

Graduate Council Response to the Academic Plan
March 6, 2008

The Graduate Council reviewed the description and recommendations for graduate programs covered in the Academic Plan. The Council concurred that the plan provides a general direction for increasing the quality and distinction of graduate programs at William Paterson University and supports the overall recommendation to provide increased resources for students and developing programs.

It was noted, however, that many of the recommendations for graduate studies were the same as those put forward in 1997 when we were seeking University status and that, while very positively stated, had not yet been implemented. Moreover, it was noted that although overall graduate enrollments in 2007 compared to 1997 appeared to be higher, it was also noted that increases were followed by decreases during the course of the past 10 years. Finally, there did not seem to be a vision or mission for graduate studies as a whole, but more of a focus on particular programs within the five colleges. The focus, moreover, tended to be about marketing to a general audience rather than about defining the scope and purpose of graduate studies at WPU and making our strengths known to appropriate channels within the potential market.

A number of particular concerns that the Council had about the draft were discussed and are summarized below:

- a) While mention was made of greater marketing for the graduate programs, there were no specific plans outlined for new marketing strategies and providing WPU's graduate programs with a separate identity from undergraduate studies. Council members expressed concern that the current 'branding' of WPU is focused upon the undergraduate experience and there did not seem to be any commitment of resources devoted to distinguishing graduate studies from undergraduate studies.
- b) While the plan states that additional resources are needed to support graduate studies, in order for this to happen, there needs to be a realistic assessment of resources, especially with respect to the creation of new doctoral programs. The Council believes that it is critical that the University engage in careful planning and analysis of faculty, classroom space, library resources, and the cost of targeted marketing to determine which programs are feasible and which should be allocated additional resources. There was particular concern expressed that new programs, especially doctoral programs, were recommended before a clearer unified vision and purpose for graduate studies is established at WPU.
- c) In consideration of enrollment and recruitment, the Council also felt that more attention needed to be paid to who our current and potential graduate students might be. Since most of WPU's graduate students are local and part-time, and many are recent college graduates, the Council discussed the possibility of financial assistance for part-time students as a way of attracting more graduate students.

- d) Most important was the suggestion in the plan to “consider” a School of Graduate Studies, a concept which was first proposed in 1997. Members agreed this was a good way to create a much sharper identity for graduate studies, with a strong mission statement, greater oversight, coherence, and collaboration across departments and programs. Members agreed that this proposal should be move forward from “consideration” to “establishment” in a timely way.

- e) Toward this end, the Graduate Council agreed that a Task Force should be created to establish a coherent and distinctive mission for graduate studies at WPU as well as map out an action plan for creating a College of Graduate Studies to be piloted in the near future. The Task Force should consist of Graduate Program Directors, Graduate Council members, Library and Professional Staff, Graduate Admissions Office staff, an Associate Dean, and would report directly to Nina Jemmott, Dean of Graduate Studies and to the Provost’s office.