

University of Wisconsin Oshkosh Graduate Education Strategic Plan

Introduction

The University of Wisconsin Oshkosh has a long tradition of providing students with high-quality, affordable graduate education that responds to the needs of northeastern Wisconsin. The structure of graduate education has changed over time. At one point there was a Dean of the Graduate School who served as the administrative leader and spokesperson for graduate education. At this point the graduate school is led by the Chair of the Graduate Council, an academic dean who has as part of his/her responsibilities representing the graduate school, and the Executive Committee of the Council. The Director of Graduate Services is an ex-officio member of the Council and the Executive Committee.

For the entire history of the UW System UW Oshkosh has had the largest graduate student enrollment of the comprehensive universities. This enrollment has fluctuated from approximately 1800 to 1300 and from 11.5% of total enrollment to 15.6%. Over the last 10 years enrollment has declined at the same time several other UW comprehensive universities have increased. (See attached table and figures.) Also, because we serve a primarily part time graduate student body, our graduate FTE has declined, while other comprehensive UW universities have had significant increases.

Graduate programs and students have a positive impact on our university by students engaging in scholarship with faculty members, by enhancing our relationship to the community at large, and by enhancing the reputation of our university. The goal of the following strategic plan is to strengthen graduate education and to guide activities over the next five years. The plan articulates a vision, a mission, a definition, and opportunities for graduate education, and it outlines a process for implementation and assessment. It discusses strategies to strengthen existing programs and to develop new programs. Furthermore, the plan describes challenges that need to be overcome and presents options for addressing them. The term “Graduate Education” is intentional in that it refers not simply to the delivery of degrees or certificates but to the whole enterprise of graduate studies as it applies to our university education. Some students wish to take courses for the knowledge gained or for licensure by outside agencies and do not wish a credential from us. This education is delivered through each college and is supported by the Graduate Studies office.

Although some programs attract students from throughout the world, the great majority of graduate students are from northeast and north central Wisconsin. Taken as a whole, this region represents the third largest population center in the state, a geography which our campus’s graduate programs benefit. The state and region will continue to need UW Oshkosh to be a leader in delivering graduate education, and we aspire to be distinctive among the UW comprehensive universities by the breadth and strength of our graduate programs; therefore, we must seek ways to strengthen graduate education at UW Oshkosh.

This plan includes five broad initiatives from which specific goals will be created. The extent to which the goals are accomplished will depend on the resources available. The resources allocated to achieve those goals will be determined by the Provost and Chancellor as part of the annual budget development process.

Vision

The University of Wisconsin Oshkosh will be recognized as the premier provider of graduate education north of Madison.

Mission

Graduate education at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh fosters scholarly activities that develop leaders who think creatively and analytically. Our graduate students and alumni contribute to the intellectual vitality of their communities by not only creating knowledge but by applying that knowledge.

Definition of Graduate Education

Graduate Education at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh is defined as post-baccalaureate education delivered within the context of programs leading to degrees, certificates, and/or professional credentials. Graduate education is typically offered in areas in which we have strong faculty credentials and we have authorization to grant degrees and certificates or to recommend licensure.

Opportunities

The plan below outlines five opportunities that can strengthen graduate education on our campus. It describes the strengths upon which we are building and the weaknesses we are attempting to address. Each opportunity includes a description and the key factors to its success. Success factors may appear under more than one Opportunity and the Opportunities are listed neither in priority order nor in chronological order. The items under “Some keys to Success” are listed as examples of achievable goals. Initiatives under each opportunity will be more fully developed by the Opportunity Task Forces.

INCREASE VISIBILITY OF GRADUATE EDUCATION ON CAMPUS

Enhance the presence of and the commitment to graduate education on campus.

Strengths: We currently have a well-functioning *office* of Graduate Studies and a Graduate Council. The Graduate Council Chair, Graduate Dean and Director of Graduate Services are represented on the Provost’s Administrative Staff. There has been support from Integrated Marketing and Communications (IMC). Our programs have a strong record of placing successful professionals throughout the region/state.

Weaknesses/Threats: We do not have a clearly identified graduate *school*. We do not have a permanent senior academic/administrative head (e.g. Dean) of graduate studies which is problematic, because the campus is focused heavily on undergraduate education and students. There is no designated program-specific space for graduate students and there is a lack of graduate-only events and awards (e.g., orientations, scholarships, recruitment)

Some Keys to Success:

- Create *esprit de campus* for graduate students by holding graduate-student-focused events & activities
- Increase opportunities for graduate education funding and scholarships
- Improve visibility and access to graduate education via signage, web-pages and print media
- Create an autonomous administrative structure, such as a Graduate School
- Promote networking opportunities for graduate students
- Identify best practices used by other campuses for organization, promotion and delivery
- Allocate adequate resources (budget, space & personnel) to achieve Graduate Education mission

COMMUNICATE OUR SCHOLARLY, LEADERSHIP AND RESEARCH EXPERTISE

Promote our expertise and excellence and better define our position and value to our region and disciplines.

Strengths: Within northeastern Wisconsin we have the largest number of expert graduate faculty who perform ongoing research and other scholarly activities. Much of the research conducted can be applied to solve real world problems. Faculty and student research and applied projects are conducted in all of the academic colleges. Some examples include the DNP program with evidence-based practice projects, MSW which requires students to complete applied research as part of their graduation requirements, education programs in which students integrate the newest teaching methods in classrooms, MBA students who use course projects to solve on-the-job problems for their employers and MPA students who also use course projects to address government policy problems.

Weaknesses/Threats: Members of northeastern Wisconsin do not recognize that our faculty and students engage in research. When people in the community need research assistance, they are much more likely to seek assistance from UW Madison. The dearth of dedicated resources for graduate research inhibits the visibility of graduate education. We may need to reframe the way our graduate research is defined and/or classified within the UW System.

Some Keys to Success:

- Promote current high-interest, high-impact projects to promote the caliber of graduate work on our campus
- Conduct primary research for the region
- Partner with local organizations and constituents to engage in applied research
- Identify best practices used by other campuses for engaging in and making available to the region campus graduate research/scholarly activities and leadership

ENHANCE EXTERNAL RELATIONSHIPS

Foster a sense of commitment to graduate education among external constituents (alumni, agencies, organizations, communities).

Strengths: We have a large number of graduates employed within the region. We have many contacts with organizations through the colleges and the Business Success Center. We have access to multiple media for communication. We have expert faculty with the potential to develop new programs and initiatives to meet the needs of the region.

Weaknesses/Threats: We do not adequately track graduate alumni. We do not market ourselves well enough as a graduate institution. The Office of Graduate Studies has very limited relationships with the UW Oshkosh Foundation and IMC.

Some Keys to Success:

- Establish and manage networking opportunities that engage graduate alumni in a variety of contexts and formats, including advisory boards, guest lecturers and committees.
- Encourage (compensate/provide incentives to) graduate faculty and staff to participate in community, civic and service organizations
- Track/manage the wide variety of contacts with external organizations and constituents
- Identify best practices used by other campuses for promoting external relationships

GO FORTH

Better serve our constituents by expanding the delivery of graduate education to the greater northern regions of the state and beyond.

Strengths: The University of Wisconsin has a national reputation and our recognized regional accreditation give us credibility in the market. There are many facilities available to provide graduate level education. We also have the capability to deliver programs using distance education formats. We have an excellent College of Business facility in Green Bay that is not utilized on weekends and during the day. We have an existing partnership with UWGB (MSW) that could be leveraged to deliver other programs collaboratively.

Weaknesses/Threats: Some faculty/staff may be reluctant to travel/participate. Even for those willing to travel, there may be detrimental impacts to their research, scholarship and university service. There is also the potential for distance education to detract from on-campus courses if we are not able to expand the number of students. Finally there are a limited number of graduate programs that may be able to take advantage of this opportunity.

Some Keys to Success:

- Establish demand for specific programs in specific locations and formats.
- Promote specific programs
- Establish a northern “campus” and/or Graduate Education Center
- Improve faculty skill in alternative educational delivery methods
- Engage in continuous assessment and quality improvement
- Improve infrastructure to meet demand

STRENGTHEN GRADUATE ENROLLMENT

Attract and matriculate qualified students to fulfill the graduate education mission. A critical mass of graduate students is needed for programs to remain viable. We need a mix of part-time students with full-time students. We need students from our region as well as from throughout the United States and the world. We need persons of color and both men and women. We need some students who are with us physically and some who are with us virtually.

Each existing program will need to maximize its opportunities in its own way: some may need to grow in enrollments; others may need fewer students; and still others will need the same enrollment but a different mix of students (e.g., better quality, more full-time, more international). It also means that we may need to add new programs that meet the needs of northeastern and north central Wisconsin and potentially beyond.

Table 1 shows head count enrollment and student credit hours for graduate and undergraduates at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh over the last 13 years. The table also shows graduate head count for our sister comprehensive campuses with large graduate enrollments. Our largest enrollment (headcount) was 1837 students in 1998 with a total enrollment of 10,800, which represented 16.7% of the total student body. Given the current total student body of 13,300 the same percentage would result in approximately 2200 graduate students compared to our current enrollment of approximately 1400.

We expect that UW System will be asking each campus to set a goal for the number of graduate degrees conferred. In anticipation of that request, we are proposing a goal for graduate enrollment, which can lead to increased degrees conferred. By 2015, our goal is for graduate headcount enrollment to be between 14% and 17% of the total student body. This would mean graduate enrollment would increase (assuming same total student body remains at 13,300) to between 1862 and 2261 graduate students. This is consistent with our historical levels.

Strengths: We have a wide array of programs to attract students. Many of our programs focus on current issues of interest and concern. The New North has 1.2 million people, so it is a wide community from which to draw. We are gaining expertise in a range of delivery methods to reach those who are unable to attend class on campus and to reach beyond northeastern Wisconsin. A number of our programs purposefully design their curriculum so that ideas directly address real issues in the region.

Weaknesses/Threats: Students lack financial aid/assistance. There is limited awareness of graduate program options at UW Oshkosh. We have a weak and decentralized recruitment plan. There is an insufficient data management structure to understand the market and its needs. Many faculty members are resistant to non-traditional educational delivery methods because they believe there are some courses that, because of the nature of their activities, do not lend themselves well to fully on-line or hybrid delivery. While programs may choose their delivery method, it is important to recognize that on-line and hybrid offerings have increasing appeal for non-traditional students and others seeking graduate education.

Overall we do not matriculate a large number of top-level students and students who seek to enter Ph.D. programs. The degree to which a program sees itself as serving a constituency which includes those who would seek eventual entry into doctoral programs will help dictate enrollment strategies. For those programs which this applies, strategies to attract prospective students may include representing the UW Oshkosh program as a “feeder” for doctoral programs. As such, the initiative would include exploring how and with whom to establish such relationships.

Some Keys to Success:

- Develop and retain well qualified faculty
- Establish and maintain relationships with alumni
- Dedicate on-going resources to enrollment, recruitment and outreach of well qualified students

- Identify and develop resources for graduate financial aid, graduate student advising and graduate student support services

Implementation

We will create a Task Force for each of the above Opportunities. Each Task Force is to identify possible *Keys to Success* to be considered to fulfill the opportunity and then to evaluate all of the *Keys to Success*. For each *Key to Success*, the Task Force will do the following:

1. Develop each *Key to Success* to understand how it would fulfill the Opportunity (e.g., *Events for Graduate Students Only* need to be developed into what specific events are desired, when they would occur, who would be included and how they would help fulfill other Opportunities),
2. Who/Which individuals or groups should be involved in implementation,
3. Determine potential measurable outcomes and the value of the initiative (these will be the metrics we will use to determine the success of the Graduate Education Strategic Plan),
4. Conduct a rough cost/benefit analysis,
5. Prepare separate recommendations for the *Keys to Success* identifying which to pursue and when including a rough timetable for each (e.g., never, later, soon, now).

The full Graduate Education Development Team will review this analysis and will take one of the following actions: 1) approve for implementation now, 2) approve for implementation later 3) forward to appropriate governance groups for review or 4) discard for now. For each *Key to Success* selected for implementation now we will form an Implementation Team.

Timetable for Opportunity Review and Implementation

Activity	Responsible Group	Date Completed
Opportunity Task Forces Formed (5)	Graduate Education Development Team	January 20, 2010
Opportunities Evaluated	Opportunity Task Forces	March 1, 2010
Initiatives Selected for Implementation	Graduate Education Development Team	March 15, 2010
Implementation Team Formed for Each Initiative (5)	Opportunity Task Forces	April 1, 2010
Timeline, Resources and Detailed Outcomes identified	Implementation Teams	May 1, 2010
Report on draft outcomes/metrics to the Graduate Education Development Team	Implementation Teams	June 4, 2010
Report to Provost on Metrics and Implementation Progress	Graduate Education Development Team	August 6, 2010
Report on Implementation Progress and Key Metrics to campus community	Graduate Education Development Team	October 1, 2010
Annual Report to the Campus Community on Graduate Education Strategic Plan Implementation	Graduate Council	October 1 each year

Table 1
Enrollment Data by Graduate versus Undergraduate, University for 1997-2009

Graduate

Fall Head Count	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
LaCrosse	712	855	876	950	1165	1487	1468	1191	1261	1508	1447	1239	1138
Stout	757	709	803	637	733	812	828	730	790	855	926	1070	1044
Whitewater	1230	1164	1223	1212	1201	1284	1389	1405	1364	1292	1329	1341	1409
Oshkosh	1762	1837	1602	1641	1643	1743	1587	1593	1525	1528	1626	1360	1520
FALL FTE													
LaCrosse	460	573	584	634	789	971	964	807	866	998	976	888	714
Stout	435	423	477	410	402	446	458	446	460	481	499	553	539
Whitewater	526	496	544	535	585	643	726	704	694	670	691	700	769
Oshkosh	646	642	581	588	569	602	585	618	588	585	616	519	560

Degrees Awarded	1998-99	2000-01	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09				
LaCrosse	378	419	630	705	545	453	557	572	458				
Stout	233	204	232	275	249	212	264	261	264				
Whitewater	291	265	380	406	380	385	374	379	432				
Oshkosh	341	339	311	330	303	332	346	284	302				
SCH/Head	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
LaCrosse	7.75	8.04	8.00	8.01	8.13	7.84	7.88	8.13	8.24	7.94	8.09	8.60	7.53
Stout	6.90	7.16	7.13	7.72	6.58	6.59	6.64	7.33	6.99	6.75	6.47	6.20	6.20
Whitewater	5.13	5.11	5.34	5.30	5.85	6.01	6.27	6.01	6.11	6.22	6.24	6.26	6.55
Oshkosh	4.40	4.19	4.35	4.30	4.16	4.14	4.42	4.66	4.63	4.59	4.55	4.58	4.42

Undergraduate

Fall Head Count	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
La Crosse	8463	8612	8646	8491	8519	8167	8127	7869	8160	8341	8547	8641	8871
Stout	6806	7022	7080	7240	7319	7419	7191	7020	7437	7517	7551	7769	7973
Whitewater	9578	9652	9618	9475	9365	9526	9453	9550	9405	9210	9408	9621	9730
Oshkosh	9565	9933	10045	10043	10351	10763	10943	10880	10960	11002	11146	11393	11672
Fall FTE													
La Crosse	8029	8150	8146	8055	8091	7849	7725	7543	7883	8029	8267	8368	8492
Stout	6332	6518	6592	6684	6739	6746	6618	6439	6800	6841	6821	6965	6973
Whitewater	8613	8763	8700	8626	8503	8798	8788	8829	8702	8551	8793	9091	9226
Oshkosh	8441	8745	8801	8697	9059	9402	9470	9580	9557	9524	9557	9658	10025

Graduate as a Percentage of Total Enrollment Oshkosh

	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Headcount	15.6%	15.6%	13.8%	14.0%	13.7%	13.9%	12.7%	12.8%	12.2%	12.2%	12.7%	10.7%	11.5%
FTE	7.1%	6.8%	6.2%	6.3%	5.9%	6.0%	5.8%	6.1%	5.8%	5.8%	6.1%	5.1%	5.3%

