

RESULTS OF GRADUATE STUDIES FORUM – MARCH 31, 2011

On March 31, 2011, the *Graduate Policies and Standards Council* and the *Graduate Programs Council* co-facilitated a forum on “Establishing a Strategic Plan for Graduate Studies at William Paterson University.” The forum was attended by 44 faculty, professional staff, librarians, and administrators and focused on a discussion of three main areas or directions in which to move over the next five years:

1. Establishing a School of Graduate Education at WPU – How might it be organized and how can we make this happen?
2. Establishing a common vision of graduate studies across the campus – How can this be incorporated into a mission statement consistent with the recent Kean Report?
3. Identifying the graduate student market for WPU including issues of enrollment and retention-What is our competitive advantage?

Summary of Group Discussions

1. School of Graduate Studies

A School of Graduate Studies (SGS) at WPU would function as the administrative body for all graduate programs in much the same way that academic Colleges function, with a Dean at the head of the organization and an Executive Council representing the various colleges and departments involved in graduate studies. In addition to the Executive Council, the School of Graduate Studies would include all presently existing committees and offices administering graduate studies (e.g., Office of Graduate Admissions, Graduate Programs Directors Council, Enrollment Management department, etc.).

Advantages of SGS on WPU

- Enhance our reputation and visibility as a University that provides quality and effective graduate education in the region and beyond
- Establish a separate body that will champion and be dedicated to the development, management, and marketing of graduate studies
- Provide a clear and transparent budgetary system for graduate studies
- Coordinate and expand internship programs, research initiatives, and support for graduate students
- Coordinate efforts to expand and explore delivery mechanisms for graduate programs such as online programs, satellite campuses, summer programs, weekend programs, and on-site delivery of programs

Issues to consider in establishing a SGS at WPU

- Where will additional funds come from for supporting the School and its projects?

- How will we coordinate and share responsibilities for graduate programs between academic Colleges and the School of Graduate Studies - Consider who is responsible for what and turf issues.
- What would the link be between graduate and undergraduate program?
- Since most faculty currently teach both graduate and undergraduate courses, how will this work in terms of defining “graduate faculty” and contractual issues that may arise?

2. Vision for Graduate Studies

The vision for graduate studies at WPU needs to build on our existing strengths and should include all viable current programs as well as provide directions for new program development and program revision. The vision should lead to a mission statement that defines and clearly communicates what graduate studies at WPU stand for and speaks to who our market is and could be.

Defining Features of WPU Graduate Studies

WPU provides a variety of graduate studies opportunities to meet a broad range of student needs:

- Provides professional development and career enhancement opportunities for new students
- Provides a direct path for continued educational opportunities for WPU graduates
- Provides opportunities for doing research and collaborating with distinguished faculty
- Provides interdisciplinary programs
- Features small but strong set of international programs
- Features programs that are customized and meet individual needs
- Provides programs that partner with community organizations which increase subsequent employment opportunities and also address community needs

Advantages of WPU Graduate Studies

- Provides an economical path for graduate studies through a variety of tuition plans, fellowship opportunities, scholarships
- Provides a convenient and familiar regional source of quality graduate education programs
- Provides opportunities for international and cross-national students
- Graduate programs enhance the undergraduate experience and attract applicants to the University
- Meet the needs of non-traditional students

Issues That Need to be Addressed to Realize This Vision for Graduate Studies at WPU

- How do new programs meet vision requirements?
 - Potential to meet local and community needs
 - Potential for global or interdisciplinary collaborations in research, outreach, and partnerships

- Will the program attract students from a broad geographical area?
- Are resources for students' living and financial aid adequate to attract non-traditional as well as traditional students?
- Will the program enhance undergraduate studies?
- Practical considerations for fulfilling the vision
 - Are there adequate funding sources to support programs? (e.g., housing, scholarships, assistantships, equipment, library funding, etc.)
 - Is there an appropriate infrastructure to support programs? (research center, administrative structures, marketing resources and plan)
 - What needs to be changed in terms of infrastructure and procedures for administering graduate programs?
 - Will there be sufficient enrollment to support and maintain the programs? What would sufficient enrollment mean?
 - Can WPU think in new ways while preserving the quality of programs that already exist?

3. Marketing of Graduate Programs

The marketing group discussed ways in which the University could more effectively use marketing methods to increase enrollments and improve retention of matriculated graduate students in all of WPU's graduate program options. As part of this discussion, marketable advantages of WPU graduate studies program were highlighted and areas needing additional support were noted.

Effective Marketing Strategies for WPU Graduate Studies

- The universal branding and promotional efforts for graduate studies needs to be tweaked to provide more flexible and varied strategies for graduate studies as distinguished from undergraduate studies and for individual programs as well. This approach is in keeping with the vision group's focus on multiple audiences for graduate programs at WPU.
- Our region is very close to NYC and, therefore, is rich with potential students, especially international students. Marketing efforts should particularly target this geographical advantage.
- We could do a better job of publicizing the arts, research, and scholarly accomplishments of our distinguished faculty in order to attract students.
- Also make known the many successes of alumni of graduate programs
- We need to get a better picture of where our market actually is. This can be partly accomplished by surveying our current and past graduate students to find out why they chose WPU and their particular graduate programs. In addition, we need to have a systematic and professional analysis of graduate program needs in our regional market.
- We need to set up a professional organized support system for marketing.
- We need to more clearly define the unique qualities of our graduate programs and differentiate our programs from programs offered at other institutions.
- We need to clearly define and reach out to program-specific markets.
- We need to more effectively promote graduate studies as a whole at WPU.

- Increasing financial support for graduate students in the form of teaching assistantships, fellowships, scholarships, and tuition reduction options and then publicizing these perks would be useful marketing techniques.

Advantages of WPU Graduate Studies That Could be Better Publicized

- Wide variety of non-traditional formats and options in graduate studies
- State-of-the-art equipment and facilities in Science and Valley Road Buildings housing many of our existing graduate programs
- Distinguished faculty with many accomplishments
- Close mentoring relationships with faculty
- Proximity to NYC
- Convenience of and familiarity of WPU in the region

To Increase Enrollment and Retention Through Marketing Strategies

- Develop a serious budget for promoting and sustaining graduate programs
- Upgrading of facilities across the campus beyond Valley Road and the new Science Building
- Increase the amount and variety of financial support for graduate students (e.g., teaching assistantships, tuition options)
- Greater support for faculty to encourage them to use non-traditional teaching options (e.g., online; off-site; weekends; summer)
- Diversify program delivery options
- Build more inter-disciplinary and international programs