Quality Graduate Programs and Their Role in Undergraduate Education at Clemson

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Graduate and Undergraduate

Shared Visions & Goals

- **Vision:** Clemson will be one of the nation’s top-20 public universities.

- **Goals:** to provide *talent* for the new economy by *recruiting* and *retaining* outstanding students and faculty and providing an exceptional *educational experience* grounded in *engagement*; to drive *innovation*, through *research* and *service*, that stimulates economic growth, creates jobs and solves problems . . .

- **Objectives:** Enhance student *quality* and *performance*; provide *engagement* and *leadership* opportunities for *all* students; *attract*, *retain* and *reward* top people . . .

—*The Clemson 2020 Roadmap*
Rankings: A Role for Graduate Students and Programs?

- **US News Rankings**: Focus on undergraduate education

- **Measures**:
  - peer assessment (22.5%);
  - retention and graduation of students (20%);
  - faculty resources (20%);
  - student selectivity (15%);
  - financial resources (10%);
  - alumni giving (5%);
  - graduation rate performance (7.5%)
How Graduate Students and Programs Can Affect Rankings

Graduate students and programs affect:

- **Peer assessment**: prestige, intellectual and symbolic capital, reputation of undergraduate programs, professional networks.

- **Retention and graduation of students**: graduate teaching assistants are often the first point of contact for undergraduates in the classroom; early success in first-year courses correlates directly to retention and graduation rates.

- **Faculty resources**: faculty realize opportunities for collaboration, funded research and publication, prestige, and more.

- **Alumni giving**: graduate students keep strong ties to programs, can be high wage-earners, inspire and hire undergraduates.

- **Graduation rate performance**: quality teaching translates into quality learning, which improves time to degree.
Quantity vs. ________

**Quantity Models**
- Many graduate programs receive some or most of their **funding** from outside sources, particularly with respect to graduate student stipends, which are yoked to industry and government grants and contracts (*More Grants and Contracts=Better Graduate Programs*)

**Challenges . . .**

- **Time to Degree**: When tied to outside funding sources, time to degree and retention waxes and wanes with funding cycles
- **Availability of Jobs**: Grants and contracts dictate specialization, training, and on-campus work—not the job market or emergent research developments
- **Across the Disciplines**: Some fields not supported robustly by government and grant-funding agencies
Quality Model

Graduate programs receive some but not most of their funding from outside sources and instead receive internal support based on metrics related to

- time to degree
- placement of graduates
- quality of engagement
- research, teaching, leadership, and innovation . . .
Graduate Students and the First-Year Experience

What Role Do Graduate Students and Programs Play?

How we welcome our first-year students into the Clemson family is critical to their success as freshman, impacts retention, and affects graduation rates.
Graduate Students and the First-Year Experience

An Example

- Writing, communication, and technological literacy are skills that, if well honed, help students as they move through their majors and into careers.

- Graduate students (MAs in English and PhDs in RCID) teach almost 2,500 undergraduates each year in English 103, the writing course that most Clemson students take in their freshman year.

- PhD students teach for up to four years in the program, mentor MA teaching assistants, and ensure continuity in quality and outcomes.
Graduate Students and the First-Year Experience

- Our investment in these PhD students in particular shows our commitment to quality education of all Clemson students.

- In an era of budget rescissions, too often PhD students and even MA students are treated simply in terms of the labor they provide (the cheaper the better).

- Commitments to recruitment of high quality graduate students, their support while here, and their opportunities to teach and study during the summer are low priority and viewed as a drain on university, college, or department budgets.

- We look for cheaper alternatives, such as hiring adjunct labor or relying more heavily on less-experienced MA students for whom teaching is a one-year deal and may be a temporary goal unrelated to career aspirations.
The National Conversation

Calls for Improving Doctoral Education
American Chemical Society

Urges significant changes in the structure, curriculums, and financing of graduate programs in chemistry to better align the interests of students, institutions and the discipline. Among the recommendations are

- median time to PhD no more than five years
- financial support for students be uncoupled (to the extent possible) from grants and contracts
- universities set the size of their doctoral programs based on the availability of ‘truly attractive opportunities for graduates’ in chemical science professions. "A large undergraduate teaching need is not a sufficient justification for a large graduate program"

—ACS Presidential Commission on Graduate Education in the Chemical Sciences (3 December 2012)
Modern Language Association

The Future of Doctoral Education in the Humanities . . .

- median time to PhD should be no more than five years
- financial support for students should be uncoupled (to the extent possible) from grants and contracts
- abandon the “coverage model”
- help graduate students be competitive for a wider range of jobs in academia and industry by fostering teaching, management, and technical skill

Clemson students in the 1941 Studio for Student Communication
We’re Out in Front at Clemson . . .

Rhetorics, Communication, and Information Design (CAAH)

- prepares students to be professionals in traditional (academic) and emerging (industry, nonprofit) economies
- founded in 2005 as a four-year program
- 100% job placement record
- abandons the “coverage model”
- a genuinely interdisciplinary degree, involving students and faculty from across the College of Architecture, Arts, and Humanities with expertise in teaching, research, communication, and emergent technologies

Clemson RCID students . . .
What people are saying . . .

“It is only at this stage of my academic life that I’ve taken notice of the dream team you have there at Clemson. . . . If I knew before what I know now, the program at Clemson would have been up there on my post-grad list! Que sera sera.”

—Andrew Wojtkielewicz (Polish researcher, scholar, editor)
What can we do to ensure HIGH QUALITY and SUSTAINABLE graduate education at Clemson?

Recruit, Retain, Teach, Engage, Innovate, Research, Serve . . .
Goals

- recruit and retain talent, provide exceptional educational experience driven by engagement, innovation, research, service

Action: Recruit Talent

- **Recruit!** Start early; promote accomplishments of students and programs; invite students to campus; offer competitive stipends and scholarships; improve job placement record and time to degree
Quality Graduate Programs

What we can do at Clemson . . .

Action: Retain Talent

- **Retain!** Show *graduate students* that we value them as students, teachers, and researchers; provide the support they need to professionalize; give them opportunities to learn and teach year round; make sure we offer courses they want and need. Show *faculty* that we value their teaching and mentorship of graduate students by promoting the accomplishments of the program and its students.

*Departments and colleges* share fiscal responsibility for faculty appointments to teach in interdisciplinary programs, for honoring commitments of support for students . . .
Quality Graduate Programs

What we can do at Clemson . . .

Action: Teach to Engage

- **Engage!** Provide opportunities, support, and infrastructure for graduate students to engage with undergraduates as well as local and broader communities and industries as a regular feature of their degree programs; build on successes of undergraduate internship programs with graduate internships; create opportunities for graduate students to work with undergraduate students on **Creative Inquiry** and client-based projects; measure and recognize engagement achievements
Professional Engagement

RCID students Kristie Byrum and Stephen Lind presented at the National Communication Association Conference in November 2012. Stephen who was honored with a Top Paper in the Spiritual Communications Division for his work, "Transdisciplinarity and Studies of Spirituality/Religion in the Public University."
Quality Graduate Programs

What we can do at Clemson . . .

Action: Teach to Innovate

- **Innovate!** Encourage research and teaching collaboration among faculty, graduate, and undergraduate students; provide graduate students opportunities to learn and develop entrepreneurial skills; foster peer-to-peer mentoring across disciplines and between graduate and undergraduate students.
Innovation

RCID student Andrew Hurley—now Assistant Professor at Clemson in Packaging Science and Research Associate, Sonoco Institute of Packaging Design and Graphics—develops models for design packaging, researches consumer response through eye-tracking, and creates training programs for the industry. Dr. Hurley developed two patents and generated over $9 million dollars in contracts right before and after defending his dissertation in 2011....
Quality Graduate Programs

What we can do at Clemson . . .

Action: Teach to Research

- Research! Faculty, graduate, and undergraduate students work collaboratively in Creative Inquiry, graduate and undergraduate students learn to publish research (through an innovative book and publishing lab coming soon), partner on grants and contracts, function as researchers and interns at centers and institutes, compete for national awards and recognition of research
Quality Graduate Programs

What we can do at Clemson . . .

Action: Teach to Serve

- **Serve!** Value and recognize existing graduate student organizations and their service to Clemson and the community; bring client-based learning into courses taught by graduate students; create internship opportunities with nonprofits; foster social entrepreneurship . . .
Thank you for your time and attention . . .

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