Strategic Plan

Unit
Graduate School

Date
January 20, 2015

Mission
The mission of the Graduate School is to advance, promote, and serve graduate faculty, students, and programs through advocacy, leadership, and oversight. The Graduate School supports all graduate programs and students at Western, expanding graduate and undergraduate student access to engaging education, promoting life-long learning, enhancing scholarly activity, and developing graduates qualified to address the diverse critical needs of the state and nation.

Vision
The Graduate School enables quality learning, research, and service that connects with and contributes to local, regional, and international communities. To this end, the Graduate School extends the Western curriculum beyond undergraduate work with rigorous, advanced courses focused on developing scholarly, creative, and professional works that emerge from in-depth disciplinary understanding. The graduate programs under the purview of this college continue to develop, evolve, and administer high-quality degrees that, based on evidence, adapt to student needs and national trends.

Values
- Support the excellence of a Western education by increasing the depth of intellectual inquiry in graduate programs, while enhancing the experiences of undergraduates through graduate student teaching, mentoring, research, and scholarly and creative activity.
- Serve as a strong and effective advocate for graduate student success and excellence.
- Foster advanced scholarship and discovery opportunities, as well as creative activities, applied projects, and professional practicum experiences and internships.
- Recruit, support, and retain highly qualified graduate students and graduate faculty.
- Strengthen the graduate student community within Western’s undergraduate community structure.
- Promote shared governance through an adaptive, centralized leadership model that involves all stakeholders, including students, faculty, and administrators.
- Assess graduate program effectiveness through evidence-based measures in line with national and professional standards.

Objectives
In line with the Graduate School’s values, seven principles continue to guide the diverse set of graduate programs at Western:

1. Remain competitive with other graduate programs by recruiting, retaining, and supporting diverse, high-quality graduate students;
2. Support adaptability in graduate education at Western by allowing and encouraging programs to evolve and change based on evidence and assessment;
3. Prepare students for professional certification and licensure;
4. Prepare highly-qualified teachers, researchers, and creative practitioners in their fields;
5. Provide postgraduate education and training by emphasizing research methods and creative skills;
6. Prepare students to enter PhD programs or other advanced study in their disciplines;
7. Provide advanced training for practicing professionals.

Following are specific Graduate School objectives that emerge from the Graduate School’s mission, vision, values, and objectives:

- Ensure competitive support packages for incoming and current graduate students, indexed to keep pace with inflation and national trends. Support for graduate students and programs includes competitive stipends for Graduate Assistants, health insurance, research support, tuition waivers for Research Assistants, and summer support for graduate students working on research and program requirements.
- Increase the number of paid Graduate Assistant positions to recruit qualified students and enhance the undergraduate Western experience.
- Expand the Graduate School’s identity within Western’s brand, taking steps to create an institutional culture that recognizes, values, and integrates graduate student contributions across campus.
- Create partnerships with existing offices and programs to provide campus-wide support for graduate student needs and to strengthen the graduate student community. Provide a leadership position for a Graduate Student in the Associated Students.
- Explore opportunities to build graduate programs that enhance and support undergraduate programs. Expand undergraduate scholarly and creative opportunities by investing in Graduate scholarly and creative opportunities.
- Invest in the Doctorate in Audiology and explore other degrees beyond the Master’s Degree.
- Increase support and incentives for faculty in graduate programs, including compensation for work directing programs and leadership positions on the Graduate Council.
- Oversee course-level and program-level assessment practices to ensure evidence-based decision making.
- Create Western Foundation support for the Graduate School. Many graduate student alumni obtain work and success in their fields; they often reciprocate by becoming active alumni supporters and donors to the Western Foundation.
- Increase investment in off-campus programs that serve the needs of students and the state.
- Explore and support opportunities for international and interdisciplinary connections within existing and potential programs.