STRATEGIC PLAN

GRADUATE SCHOOL

Gladly we learn and teach

the **GRADUATE SCHOOL** *at* **ILLINOIS STATE UNIVERSITY**

ILLINOIS STATE UNIVERSITY
FALL 2017

Contents

Executive summary

The purpose of this study was to utilize stakeholder input to make informed decisions in establishing a strategic plan to best utilize Graduate School resources over the next five years.

PROCESS:

The research aspect of this study included three phases: a series of six stakeholder focus groups; a survey distributed to graduate faculty members; and an open forum with graduate coordinators and the graduate council.

RESULTS:

The results indicated perceptions of the role of the Graduate School, the Graduate School and graduate programs, and graduate student services. Of particular interest was that the graduate faculty overwhelmingly supported the value and necessity for graduate education at Illinois State. Some of the highest rated items (5-point scale) indicated that faculty greatly valued graduate programs, and they were a significant contributing factor in working at ISU. For example:

Please evaluate the following items, with 5 being strongly agree and 1 being strongly disagree	Mean	S.D.
The Graduate School should be an advocate for scholarship on campus.	4.51	0.76
Graduate programs add prestige to the university.	4.64	1.09
Graduate programs add value to the university.	4.70	1.06
Graduate programs contribute to scholarship at ISU.	4.64	1.08
Graduate programs deserve more institutional recognition than they currently receive.	4.32	1.18
Having a graduate program in my department/school was an important part of my decision to work at ISU.	4.34	1.28
The Graduate program in my academic unit contributes to my job satisfaction.	4.31	1.29
I would not want to work at a university that did not have graduate programs.	4.24	1.32
Working with graduate students improves my ability to conduct research.	4.14	1.31

A 10 YEAR VISION:

In 10 years the Graduate School will:

- Have 3,000-3,500 students.
- Offer non-traditional programs/degrees to meet the needs of the workforce including but not limited to accelerated master's degree programs; online opportunities; professional master's degrees; and badges, micro-degrees, and stackable certificates.
- Be staffed at the appropriate level to meet university and program growth goals with a top priority being student recruitment.
- Be valued at all levels of the University and be viewed as an integral part of meeting University goals
- Be viewed as an essential part of enrollment management.
- Have at least 15 percent of all graduate students from underrepresented populations.

STRATEGIES AND TACTICS:

Ten strategies (goals) and accompanying tactics (objectives) were developed from the research findings. The tactics will be used to form the annual work plan for the Graduate School. They are as follows:

1. **Continue to improve the role of the Graduate School in problem-solving, customer service and leadership**

   a. Continue to look for ways to serve our constituents. (ongoing)

   b. Seek to enhance customer service to faculty, staff, and students. (ongoing)

   c. Advocate for electronic degree audits to aid faculty staff and students. (FY 19)

   d. Investigate graduate student payment options to understand the feasibility of graduate students having a different payment schedule, with a first payment due after they receive their first GA stipend payment. (FY 21)

2. **Advocate for graduate students, student services, and student scholarship and creative activity**

   a. Work closely with the graduate student senator to communicate issues relevant to graduate students. (ongoing)

   b. Hold a "Coffee with the Director" event inviting all graduate students to share concerns with the staff on a regular basis. (FY 18)

   c. Develop a plan to best utilize the Graduate Student Advisory Board. (FY 19)

   d. Work with Milner Library's Information Use and Fluency Department/Scholarly Librarian to develop the "Grow a Researcher" program. (FY 19)

   e. Continue to advocate for a second seat on the Academic Senate, which would create representation equal to the percentage of graduate students enrolled at the University. (FY 20)

   f. Capitalize on establishing/growing programs that meet the demands of potential students and the job market such as:
      i. accelerated master's degree programs (FY 18)
      ii. online programs (FY 19)
      iii. professional master's degrees (FY 22)
      iv. Interdisciplinary/joint programs (FY 22)

   g. Investigate low retention rates for doctoral students and determine why students drop out of the program, what point they drop out, and if underrepresented students drop out at a higher rate than others. (FY 21)

3. **Maintain standards across campus**

   a. Work with departments to recruit more applicants to increase the quality of the applicant pool. (FY 18)

   b. Review and develop a policy to deal with dual credit courses (300 level) and the lack of standardization for graduate student requirements within them. (FY 18)

   c. Revise the Graduate Catalog to ensure degree requirements are detailed for each program. (FY 18)

   d. Review and develop a policy to deal with decimalized courses and the lack of curriculum process review with them. (FY 19)

   e. Develop an exit survey to determine the quality of the program. (FY 19)

   f. Re-implement the first year graduate student survey to assess processes and why they chose ISU. (FY 20)

4. **Review and improve the thesis/dissertation process including deadlines and formatting**

   a. Review the thesis/dissertation process and formatting guidelines in both the Graduate School and the Registrar's Office in order to eliminate inefficiencies. (FY 18)

   b. Once thesis and dissertations formatting and inefficiencies are reviewed, adjust dates and deadlines to give students more time to complete the thesis/dissertation. (FY 18)

   c. Hold ProQuest drop-in hours to better serve students at the defense stage of the thesis/dissertation. (FY 18)

   d. Remove thesis and dissertation proposal approval form submission deadlines to expedite the process. (FY 19)

   e. Increase the number of workshops aimed at assisting students with the thesis/dissertation process. (FY 20)

   f. Develop new methods of delivering workshops and resources through the coordinator of outreach. (FY 20)

   g. Create an internal research tools certificate for graduate students. (FY 21)

   h. Develop an embargo policy for theses/dissertations. (FY 22)

   i. Investigate eliminating ProQuest and using the ISU ReD as the repository. (FY 22)

5. **Provide recruitment assistance to programs**

   a. Hold a recruitment workshop for faculty to build skills and learn best practices in recruiting quality graduate students. (FY 18)

   b. Create the Graduate School summer fellowship where a faculty member works in the Graduate School to develop recruiting strategies, promotional talking points, marketing materials. (FY 18)

   c. Survey those students accepted to ISU but who did not attend to determine reasons why we are losing graduate students. (FY 18)

   d. Require departments to develop recruiting plans to receive recruitment funds. (FY 19)

   e. Investigate EAB resources on graduate recruitment. (FY 19)

   f. Ensure that all program websites have the online information form to generate prospect lists. (FY 20)

   g. Develop a communications plan with Admissions to detail how each unit on campus communicates with prospects. (FY 20)

   h. Develop informational resources to recruit external graduate assistantships. (FY 20)

   i. Enhance recruitment efforts for underrepresented students. (FY 21)

   j. Hire a recruiter to work on behalf of the University and individual departments who will also be responsible for external graduate practicums. (FY 22)

   k. Increase funding from the Graduate School for recruitment. (FY 22)

   l. Establish an underrepresented student mentoring program with the Black Graduate Student Association. (FY 22)

6. **Integrate across campus the concept that graduate programs add value to the university in terms of prestige and scholarship**

   a. Communicate work of graduate students to upper administration on a regular basis. (FY 18)

   b. Continue to seek representation of the Graduate School on key committees and with key stakeholders. (FY 18)

   c. Add dean of the Graduate School to the title of the associate vice president title or the director of the Graduate School to elevate the value of the position and the Graduate School both on campus and across the country. (FY 22)

   d. Enhance promotion of graduate students and their work at ISU including recognizing awards, publications, and presentations (eg #ShareMyThesis). (FY 21)

   e. Gather information and promote the research productivity of faculty who involve graduate students in the research process. (FY 20)

   f. Develop stories for news feeds featuring graduate students. (FY 19)

7. **Build on the value faculty members have for graduate education to expand program offerings**

   a. Implement the INTO program at the graduate level. (FY 19)

   b. Create a plan to integrate badges, micro degrees (interdisciplinary studies), and stackable certificates. (FY 21)

   c. Build strong graduate programs by reviewing underperforming programs and exploring new programs to meet the changing job market. (FY 22)

   d. Investigate the feasibility of an interdisciplinary degree through stackable certificates or other plans of study. (FY 22)

8. **Reposition graduate programs so they get more institutional recognition than they currently receive**

   a. Request that each college assign an associate dean within the college the responsibility of graduate education. (FY 18)

   b. Elevate the position of the Graduate School in the minds of upper administration so they are a part of the president's Points of Pride, mentioned in talking points to community groups, etc. (FY 20)

   c. Reinstitute the graduate assistant position within the Graduate School which was lost to budget reductions. The new position would be responsible for marketing including social media, recruitment initiatives, and writing stories of collaboration between students and faculty. (FY 20)

   d. Create a university wide 3 Minute Project/Issue Competition to encompass non-thesis projects. (FY 21)

   e. Develop a marketing plan for the Graduate School that showcases the value of graduate education at ISU including diversity, finances, etc. (FY 22)

   f. In collaboration with the AVP of Research and Graduate Studies, investigate the feasibility of a Student Research Center to facilitate and showcase both undergraduate and graduate research, with undergraduate research leading to graduate school prospects. (FY 22)

9. **Advocate that graduate assistants are valuable resources**

   a. Analyze data examining loss of graduate assistants across campus. (FY 18)

   b. Work with CTLT to provide a teaching certificate for graduate students due to the large number of credit hours they teach. (FY 19)

   c. Implement a stipend incentive program to attract high quality graduate students. (FY 19)

   d. Have discussions with colleges and their coordinators about growth of programs directly resulting in the growth of graduate assistants. (FY 20)

   e. Explore opportunities to provide more work experience for international students. (FY 20)

   f. Continue to advocate our U.S. Congressional representatives to change the tax code impacting graduate assistant tuition waivers. (FY 20)

   g. Develop new external practicum graduate assistantships to fund additional positions. (FY 21)

   h. Establish teaching resources for graduate teaching assistants through CTLT. (FY 21)

   i. Provide more transparency within colleges in how graduate assistantships are distributed to programs. (FY 22)

   j. Monitor graduate assistants (GAs) across campus including continued efforts to increase graduate student stipends to competitive national levels as the state and university budgets permit, the number of GA positions, and the distribution of GAs within programs and departments. (FY 22)

10. **Recognize that graduate students are different than undergraduate students and that different services are required to support them**

    a. Meet with Student Affairs to review services available to graduate students and market them to the students. (FY 18)

    b. Investigate the library services needed by graduate students. (FY 18)

    c. Promote the resources available to graduate students such as Career Services, Milner Library, and CTLT. (FY 19)

    d. Work with Milner Library to develop a section of the website that specifically targets the needs of graduate students. (FY 19)

    e. Create an all graduate student orientation. (FY 19)

    f. Investigate writing resources on campus for both domestic and international students. (FY 20)

    g. Develop webinars of the professional development series so that part-time students may benefit from the workshops without being on campus. (FY 20)

This analysis enables the Graduate School to examine its strategic fit within the University as a whole.

Strengths:

- New programs/services being offered (ie. professional development workshops)
- Customer service to faculty, staff, and students
- Problem solving
- Faculty value graduate students and cause faculty to want to work at ISU
- University Research Symposium and 3 Minute Thesis Competition
- Seeks input from graduate coordinators, staff, and students
- Collaborations with such entities as Milner Library, SoTL, Career Center

Weaknesses

- Near exclusive university focus on undergraduate programs
- Recruitment left to faculty
- Marketing and recruitment skills of coordinators
- Low GA stipends
- Inequity in GA distribution among programs
- Retention skills, knowledge
- Lack of knowledge across campus that the Grad School actually exists
- Not seen as important in maintaining enrollment targets

Opportunities

- Contribution to enrollment management
- Work with outside agencies to create external assistantships
- Enhance visibility of Grad School
- Focus on programs that are in growth mode vs. declining programs
- Help departments determine viable programs
- Establish enrollment targets
- Implement new types of graduate programs to increase enrollment

Threats

- Continued decreased funding
- Graduate School is significantly understaffed
- Misperception that graduate education is a financial drain on the institution
- Reduction in enrollment over time
- High competition for grad students
- Lack of services for international students
- History of accepting only students on a graduate assistantship
- Fear of change (ie. new programs, decreasing credit hours needed for a degree, online programs)

Introduction

Student demographics on university campuses are changing significantly. We are seeing a declining number of high school graduates, shifts in racial/ethnic composition of students going to college, a large number of Illinois high school graduates leaving the state to attend other universities, slight increases in graduate students across the country, increased online graduate degree options, and increased numbers of international students coming to the United States to study. This results in a substantial challenge for ISU, undoubtedly a decline in the number of students who are classified as first time in college, and a prime graduate population to target. In order to meet university enrollment goals, the Graduate School must position itself for growth. With growth it can more readily and substantially contribute to meeting enrollment targets. This document will outline results of the strategic planning process, a ten- year aggressive vision, a SWOT analysis, and results of the three data collection techniques utilized. All of this resulted in 10 strategies (goals) and detailed tactics to achieve in fulfilling the strategies. The strategies and tactics will contribute to the goals and objectives of Educating Illinois. Once the newest version of Educating Illinois is released in spring 2018 these strategies and tactics will be reviewed to ensure they align with ISU's guiding plan.

A 10 Year Vision

In 10 years the Graduate School will:

- Have 3,000-3,500 students.
- Offer non-traditional programs/degrees to meet the needs of the workforce including but not limited to accelerated master's degree programs; online opportunities; professional master's degrees; and badges, micro-degrees, and stackable certificates.
- Be staffed at the appropriate level to meet university and program growth goals with a top priority being student recruitment.
- Be valued at all levels of the university and viewed as an integral part of meeting university goals
- Be viewed as an essential part of enrollment management.
- Have at least 15 percent of all graduate students from underrepresented populations.

The Process

The Graduate School worked with Jeri Beggs, professor in the Illinois State University College of Business, to complete the strategic planning process. It was the desire of the Graduate School to learn the perceptions of its services, what role it plays at the University, and what future direction it should take.

The research phase of this plan had three parts. The first part was a series of six focus groups conducted in November and December of 2015 with five different participant groups including (1) graduate coordinators, (2) graduate program administrative assistants, (3) department chairs/school directors, (4) graduate students and (5) a support group (International Studies, Registrar, Admissions, etc.) The summary for each focus group is available (Appendix A). Beggs asked a series of questions including such things as:

- What is the role of the Graduate School on campus?
- What does the Graduate School do well?
- What could the Graduate School improve?
- What should the Graduate School be doing that it isn't?
- If you were the director of the Graduate School or the provost, what changes would you make to graduate education?

As the focus groups were being conducted, Beggs met with Troy Johnson, associate vice president for Enrollment Management to discuss the role of the Graduate School in enrollment management.

The second part of the process was a survey informed by the focus group findings. After a thorough review of the data, Beggs, Amy Hurd (director of the Graduate School), and Brent Beggs (professor, School of Kinesiology and Recreation and a survey design expert) collaborated to develop the survey questions. The survey was created using Select Survey and distributed to all ISU graduate faculty members in April 2016. The survey (Appendix B) was divided into six sections including:

- The Role of the Graduate School
- Graduate Students
- Thesis/Dissertation Process
- Perceptions of the Graduate School
- Priorities of the Graduate School
- Open ended general questions

Results included responses from 219 graduate faculty members. The data, analyzed by Brent Beggs, led to 10 research findings, or strategies, that were used as the impetus for establishing the tactics the Graduate School will use to guide its work over the next five years.

Responses were analyzed by faculty rank, college, and involvement with the thesis/dissertation process. Responses did not differ by faculty rank or college. However, a faculty member's involvement in the thesis/dissertation process did have an impact on their responses. The summary of the survey and the summaries by faculty rank, college, and involvement with the thesis/dissertation process are presented in the next section.

For the third part, once the draft strategies and tactics were completed, graduate coordinators and the Graduate Council members were invited to review the findings and provide additional input. Jeri Beggs facilitated this meeting and encouraged the participants to "think outside the box." The input from this meeting resulted in further refinement of the strategies and tactics.
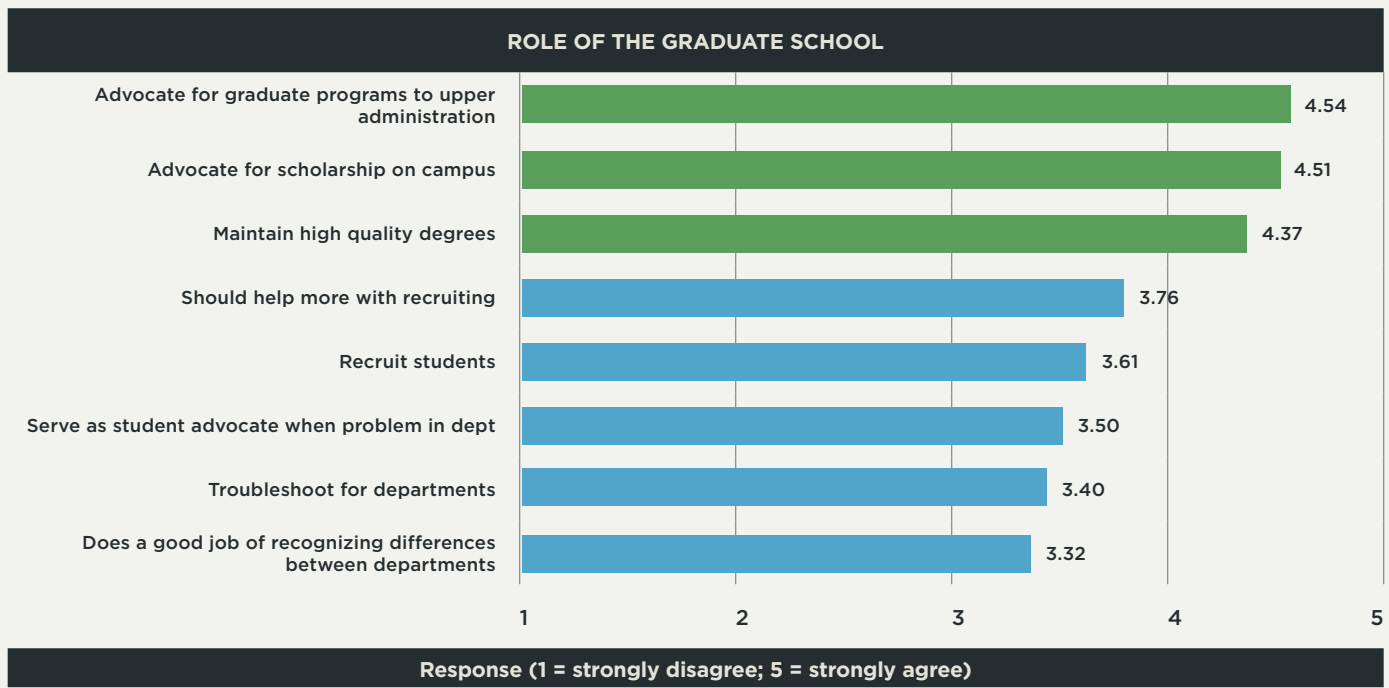
Research Findings

The results from the focus groups, survey, and meetings led to 10 key strategies. Those strategies and supporting data are presented below.

Role of Graduate School

The role of the Graduate School examined several different factors including advocacy, maintaining quality degrees, and recruitment. The highest priorities are advocating for graduate programs to upper administration, advocating for scholarship on campus, and maintaining high quality degrees (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Role of the Graduate School

ROLE OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

Item	Value
Advocate for graduate programs to upper administration	4.54
Advocate for scholarship on campus	4.51
Maintain high quality degrees	4.37
Should help more with recruiting	3.76
Recruit students	3.61
Serve as student advocate when problem in dept	3.50
Troubleshoot for departments	3.40
Does a good job of recognizing differences between departments	3.32

Response (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree)

Following are the strategies and related data that led to each one.

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1. **Continue to improve the role of the Graduate School in problem-solving, customer service and leadership**

FOCUS GROUP RESULTS:

The most common response across all focus groups to the question of the role of the graduate school was problem-solving/customer service. This role was prominent and positive across all research methods.

The current staff's willingness to answer any type of question or respond to any problem was repeated across all six groups. There was also the implication across all groups that the staff's customer service has improved with the change in leadership of the director of the Graduate School.

When asked what the Graduate School does well, again the most common response was customer service, trouble-shooting and problem-solving by the staff and director.

SURVEY RESULTS (FACULTY ONLY):

Please evaluate the following items, with 5 being strongly agree and 1 being strongly disagree	Mean	S.D.
The role of the Graduate School is to troubleshoot for departments and schools.	3.40	1.13

Sample of open-ended responses on the survey to the question what are the strengths of the Graduate School:

- The people. Amy is down to earth and doesn't have a pre–conceived agenda when discussing a topic. She's open to hearing how others operate.

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- The hiring of Amy Hurd has stabilized the leadership of the Graduate School. The staff is all great to work with. Communication between the Graduate School and departments/schools has improved. So I guess the greatest strengths are the people who work in the Graduate School!
- As a school director I appreciate that the Graduate School is willing to help us work through whatever issues we have in a professional and timely manner.
- The new leadership via Amy Hurd and John Baur.
- Over the last several years the Graduate School does seem more focused on helping students rather than simply serving as a hurdle to graduation.
- Graduate School staff has always helped me solve problems.
- Amy Hurd and her staff! They are always responsive to questions and concerns. If they don't know the answer, they research it and get back in a timely manner!
- Leadership. Amy and her staff are competent, hard working, and collaborative.
- They have become very student-centered in the past couple of years. They are also excellent at helping answer faculty questions regarding process!

> *As a school director I appreciate that the Graduate School is willing to help us work through whatever issues we have in a professional and timely manner.*

2. **Advocate for graduate students, student services, and student scholarship and creative activity**

FOCUS GROUP RESULTS:

The focus for the advocacy role varied based upon the group that was participating. For example, the graduate students wanted the Graduate School to be an advocate for them in terms of better pay, better benefits, and when conflicts occurred within their departments. Graduate coordinators wanted the Graduate School to be the advocate of scholarship on campus (seminars, speakers, etc.).

> *The primary role of the Graduate School is advocacy —to higher administration and for scholarship.*

SURVEY RESULTS (FACULTY ONLY):

Please evaluate the following items, with 5 being strongly agree and 1 being strongly disagree	Mean	S.D.
The role of the Graduate School is to serve as student advocates when there is a problem within the department or school.	3.50	1.08
The Graduate School should be an advocate for scholarship on campus.	4.51	0.76
The role of the Graduate School is to serve as an advocate for graduate programs to upper administration.	4.54	0.73

Please evaluate the following items in terms of whether it should be a priority for the Graduate School, with 5 being strongly agree and 1 being strongly disagree. Note: Item ranking is out of 10	Mean	S.D.
#1 Advocating for graduate programs across campus.	4.55	1.20
#6 Advocating for more graduate student services through Student Affairs.	3.97	1.21

Sample of open-ended responses on the survey to the question what are the strengths of the Graduate School:

- Provides good advocacy for graduate students. Recently there has been more of an attempt to support students as they transition.
- Since Amy Hurd came on board, the Graduate School has improved enormously. The advocacy nature of the Graduate School in all aspects of graduate program is wonderful. Promoting scholarship and support systems for faculty, department, and graduate students is also strong.

3. Maintain standards across campus

FOCUS GROUP RESULTS:

The common theme across all groups was that a primary role of the Graduate School is to maintain standards across campus. All groups acknowledged the variety of graduate programs across campus, but that the Graduate School works to ensure "a certain level of professionalism and quality" is maintained.

SURVEY RESULTS (FACULTY ONLY):

Please evaluate the following items, with 5 being strongly agree and 1 being strongly disagree	Mean	S.D.
The role of the Graduate School is to maintain high quality degrees.	4.37	0.85

Sample of open-ended responses on the survey to the question what are the strengths of the Graduate School:
- Assuring the standards of theses and dissertation procedures are met.

Sample of open-ended responses on the survey to the question what are the weaknesses of the Graduate School:
- Relationship between general standards for degrees and goals of areas in need of constant balance; incredibly uneven quality of graduate programs on campus;
- Do not attract the quality of applicants that is possible. Standards are too lenient.
- It should enforce minimum standards such as GRE and letters of recommendation where appropriate.

4. Review and improve the thesis/dissertation process including deadlines and formatting

FOCUS GROUP RESULTS:

The changes to the thesis/dissertation timeline was an important topic to the graduate coordinators, the graduate program administrative assistants, and the graduate students. Each group indicated that the earlier timeline was causing problems, and in some cases, was causing graduate students to add an extra semester to their graduate program or to choose a non-research option when possible.

SURVEY RESULTS (FACULTY ONLY):

Please evaluate the following items, with 5 being strongly agree and 1 being strongly disagree	Mean	S.D.
The Graduate School thesis/dissertation workshops are beneficial for students.	3.61	1.59
The online thesis/dissertation resources are helpful to students.	3.67	1.64
The online thesis/dissertation resources are helpful to faculty.	3.61	1.61
The Graduate School needs to provide more training for faculty on mentoring students.	3.33	1.46
The Graduate School needs to provide more structure for the proposal and defense processes.	3.01	1.48
Moving the thesis/dissertation deadlines to earlier in the semester has been a positive change.	2.40	1.37
If available, graduate students are choosing an alternative option other than thesis/dissertation because of the deadline changes.	3.17	1.49
Students have the appropriate resources available to complete a thesis/dissertation in a timely manner.	3.18	1.44

Sample of open-ended responses on the survey to the question what are the strengths of the Graduate School:
- Providing support for students and faculty in writing theses/dissertations.
- Establishing clear deadlines and clear writing standards and formats for theses/dissertations.
- The Graduate School is trying to help students fit into what the Graduate School thinks ought to be standard requirements. But some things (e.g., IRB requirements, checking of dissertations for formatting and referencing, etc.) often are a negative. They waste time when time is most valuable, alas.

Sample of open-ended responses on the survey to the question what are the weaknesses of the Graduate School:
- The deadline for doctoral dissertation is not good. In other words, March 21 as the final date for depositing dissertation is early, especially when students are graduating in May. However, the Graduate School team has been flexible with this deadline. Thank you.

- Moving the thesis/dissertation deadlines up without much consultation with programs has created HUGE problems for students.
- Too few staff to process theses/dissertations, thus necessitating earlier deadlines than desirable.
- Moving deadlines for theses/dissertations and confusion surrounding these changes. It is very difficult for students to finish a MA in two years with defenses due in mid-to-late March. What is intended as a two-year program now becomes a 1.5 year deadline to start and complete a thesis.

5. Provide recruitment assistance to programs

FOCUS GROUP RESULTS:

Each of the focus groups including department chairs, graduate coordinators, and graduate program administrative assistants requested more assistance with recruitment. The requests varied depending upon the level of interest in the program (some programs have more applicants than spaces in the program) and historical role of the graduate coordinator and graduate program administrative assistant. Some individuals wanted the Graduate School to do more recruiting for them, and others wanted more funding to help with recruitment.

Programs need more resources for graduate student recruitment—staff and funds.

SURVEY RESULTS (FACULTY ONLY):

Please evaluate the following items, with 5 being strongly agree and 1 being strongly disagree	Mean	S.D.
Faculty should be involved in recruiting students into a graduate programs.	4.38	1.17

Please evaluate the following items in terms of whether it should be a priority for the Graduate School, with 5 being strongly agree and 1 being strongly disagree. Note: Item ranking is out of 10	Mean	S.D.
#3 Recruitment of graduate students	3.96	1.31
#5 Assisting departments in securing external (to ISU) graduate assistantships with area agencies	3.98	1.20

Sample of open-ended responses on the survey to the question what are the strengths of the Graduate School:
- I appreciate the recruitment grant funding available to departments for attracting students to our graduate programs.

Sample of open-ended responses on the survey to the question what are the weaknesses of the Graduate School:
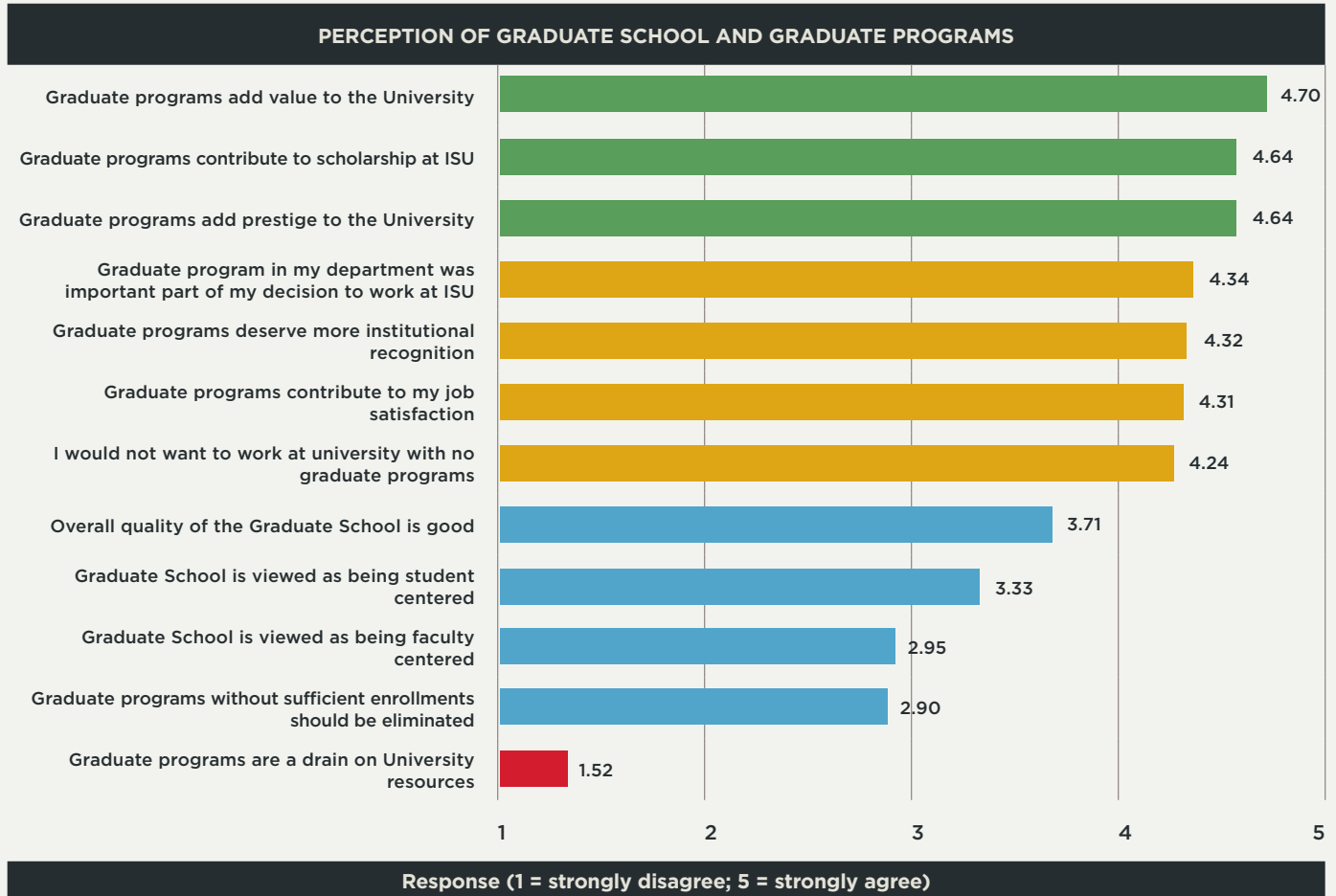- Lack of money for recruitment of graduate students is a major weakness. Funds are needed to bring good prospects to sell them on our programs.
- This is not a weakness but a suggestion to work with Admissions, IT, and others to streamline the graduate admission and recruitment process. There is so little attention paid to the online system, the staff needed to process applications in the poorly functioning system, and the coordination among units that coordinators and staff must work many extra hours just to keep up. Timely processing is critical. Easy availability of application details is necessary (in one place, not on seven different tabs). The current online system is embarrassing on the front side and abominable on the back side. Admissions needs to pay attention to graduate recruitment with similar care as undergraduate recruitment, though on a smaller scale given the numbers overall.

Admissions needs to pay attention to graduate recruitment with similar care as undergraduate recruitment, though on a smaller scale given the numbers overall.

- They (the Graduate School) do not have the sufficient resources they need to address many of the issues addressed in this survey, i.e. recruitment, alumni tracking, etc. This limits what they can do but they do a tremendous job with existing resources.

Perceptions of the Graduate School and Graduate Programs

The Graduate faculty indicated that their perceptions of the Graduate School and Graduate Programs were very positive in terms of the value added to the University as a whole, scholarship, and prestige (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Perception of Graduate School and Graduate Programs

PERCEPTION OF GRADUATE SCHOOL AND GRADUATE PROGRAMS

Item	Value
Graduate programs add value to the University	4.70
Graduate programs contribute to scholarship at ISU	4.64
Graduate programs add prestige to the University	4.64
Graduate program in my department was important part of my decision to work at ISU	4.34
Graduate programs deserve more institutional recognition	4.32
Graduate programs contribute to my job satisfaction	4.31
I would not want to work at university with no graduate programs	4.24
Overall quality of the Graduate School is good	3.71
Graduate School is viewed as being student centered	3.33
Graduate School is viewed as being faculty centered	2.95
Graduate programs without sufficient enrollments should be eliminated	2.90
Graduate programs are a drain on University resources	1.52

Response (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree)

Following are the strategies and related data that led to each one.

6. **Integrate across campus the concept that graduate programs add value to the University in terms of prestige and scholarship**

FOCUS GROUP RESULTS:

Focus group with graduate coordinators and department chairs took a strong stance on the idea that graduate programs add value to the University and that value is underreported and underappreciated. Participants acknowledged the reality that ISU is known by reputation and by numbers as an undergraduate school, but they reiterated that graduate programs add value to students, faculty, and the community that is different than undergraduate programs. They wanted to see graduate programs recognized by higher administration and highlighted where appropriate.

SURVEY RESULTS (FACULTY ONLY):

Please evaluate the following items, with 5 being strongly agree and 1 being strongly disagree	Mean	S.D.
The Graduate programs add prestige to the university.	4.64	1.09
The Graduate programs add value to the university.	4.70	1.06
Graduate programs contribute to scholarship at ISU.	4.64	1.08
Overall quality of the Graduate School is good.	3.71	1.08

Sample of open-ended responses on the survey to the question what are the strengths of the Graduate School:

I perceive the Graduate School could do much more if graduate education were valued more across the board. I only teach graduate students so I would not be here if the graduate program in my field did not exist! Graduate study opportunities add to the value of all ISU degrees.

7. Build on the value faculty members have for graduate education to expand program offerings

FOCUS GROUP RESULTS:

The focus group of department chairs/school directors recognized that graduate programs are important in the hiring process and in the tenure process, especially for programs in which graduate students conduct research and complete thesis/dissertations as part of the program.

Faculty feel graduate programs are highly important (M=4.7) at ISU, but undervalued overall.

SURVEY RESULTS (FACULTY ONLY):

Please evaluate the following items, with 5 being strongly agree and 1 being strongly disagree	Mean	S.D.
Having a graduate program in my department/school was an important part of my decision to work at ISU.	4.34	1.28
The graduate program in my academic unit contributes to my job satisfaction at ISU.	4.31	1.29
I would not want to work at a university that did not have graduate programs.	4.24	1.32
Working with graduate students improves my ability to conduct research.	4.14	1.31
The Graduate School is viewed as being student centered.	3.33	0.98
The Graduate School is viewed as being faculty centered.	2.95	0.93
Faculty should be involved in recruiting students into a graduate programs.	4.38	1.17
Overall quality of the Graduate School is good.	3.71	1.08

Sample of open-ended responses on the survey to the question what are the strengths of the Graduate School:

- I only teach graduate students so I would not be here if the graduate program in my field did not exist! Graduate study opportunities add to the value of all ISU degrees.
- The Graduate School constitutes an indispensable pillar of the research and educational missions of the University. The school at once facilitates the training of the next generation of Illinois Scholar, and enables the production of competitive research at Illinois State University. In my opinion, the Graduate School is what separates a university like ISU from a primarily instructional institution like Wesleyan.

In my opinion, the Graduate School is what separates a university like ISU from a primarily instructional institution like Wesleyan.

8. Re-position graduate programs so they get more institutional recognition than they currently receive

FOCUS GROUP RESULTS:

Focus groups with graduate coordinators, graduate program administrative assistants, and department chairs revealed a common theme that the graduate programs did not receive the recognition they deserved. While each group acknowledged that they understood the reasons (numbers, institutional focus on undergraduate, etc.), they also expressed a desire to see graduate programs be recognized for their contributions to the University (research, financial, faculty satisfaction, faculty productivity, etc.).

Graduate students are an important reason for faculty to come to ISU (M=4.34), and they help with research (M=4.14).

SURVEY RESULTS (FACULTY ONLY):

Please evaluate the following items, with 5 being strongly agree and 1 being strongly disagree	Mean	S.D.
The graduate programs add prestige to the university.	4.64	1.09
The graduate programs add value to the university.	4.70	1.06
Graduate programs contribute to scholarship at ISU.	4.64	1.08
Graduate programs deserve more institutional recognition than they currently receive.	4.32	1.18
Graduate programs are perceived as less important as undergraduate programs at ISU.	3.88	1.28
Overall quality of the Graduate School is good.	3.71	1.08

Sample of open-ended responses on the survey to the question what are the strengths of the Graduate School:

- The current administration of the Graduate School has the right goals for advocating for grad programs and for supporting grad programs. What they lack are the funds and the institutional clout to raise the profile of the graduate programs.

Grad students give undergrads a vision for a "next step," their presence stimulates research and provides more opportunities for undergraduates to get involved in research.

- Why doesn't anyone on campus use the combined argument that graduate students are good for undergraduate students? Faculty say this all the time, but administrators never seem to mention it. Grad students give undergrads a vision for a "next step." Their presence stimulates research and provides more 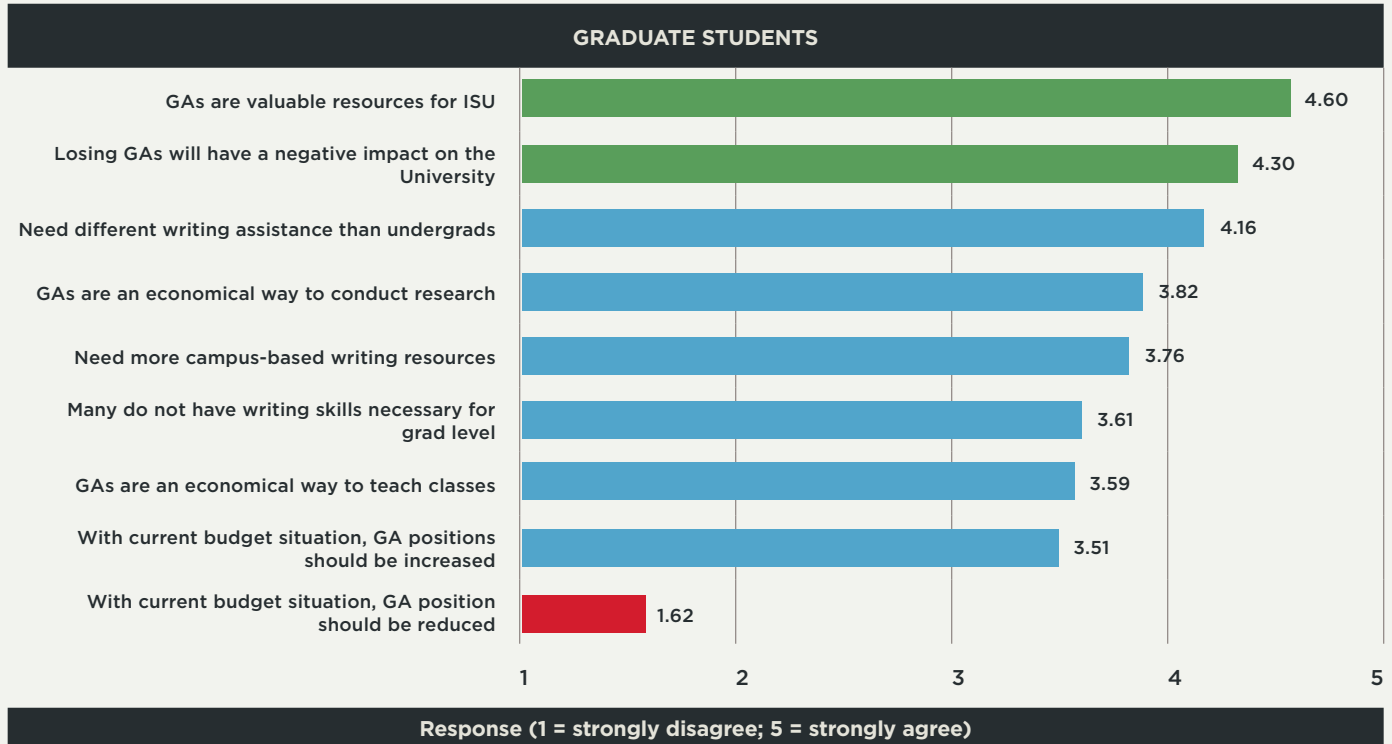opportunities for undergraduates to get involved in research, even if it's by volunteering, and they help faculty get grants (working with grad students fulfills the training mission of many funding agencies and makes it more likely that faculty will complete the research project in a timely manner. Grad programs add status to institutions, increasing the likelihood that faculty will get funding.)

Sample of open-ended responses on the survey to the question what are the weaknesses of the Graduate School:

- There isn't much of a presence on campus about the Graduate School.

Graduate Students

The data indicate that graduate students are a valuable resource, losing graduate assistants will negatively impact ISU, and there are needed services on campus to support graduate students (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Graduate Students

GRADUATE STUDENTS

Item	Response
GAs are valuable resources for ISU	4.60
Losing GAs will have a negative impact on the University	4.30
Need different writing assistance than undergrads	4.16
GAs are an economical way to conduct research	3.82
Need more campus-based writing resources	3.76
Many do not have writing skills necessary for grad level	3.61
GAs are an economical way to teach classes	3.59
With current budget situation, GA positions should be increased	3.51
With current budget situation, GA position should be reduced	1.62

Response (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree)

Following are the strategies and related data that led to each one.

9. Advocate that graduate assistants are valuable resources

FOCUS GROUP RESULTS:

It became clear that the role of graduate assistants varied widely from department to department and with it, their perception as valuable resources. Department chairs, in particular, were very interested in discussing the value of graduate assistants, and again their perception seemed to depend upon the role graduate assistants performed. Some departments relied heavily on graduate students to teach classes while others did not. Some graduate students were perceived as working very hard to earn their stipend while some participants indicated that graduate students in their department did not perform enough work to earn their stipends.

SURVEY RESULTS (FACULTY ONLY):

Please evaluate the following items, with 5 being strongly agree and 1 being strongly disagree	Mean	S.D.
Graduate assistants are valuable resources for ISU.	4.60	1.18
Graduate assistants are an economical way to teach classes.	3.59	1.38
Graduate assistants are an economical way to conduct research.	3.82	1.29
With our current budget situation, GA positions should be reduced.	1.62	0.87
With our current budget situation, GA positions should be increased.	3.51	1.27
Losing graduate assistants will have a negative impact on the university.	4.30	1.21

Please evaluate the following items in terms of whether it should be a priority for the Graduate School, with 5 being strongly agree and 1 being strongly disagree. Note: Item ranking is out of 10	Mean	S.D.
#2 Maintaining the number of graduate assistants across campus	4.33	1.23

Sample of open-ended responses on the survey to the question what are the strengths of the Graduate School:

- Graduate students are amplifying agents. They amplify the instructional reach of PIs in the classroom and in our labs, maximizing the number and the quality of undergraduate instruction. A dozen undergraduate students have direct research experience in my lab each semester. They learn how to do research, they publish, and they present at meetings. I can certainly attest that I could only instruct a small fraction of these capable students without the support of my graduate trainees. The Graduate School therefore not only expands our educational mission. It greatly enhances undergraduate education and the reach and caliber of our research programs.

> *Graduate students are amplifying agents. They amplify the instructional reach of PIs in the classroom and in our labs, maximizing the number and the quality of undergraduate instruction … The Graduate School enhances undergraduate education.*

Sample of open-ended responses on the survey to the question what are the weaknesses of the Graduate School:

- So far, the Graduate School has not been effective in intervening into the budgetary situation that makes us totally lacking in competitiveness for students because of abysmally low stipends. The situation lowers graduate student quality at ISU, lowers the quality of undergraduate learning at ISU especially in writing and math skills, and creates pressures on grad students that keep them from degree completion and quality research because they have to devote their time to making money, whether here or elsewhere. It's shameful. It isn't all the Grad School's fault by any means, but they needed to ramp up the rhetorical strategies a decade ago.

10. Recognize that graduate students are different than undergraduate students and that different services are required to support them

FOCUS GROUP RESULTS:

This was a strong theme in the focus groups with graduate coordinators and graduate students. Most services are created for undergraduate students and then adapted (sometimes) for graduate students. The writing ability of graduate students was a concern for graduate coordinators and the lack of resources such as tutoring that focused on graduate students. One graduate student reported, "The tutor I went to did not know how to write at a graduate level. She could only help with grammar, punctuation, and spelling."

SURVEY RESULTS (FACULTY ONLY):

Please evaluate the following items, with 5 being strongly agree and 1 being strongly disagree	Mean	S.D.
Graduate students need different assistance in writing than undergraduate students need.	4.16	1.14

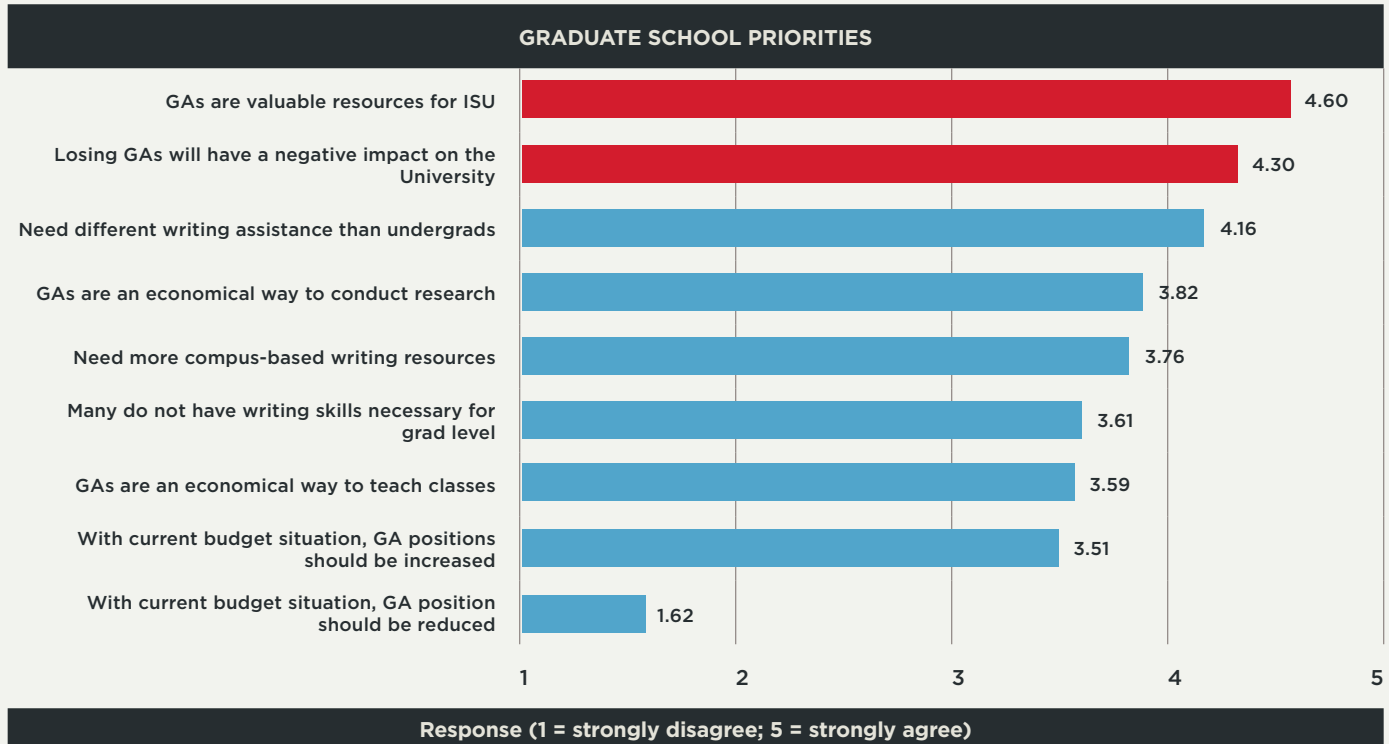| Please evaluate the following items in terms of whether it should be a priority for the Graduate School, with 5 being strongly agree and 1 being strongly disagree. Note: Item ranking is out of 10	Mean	S.D.
#5 Advocating for more graduate student services through Student Affairs	3.97	1.21

Sample of open-ended responses on the survey to the question what are the strengths of the Graduate School:

- Need to understand the very different nature of graduate student experience across campus. COE graduate students, for instance, are not present on campus. Many programs and initiatives seem to be developed without recognition of that.

Priorities of the Graduate School

The focus group results were used to establish the list of priorities for the Graduate School. Because they were developed in this way, it is not surprising that most of the priorities rated fairly high (Figure 4). The survey results indicated that the top priority should be advocacy for graduate education followed by maintaining GA positions and assisting departments in tracking alumni. These priorities were infused within the strategies and tactics.

Figure 4: Graduate School Priorities

GRADUATE SCHOOL PRIORITIES

Priority	Score
GAs are valuable resources for ISU	4.60
Losing GAs will have a negative impact on the University	4.30
Need different writing assistance than undergrads	4.16
GAs are an economical way to conduct research	3.82
Need more compus-based writing resources	3.76
Many do not have writing skills necessary for grad level	3.61
GAs are an economical way to teach classes	3.59
With current budget situation, GA positions should be increased	3.51
With current budget situation, GA position should be reduced	1.62

Response (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree)

SWOT Analysis

Synthesizing the results of the focus groups and survey allowed us to create a SWOT analysis. This analysis enables the Graduate School to examine its strategic fit within the University as a whole.

Strengths

- Communication with faculty and students
- New programs/services being offered (ie. professional development workshops)
- Customer service to faculty, staff and students
- Problem solving
- Faculty value graduate students and cause faculty to want to work at ISU
- Helping new grad coordinators learn their role
- Moved from faculty centered to student centered
- Flexibility
- Desire to highlight achievement of students
- University Research Symposium and 3 Minute Thesis Competition
- Seeks input from graduate coordinators, staff, and students
- Collaborations with such entities as Milner Library, SoTL, Career Center
- Providing better online T/D resources

Weaknesses

- Near exclusive university focus on undergraduate programs
- Recruitment left to faculty
- Marketing and recruitment skills of coordinators
- Retention skills, knowledge
- Lack of knowledge across campus that the Grad School actually exists
- Limited access and services for part-time grad students
- Lack of resources (staff) to do what needs to be done
- Little focus on research
- Not seen as important in maintaining enrollment targets
- Lack of a champion for graduate education

Opportunities

- Contribution to enrollment management
- Work with outside agencies to create external assistantships
- Provide more help with recruiting (beyond $$)
- Enhance visibility of Grad School
- Work with Student Affairs for services that are perceived for undergrads only
- Implement rolling admissions to enhance international recruitment
- Focus on programs that are in growth mode vs. declining programs
- Help departments determine viable programs
- Establish enrollment targets
- Writing support
- Create more partnerships
- New graduate programs can be created much quicker than undergraduate ones
- Implement new types of graduate programs to increase enrollment
- Think outside the box and do things differently

Threats

- Continued decreased funding
- Colleges/programs cutting graduate assistants as a cost-saving measure
- Graduate School is significantly understaffed
- Misperception that graduate education is a financial drain on the institution
- Reduction in enrollment over time
- High competition for grad students
- Decreased number of GAs due to budget reductions
- Decreased tuition waiver allocations to colleges
- Lack of services for international students
- History of accepting only students on a graduate assistantship
- Need to cut some programs, but politics prevent it
- Fear of change (ie. new programs, decreasing credit hours needed for a degree, online programs)

Strategies and Tactics

Role of Graduate School

1. **Continue to improve the role of the Graduate School in problem-solving, customer service and leadership**

    a. Continue to look for ways to serve our constituents. (ongoing)

    b. Seek to enhance customer service to faculty, staff, and students. (ongoing)

    c. Advocate for electronic degree audits to aid faculty staff, and students. (FY 19)

    d. Investigate graduate student payment options to understand the feasibility of graduate students having a different payment schedule with a first payment due after they receive their first GA stipend payment. (FY 21)

2. **Advocate for graduate students, student services, and student scholarship and creative activity**

    a. Work closely with the graduate student senator to communicate issues relevant to graduate students. (ongoing)

    b. Hold a "Coffee with the Director" event inviting all graduate students to share concerns with the staff on a regular basis. (FY 18)

    c. Develop a plan to best utilize the Graduate Student Advisory Board. (FY 19)

    d. Work with Milner Library's Information Use and Fluency Department/Scholarly librarian to develop the "Grow a Researcher" program. (FY 19)

    e. Continue to advocate for a second seat on the Academic Senate, which would create representation equal to the percentage of graduate students enrolled at the University. (FY 20)

    f. Capitalize on establishing/growing programs that meet the demands of potential students and the job market such as:
        i. Accelerated master's degree programs (FY 18)
        ii. Online programs (FY 19)
        iii. Professional master's degrees (FY 22)
        iv. Interdisciplinary/joint programs (FY 22)

    g. Investigate low retention rates for doctoral students and determine why students drop out of the program, what point they drop out, and if underrepresented students drop out at a higher rate than others. (FY 21)

3. **Maintain standards across campus**

    a. Work with departments to recruit more applicants to increase the quality of the applicant pool. (FY 18)

    b. Review and develop a policy to deal with dual credit courses (300 level) and the lack of standardization for graduate student requirements within them. (FY 18)

    c. Revise the Graduate Catalog to ensure degree requirements are detailed for each program. (FY 18)

    d. Review and develop a policy to deal with decimalized courses and the lack of curriculum process review with them. (FY 19)

    e. Develop an exit survey to determine the quality of the program. (FY 19)

    f. Re-implement the first year graduate student survey to assess processes and why they chose ISU. (FY 20)

4. **Review and improve the thesis/dissertation process including deadlines and formatting**

    a. Review the thesis/dissertation process and formatting guidelines in both the Graduate School and the Registrar's Office in order to eliminate inefficiencies. (FY 18)

    b. Once thesis and dissertations formatting and inefficiencies are reviewed, adjust dates and deadlines to give students more time to complete the thesis/dissertation. (FY 18)

    c. Hold ProQuest drop-in hours to better serve students at the defense stage of the thesis/dissertation. (FY 18)

    d. Remove thesis and dissertation proposal approval form submission deadlines to expedite the process. (FY 19)

e. Increase the number of workshops aimed at assisting students with the thesis/dissertation process. (FY 20)

f. Develop new methods of delivering workshops and resources through the coordinator of Outreach. (FY 20)

g. Create an internal research tools certificate for graduate students. (FY 21)

h. Develop an embargo policy for theses/dissertations. (FY 22)

i. Investigate eliminating ProQuest and using the ISU ReD as the repository. (FY 22)

5. **Provide recruitment assistance to programs**

a. Hold a recruitment workshop for faculty to build skills and learn best practices in recruiting quality graduate students. (FY 18)

b. Create the Graduate School summer fellowship where a faculty member works in the Graduate School to develop recruiting strategies, promotional talking points, marketing materials. (FY 18)

c. Survey those students accepted to ISU but who did not attend to determine reasons why we are losing graduate students. (FY 18)

d. Require departments to develop recruiting plans to receive recruitment funds. (FY 19)

e. Investigate EAB resources on graduate recruitment. (FY 19)

f. Ensure that all program websites have the online information form to generate prospect lists. (FY 20)

g. Develop a communications plan with Admissions to detail how each unit on campus communicates with prospects. (FY 20)

h. Develop informational resources to recruit external graduate assistantships. (FY 20)

i. Enhance recruitment efforts for underrepresented students. (FY 21)

j. Hire a recruiter to work on behalf of the University and the individual departments who will also be responsible for external graduate practicums. (FY 22)

k. Increase funding from the Graduate School for recruitment. (FY 22)

l. Establish an underrepresented student mentoring program with the Black Graduate Student Association. (FY 22)

Perceptions of the Graduate School and Graduate Programs

6. **Integrate across campus the concept that graduate programs add value to the University in terms of prestige and scholarship**

a. Communicate work of graduate students to upper administration on a regular basis. (FY 18)

b. Continue to seek representation of the Graduate School on key committees and with key stakeholders. (FY 18)

c. Add dean of the Graduate School to the title of the associate vice president title or the director of the Graduate School to elevate the value of the position and the Graduate School both on campus and across the country. (FY 22)

d. Enhance promotion of graduate students and their work at ISU including recognizing awards, publications, and presentations (eg #ShareMyThesis). (FY 21)

e. Gather information and promote the research productivity of faculty who involve graduate students in the research process. (FY 20)

f. Develop stories for news feeds featuring graduate students. (FY 19)

7. **Build on the value faculty members have for graduate education to expand program offerings**

a. Implement the INTO program at the graduate level. (FY 19)

b. Create a plan to integrate badges, micro degrees (interdisciplinary studies), and stackable certificates. (FY 21)

c. Build strong graduate programs by reviewing underperforming programs and exploring new programs to meet the changing job market. (FY 22)

d. Investigate the feasibility of an interdisciplinary degree through stackable certificates or other plans of study. (FY 22)

8. **Reposition graduate programs so they get more institutional recognition than they currently receive**

   a. Request that each college assign an associate dean within the college the responsibility of graduate education. (FY 18)

   b. Elevate the position of the Graduate School in the minds of upper administration so they are a part of the President's Points of Pride, mentioned in talking points to community groups, etc. (FY 20)

   c. Reinstitute the graduate assistant position within the Graduate School which was lost to budget reductions. The new position would be responsible for marketing including social media, recruitment initiatives, and writing stories of collaboration between students and faculty. (FY 20)

   d. Create a university wide 3 Minute Project/Issue Competition to encompass non-thesis projects. (FY 21)

   e. Develop a marketing plan for the Graduate School that showcases the value of graduate education at ISU including diversity, finances, etc. (FY 22)

   f. In collaboration with the AVP of Research and Graduate Studies, investigate the feasibility of a Student Research Center to facilitate and showcase both undergraduate and graduate research, with undergraduate research leading to Graduate School prospects. (FY 22)

Graduate Students

9. **Advocate that graduate assistants are valuable resources**

   a. Analyze data examining loss of graduate assistants across campus. (FY 18)

   b. Work with CTLT to provide a teaching certificate for graduate students due to the large number of credit hours they teach. (FY 19)

   c. Implement a stipend incentive program to attract high quality graduate students. (FY 19)

   d. Have discussions with colleges and their coordinators about growth of programs directly resulting in the growth of graduate assistants. (FY 20)

   e. Explore opportunities to provide more work experience for international students. (FY 20)

AVP Enrollment Management.

"Even though this is a predominantly undergraduate university, there is a place for graduate programs to shine."

   f. Continue to advocate our U.S. Congressional representatives to change the tax code impacting graduate assistant tuition waivers. (FY 20)

   g. Develop new external practicum graduate assistantships to fund additional positions. (FY 21)

   h. Establish teaching resources for graduate teaching assistants through CTLT. (FY 21)

   i. Provide more transparency within colleges in how graduate assistantships are distributed to programs. (FY 22)

   j. Monitor graduate assistants (GAs) across campus including continued efforts to increase graduate student stipends to competitive national levels as the state and university budgets permit, the number of GA positions, and the distribution of GAs within programs and departments. (FY 22)

10. **Recognize that graduate students are different than undergraduate students and that different services are required to support them.**

   a. Meet with Student Affairs to review services available to graduate students and market them to students. (FY 18)

   b. Investigate the library services needed by graduate students. (FY 18)

   c. Promote the resources available to graduate students such as Career Services, Milner Library, and CTLT. (FY 19)

   d. Work with Milner Library to develop a section of the website that specifically targets the needs to graduate students. (FY 19)

   e. Create an all graduate student orientation. (FY 19)

   f. Investigate writing resources on campus for both domestic and international students. (FY 20)

   g. Develop webinars of the professional development series so that part-time students may benefit from the workshops without being on campus. (FY 20)

Appendix A: Focus Group Results

Department Chairs (10 participants)

Date_____11/12/2015 and 11/18/2015_____

What is the role of the Graduate School on campus?
- Problem solvers—clarification and "they are a willing ear"
- Establish policies and procedures and enforce them
- Recognizes differences between programs—"nimble enough to take into consideration the differences of each program"
- Provides the vision of graduate education across campus
- Voice of graduate education on campus
- Manages processes and provides consistent quality and expectations across departments
- Recruiting international students

What does the Graduate School do well?

Good customer service
- "In the past there were problems with copyright issues, those have been resolved with Amy."
- Amy is pragmatic and not territorial—"The goal is the right thing, not the way we have always done it."
- Good communication with graduate coordinators and support staff
- Good collaboration with library—librarian assigned to Graduate School
- Clear communication and better resources for thesis/dissertation (checklist, timelines, consistent forms, all in one place, updated website, etc.)
- Good advocate for graduate programs and graduate students
- Communication has improved
- Perception of the office has improved

What could the Graduate School improve?
- Funding for more graduate assistantships—

  - Not Amy's decision but possible opportunities such as Diversity Tuition Waiver

  - Want to use graduate assistantship positions to get top students but can't because we need them to teach, and the best teachers are not always the top students

  - Best students won't come because stipend is too low

  - Would be great if student fees did not apply to graduate assistantships
- More recruiting dollars
- More opportunities for graduate assistants
- Want to grow some programs because numbers are low but need funding to grow them
- Understanding programs that need to be in growth mode vs. programs that should not
- The visibility of the Graduate School needs to be better
- The perception of the Graduate School is that it's not an academic department (e.g. director of Graduate School, not dean of Graduate School)
- We rely heavily upon graduate assistants for scholarship, and they don't believe that the graduate programs at ISU get the recognition they deserve for that contribution
- The Graduate School seems to be playing a management role rather than a leadership role.
- Physical facilities in Hovey aren't inviting

If you were the director of the Graduate School or provost, what changes would you make to graduate education?
- For most faculty, Graduate School represents red tape (policies, deadlines, etc.). Eliminate red tape
- Faculty are not aware or don't care about graduate education—wish faculty had a better understanding of the value of graduate education

What do you wish higher level administration knew about graduate education?
- Understanding that some programs could grow
- Leadership not making tough decisions about cutting programs that need to be cut
- If we're going to have graduate programs, they need to be funded
- MFA is a terminal degree

I asked them about role of graduate vs. undergraduate education, and they agreed that they definitely feel like the focus is not on graduate education. Think the Graduate School should promote the value of graduate education to the rest of the campus.

What do you wish higher level administration knew about graduate students?
- "We have there incredible lab facilities, but we can't hire graduate assistants for that lab because we have to have them teach activity courses." Missing out on a real opportunity for recruiting excellent students and faculty. "Losing fantastic students to Big Ten schools that have lower quality facilities because they can do research."
- Hurts faculty recruitment because we can't get good grad students
- "We are more focused on what graduate students can do for us than what we can do for them."

What would a well-functioning graduate school look like on our campus?
- Nimble and responsive
- Try to standardize but understand differences
- Question about who represents Graduate School on presidential cabinet
- Five years ago—acceptance of graduate programs' place at ISU—work is being done to raise profile of Graduate School

What tasks should be on the Graduate School's 5 year work plan?
- Funding sources
- Improving recruiting
- Focus on pedagogy for graduate assistants rather than the function they fill—"Pedagogy trumps GA tasks."
- Need to be more focused on student success in our graduate programs
- Work harder to maintain contact with graduate alumni
- Define role of graduate education here including targeting numbers and enrollment management—what is the message to graduate programs about growth?
- Advocate for more funding for graduate students
- Monitor legal regulations (e.g. international students' issues, Affordable Health Care Act)
- Work with departments to improve recruitment quality and quantity
- Improve facilities to make them more inviting for students
- Work with alumni office to keep in contact with graduate alumni

What are the biggest threats that the Graduate School faces in terms of expanding services?
- Funding
- Ownership of program at department level—don't want Graduate School in their business

Graduate Coordinators (12 participants)

Date_____10/29/2015 and 10/30/2015_____

What is the role of the Graduate School on campus?
- Support the departments
  - Troubleshooting
  - Advocacy for programs
  - Problem solving
  - Recruitment

- Support students
  - Troubleshooting
  - Advocate outside of department
  - Problem solving
  - Advocate outside of department
  - Students become aware of Graduate School at the end of their experience and is sometimes negative because of "nitpickiness" of standards
  - They believe that most students when asked about the Graduate School will think of their department, not the Graduate School. Their departments are the "face of the Graduate School" for most students.
  - Students are missing out on resources because of their lack of awareness of the Graduate School.
- Maintain standards across departments
  - Admissions
  - Graduate screening?
  - Degree audits
  - Standardization of thesis/dissertation
  - Accreditation
  - Maintaining high quality of degree "Making sure we're producing good candidates that are leaving here with a master's or doctoral level of education"
- Advance graduate education on campus
- Foster intellectual environment on campus
  - Question of Graduate School's role with faculty

What does the Graduate School do well?
- Overwhelming consensus that the staff is doing a great job. "Compliments to the new regime." "They hired Amy Hurd."
- Graduate School excels at problem solving and is willing to find the answer to any question.
- New programming
- Has improved recruitment and funding of recruitment activities
- Good at helping/advocating for students
- Has improved their understanding and flexibility with variance in departments such as different types of research, etc.
- Good job highlighting achievements of our students "Have become more student centered"
- Graduate Symposium
- Forms from prospective students
- Look at what's happening with the number of graduate assistants. Concerned about the number being cut during budget cutting.
- Will help with recruiting and funding for recruiting. (Several did not know about the Graduate Recruitment Assistance Fund.)
- Good communication—frequency and usefulness of communication
- Very helpful to new graduate coordinators
- Degree audits
- Advocate for graduate students and graduate coordinators to other areas on campus
- Keeps up with changes such as regulatory environment
- Funding for students
- Organization for students
- Has moved from faculty centered to student centered

What could the Graduate School improve?

- Give us better idea about what's coming at us with regulations and trends in graduate education
- Faculty development—promote graduate education with faculty
- More education/information on marketing and recruiting
- Need more communication between research and graduate education—there is too much "siloing" and there are barriers to collaboration
- Graduate School has already started improving communication with students about resources including seminars, etc., but needs to continue with that. Need to make sure that graduate coordinators are also receiving these communications when students do.
- Problems with dates has made it difficult to graduate in two years and has driven students away from choosing the thesis option.
- Create a document, not a template for dissertation/thesis. Consider Mac and PC issues.
- Work with departments to utilize external relationships for assistantships

What should the Graduate School be doing that it isn't?

- Trying to change attitude about Graduate School and graduate education at ISU. Seen as "sidekick" to undergraduate education. Needs to have a "seat at the table." Needs to have a better institutional position. Role of Graduate School is not valued. "Faculty want to come to good grad programs.
- Graduate School could facilitate knowledge sharing among faculty, students, etc.
- Help departments determine "viable" programs—feel pressure to keep numbers up. Maybe not all programs should exist.
- Consider more social activities and community building for students (Acknowledgement that students may not go).
- Consider sponsoring speakers to foster the intellectual environment

If you were the director of the Graduate School or provost, what changes would you make to graduate education?

- Help to market online programs
- Create interdisciplinary programs that will differentiate our programs from others
- Remove barriers to successful completion of degrees (no discussions of what barriers)

What do you wish higher level administration knew about graduate education?

- Change the image of graduate school at ISU. Highlight the value added of graduate programs
- Demonstrate the value of graduate education to the greater community
- Grad programs contribute to Educating Illinois
- Want to know from higher administration where graduate education fits at ISU.
- The focus is on undergraduate school, not graduate school.
- Graduate education is expensive and the competition for graduate students can be very high.
- There is high demand for convenience in graduate education (online, shortened time requirements, etc.). They also expressed concern about the quality of the education offered in online programs.
- Need a better understanding of balancing desire to be honest with students about job prospects and accepting weak candidates vs. desire to maintain numbers, funding, and prestige of department. "It will hurt our department if we don't have a graduate program. The message we get from our chair is to accept everyone despite weak applications because we have to maintain a graduate student body. It adds to the prestige of our department, it helps in terms of getting funding, faculty lines." This varies across departments.
- They don't understand the demands of graduate education on faculty in terms of time and effort

What do you wish higher level administration knew about graduate students?

- Many are working and therefore the barriers can be greater
- Because graduate education is very expensive, many graduate students struggle to meet basic demands, in particular international graduate assistants who must live on their stipends.
- What it's like to be a graduate student including variance in demographics (full- vs. part-time, age differences, marital status, international, etc.)
- The needs are different than undergraduate so programming that's designed for undergraduate often does not work for graduate students. Very little is tailored to graduate students.

What would a well-functioning graduate school look like on our campus?

- "Not a problem", "It is well-functioning!"
- One comment about communication being key to well-functioning graduate school.
- They did not bring this up but when asked, they agreed that it would help if the Graduate School had a higher profile or position and greater visibility within the University.
- "Considering the scope of their work, they do a great job!"
- Sustainable, efficient
- More institutional power—better positioning of graduate school
- Centralize some services such as recruitment, degree audit, etc.

What tasks should be on the Graduate School's Five–year work plan?

- Create target numbers for graduate programs
- More data—time to degree, national #s, etc.
- Online degree audits (This may already be happening.)
- Look at graduate coordinator roles across campus positions in terms of compensation, responsibilities, etc. Consider survey asking about compensation and responsibilities
- Help graduate coordinators to connect—could be good resource for each other
- "Internationalize the campus"—graduate coordinators need more training on working with international students
- Increased funding for students
- Online degree audits (This may already be happening.)
- Improve dissertation/thesis formatting issue
- Consistency across graduate coordinator positions in terms of compensation, responsibilities, etc. Consider survey asking about compensation and responsibilities. They acknowledged that the departments are very different, and this may not be helpful.

What are the biggest threats that the Graduate School faces in terms of expanding services?

- Funding
- Staffing in Graduate School office
- Reduction in student enrollment—concerned about protecting graduate assistants from budget reduction
- Funding
- Staffing in Graduate School office

Graduate Student Advisory Committee

- All 11 participants were graduate assistants
- Date: 11/16/2015

What is the role of the Graduate School on campus?

- Problem solvers
- Policies and procedures
- Coordination between graduate programs and other departments
- Advocacy for students who have conflicts with their departments

What does the Graduate School do well?

- Good customer service including problem solving
- Personal and supportive
- Seeks input from students

  - Advisory Board

  - Supports student organizations
- Providing more resources

  - Information sessions

- · Getting research done
- · Making progress on thesis or dissertation
- Research symposium

What could the Graduate School improve?
- Career support after graduation
- "They are a minimal presence in most graduate students' lives. They need to know more about the Graduate School and what it can do for them."
- Create more social environment for graduate students (all participants were graduate assistants)
- Increase financial support for graduate assistants (all participants were graduate assistants)
- Improve recruitment and admission process
- Encourage different faculty to teach graduate courses—want more variety and ability to avoid certain faculty members
- More graduate assistant positions
- Include books in graduate assistantships
- Provide more networking opportunities for graduate students

What should the Graduate School be doing that it isn't?
- More writing support—graduate students need someone who understands a higher level of reasoning and writing
- Better communication to graduate students about role of department vs. Graduate School
- What do you wish higher level administration knew about graduate education?
- Need more help for graduate students "Undergraduate services won't work for grad students and an example is writing."
- "They don't understand the value of graduate students. How much money we save the University."
- The need to understand the international discrimination that exists in graduate programs

What do you wish higher level administration knew about graduate students?
- Career services need to be different for graduate students
- International students don't know the rules including police and legal rules
- Graduate students are not well represented on campus

What tasks should be on the Graduate School's Five-year work plan?
- Create greater buffer or advocacy for graduate students dealing with problems within their department
- Look at all areas for graduate assistants—Are there legitimate reasons for differences? An example is parking.
- More attention to international students issues such as housing

Campus Partners
- 9 participants
- Date: 12/15/2015

What is the role of the Graduate School on campus?
- To serve as a hub, fulcrum, go-between for graduate programs and other departments on campus
- Macro perspective (umbrella)
- Governing body—Establish policies and procedures and enforce them
- Resources for graduate students
- Problem solvers
- Thesis/dissertation management
- Marketing and recruiting

What does the Graduate School do well?
- Problem solving
- Communicate with students and graduate coordinators
- Good interaction/professionalism

What could the Graduate School improve?
- More focus on research
- Student services—not as many safety nets for graduate students
- Increase visibility of Graduate School
- Rolling admissions—can't control this but should continue to work on it
- Dealing with different programs

What should the Graduate School be doing that it isn't?
- Should host a plagiarism workshop
- Possibly take on more recruitment role
- Creating partnerships with other areas on campus

If you were the director of the Graduate School or provost, what changes would you make to graduate education?
- Create uniform guidelines for graduate admissions
- Rolling admissions
- Target enrollment
- Mandated programs for graduate students (e.g. writing, research, etc.)
- Create a graduate student ombudsman
- More education/training for teaching assistants

What do you wish higher level administration knew about graduate education?
- Graduate degrees are all very different
- Some departments won't take a graduate student without a graduate assistant even if they can pay full tuition

What do you wish higher level administration knew about graduate students?
- Graduate assistants have problems paying fees and taxes on their income
- There is a housing issue for international students
- Need assistance in the Visor Center for graduate students at graduate level work
- Need support similar to undergraduate students, but it is not available

What would a well-functioning graduate school look like on our campus?
- It would be an advocate for graduate education
- Has an ombudsman
- More creative approaches to graduate education

What tasks should be on the Graduate School's Five-year work plan?
- Completion plans—rates of completion
- Better response times on application (Not a priority, not enough personnel)
- Need to change rewards for faculty and departments—"If you want something to grow, you've got to feed it."

What are the biggest threats that the Graduate School faces in terms of expanding services?
- Funding
- Reporting lines
- Buy-in

Graduate Support Staff

- 9 participants
- Date: 11/10/2015

What is the role of the Graduate School on campus?

- Central location for general information
- Guidance for the departments and students

  - Good "go-to"—problem solvers

  - Communicates with both groups (resources, new information, etc.)

  - Meets needs of all departments "whole rather than individual department"

  - Resources
- Enforce and inform about university policies and procedures (Forms, etc.)
- Coordinate with Admissions

What does the Graduate School do well?

- Good problem solvers and information source
- Great customer service—quick and all the staff are very personable
- Better informed than previous administration
- Easy access to Amy
- Serve us better—geared to our level
- Very helpful with the new system (making requests, reports, etc.)
- Keeping website current

What could the Graduate School improve?

- Not really much to improve because they have already done so much to improve—many indicated they left this question blank
- More dissemination of information (ex. bootcamp?)
- Provide assistance to new people for graduate fairs—ideas for recruiting
- Some of the things we want improved are out of their realm such as reports
- Lack of knowledge by students about role of Graduate School and what the Graduate School can do for them—Many associate Graduate School with their departments, not office in Hovey
- Access to Graduate School is a problem for night classes—don't see students

What should the Graduate School be doing that it isn't?

- More writing support—(spent 10 minutes discussing problems with writing—Visor Center can only do so much, problems with plagiarism)
- More funding for graduate assistants
- More format support for Art students
- More help with graduate fairs—where to go—don't want to waste their time at fairs that don't make sense? Materials?

If you were the director of the Graduate School or provost, what changes would you make to graduate education?

- Try to make graduate school more prominent—everything is based on undergraduate
- Change faculty perception of graduate programs—believe it is negative
- Help with establishing external graduate assistantships
- More scholarship opportunities

What do you wish higher level administration knew about graduate education?

- Need more help for graduate students
- Need to understand that grad classes are going to have lower numbers
- Wish recruitment incentive money could be used for tuition waivers

What do you wish higher level administration knew about graduate students?

- Grad students are working full-time, married with children, etc.
- They are taking on a lot of debt to fund their education
- They actually save money for the University
- There is a significant difference between graduate assistants and part-time graduate students
- For graduate assistants, fees aren't covered, and they are taxed on stipends (sometimes all in one pay period)

What would a well-functioning graduate school look like on our campus?

- More recognition "The Grad School needs to tell the story better."
- Not just a smaller undergraduate program
- Good recruitment program

What tasks should be on the Graduate School's Five-year work plan?

- Graduate student orientation—coordinate with departments
- Evaluation of how long it takes to graduate and deadlines (6-8 years)

What are the biggest threats that the Graduate School faces in terms of expanding services?

- Funding
- Staffing in Graduate School office
- Satisfying divergent needs
- Technology
- Changes in regulations for international students

Appendix B Survey Questions

ROLE

Please evaluate the following statements on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree. (1 strongly disagree; 2 disagree; 3 neither agree nor disagree; 4 agree; 5 strongly disagree)

1. The role of the Graduate School is to troubleshoot for departments and schools.
2. The role of the Graduate School is to recruit quality students.
3. The Graduate School should help more with recruiting students.
4. The role of the Graduate School is to maintain high quality degrees.
5. The role of the Graduate School is to serve as student advocate when there is a conflict or issue within the department or school.
6. The Graduate School should be an advocate for scholarship on campus.
7. The Graduate School does a good job of recognizing the differences between departments/schools.
8. The role of the Graduate School is to serve as an advocate for graduate programs to upper administration.

GRADUATE STUDENTS

Please evaluate the following statements on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree. (1 strongly disagree; 2 disagree; 3 neither agree nor disagree; 4 agree; 5 strongly disagree)

1. Graduate assistants are valuable resources for ISU.
2. Graduate assistants are an economical way to teach classes.
3. Graduate assistants are an economical way to conduct research.
4. Many graduate students do not have the writing skills necessary to write at a graduate level.
5. Graduate students need more campus based resources to assist in writing.
6. Graduate students need different assistance in writing than undergraduate students need.
7. With our current budget situation, GA positions should be reduced.

8. With our current budget situation, GA positions should be increased.

9. Losing some graduate assistant positions will have a negative impact on the University.

THESIS/DISSERTATION PROCESS

1. I have served on a thesis or dissertation committee in the last two years. Yes/No <yes is redirected to questions below; no to Perceptions section>

Please evaluate the following statements on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree. (1 strongly disagree; 2 disagree; 3 neither agree nor disagree; 4 agree; 5 strongly disagree)

If you have no knowledge related to this statement, please don't evaluate the statement. Leave it blank.

1. The Graduate School thesis/dissertation workshops are beneficial for students.

2. The online thesis/dissertation resources are helpful to students.

3. The online thesis/dissertation resources are helpful to faculty.

4. The Graduate School needs to provide more training for faculty on mentoring students.

5. The Graduate School needs to provide more structure for the proposal and defense processes.

6. Moving the thesis/dissertation deadlines to earlier deadlines has been a positive change.

7. If available, graduate students are choosing an alternative option other than thesis/dissertation because of the deadline changes.

8. Students have the appropriate resources available to complete a thesis/dissertation in a timely manner.

PERCEPTIONS

Please evaluate the following statements on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree. (1 strongly disagree; 2 disagree; 3 neither agree nor disagree; 4 agree; 5 strongly disagree)

1. Having a graduate program in my department/school was an important part of my decision to work at ISU.

2. The graduate program in my academic unit contributes to my job satisfaction at ISU.

3. I would not want to work at a university that did not have graduate programs.

4. Working with graduate students improves my ability to conduct research.

5. Graduate programs are a drain on the University's resources.

6. Graduate programs add prestige to the University.

7. Graduate programs add value to the University.

8. Graduate programs contribute to scholarship at ISU.

9. Graduate programs deserve more institutional recognition than they currently receive.

10. Graduate programs are perceived as less important than undergraduate programs at ISU.

11. The Graduate School is viewed as being student centered.

12. The Graduate School is viewed as being faculty centered.

13. Graduate programs that do not have sustainable enrollment numbers should be considered for elimination.

14. Faculty should be involved in recruiting students into graduate programs.

15. The overall quality of the Graduate School is good.

PRIORITIES FOR GRADUATE SCHOOL

Please evaluate the following items in terms of whether it should be a priority for the Graduate School. Please evaluate the following statements on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree. (1 strongly disagree; 2 disagree; 3 neither agree nor disagree; 4 agree; 5 strongly disagree)

1. Recruitment of graduate students

2. Advocating for graduate programs across campus

3. Maintaining the number of graduate assistants across campus

4. Planning and hosting the University Research Symposium

5. Developing new interdisciplinary programs

6. Assisting departments in securing external (to ISU) graduate assistantships with area agencies

7. Assisting departments in determining enrollment targets

8. Assisting departments in determining viable programs

9. Advocating for more graduate student services through Student Affairs

10. Holding a campus-wide graduate assistant orientation

11. Holding a campus-wide all graduate student orientation

12. Assisting departments with tracking graduate student alumni

OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

1. What are the top three priorities for the graduate school?

2. What do you believe are the strengths of the Graduate School?

3. What do you believe are the weaknesses of the Graduate School?

4. What resources and services should the Graduate School provide to students, faculty, and staff?

Appendix C: Priority Rank

Please evaluate the following items in terms of whether it should be a priority for the Graduate School, with 5 being strongly agree and 1 being strongly disagree. Results are listed in order of highest to lowest mean.

Item	Mean	S.D.
Advocating for graduate programs across campus	4.55	1.20
Maintaining the number of graduate assistants across campus	4.33	1.23
Assisting departments with tracking graduate student alumni	4.15	1.21
Planning and hosting the University Research Symposium	4.11	1.22
Assisting departments in securing external (to ISU) graduate assistantships with area agencies	3.98	1.20
Advocating for more graduate student services through Student Affairs	3.97	1.21
Recruitment of Graduate Students	3.96	1.31
Holding a campus wide all graduate student orientation	3.75	1.32
Holding a campus wide graduate assistant orientation	3.72	1.31
Assisting departments in determining viable programs	3.52	1.25
Assisting departments in determining enrollment targets	3.43	1.30
Developing new interdisciplinary programs	3.28	1.28