions from attendees.

Though it largely remained the same, the presentation was revised for clarity and to be responsive to the comments expressed at each meeting. The final presentation, made to the Faculty Senate on June 15, 2020, is included in Appendix E.

After each presentation, the Graduate School Task Force fielded questions and comments from the audience. A detailed list of questions or comments posed during stakeholder meetings and short responses is included in Appendix F.

The Graduate School Task Force identified themes of common concerns among each stakeholder group,⁹ and these are reported in Exhibit 2.

Exhibit 2. Concerns from the University Community

	Deans	Assoc. Deans	Dept. Heads	Faculty	Grad. & Prof. Students
<i>History of graduate administrative unit</i>					
<i>Challenges encountered/rationale for the change</i>					
<i>Considering different types of programs</i>					
<i>Budget concerns (incl. graduate student stipends)</i>					
<i>Increase interdisciplinary efforts and support</i>					
<i>Impact on Graduate Council</i>					
<i>Impact on Departments</i>					
<i>Impact on graduate & professional students</i>					
<i>Assist PIs with grant data</i>					
<i>Process for change</i>					
<i>Task Force information</i>					
<i>Realize efficiencies</i>					
<i>Nature of oversight</i>					
<i>Impact on metrics</i>					

Note: Shading represents that the stakeholder group posed a question or comment expressing the associated concern

⁹ Stakeholder responses were grouped according to the following meetings: Faculty Senate and Council of Principal Investigators (Faculty); Graduate Operations Committee and University Research Council (Associate Deans); Department Head Steering Committee (Department Heads); Graduate and Professional Student Government Senate (Students); and Council of Deans (Deans).

While a summary response to each question/comment is provided in the table in Appendix F, the most common concerns and associated responses are highlighted below.

History of the Graduate Administrative Unit: Stakeholders sought information about graduate and professional education at Texas A&M University and how the administrative structure and processes have changed over time.

Response: With respect to the changes in graduate education over time, the Graduate College was dissolved to form Graduate Studies in the late 1980s. When the Graduate College began, we had a small footprint in terms of graduate students and programs. The Graduate College had a much stronger role in decisions then, such as admissions. As the number of graduate programs grew, there was a feeling that the Graduate College was impeding progress, so the change was made to move to an office model. Now, we have a large graduate footprint. There is a need to refine our central graduate administrative unit. Some changes are symbolic, such as matching the structure of our peers and aspirant peers, some are actual. Like some of our AAU peers, it is important to show graduate education is a key component of a research institution. The redefined graduate administrative unit would not take away faculty governance. Instead it would establish a 21st century graduate school which is student centered and where faculty are established as the governing body.

Challenges Encountered and Rationale for the Change: Stakeholders sought to understand the sources of resistance to the establishment of a graduate school and the rationale for moving to a Graduate School.

Response: Texas A&M is not consistent with peer and aspirant peer institutions, most of whom have Graduate Schools, Colleges, or Divisions, not an office. Graduate and professional education is an integral part of the university research and teaching mission; a shift to a Graduate School demonstrates this connection. Finally, there has not been pushback, per se, more so just questions about future changes. The guiding principles, which were created with task force input, will help shape the activities of the Graduate School.

Considering Different Types of Programs: Stakeholders sought additional information about how the Graduate School would consider the heterogeneity of programs at the university, from professional and research master's and doctoral degree programs to STEM and Humanities programs.

Response: As the Graduate School evolves, it must be mindful of the disciplinary diversity of the graduate and professional programs. This is illustrated best in the commitment to the guiding principles, one of which explicitly focuses on program heterogeneity. Respect for differences of disciplines in best practices should guide implementation of the graduate school's strategies. A 'one size fits all' approach will simply not work. For example, the Graduate School can help promote and support master's programs through recruiting, and work with the various programs within the university to address their unique career development needs. Finally, and consistent with the 2020-2025 Strategic Plan, the Graduate School can collaborate with university entities to make lifelong learning opportunities more accessible.

Budget Concerns: Stakeholders sought information about how the changes would be funded and what a new Graduate School would mean for their units.

Response: Budget questions are addressed in the guiding principles, which state that the core of the Graduate School's budget should consist of funds currently allocated to the OGAPS. Additional funding should come from new investments.

Increase Interdisciplinary Efforts and Support: Stakeholders sought information about how a new Graduate School would increase opportunities for students to engage in interdisciplinary research and education, while breaking down silos. There was also interest in exploring how the Graduate School could assist PIs seeking interdisciplinary training grants.

Response: One of the primary changes sought in the shift to a Graduate School is closer connection with the IDPs. The Graduate School could help address some of the barriers that students in IDPs and students engaged in interdisciplinary research face. The Task Force has identified activities at peer institutions (e.g., interdisciplinary graduate programs similar to how the university structures university studies for undergraduate programs, and research activities similar to the T3 program). Ultimately, the establishment of such programs at TAMU would be up to the faculty. The role of the Graduate School would be to serve the student needs and faculty interests. Further the Graduate School can help PIs with data collection and other proposal development during the submission of training grants.

Impact on Graduate Council: Some stakeholders sought additional information about the changes to the Graduate Council.

Response: One major change is the addition of three sub-committees to the Graduate Council which will examine curricular reviews, policies, and procedures for graduate and first professional programs. This change will ensure that faculty with local academic program expertise are reviewing proposed curriculum and programmatic changes.

Impact on Departments: Some stakeholders sought more information about how a Graduate School would impact their departmental operations.

Response: With respect to departmental faculty and staff, the Graduate School will strengthen department and program activities. This commitment is illustrated in the guiding principles, with a focus on service excellence, faculty-governance, student-centered, program and disciplinary diversity, and budgeting. The Graduate School will promote activities that advance quality graduate education, rather than stipulating a particular implementation to departments or programs. As shown in the presentation, the Graduate School will also help to promote IDPs, their educational activities, and growth. Finally, many of the proposed changes focus on the *processes* of delivering graduate and professional education. This emphasis should result in greater efficiencies across campus.

Impact on Graduate & Professional Students: Stakeholders sought to understand the impact of the changes on the experiences and outcomes of graduate and professional students, especially international students.

Response: The impact of a transition to a Graduate School will benefit students, including international students. As previously noted, many of the proposed changes focus on the *processes* of delivering graduate and professional education. In addition to helping realize greater efficiencies, a focus on processes will serve to benefit graduate and professional students by promoting a fair, consistent, and equitable educational experience. The focus on university-level recruiting should allow for greater student diversity. Finally, by building upon the collaboration with the IDPs, the Graduate School can help promote interdisciplinary education and research activities.

Task Force Input

Based on careful consideration of the collective feedback from the university community (see the previous section and Appendix F), the Graduate School Task Force offers the following input on the establishment of a graduate school.

1. Texas A&M University would benefit from the OGAPS transforming to a Graduate School model.
2. The name of “Graduate and Professional School” would more appropriately reflect the diversity of graduate and professional programs at Texas A&M. Similarly, a renaming of the Graduate Council to Graduate and Professional Council should be considered.
3. It is important that the Graduate School gives appropriate attention to the enhancement and support of professional master’s programs and not focus solely on research degrees.
4. The funding is in place in the OGAPS to implement each of the changes identified in the report. That noted, future growth or innovations consistent with our peers *may* require additional resources.
5. It is important that the newly formed Graduate School is supported by a unified marketing scheme and an internal informational awareness campaign.

Future Task Force Activities

Finally, the Graduate School Task Force will continue into the 2020-21 academic year, with a focus on:

- Providing feedback to the OGAPS as it transitions to a Graduate School model.
- Gathering broad input to address the comments and suggestions for improvement and issues identified in the stakeholder meetings. Possible areas of focus mentioned during the meetings include the speed of the curricular review process, possible differences in English Language Proficiency admissions requirements between master's programs and doctoral programs, and IDP structural barriers resulting from the current graduate administrative and governance structure.
- Identifying changes needed to achieve the graduate and professional studies goals in the 2020-2025 University Strategic Plan.
- Providing recommendations to be addressed at the university level.

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Appendix G: GPSG R.53.07: Support of the Establishment of a Graduate School within Texas
A&M University (GPSG Senate Resolution)

Appendix A: Summary of Peer Institution Data Collection

Summary of Peer Institution Data Collection

In Fall 2019, the Associate Provost for Graduate and Professional Studies and two members of her leadership team (George Cunningham and Shannon Walton) along with three faculty members (Jay Ramadoss, representing the CPI, Julie Harlin representing the Faculty Senate, and Maria Escobar-Lemmon representing the GOC and URC) made campus visits to the graduate units at the University of Texas at Austin, University of Michigan, and University of California Los Angeles.

Feedback from CPI and the faculty participating in the campus visits supported forming a graduate school, noting that doing so would potentially (1) streamline professional development programs, recruitment, and administrative processes; (2) enhance interdisciplinary efforts across colleges; (3) improve the student experience, particularly related to support, mentoring, and scholarship; and (4) improve diversity efforts, among other benefits.

The faculty also noted the importance of identifying and continuing the current graduate education successes on campus, while also addressing the areas in need of improvement.

Appendix B: Request to Establish a Graduate School

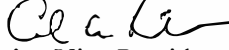
GRADUATE AND PROFESSIONAL STUDIES


Karen Butler-Purry, Ph.D., P.E.
Associate Provost for Graduate and Professional Studies



January 23, 2020

MEMORANDUM

TO: Dr. Carol Fierke 
Provost and Executive Vice President

FROM: Karen Butler-Purry 
Associate Provost

SUBJECT: Request to Establish a Graduate School

Vision 2020 recognized the importance of graduate education in achieving the university's aspirational goals. In particular, Imperative 2: Strengthen Our Graduate Programs states, "We must have a shift in our thinking about the role of graduate education to attain the level of excellence we desire. A substantially expanded graduate studies effort is critical to our academic aspiration and to our effectiveness as a great research university." As outlined below, there has been considerable progress toward this goal, and opportunities exist for further strides, still.

Following on one of the recommendations coming from the Academic Master Planning in 2009, a task force on the Graduate Experience was convened in December 2009. Its purpose was to identify a prioritized set of recommendations needed to enhance Texas A&M's graduate programs, thereby allowing us to meet the goals set in Vision 2020. The task force offered priorities and recommendations around three issues: (1) Quality of Life, (2) Practices: Compensations and Benefits, and (3) Professional Development. Over the next ten years, several major university investments were made and programs established to improve graduate student financial and programmatic support.

The Office of Graduate and Professional Studies (OGAPS) then gathered preliminary input to inform a decision on possible changes to the scope and structure of the university's graduate unit. To do so, OGAPS commissioned Hanover Research to perform a benchmarking analysis¹ of the structure of graduate units, program offerings, types of administrative staff in the unit, and graduate unit mission and focus at our Vision 2020 peer institutions. As of May 2018, ten of fourteen graduate units at Vision 2020 peer institutions have standalone graduate schools or colleges, and three have graduate divisions. Only one benchmarked institution—Georgia Institute of Technology—has a smaller "Office of Graduate Studies." Most benchmarked graduate units are decentralized. These units typically manage graduate admissions and student services but do not award degrees.

In Fall 2018, the Council of Principal Investigators (CPI) established three subcommittees, two of which identified issues related to graduate education. Specifically, findings were presented related to deficiencies in graduate student financial support, graduate program organization and structure, graduate education marketing, and incentives for graduate students to participate in interdisciplinary research. One of their recommendations was to establish a centralized graduate college.

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To gather additional input, the Associate Provost for Graduate and Professional Studies, two members of her leadership team, and three faculty members (representing the CPI, Faculty Senate, and GOC Deans) made campus visits in Fall 2019 to the graduate units at the University of Texas at Austin, University of Michigan, and University of California Los Angeles. Feedback from CPI and the faculty participating in the campus visits supported forming a graduate school, noting that doing so would potentially (1) streamline programs, recruitment, and administrative processes; (2) enhance interdisciplinary efforts across colleges; (3) improve the student experience, particularly related to support, mentoring, and scholarship; and (4) improve diversity efforts, among other benefits. Also the faculty team expressed interest in maintaining the features of the current system where the process works well and benefits students and using the transition as a way to identify specific areas for improvement.

Moreover, benefits of a strong graduate education administration quoted from a 2019 Council of Graduate Schools publication entitled *The Organization and Administration of Graduate Education*² are stated below.

- Raises the profile of graduate programs on campus, communicating the value of graduate education to prospective students, the community, employers and funders.
- Helps create economies of scale when it comes to the administration and delivery of degree programs, potentially reducing costs, especially related to systems and technology.
- Promotes student success and well-being across programs and fosters collaborations among individual programs and disciplines.
- Helps to ensure consistency of policies and practices across graduate programs and may reduce the likelihood of legal challenges to administrative decisions.
- Collects and analyzes data to support university decisions, dissemination, and transparency about graduate education.
- Ensures strategic, comprehensive approaches to promoting student retention and success

Building on the aforementioned information and input, as well as feedback from the recent TAMU Strategic Plan discussions, I am requesting to shift the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies to a Graduate School model. To inform the transition, I propose to convene a task force to provide recommendations on the scope of the requested Graduate School. This process would also include addressing questions related to relationships among the Graduate School, colleges, and student services, such as admissions, career center, writing center, interdisciplinary degree programs, financial support and funding opportunities, and so on. The task force would include representatives from the GOC Deans, ABOC Deans, URC Deans, CPI, Faculty Senate, TAMUG, HSC, and GPSG.

References

- 1) Tamu.edu. (2019). *Vision 2020: Creating a Culture of Excellence*. [online] Available at: <https://vision2020.tamu.edu/> [Accessed Jan. 23 2020].
- 2) Hanover (2018). *Graduate Unit Benchmarking report*. (May 2018)
- 3) Cgsnet.org. (2019). *The Organization and Administration of Graduate Education* | Council of Graduate Schools. [online] Available at: <https://cgsnet.org/organization-and-administration-graduate-education-0> [Accessed Oct. 1 2019].

Appendix C: Graduate School Task Force Membership

Graduate School Task Force Membership

Graduate Operations Committee Representatives

Maria Escobar-Lemmon, Associate Dean & Professor, College of Liberal Arts

Mark Zoran, Executive Associate Dean & Professor, College of Science

University Research Council Representative

Antoinetta Quigg, Associate Vice President & Head, Texas A&M University at Galveston

ABOC Representative

Michelle Mitchell, Assistant Dean of Finance, College of Engineering

Interdisciplinary Degree Program Chair

Ivan Rusyn, Professor, College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences

Faculty Representatives

Julie Harlin, Associate Professor, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences

Jay Ramadoss, Associate Professor, College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences

Paul Hernadez, Associate Professor, College of Education and Human Development

Idia Thurston, Associate Professor, College of Liberal Arts; School of Public Health

Ashley Ross, Assistant Professor, Texas A&M University Galveston

Narendra Kumar, Associate Professor, Irma Lerma Rangel College of Pharmacy

Dennis Gorman, Professor, School of Public Health

Stacy Drake, Associate Professor, College of Nursing

Hope Rising, Assistant Professor, College of Architecture

Richard Malak, Associate Professor, College of Engineering

Christian Hiltly, Professor, College of Science

Larry Bellinger, Associate Dean & Professor, College of Dentistry

David Threadgill, Distinguished Professor, College of Medicine

Department Head Representative

Lori Taylor, Professor & Head, Bush School of Government and Public Service

Graduate Program Director Representatives

Charlotte Ku, Associate Dean & Professor, School of Law

Hagen Kim, Associate Professor, Mays Business School

Istvan Szunyogh, Professor, College of Geoscience

Wayne Smith, Associate Dept Head & Professor, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences

Staff Representatives

Ashley Seabury, Program Manager, College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences

Kara Bond, Academic Advisor III, College of Education and Human Development

Graduate Student Representatives

Purna Doddapaneni, GPSG President, College of Engineering

Chante Anderson, BGSA President, College of Liberal Arts

Smit Prashant Mehta, IGSA Officer, College of Engineering

Office of Graduate and Professional Studies

Misha Chakraborty, Postdoctoral Fellow

Executive Committee

Karen Butler-Purry, Associate Provost, Office of Graduate and Professional Studies

George Cunningham, Senior Assistant Provost, Office of Graduate and Professional Studies

Shannon Walton, Director, Office of Graduate and Professional Studies

Gerianne Alexander, Professor and Associate Vice President, Division of Research

Anne Reber, Dean of Student Life, Division of Student Affairs

Joe Pettibon, Vice President, Division of Enrollment and Academic Services

Jocelyn Widmer, Assistant Provost, Academic Innovation & Online

Appendix D: Draft Graduate School Proposal

Draft Proposal for Establishment of Texas A&M University Graduate School

[March 30, 2020]

Introduction

This document asserts a rationale for the establishment of the Texas A&M University Graduate School and provides a framework detailing changes in the scope of the existing Office of Graduate and Professional Studies. The proposed changes articulated in this document constitute a basis for a shift from an “Office” of Graduate and Professional Studies to a Graduate School in the summer of 2020. A task force composed of faculty, administrators, staff, and graduate students convened in February 2020 to gather input from graduate education stakeholders and generate feedback on the proposal. Further discussion of issues and changes that do not affect the initial scope of the Graduate School will be deferred to the fall 2020 task force meetings. Also, during the 2020-21 academic year, the task force will identify issues and changes that the central graduate unit and other university-level units can implement over the next five years to achieve the graduate-related goals of the 2020-2025 university strategic plan.

Rationale for Establishment of the Graduate School

Vision 2020 identified the importance of graduate education in achieving the university’s aspirational goals. In particular, Imperative 2: Strengthen Our Graduate Programs states, “We must have a shift in our thinking about the role of graduate education to attain the level of excellence we desire. A substantially expanded graduate studies effort is critical to our academic aspiration and to our effectiveness as a great research university.”

Texas A&M has made considerable progress in strengthening its graduate programs over the past twenty years. Yet, if we want to build on our success and reach the level of excellence in graduate education for which we are striving, we must continue to evolve, embracing bold strategic changes and investing the financial resources necessary to maximize the positive impact of those changes. One such change is to transform the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies into a Graduate School. Making this move would necessitate shifting a few areas of university-level administrative oversight to a centralized administrative division, the Graduate School. Further administrative shifts or enhancements in governance structure, marketing, and graduate interdisciplinary degree program operations are proposed for summer 2020.

The shift from an Office of Graduate and Professional Studies to a Graduate School and the accompanying expansion or reconfiguration of services would provide numerous benefits to our graduate and larger Texas A&M community. First off, renaming or rebranding would immediately signify that graduate education is an integral part of the university mission and, therefore, strengthen the university’s identity as a research institution in a manner analogous to our peers. Thirteen of our Vision 2020 peer institutions have stand-alone graduate schools, colleges, or divisions. More than that, though, the Graduate School would support the enhancement of all of our graduate programs to build and sustain excellence in graduate education at Texas A&M by:

- improving effectiveness in the administration and delivery of degree programs, including utilization of systems and technology
- building our graduate community by providing a central hub for current students, prospective students, former students, faculty, staff, and other invested properties such as potential employees or sources of funding
- encouraging interdisciplinary collaboration
- centralizing coordination of health and wellness initiatives for graduate students
- enabling consistency in policies and practices across graduate programs
- centralizing the collection and analysis of data to support university, college, and department decisions, dissemination of information, and transparency about graduate education

Given these benefits, shifting to a Graduate School would advance Texas A&M’s goal to be known as a university that attracts the best students from the U.S. and abroad, supports its graduate students comprehensively, and provides outstanding professional and career development programming, thus elevating our graduate programs and community while building on Texas A&M’s reputation as one of the world’s preeminent educational institutions.

Guiding Principles

The Graduate School will adhere to the following principles:

- *Service and Excellence* – the school exists to serve students, faculty, and graduate programs and advance excellence in graduate and professional education
- *A Student-Centered Approach* – the school should be leading the implementation of student centered, optimal approaches for student success and well-being across programs
- *Faculty Governance* – Faculty should retain a critical role in collective decision-making for graduate education.
- *Program Diversity* – TAMU administers a wide variety of graduate programs, from professional and research programs to STEM and Humanities programs. Respect for differences of disciplines in best practices will be guide implementation of the school's strategies
- *Budgeting* – The core of the school's budget should consist of funds currently allocated to the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies. Additional funding should come from new investments.

Proposed Graduate School Framework

Section I below details proposed changes to be implemented in summer 2020. Section II lists current practices that will remain unchanged with the Graduate School assuming the responsibilities of OGAPS.

Section I: Proposed Changes

- The work currently being overseen by the associate provost for graduate and professional studies will be transformed into the work of the graduate school.
- *Graduate Faculty* will be affiliated with the Graduate School.
- *Proposed changes to the Graduate Council:* (i) The Graduate Dean will remain a non-voting member and become the chair of the GC; and (ii) establish three new subcommittees: a master's and doctoral curricular review subcommittee, a first professional doctorate curricular review subcommittee, and a graduate policies and procedures subcommittee. The current time demand placed on the GC chair to review all materials and facilitate quality reviews by other GC members is excessive. Moreover, changes in department and college administrators over the past five years have resulted in frequent changes in GC chair and vice chair posts. Having the Graduate Dean serve as chair shifts the administrative burden from a faculty member, allows the faculty members on GC to focus on their operational responsibilities, and improves the consistency in committee operations. Several peer institutions employ this model.
- *Proposed changes to Graduate Program Directors:* (i) In order to attain more consistency for the position across graduate degree programs, the Graduate School and Graduate Council will work together to define a set of standard roles and responsibilities for GPDs; (ii) The Graduate School will hold regular meetings with GPDs to identify opportunities for improvement in graduate program procedures and operations and provide opportunities for GPDs to share their best practices; and (iii) The Graduate School will provide regular professional development for GPDs so they utilize best practices in graduate education and meet the diverse needs of their students. Also, the regular professional development sessions will provide opportunities to train new GPDs more quickly.
- The Graduate School will initiate a unified university-level *marketing and communication plan* to promote TAMU Graduate and Professional Studies across the U.S. and abroad, and invest in tools to strengthen engagement at university, college, department, and program levels with prospective students, current students, and alumni.
- *Proposed changes to Interdisciplinary Graduate Degree Programs:* It is critical that regular meetings occur between the A&EC and the IDP EC since most of the concerns articulated by faculty affiliated with doctoral IDP programs are related to policies and practices in academic departments such as access to GAT positions, student travel support, and faculty teaching assignments. Hence the Graduate School will assume responsibility for convening an annual meeting of the A&EC and EC for each IDP doctoral program to ensure that regular interactions occur to support the success of the IDP programs. Also, the IDP chair or a designee for each IDP program will serve on the GIC of their administrative college to keep intercollegiate faculty apprised of policy and procedural changes.

Section II: Current Practices which will continue with the Graduate School assuming the responsibilities of OGAPS.


- **Graduate Unit and Leadership -- Roles & Responsibilities:** The Office of Graduate and Professional Studies (OGAPS), led by the Associate Provost for Graduate and Professional Studies (APGPS), serves as the central unit responsible for graduate and professional studies at Texas A&M University. Once an applicant is accepted into a graduate academic department, school, or college, OGAPS assists and facilitates the student's progress toward degree completion by maintaining all official records. OGAPS works directly with the GOC Deans (Associate Deans responsible for graduate studies in colleges) and Graduate Council to set minimal university guidelines, which all departments and colleges then use as a framework for operation, only setting more stringent standards when needed and appropriate. Clearance for graduation, including final reviews of theses, dissertations, and records of study, is performed by OGAPS. The Office of the Registrar is responsible for issuing diplomas and transcripts.
- **Academic Programs (Awards degrees) --** Texas A&M University awards degrees. Graduate degree programs are administratively housed in departments and colleges. OGAPS provides administrative oversight for all graduate certificates, and master's and doctoral degree programs.
- **Administration and Governance Structure for Graduate & Professional Studies --** Graduate and Professional Studies is governed by the following entities: President, Provost, Graduate Faculty, Faculty Senate, Graduate Council, Graduate Operations Committee, College Committees of Graduate Instruction, and Departmental Graduate Program Directors
 - Administration of Graduate and Professional Studies -- The graduate faculty at Texas A&M University consists of the President, the Provost and Executive Vice President, the Associate Provosts, the Deans of all subject-matter colleges, selected Directors and properly qualified academic groups. Graduate faculty participate in the graduate degree programs of the University by serving on student advisory committees and teaching graduate courses.
 - Faculty Senate -- Before submission to the President, the faculty senate reviews—and may initiate—the following related to graduate education: all university policies regarding curricula and instruction; academic standards for admission, standing, and graduation; and scholarships, honors and other forms of distinction.
 - Graduate Council (GC) -- A reporting committee to the Faculty Senate, the GC reviews all curricular requests pertaining to graduate and professional academic programs, is responsible for the quality and development of graduate instruction and programs, and advises the Associate Provost for Graduate and Professional Studies on all graduate and professional program matters. The GC submits its recommendations to the Faculty Senate via the Executive Committee. The GC is composed of a representative from the graduate faculty of each College at Texas A&M with one member elected as chair. The Associate Provost for Graduate and Professional Studies is an Ex-Officio member.
 - Graduate Operations Committee (GOC) -- The GOC serves as an advisory body to the Associate Provost for Graduate and Professional Studies and provides a forum for the Associate Deans in each College to discuss issues/concerns of an operational nature. To resolve these issues/concerns, the GOC recommends actions or procedures that are as uniform as possible across Colleges. The GOC works very closely with the GC to coordinate all curriculum and policy guidelines.
 - College Committees on Graduate Instruction (GIC) -- GICs are responsible for making recommendations concerning graduate course offerings, general policies on graduate instruction, and other matters pertaining to graduate studies in each college.
 - Graduate Program Directors (GPDs) -- Department Heads typically designate one or more graduate faculty or administrators to oversee their graduate degree program(s) and designates one to represent the department on its respective College Graduate Instruction Committee (GIC). There are no defined titles or roles and responsibilities for these positions.
- **Graduate Admissions and Recruitment --** The Office of Admissions facilitates the graduate application process including official admissions offers. Admission standards are established and decisions and discipline-specific recruiting are performed by faculty in departments and colleges. OGAPS performs recruitment to diversify the graduate student population.
- **Graduate Interdisciplinary Degree Program (IDP) Oversight and Operations --** Each graduate interdisciplinary degree program is overseen by a group of intercollegiate faculty, composed of graduate faculty from more

than one discipline representing more than one college. Graduate IDPs typically reside administratively in the college and department of the chair of the intercollegiate faculty overseeing the IDP. According to University SAP 03.02.99.M1.01, annual reports will be submitted by the IDP Executive Committee (EC) to the Advisory and Evaluation Committee (A&EC) of Participating Department Heads for the program, who will ensure that the report is distributed appropriately. A yearly meeting of the A&EC and EC will be held to review the performance of the IDP. Additional meetings may be called at the discretion of the A&EC or IOC

Plans for 2020-21

The task force will continue its efforts into the 2020-21 academic year, gathering broad input to work through issues identified during spring 2020 discussions. In addition, the task force will identify changes needed to achieve the graduate and professional studies goals in the 2020-2025 University Strategic Plan and provide recommendations to be addressed at the university level.

Appendix E: Presentation Made to University Community




Graduate School Task Force Stakeholder Presentation

April-June 2020

Updated 06/10/20


GRADUATE AND PROFESSIONAL STUDIES
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Agenda

- Background
- Task Force charge and membership
- Timeline
- Graduate School Proposal
 - Rationale
 - Guiding Principles
 - Framework
 - Current organizational structure
 - Proposed changes
 - Current practices that will continue
- Plans for 2020-21
- Q&A


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Background

- Vision 2020
 - Imperative 2: Strengthen Our Graduate Programs
- Academic Master Planning in 2009
 - Recommended a task force on the Graduate Experience
- Graduate Experiences Task Force
 - Offered priorities and recommendations around three issues: (1) Quality of Life, (2) Practices: Compensations and Benefits, and (3) Professional Development
- Next ten years, several major university investments were made and programs established to improve graduate student financial and programmatic support
- 2018 – 2019: OGAPS gathered preliminary input to inform a decision on possible changes to the scope and structure of the university's graduate unit
 - Hanover Research – Benchmarking Analysis of Graduate Units at Peer Institutions
 - Visits to Graduate Units at UT Austin, U of Michigan, UCLA
- December 2019: Request to establish Graduate School submitted to Provost
 - Convened a Task Force

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TF Charge and Membership

<https://ogaps.tamu.edu/Graduate-School>

- Charge
 - During the spring semester, the task force will focus on gathering input from stakeholders [e.g. faculty senate, council of deans, GOC Deans, URC Deans, graduate students, CPI, etc.] on the establishment of a Graduate School and its scope.
 - The task force will continue into the next academic year with a charge to provide recommendations on changes needed to achieve the graduate and professional education goals in the 2020-2025 University strategic plan.
- Membership
 - 13 Faculty
 - 5 department administrators, 4 college administrators, 1 interdisciplinary degree program chair
 - 2 staff
 - 3 graduate students
 - 8 member executive committee representing university administrative units


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TF Timeline & Scope

- February 26, 2020 Task Force Meeting #1
- Mid-March to Mid-June 2020 Stakeholder Presentations
 - GPSG, CPI, Council of Deans, GOC Deans, DH Steering Committee, URC Deans, Faculty Senate
- Late June 2020 Task Force Meeting #2
 - Discussion of Draft Task Force Report #1
- Late-June Finalize Task Force Report #1
- First Week of July Associate Provost submits recommendation to Provost based on Task Force input
- September 2020 Task Force Reconvenes
 - Subcommittees will be established in fall to develop recommendations

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GRADUATE SCHOOL PROPOSAL

GRADUATE AND PROFESSIONAL STUDIES
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Rationale

- Texas A&M has made considerable progress in strengthening its graduate programs over the past twenty years.
- Yet, to build on our success and reach the level of excellence in graduate education, we must continue to evolve, embracing bold strategic changes and investing the financial resources necessary to maximize the positive impact of those changes.
- **One such change is to transform the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies into a Graduate School.**
 - **Shifting a few areas of university-level administrative oversight to a centralized administrative division, the Graduate School.**
 - **Administrative shifts or enhancements in governance structure, marketing, and graduate interdisciplinary degree program operations are proposed for summer 2020.**

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Benefits of Re-branding as a Graduate School

- Signify that graduate education is an integral part of the university mission and, therefore, strengthen the university's identity as a research institution in a manner analogous to our peers
- Graduate School would support the enhancement of all of our graduate programs to build and sustain excellence in graduate education at Texas A&M by:
 - improving effectiveness in the administration and delivery of degree programs
 - building our graduate community by providing a central hub for current, prospective, and former students, faculty, staff
 - encouraging interdisciplinary collaboration
 - enabling consistency in policies and practices across graduate programs
 - centralizing the collection and analysis of data to support decisions, dissemination of information, and transparency about graduate education
 - centralizing coordination of health and wellness initiatives

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In summary...

- **Shifting to a Graduate School would advance Texas A&M's goal to be known as**
 - a university that attracts the best students from the U.S. and abroad,
 - supports its graduate students comprehensively, and
 - provides outstanding professional and career development programming,
- **thus elevating our graduate programs and community while building on Texas A&M's reputation as one of the world's preeminent educational institutions.**

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TEXAS A&M
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Graduate School Guiding Principles

- *Service and Excellence* – the school exists to serve students, faculty, and graduate programs and advance excellence in graduate and professional education
- *A Student-Centered Approach* – the school should be leading the implementation of student centered, optimal approaches for student success and well-being across programs
- *Faculty Governance* – Faculty should retain a critical role in collective decision-making for graduate education.
- *Program Diversity* – TAMU administers a wide variety of graduate programs, from professional and research programs to STEM and Humanities programs. Respect for differences of disciplines in best practices will guide implementation of the school's strategies
- *Budgeting* – The core of the school's budget should consist of funds currently allocated to the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies. Additional funding should come from new investments.

GRADUATE AND PROFESSIONAL STUDIES

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Administration & Governance of Graduate & Professional Studies

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graph TD
    A[Provost and Executive Vice President] --> B[Associate Provost for Graduate & Professional Studies]
    B --> C[Office of Graduate and Professional Studies (OGAPS)]
    B --> D[Graduate Operations Committee (GOC)]
    C <--> D
  
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GOC – serves as advisory body to the Associate Provost for Grad & Prof Studies and focuses primarily on operations and procedures regarding administration of graduate education throughout the University.

Each academic college is represented on the GOC by the associate dean (or other named individual) responsible for graduate studies in that college.

GRADUATE AND PROFESSIONAL STUDIES

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Administrative Organization – Graduate Operations

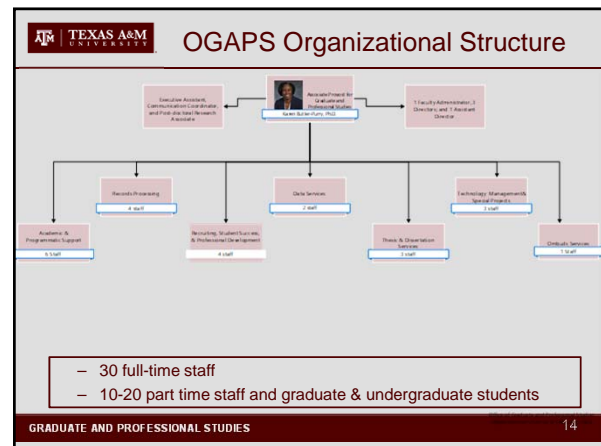
Department & Intercollegiate Faculty	College – GIC	University – GC
Graduate Advisors – Graduate Program Directors	Chair – Associate Dean for Graduate Studies Members – Graduate Program Directors	Chair Members – Chairs of GICs, Graduate Program Directors, Graduate Faculty

***GIC (College Committees on Graduate Instruction)** -- Responsible for making recommendations concerning graduate course offerings, general policies on graduate instruction and for other matters pertaining to graduate studies in each college.

***GC (Graduate Council)** -- A reporting committee to the Faculty Senate. Concerns itself with the development of graduate programs within the university and the maintenance of standards of excellence in all graduate instruction and graduate activities

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Proposed Changes

Graduate Unit	(i) Work currently overseen by OGAPS will be transformed into work of Graduate School
Graduate Faculty	(i) Will be affiliated with the Graduate School
Graduate Council (GC)	(i) Graduate Dean will remain a non-voting member and become the chair of the GC (ii) Establish three new subcommittees: master's and doctoral curricular review, first professional doctorate curricular review, and graduate policies and procedures
Graduate Program Directors (GPD)	(i) Work with GC to define a set of standard roles and responsibilities for GPDs (ii) Hold regular meetings with GPDs to identify opportunities for improvement in graduate program policies, procedures and operations, and provide opportunities for GPDs to share their best practices (iii) Provide regular professional development for GPDs so they utilize best practices in graduate education and meet the diverse needs of their students. Also provides opportunity to train new GPDs more quickly

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Proposed Changes

Marketing and Student Engagement	(i) Initiate a unified university-level marketing and communication plan to promote TAMU Graduate and Professional Studies across the U.S. and abroad (ii) Invest in tools to strengthen engagement at university, college, department, and program levels with prospective students, current students, and alumni
Interdisciplinary Degree Programs	To address concerns articulated by faculty in doctoral IDP programs, (i) GS will assume responsibility for convening an annual meeting of the A&EC department heads and EC for each IDP doctoral program to ensure that regular interactions occur to support the success of the IDP programs (ii) The IDP chair or a designee for each IDP program will serve on the GIC of their administrative college to keep IDP faculty apprised of policy and procedural changes

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Current Practices that will continue


Roles & Responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> OGAPS
Academic Programs (Awards degrees)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TAMU awards degrees Graduate degree programs administratively housed in departments and colleges OGAPS provides oversight of policies & procedures for graduate certificates and master's and doctoral programs
Administration & Governance Structure for Graduate and Professional Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Faculty Senate, Graduate Council, Graduate Operations Committee, College Committees of Graduate Instruction, Graduate Program Directors


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Current Practices that will continue

Graduate Admissions & Recruitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Faculty establish admissions standards, make decisions, perform discipline specific recruiting
Graduate IDP Oversight and Operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intercollegiate Faculty IDP Executive Committee Advisory & Evaluation Committee of participating department heads Administratively housed in colleges

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	TF Plans for 2020-21
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continue its efforts into the 2020-21 academic year, gathering broad input to work through issues identified during spring 2020 discussions.• Identify changes needed to achieve the graduate and professional studies goals in the 2020-2025 University Strategic Plan, and provide recommendations to be addressed at the university level.	
GRADUATE AND PROFESSIONAL STUDIES	19

	
Q&A	
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Appendix F: Compilation of Feedback from University Community

Categories of Stakeholder Meeting Questions

Theme	Representative Question/Comment	Response	Stakeholder Group
Questions about purpose/need for change	What does additional oversight in the Graduate School proposal entail?	When we talk about oversight, the central graduate unit's role is to take the university rules and policies related to graduate and professional education and operationalize them and promote best practices that advance excellence across programs.	CPI
	Will this change require additional administrators? Or can existing administrators redistribute their efforts rather than requiring the expansion of the administrative offices to implement the Graduate School plan?	Currently, OGAPS has four directors and one faculty administrator. Last year, OGAPS received funds to add two part-time faculty admins. They will both be part time, and we will advertise the openings later this spring.	CPI
	So much of this seems logical and a good idea. What are sources of pushback? What are the long-term changes and how might this impact them?	There has not been pushback, per se, more so just questions about the future. The guiding principles, which were created with task force input, will help shape the activities of the school.	DH Steering Committee
	What are the problems that a graduate school will solve? What are the issues that gave rise to this proposal?	We are not fundamentally broken. The proposed changes will simply enhance graduate and professional education at TAMU. TAMU aspires to be a top 10 public institution. The overwhelming majority of our peers (R1 institutions) have graduate schools, colleges, or divisions not an office (that is usually seen at smaller schools). We believe that sends a message that graduate education is not as much a priority as it actually is. Having a graduate school will help to shape TAMU as a premier graduate institution. We have also taken up this effort as a way to seek suggestions to advance excellence.	DH Steering Committee
	The Bush School and other colleges with large numbers of master's students might be worried that the	The graduate school would need to focus on ways to help support all programs. Some efforts will be specific to different populations/programs	DH Steering Committee

Theme	Representative Question/Comment	Response	Stakeholder Group
	master's programs would be lost, especially if there is a focus on the doctoral students solely or principally		
	Is there any chance that the Provost will not accept the request and we will not have a Graduate School?	A major goal of the TF is to gauge buy-in for the proposal in its early stages. The Task Force is responsible for gathering information and feedback to provide to the Provost, who will render a decision in the best interest of the University.	GOC
	What are challenges associated with the proposed change?	The change itself can be perceived as a challenge. It is important to have the support and unity among stakeholders. Together, we have to help people see the benefits of the change for TAMU.	GPSG
	How will graduate students be involved in this effort?	Graduate students need to be involved in the discussions about the establishment of a graduate school. Hence graduate students are on the task force, and we are presenting to the GPSG senate to gather your feedback.	GPSG
Impact on University Units, Students, and Faculty	What does the funding model look like? Will there be any changes in the budget? Will the colleges still receive their allocations from OGAPS?	There will not be any immediate changes to the OGAPS allocations to colleges.	COD
	We need more information about master's students and that do not want to be engaged in research.	A graduate school can leverage units and resources to improve master's students success by increasing focus on their graduation and career success and funding and diversity of programs. We do need to better articulate how we support master's students.	COD
	How will the change affect graduate students' stipends? How long will it take for the students to receive degrees, etc?	There will be no immediate changes in these metrics. However, we would keep in mind the guiding principle to use a student-centered approach in making changes.	COD
	Please review the relevant history of graduate education administration at the University.	When the Graduate College was started, we had a very small footprint in terms of graduate students. The graduate college had a much stronger role in decisions then, such as admissions.	COD CPI Faculty Senate

Theme	Representative Question/Comment	Response	Stakeholder Group
	<p>What is the difference between having a Graduate Office and a Graduate School, especially considering that there was one before.</p>	<p>As the number of graduate programs grew, there was a feeling that the graduate college was impeding progress, so around 1987-1988, the TAMU Graduate College was dissolved to form the Office of Graduate Studies.</p> <p>Now, we have a very large graduate footprint. There is a need to have a redefined centralized unit (some efforts are symbolic, such as matching the structure of our peers and aspirant peers, some are actual). Like our AAU peers, it is important to show graduate education is a key component of a research institution and promote excellence across all of graduate programs.</p> <p>The redefined central unit would not take away faculty governance. Instead, it would establish a 21st-century graduate school, which is student centered and where faculty are established as the major governing body.</p>	
	<p>What about the graduate degrees with the first professional (FP) units? Does this affect FP programs like Law?</p>	<p>The graduate school would not have oversight of the first professional doctorates (DVM, MD, JD, DDS, PharmD) but would for the professional master's along with research master's and all other doctorates. This approach is consistent with our current model for OGAPS. The first professional doctorates may be overseen by the colleges or the office of the Provost.</p> <p>Currently, the FP curricular items must go through the Graduate Council (GC) and then to the faculty senate. The GC is predominantly composed of faculty and administrators engaged with graduate programs.</p>	CPI

Theme	Representative Question/Comment	Response	Stakeholder Group
		The idea is that the FP sub-committee would be composed of representatives engaged with FP (First Professional) doctorate programs. Hopefully, it will improve the current process.	
	We hope the change to a Graduate School does not increase paperwork. Can we keep this in mind?	We are working to improve all processes, including moving to electronic forms. We heavily invested in IT support this year to do so. We will continue that transition next year.	CPI
	Does this change affect the land-grant mission?	There will be no change in the mission of the university. We will keep our commitment as a land-grant institution to serving the state.	CPI
	What does review of graduate certificates for master's and doctoral degrees entail?	OGAPS does not review curricular items. Graduate curricular items are facilitated through the university curricular approval process [department, college, Graduate Council, Faculty Senate, President]. OGAPS', and the new graduate school's, role is to take university rules, policies and procedures and operationalize them. OGAPS does not have the authority to approve or disapprove curriculum.	CPI
	How will this impact our department? My faculty are happy, and our standards are above those of the university. They just don't want to be negatively impacted.	A new graduate school would help support department activities, not take away from them. Perhaps this is best illustrated in the guiding principles: focusing on service and excellence, a student-centered approach, faculty governance, program diversity, and budgeting. The new graduate school would also look to support activities at the university-level that have been shown to be effective.	DH Steering Committee
	We need more money to support graduate student research. How can we identify ways to raise money to support RA's as much as TA's	A Graduate School can help with fundraising efforts from numerous external sources such as foundations, etc.	DH Steering Committee
	One of the benefits listed is improvement in the ways graduate advisors work. But the scale of the operation varies widely across campus. What is the plan for this?	The plan is to establish a consistent set of responsibilities for all graduate program directors, helping to ensure proper attention is being paid to graduate education through engagement in professional development of these individuals. The idea is to help ensure that proper attention is paid to the best practices	Faculty Senate

Theme	Representative Question/Comment	Response	Stakeholder Group
		related to graduate education, not requiring every department to have an individual in this title. The focus is on providing guidance to departments on best practices.	
	Will the graduate school encourage multidisciplinary research and coursework, as is done in other places?	The Graduate School could help address some of the barriers that students in interdisciplinary degree programs (IDPs) and students engaged in interdisciplinary research face. However some universities have multidisciplinary “university studies”-type degrees at the graduate level; establishment of such programs at TAMU would be up to the faculty. The goal of the graduate school would be to serve the student needs and faculty interests.	Faculty Senate
	Students are limited to what they can do when they are admitted into a department. Their research is constrained by the advisor. How do we have a system with more cross-pollination of ideas, moving away from the existing silos.	There are opportunities to enhance a number of initiatives. Some universities have funding that allow students to explore novel projects. It might look like a T3 for graduate students. This is just one example. Also there are many opportunities for students around leadership and communication, allowing them to participate in interdisciplinary education. There is a real opportunity for the graduate school to advance these types of initiatives. Another example is the Life Science cluster, where faculty and students might congregate around a particular research area.	Faculty Senate
	The key is the give graduate students the best experience possible.	Agreed	Faculty Senate
	Why would we shift if there is not a promise of additional resources?	Regarding resources, we have a good budget to focus on some of the things that might come out over the next year. There will be changes in the processes and functions. The students are now a major driver, and we need to have a school that is student centered and faculty centered to improve the excellence across the university. For example, we can focus on recruiting, helping with training grants, and so on.	Faculty Senate

Theme	Representative Question/Comment	Response	Stakeholder Group
	<p>How will the three Graduate Council (GC) subcommittees work? Will that be the people on the current GC or will that be other people on the subcommittees? Will it meet as subcommittees and then as a whole GC?</p>	<p>The role of all sub-committees: offering feedback to the larger Graduate Council. This would enable the Graduate Council to focus on larger, more strategic faculty governance related decisions and discussions.</p> <p>All voting would still be done by Graduate Council members only.</p> <p>The first-professional sub-committee would be comprised specifically of first-professional program faculty from our five first professional programs (DVM, JD, MD, PharmD, DDS). The associate deans from colleges housing the programs will name a faculty to represent their program on the sub-committee. The subcommittee would review GC items submitted by first professional programs and make recommendations to the Graduate Council.</p> <p>The remaining two subcommittees will be composed of members of GC.</p> <p>The graduate policies and procedures sub-committee will play a proactive role. The members will bring issues and concerns that they are hearing around campus. They will also make suggestions and recommendations to the GC for discussion.</p>	GOC
	<p>How will the change impact graduate students, particularly international students?</p>	<p>If the graduate school is established, we will also rely on graduate students for marketing and promotions, as they are frequently the best ambassadors for their programs. They can speak at their alma maters and other events.</p> <p>Finally, we have invested in a new CRM that will help better communicate with applicants and prospective students. Also transparency of data on applicants, enrolled students, and student success and utilization of best practices will improve student outcomes.</p>	GPSG

Theme	Representative Question/Comment	Response	Stakeholder Group
	How will the change help with the metrics of vision 2020?	The change will help our institution to expand our national and international brand as a prestigious graduate education destination.	GPSG
	Would there be any change in the fee structure?	No major fee changes are anticipated to support the establishment of a graduate school.	GPSG
	Where is the money coming from for future investments?	<p>For FY20, the university made a \$1M investment in graduate education, based on money that came from the state. Forty percent went to support a graduate IT team that will report to EIS and OGAPS and focus on graduate student related items in COMPASS. Other money will go to support new faculty administrators, adding new leadership to the office. Some of the rest of the money went to support a communications coordinator and portions of two other positions.</p> <p>We are in a good place to support and achieve the new goals and objectives of the strategic plan.</p> <p>Any additional funds targeting graduate education will go toward strategic initiatives, such as supporting tuition and fees, etc.</p>	URC Deans
	Will the new data services help PI's with grants?	<p>Yes. We have developed templates for building data tables for T32 proposals. We are also developing a manual with templates for T32 proposal sections. We can assist with the data collection as it relates to students and student success.</p> <p>We also are working with DARs on the new tab on the accountability website that is specific to graduate and professional students. The data goes down to the program level which will help with academic program reviews (APRs) and grants.</p>	URC Deans

Theme	Representative Question/Comment	Response	Stakeholder Group
Task Force and Timeline	Provide the names of the people on task force so they can be reached with comments and concerns.	We are preparing a webpage that will have the Task Force Members' information.	DH Steering Committee
	Does the Graduate School start next year?	<p>Next year, as the task force meets, we will identify specific needs at university level.</p> <p>There are improvements that are needed to help support grad education in a more fundamental way.</p> <p>One example is the career center: are we doing what we can at the university level to help support students? Can we work better with the departments and colleges to better propel the students? The career development resources for graduate students to ensure we see the outcome. The primary goal of graduate students is to be successful when they graduate. Future task force activities might include suggestions to programs and departments to help improve and advance excellence.</p> <p>Our initial plan was to submit a report to the Provost in May. With the COVID-19 delays, this will be pushed to June. Based on the collective feedback, the Provost will then decide if and when to move forward with a graduate school model.</p> <p>Either way, the task force will continue in the Fall, working on ways to further enhance graduate education. The central focus is building on successes, identifying and addressing shortcomings, and promoting excellence.</p>	DH Steering Committee
	Faculty in various departments are asking where they can get information about the Task Force. If they have any questions or concerns,	<p>The Webpage information was shared. Link: http://ogaps.tamu.edu/Graduate-School</p> <p>A list of TF members with contact information is available on the webpage.</p>	GOC

Theme	Representative Question/Comment	Response	Stakeholder Group
	how can they let the TF members know	The web page has a copy of the stakeholder presentation and the proposal, as well as a place for people to send feedback. Please pass along to the faculty in your college. The upcoming CPI newsletter will also have the link to the webpage.	
		Additional Questions/Concerns	Stakeholder Group
		<p>Areas that could require additional clarification:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graduate Faculty will be affiliated with the Graduate School. • What is meant by affiliation? Are there different levels for faculty teaching across undergraduate and graduate programs? • Proposed changes to Graduate Program Directors: Does this impact the program coordinators? Are they going to be title changed? • The Graduate School will initiate a unified university-level marketing and communication plan... How will this coordinate with the CON efforts? 	Nursing Executive Committee

Appendix G: GPSG R.53.07: Support of the Establishment of a Graduate School within
Texas A&M University (GPSG Senate Resolution)

Texas A&M University
Graduate and Professional Student Government
Senate
53rd Session, 2019-2020

Resolution

Support of the Establishment of a Graduate School within Texas A&M University

Introduced By: Jonathan Behlen, GPSG Advocacy Committee Co-Chair

Sponsored By: Alexander Blanchette, Toxicology

Whereas (1): Dr. Karen Butler-Purry, Associate Provost for Graduate and Professional Studies, presented to the Graduate and Professional Student Government on March 17, 2020, updating GPSG Senate on the establishment of a graduate school within Texas A&M University;¹ and,

Whereas (2): Similar peer Tier One research universities have graduate schools which centralize admissions, graduate procedures and graduation requirements;² and,

Whereas (3): Any improvements to graduate students adheres to the established 2020-2025 strategic plan and the vision of defining our future for the next 150 years for Texas A&M University;³ and,

Whereas (4): Harmonization and centralization of graduate and professional study procedures and guidelines guarantee the highest quality educational experience across the University, which adheres to the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies responsibilities and their 2016-2020 strategic plan under pillars two and four.⁴

Let it be Resolved (1): GPSG supports the establishment of a graduate school within Texas A&M University; and,

Resolved (2): A copy of this resolution shall be posted and delivered to:

Mr. Michael K. Young, J.D.

President of Texas A&M University

Dr. Daniel Pugh

Vice President of Student Affairs

Dr. Karen Butler-Purry

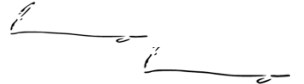
Associate Provost for Graduate and Professional Studies

Dr. Anne Reber
Dean of Student Life
 Dr. Andrew Klein
Speaker of Faculty Senate
 Mr. Mikey Jaillet
Student Body President, SGA
 Mr. Eric Mendoza
Speaker of the Student Senate, SGA
 Ms. Nicole Pompilio
Advisor to the Graduate and Professional Student Government
 Ms. Stefanie Baker
Advisor to the Graduate and Professional Student Body President
 Members of the GPSLCG
Graduate and Professional Student Leadership Communication Group

Action Taken: Passed

Certified By: 
 Shannon Norris
Speaker & Executive Vice President, GPSG

Date: April 21, 2020

Duly Approved By: 
 Purna Doddapaneni
Student Body President, GPSG

¹ Graduate and Professional Student Government Senate Agenda for March 17, 2020—
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1QzSJhyfsRtsbY6aHwjbcAJxBtds9uV9sp3xB8x_-8BM/edit#heading=h.eqlnbh1y08qx

² US News and World Reports—
<https://www.usnews.com/best-graduate-schools/rankings>

³ Office of the Provost and Executive Vice President - Strategic Planning—
<http://provost.tamu.edu/Strategic-Planning>

⁴ Office of Graduate and Professional Studies—
<https://ogaps.tamu.edu/About>