

Southern Illinois University Carbondale

GRADUATE ENROLLMENT PLAN 2008-2009

**Developed by:
Graduate Enrollment Working Group
Colleges and Graduate Programs
Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research and Graduate Dean**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Presidential goals for graduate enrollment target a 5% increase for Fall 2009, equivalent to an increase of 198 students.
- Graduate programming is highly decentralized, which means that recruiting, admissions, and administration of graduate programs are managed at the department/program level.
- Enhanced graduate programming, recruiting, and ‘catch-rate’ efforts developed by the Graduate Enrollment Working Group (GEWG) should positively impact graduate enrollment. Most of these activities involve personal communication with the candidates and are labor intensive. Most programs indicate that available staff time is a limitation to these efforts.
- Approximately 55% of graduate students at SIUC are supported with an assistantship or fellowship. Without additional resources to support graduate students, this fact makes the +5% goal particularly challenging.
- Because in many disciplines 100% of graduate students are given financial support (i.e., competitive offers of admission require support), a lack of additional funds may restrict major growth in enrollment to those areas in which such support is not the norm.
- Commitment by the campus of additional tuition waivers, perhaps distributed on a partial basis, may be used to enhance enrollment, particularly in those disciplines where assistantship support is not required for recruitment.
- Continued growth in external grants that include graduate assistantship support, and fundraising to support graduate fellowships will generate new funds to increase capacity but will be particularly challenging in the current economic climate.
- Commitment of additional resources for GAs by the campus would directly lead to enrollment increases.
- Opportunities for enrollment of international graduate students who are not supported (and therefore also have no tuition waiver) are hampered by the high out-of-state tuition multiplier (2.5x) coupled with the 1.4x multiplier for graduate tuition versus undergraduate tuition. These compounding factors result in international graduate students paying tuition at a rate 3.5x higher than in-state undergraduates.
- Banner implementation has replaced the Graduate School on-line graduate application with a Fall 2009 application that is not suitable for graduate education. Stopgap alternatives are being developed.
- Particularly notable/new actions that will be implemented or developed to approach achievement of the enrollment target are:
 - A new plan for use of partial tuition waivers to recruit top students in revenue-positive and enrollment-positive ways,
 - Creation of a timely new master’s program in Advanced Energy and Fuels Management,
 - Creation of on-line MBA and MAcc programs,
 - Creation of weekend Master’s of Social Work offered at community colleges,
 - Partnership agreements with international universities from China, Greece, Thailand, Malaysia, Taiwan, etc.
 - Partnerships with International Student Council, and other student groups, to enhance recruitment of international and other targeted student groups, and
 - Mechanisms and programs for recruiting non-traditional graduate students from the local area for life-long learning and career-change experiences.

I. Introduction. In Fall 2008, President Poshard established a variety of FY10 goals for the SIUC campuses, including a target for a 5% increase in graduate enrollment for the Fall 2009 semester. As the Fall 2008 graduate enrollment at SIUC was 3,969, this target corresponds to an increase of 198 students for a total projected graduate enrollment of 4,167. This plan outlines the campus vision to approach the targeted graduate enrollment.

II. Graduate Programming at SIUC. At SIUC, as at most research universities, graduate programming is highly decentralized, which means that recruiting, admissions, and administration of graduate programs are managed at the department/program level. There are several reasons for this approach. Frequently, the choice of a specific research university is a personal decision between a student and a faculty member, particularly with doctoral students. In addition, departments have a better understanding of the type of students they want to recruit to maintain quality programs, and are better positioned to maintain contacts with students admitted to their programs but who have not yet arrived on campus. Indeed, regular contact with such students throughout the summer months is an important means to ensure that the students arrive on campus in August.

There are a number of ways that the Graduate School staff assists departments in their annual recruiting efforts, especially with minority and international students. The Graduate School provides oversight for graduate program administration from policy perspectives and maintenance of standards, operation and advancement of university-wide initiatives, management of fellowship programs, and oversight of campus-wide recruiting and training activities initiatives. The OVCR/GD also manages a portion (~10%) of the graduate assistantship budgets for the colleges; criteria for distribution of these funds to the colleges are: expenditures for grad assistantships, graduate enrollment, and diversity of the graduate population within the colleges.

III. Graduate Enrollment. There are many factors that influence the number of graduate students at US universities, including SIUC. Primary among these, as stated by Sims and Syverson (1) “Both graduate enrollments and applications are related to the availability of financial support for graduate education and inversely related to the general state of the economy.” Because the majority of graduate students are on some form of support, the level of assistantship/fellowship support that is available influences the university’s ability to attract students.

In addition, environmental factors such as the economy and job market for undergraduates influence the level of interest in graduate education by bachelor’s graduates. Other factors that influence graduate enrollment are: 1) the reputation and attractiveness of our graduate programs and offerings, including the quality of faculty in those programs; 2) the capacity of programs to carry graduate students; and 3) the effectiveness of our recruiting efforts; etc.

Currently, as is typical at research universities, approximately 55% of SIUC graduate students are supported by some form of assistantship or fellowship, at an average cost of about \$15,000/year. If the assigned target were to be reached while maintaining this percentage of graduate student support, over \$1.6M in additional funds would be required. Since no new dollars are currently identified to support these positions, achievement of the assigned target is

particularly challenging, especially when coupled with some of the SWOT analysis *threats* indicated below.

Because in many disciplines all graduate students are given financial support (i.e., competitive offers of admission require support), a lack of additional funds may restrict major growth in enrollment to those areas in which such support is not the norm. This circumstance would shift the burden for enrollment growth to those programs where support is not required for recruitment (e.g., education, business, electrical engineering, etc.), some of which already may be over capacity.

Growth in support for graduate students from external sources is particularly challenging when state and federal budgets grow slowly. Therefore, the current economic climate may present historic challenges, and efforts to pursue such support must be aggressive and of particular high quality to increase the likelihood of success. Further, maintenance of on-campus support for graduate assistants may be challenged unless particular priority for protection of this support is established.

IV. SWOT Analysis for Graduate Education at SIUC. A cursory Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis of the status of graduate programming and enrollment at SIUC follows:

Strengths

- Expanding portfolio of cutting-edge programs
- Success of graduates in competitions, e.g., three MAGS outstanding thesis awards in last six years, etc.
- Several nationally-ranked programs
- Graduate Enrollment Working Group with representatives from all colleges: planning, best practices, laying ground work for enhanced success

Opportunities

- International agreements/joint degree programs, e.g., UIBE (China), Patras (Greece), Taiwan, etc.
- On-line programs, e.g.:
 - Rehab Admin (RA-Online)
 - MBA (Fall 2009)
 - MAcc (Fall 2009)

Weaknesses

- Quality of some printed recruitment documents/some websites
- Variable acceptance of responsibility for grad issues in colleges
- Lack of competitive support packages, e.g., fellowships
- Challenges in gaining approval of on-line programs
- Risk-averse administrative culture
- Need for additional staff, especially for graduate recruiting
- Bureaucratic friction across administrative lines that sometimes impedes goals

Threats

- Rising fees
- Higher grad tuition (1.4x)
- High out-of-state multi (2.5x)

- $1.4x + 2.5x$ compounded = $3.5x!$ (i.e., out-of-state grad student pays 3.5x tuition rate of in-state undergrad!)
- Banner implementation may deter graduate applications and 601 enrollments
- Accreditation limits growth in certain programs without additional faculty
- Linkage of summer fees and tuition schedule
- State and federal budget challenges not only make growth in external support for graduate students challenging, but may even threaten current levels

V. Graduate Enrollment Working Group (GEWG). In order to develop methods and practices intended in the long run to enhance graduate enrollment at SIUC, in 2007 the VCR/GD, in collaboration with the Provost and the Colleges, established the Graduate Enrollment Working Group (GEWG). The primary goal of the GEWG is *to develop ideas and mechanisms to increase the number, quality, and diversity of graduate students at SIUC*. Over the last year, efforts of the group have included: 1) assistance with the evaluation of capacity analysis data for all graduate programs, 2) development of best practices for graduate recruiting based on workshops attended by several members, 3) adoption of best practices for diversity in graduate enrollment, 4) consideration of several approaches for on-line graduate program development, 5) oversight and evaluation of strategic plans for graduate enrollment developed by all graduate programs, and 6) identification of graduate programs for tactical recruitment videos to enhance web sites. The following enrollment plan is based in large part on the best practices developed by the GEWG with input from national leaders and consultants. Most activities intended to increase ‘catch-rates’ of admitted students involve personal communication with the candidates and are labor intensive. Most programs indicate that available staff time is a limitation to these efforts. Addition of Associate Deans for Research and Graduate Programs in every college (as endorsed by the Graduate Council) would provide some assistance with this limitation. Additional staffing at the program level, perhaps even at the GA level (compounding the benefit), would as well.

VI. Capacity Analysis. Capacity analysis indicates that a number of programs can carry additional students but do not necessarily have the resources to do so. Currently, graduate students recruited to SIUC: 1) may be offered a graduate assistantship or fellowship, which includes a tuition waiver (while still paying fees), or 2) may be offered admission and pay full tuition. Therefore, programs have little in terms of incentives to offer graduate applicants if they are unable to provide a costly assistantship.

In light of this situation, we recommend providing key programs with the capability to offer partial tuition scholarships (e.g., tuition for up to 10, 20, 30%, etc.). We propose a total of 100 full-time scholarships that would be accessible by programs campus wide. These scholarships would be offered only to meritorious, new graduate applicants. The scholarship program would be managed in a manner that would have net positive effects on revenue and enrollment in programs campus wide. All students receiving the scholarship would be required to register for a minimum of nine hours each term for the academic year; they could receive an additional three-hour scholarship if they enroll for six hours during summer.

VII. Graduate Enrollment Plan for 2008-2009

Based on the detailed efforts of the GEWG, graduate programs and the Graduate School, we propose the following plan exemplifying activities to increase graduate enrollment for Fall 2009:

GOAL: Increase Graduate Enrollment at SIUC.

OBJECTIVE: Increase enrollment of new graduate students.

1.1 Continue efforts of Graduate Enrollment Working Group (ongoing).

Further develop practices for enhanced graduate enrollment and diversity of graduate students. Develop best practices for strategic planning, including enhancement of summer graduate enrollment.

- Develop best practices from graduate programs' strategic plans.
- Work to enhance summer enrollment across colleges.
- Assess and enhance departmental and Graduate School printed recruitment materials.
- Assess and enhance University and departmental web sites.

1.2 Continue to work with Peterson's, Princeton Review, and Gradschools.com to increase high-quality applicants (ongoing).

- Increase the number of qualified applicants for graduate programs (vs. June 2008) in order to increase graduate and professional enrollment to 4,167 by September 2009.
- Continue to aggressively recruit international students with a goal for an increase in applicants by June 2009, as measured against June 2008.
- Create tactical recruitment videos for selected graduate programs for departmental/ University websites.
- Continue to fund (and better publicize) on a matching basis on-campus visits of prospective graduate students.

1.3 Continue to enhance our portfolio of graduate programs at the master's level, and attract new resources to support them.

- Complete and send forward for IBHE approval a New and Expanded Program Request (NEPR) for an interdisciplinary Professional Science Master's program in Advanced Energy and Fuels Management for implementation in Summer 2009; a \$450K earmark has been included in federal budget language to facilitate implementation of the program.
- Work with industry to enhance internship opportunities for students in the PSM in Advanced Energy and Fuels Management program, as well as students in other programs.
- Work with the College of Applied Arts and Sciences to complete NEPRs for two off-campus, cost-recovery master's programs: one in fire service and homeland security management, and the other in occupational therapy.
- Secure final IBHE approval and implement the new M.S. in Math and Science Education by Spring 2009.

- Explore joint degree programs with international partners such as the University of Patras (Greece), University of International Business and Economics (China), and several schools in Taiwan.
- Work with the Saudi Embassy, the Malaysian Ministry of Education, and Prince of Songkla University (Thailand) to bring state-sponsored doctoral students to campus.
- Development of on-line MBA and MAcc programs for Fall 2009.
- Work to establish a weekend Master's of Social Work program for Fall 2009, in collaboration with local community colleges.

1.4 Maintain an appropriate balance of Ph.D. programs.

- Complete a Reasonable and Moderate Extension (RME) to create an Ed.D. in the College of Education and Human Services to make COEHS doctoral programming more competitive.

1.5 Acquire additional funding to recruit and retain graduate students.

- Develop and submit proposal to NSF's Integrative Graduate Education and Research Traineeship (IGERT) program, which has the goal of establishing innovative new models for graduate education and training in an environment for collaborative interdisciplinary research, to facilitate greater diversity in student participation and preparation, and to contribute to the development of a diverse, globally-engaged workforce in the STEM fields (Fall 2008).
- Explore opportunities for expansion or creation of third-party agreements to support graduate student research and training.
- Emphasize commitment of matching funds for grants to support GAs, where GA support is emphasized in the budget to the agency (Fall 2008).
- Pursue support for enhanced commitment of tuition waiver scholarships (~100 FTE) and develop a plan for distribution of these to programs that results in a net increase in graduate enrollment and tuition income (Fall 2008).
- Compete for a new cohort of Bridge-to-the-Doctorate fellows from the National Science Foundation (Spring 2009).

1.6 Intensify efforts to establish Associate Deans for Research and Graduate Education in all colleges to better coordinate graduate education, and/or devise other means to assist graduate programs in their recruiting and enrollment efforts.

- Seek funds for GAs to assist with graduate enrollment and recruiting in programs, or alternate means to provide assistance to programs to enhance recruiting efforts (Spring 2009).

1.7 Graduate School recruitment activities

- Participate in regional, national, and international graduate recruitment fairs (ongoing).
- Offer on-campus workshops with the goal of encouraging undergraduate students to continue into graduate education (ongoing).
- Work with departments on joint efforts to enhance graduate enrollment (ongoing).

- Provide quality printed recruitment materials to departments/colleges/units and prospective students (ongoing, complete by Spring 2009).
- Assess and enhance Graduate School web site (Fall 2008).
- Continue publication of *Graduate Highlights* to illustrate graduate student accomplishments.
- Develop partnership with International Student Council, and other student groups to enhance recruitment of international/other (e.g., minority) students by December 1, 2008.

1.8 Address GEWG concerns of electronic graduate application with Banner Implementation.

- In collaboration with IT and the Banner implementation team, develop an acceptable graduate application to be used for Fall 2009 applicants (by December 1, 2008), and if necessary, explore third-party software options (during Spring, 2009).

1.9 Develop mechanisms and programs for recruiting unclassified graduate students for life-long learning and career-change experiences.

- Begin marketing by November 30, 2008.

REFERENCE

- L. B. Sims and P. D. Syverson, "Utilizing Data for Effective Administration of Graduate Education", *J. Higher Education Strategists*, **1**, 65 (2003).