

The Graduate School Annual Report 2002-2003

Highlighted Achievements

A record number of National Science Foundation fellows enrolled in graduate programs at UGA. There are 13 active fellows and two fellows in reserve status.

The total graduate student enrollment (returning and new students) for Fall 2002 semester was 6,456. This represents an increase of 474 students (7.9%) over the total of 5,982 students enrolled for Fall 2001.

Improved measures to provide leadership and successfully mentor faculty in new program development resulted in the initial approval of a Master of Public Health, and three Masters in Engineering programs.

The Graduate School Business Office developed and brought online an integrated budget system combining data from the assistantship, staff and budget databases to produce budget amendments and employee personnel reports, as well as to facilitate reporting internally and externally.

The implementation of electronic elections for membership to the Graduate Council has resulted in a streamlined, more efficient process.

Other achievements are highlighted in the report.

Strategic Plan Changes

None

Strategic Plan Progress (Unit Level)

Steps to enhance graduate student learning environment

An important step to enhance graduate student learning involved the Graduate School workshops on inclusiveness. These workshops provided a wealth of information to UGA graduate coordinators and faculty, administrators, and graduate students. Developed to assist faculty on how to better receive students from underrepresented populations, these workshops also were used to help graduate students from diverse populations work with faculty at a large majority institution.

Additionally, the Graduate School worked closely with graduate student leaders to improve the orientation programs for new graduate students. Improvements were made to tailor the orientation programs to meet individual needs and to improve the foundation of campus and community support and resources necessary for students to have a successful beginning to their graduate studies. This collaboration also resulted in the creation of a new Web-based graduate student orientation site for students.

In another effort to enhance the graduate student learning environment, the Graduate School provided a workshop entitled, "How to survive in Graduate School-101." This workshop was attended by over 200 students and received positive feedback from new graduate students.

Steps to increase graduate enrollment

To increase graduate enrollment, early filing of applications was promoted by reducing the turnaround time for mailing applications and other informational materials. During the peak admissions season, the mailroom responded to requests for information within three days of receiving the requests, compared with a three-week response time in the previous two years.

The implementation of a targeted email communication initiative for prospective students has encouraged them to complete the application process. This initiative included additional messaging as part of the online application system, as well as the use of a new messaging system once applicants are in the UGA system. Improvements were made to a Web-based document that serves over 10,000 applicants, increasing the efficiency within the admissions office and across campus.

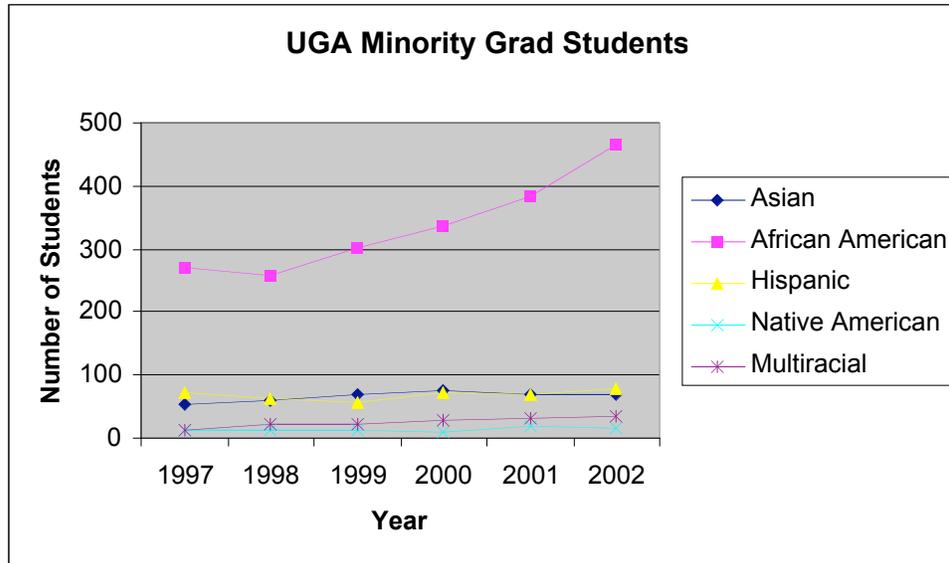
Special topical workshops were provided for departmental support staff who facilitate graduate student admissions and enrollment. The focus of the workshops was to improve the admissions-related organization and process within departments, resulting in a positive effect on departmental admissions recommendations.

Because funding of graduate students is essential in recruiting the very best students and increasing graduate enrollment, a program under which early Graduate School assistantship awards would be made to exceptional recruits was instituted. This program enhanced a department's ability to recruit exceptional students to UGA.

In addition, non-thesis master's allocations were made to select programs. These allocations allow the programs to recruit more students with fewer dollars, and consequently enable more resources to be devoted to recruitment of students to traditional M.S. and Ph.D. programs.

Overall, the number of graduate assistants employed campus wide increased by 2.5% over FY02. Funding increased by over \$2 million.

The Graduate School's Recruitment and Retention office continued efforts to increase enrollment among historically underrepresented groups. There was a 15% increase (87 students) in enrollment of students from underrepresented groups, 574 (2001) to 661 (2002).



Steps to enhance international learning experiences

The Graduate School plays an important role in facilitating international student enrollment and exposing domestic students to an international student body at UGA. For the second year, special processing guidelines for applications from foreign applicants were refined. The processing changes have provided more time for reviewing files of applicants who have been recommended for admission. A detractor in the international arena has been the implementation of the federal SEVIS reporting requirements. Carrying out the governmental requirements has delayed admissions decisions being forwarded to applicants

Steps to enhance research funding and activity

The Graduate School provided additional funding for graduate research assistantships as part of matching funds with proposals to external agencies. This enhanced the prospect of funding. Supplemental funds were also allocated to existing research assistantships. Additionally, the Graduate School funded assistantships to departments to assist them in writing external grants.

Strategic Plan Progress (Institutional Level)

Increase in Graduate Applications

Graduate Admissions processed 10,579 applications for Summer 2002 – Spring 2003. This represents an increase of 7% from the previous year. Of this number, 4,790 (45%) were accepted, reflecting an increase of 2% from the previous year.

Increase in Graduate Enrollment

The total graduate enrollment (returning and new students) for Fall 2002 semester was 6,456. This represents an increase of 474 students (7.9%) over the total of 5,982 students enrolled for Fall 2001. New students for Fall 2002 semester totaled 1,576, showing an increase of 140 (9.7%) over the new student total of 1,436 for Fall 2001.

The total graduate student enrollment (returning and new students) for Spring 2003 semester was 6,339, representing an increase of 500 students (8.6%) over the total of 5,839 for Spring 2002 semester.

There were 492 new students for Spring 2003 semester, representing an increase of 74 students (17.7%) over the total of 418 for Spring 2002 semester.

Diversity

A Graduate Recruitment Opportunity (GRO) assistantship program was implemented to attract graduate students who are considered first generation, educationally or economically disadvantaged, or have some aspect of a uniquely diverse background that adds to their discipline of study. In the academic year 2002-2003, a total of \$272,000 was allocated to fund 19 students.

The Graduate School's Summer Undergraduate Research Program (SURP) provides undergraduate students from historically underrepresented groups with research experience and opportunities to work with UGA faculty mentors. This program is designed to recruit and attract diverse students to UGA. For example, four students who participated previously in SURP were admitted to graduate and professional programs at UGA for Fall 2002.

Public Service and Outreach Contributions

The Graduate School presented workshops on "How to prepare for Graduate School" for numerous institutions around the country. These workshops included helpful tips on how to prepare a statement of purpose, how to prepare for the GRE, how to ask for a letter of recommendation, and how to find out about financial opportunities. Some of the institutions and sites visited for workshops and recruitment include the following: Houston-Alliance for Minority Participation at Southwest Texas State University; University of Tennessee McNair Conference; Minority in Agriculture, Natural Resources

and Related Sciences (MANRRS); Society for the Advancement of Chicanos and Native Americans in Science (SACNAS); and the Annual Biomedical Research Conference for Minorities in Science (ABRCMS). An on-campus workshop on graduate education was held for UGA upperclassmen and students from nearby institutions.

In addition, workshops were held on graduate education at graduate fairs at all eight Historically Black Colleges and Universities in Georgia: Savannah State University, Albany State University, Fort Valley State University, Paine College and the Atlanta University Center (AUC-Spelman College, Morris Brown College, Morehouse College and Clark Atlanta University); as well as Augusta State University, and the Annual Leadership Development Seminar for Minorities in Georgia at Jekyll Island.

An important part of Graduate School outreach is the dissemination of scholarly work of its students. This is done primarily through electronic theses and dissertations. This year, the Graduate School received and processed over 800 electronic theses and dissertations that are available to the public online through the library.

The Graduate School produced and distributed over 20,000 copies of the 2002 Graduate Bulletin on CD-ROM.

Short Term Goals (FY 04)

Goal 1: Increase graduate enrollment, using electronic strategies, and continue efforts to realize a comprehensive health insurance program for graduate assistants.

Goal 2: Continue efforts to diversify graduate student population by recruiting students from underrepresented populations.

Goal 3: Enhance graduate student experience and assist graduate students to achieve success in their graduate studies through ongoing professional development and seminars for graduate coordinators, graduate coordinator assistants, and graduate students, and the development of an online graduate student handbook for ready access to procedures and policies.

Goal 4: Benchmark up to five top-tier graduate schools to assess processes, structures, programs, student learning environments, and international experiences for graduate students, and to identify models of excellence that can be adapted to UGA.

Goal 5: Streamline processes by converting paper documents to digital data and explore ways of receiving and sharing admissions documents electronically with departments, and develop a comprehensive database that can provide quick access to queries for enrolled and graduated students and that can be used to examine completion and attrition of doctoral students, as well as other aspects of graduate education.

Assessing Effectiveness

Feedback concerning graduate admissions processing is obtained from graduate coordinators and their assistants at annual meetings and through the graduate coordinator and assistants listserves. Graduate admissions practices have been modified to increase departmental flexibility in meeting Graduate School guidelines for admission. These changes have resulted in applicants being accepted more quickly or given provisional admission while missing requirements are satisfied.

Evaluation forms were used to assess all recruitment programs. The annual "Visitation Days" program was revised to assist prospective students with their applications by reviewing their statement of purpose. Other changes to the program included assistance with application materials, better meals during the visitation, and higher quality of students accepted to participate in the program vs. quantity. Overall, the assessment of the effectiveness of the unit concluded from FY02 to FY03 that the Recruitment and Retention office needed to streamline data entry of inquiry cards from recruitment trips and workshops and to update methods of follow up to prospective students.

Student Retention/Graduation

A program of dean's awards was established to help finance doctoral dissertation research. This program is used to facilitate students' move toward the completion of the degree. A total of \$13,500 was awarded to students in the arts and humanities, while \$7,300 was awarded to students in the social sciences.

The retention process for students whose graduate course average dropped below the minimum of 3.0 was modified to include monitoring by graduate coordinators. This increases the probability of retention by heightening awareness of poor student performance or advising problems within academic departments.

The Associate Dean became more involved with the retention aspect of graduate students. A Graduate School database is being created to identify students who fail to register in a particular term. Departments will be notified, and follow-up procedures established to identify students experiencing academic difficulties or other situations that might lead to dropping out a semester. If students fail to register two consecutive semesters, a plan will be implemented to counsel them about withdrawal.

A meeting was held with all GRO recipients of 2002-2003 at the end of Fall 2002 semester. During this meeting, each student was asked to discuss his or her research direction and activities with the department and major professor. This information was used to assess how well the departments were creating a climate of inclusiveness. Students provided examples of both good and poor treatment and interaction that they experienced. This meeting was one of the primary catalysts for the coordinators workshop on best practices in inclusiveness.

The Graduate School has continued to foster cultural diversity of the university's graduate student population. In November of Fall 2002 semester, the Graduate School presented an open forum to all faculty and students. Dr. Beverly Tatum, president of Spelman College, gave a lecture on the inclusion of underrepresented students at the university in order to provide all students with both exposure and understanding of cultures other than their own. The presentation was given in the Chapel with approximately 100 individuals in attendance.

A second program for fostering cultural diversity was held in Spring 2003 semester. All graduate coordinators were encouraged to attend a workshop on "best practices in providing an inclusive environment within the departmental community." The speaker and coordinator of the workshop was Dr. Howard Adams, an expert on increasing cultural diversity and inclusiveness within university academic programs.

The Graduate School worked closely with other minority-serving units at UGA to provide an inclusive environment for graduate students from underrepresented populations. These units include the Minority Services and Program Office, Office of Institutional Diversity, Office of Diversity-College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences, USDA-Affirmative Action office and programs, Graduate and Professional Scholars, and the Black Faculty and Staff Organization.