The Role, Mission, Vision, and Goals of Graduate Education at Central Washington University

**Role:** The role of graduate education at Central Washington University is multi-faceted. Graduate education, first and foremost, provides opportunities for students to earn master’s degrees in selected fields of study. Some of these degrees are in professions where the master’s degree is the terminal degree and in disciplinary or interdisciplinary emphases that reflect the cultural, physical, and historic qualities of our region or that respond to the needs of professional education and business. The rigor of certain master’s degree programs provides training and preparation for doctoral studies.

Graduate education assists the university in providing research and service in the public interest to the region, the state, and notably to the nation and the world. Working together with faculty, graduate students fuel discoveries and applications that benefit economic, cultural, and societal development and serve the university mission of responsible citizenship and stewardship. Graduate students enhance the teaching mission of Central Washington University by serving as graduate teaching assistants who teach undergraduate courses, assisting professors in teaching undergraduate courses, or teaching laboratory sessions. Graduate research assistants contribute to and enhance faculty research and creative activity. In addition, graduate students work in a triadic model with faculty and undergraduate students to enhance undergraduate research and scholarship. This relationship was highlighted when the annual Symposium on Undergraduate Research and Creative Expression (SOURCE) changed its name in 2005 to the Symposium on University Research and Creative Expression and invited faculty and graduate students to present their research and creative work alongside undergraduate students.

Graduate education and faculty scholarship enjoy a symbiotic relationship. In fact, the very existence of graduate students and programs at Central Washington University attracts faculty who have a strong desire to contribute to their respective disciplines through scholarship, and outstanding graduate students are often the catalyst for research and creative activity by faculty. Not only do the disciplines and society benefit from the generation of scholarship, but both graduate and undergraduate students gain invaluable experience by collaborating with faculty on research projects. Graduate students may serve as research associates for faculty who are the principal investigators on federally and privately funded grants. Indirect costs associated with grants benefit faculty and students. Faculty benefit from time allocated to produce scholarly works, to develop new directions in scholarship, and to develop and prepare new external grants and from funding that supports travel and equipment purchase. Undergraduate and graduate students benefit when indirect costs fund their scholarship-related travel and research and the Symposium on University Research and Creative Expression (SOURCE). Thus, graduate education nurtures the symbiotic relationship between graduate students and the institution in which students benefit from teaching and research opportunities that the institution provides and the university benefits from graduate student roles in research support and in teaching and mentoring undergraduates.

Graduate education is a combination of study and apprenticeship. The apprenticeship relationship between student and faculty combines the skills and abilities of credentialed and experienced faculty members with the receptivity, energy, and creativity of graduate students.
Graduate students are expected to develop a sophisticated understanding of literature relevant to their specializations, enhanced critical thinking, creative and analytical approaches to knowledge, and ultimately learn to communicate, artistically express, and apply that knowledge effectively in a professional setting. Graduate education thus extends the resources and ability of the institution to find solutions to human and environmental problems and to engage in the discovery and dissemination of knowledge that is useful to central Washington, the state, the region, the nation, and the world.

A central characteristic of the university’s current graduate programs is how they complement and enhance the university’s core undergraduate mission and programming strength through the multifaceted roles of the faculty. These programs provide unique opportunities for graduate students to work closely with faculty and, at the same time, to teach and mentor undergraduates in ways not possible in programs of larger scale. The latter provides the undergraduate student with role models and a vision of what they might do in their future education. Past graduates value our small classes and opportunities for close interaction and discussion with faculty and classmates, and occasions to work with undergraduates in applying knowledge and skills relevant to future academic and employment goals.

Practically speaking, graduate programs at CWU arise from a combination of departmental strengths, faculty qualifications, availability and interest, student interests, and efforts to meet employer demands for master’s level graduates within the state and region and to address needs critical to the nation and world. The Washington Higher Education Coordinating Board’s (HECB) standards for program approval set rigorous criteria to ensure that programs are well crafted, well-supported, and have access to appropriate faculty, space, equipment, laboratories, library, and information resources; that they meet the needs of citizens, business and industry within the state, or provide a unique resource on a broader scale; and avoid unnecessary program duplication with other state universities. The process is complex but positive, in that it requires careful consideration of proposals on the campus as well as state-wide and ensures successful integration with existing programs.

An important direction in the university’s graduate programming comes from recognition that interdisciplinary graduate programs are particularly well suited to an institution of CWU’s size and character. In 2006 the university president introduced a “Spheres of Distinction” funding initiative which has given priority to interdisciplinary programs and research. This initiative is also consistent with the Council of Graduate Schools’ recent assertion that, “Interdisciplinary research preparation and education are central to future competitiveness, because knowledge creation and innovation frequently occur at the interface of disciplines” (CGS 1, 2007, pg.12). Other Sphere of Distinction categories that are suited to innovative proposals in graduate education include “Preparation of Professional Educators,” “Activities Addressing Regional Needs and Enhancing Regional Resources,” and “University Centers.”

**Mission Statement:** Through value, opportunity and quality the graduate education at Central Washington University provides educational advancement and professional development for post-baccalaureate students, addresses the needs of the workforce for highly skilled workers, prepares students for doctoral study, creates partnerships between faculty and students to extend scholarship in important areas of research, creativity, and practice, and fuels the economic
development engine of the region through scholarly activity. In all of these ways and consistent with the mission of the university, graduate education prepares students for responsible citizenship, stewardship, and productive lives. The highest degrees awarded are the master degree and the master of fine arts degree.

Vision: Central Washington University’s graduate program will be regionally and nationally recognized for the quality of their graduates, and the contributions of its students and faculty to research, creative activity and service.

Goals:

1. The graduate office will work with the Graduate Council, deans and department chairs, and appropriate external bodies to create review criteria for graduate programs.
   a. These criteria will include such factors as:
      i. Consistency with the primary role and mission of graduate education;
      ii. Evaluation of enrollments, assigned faculty load, facilities, equipment, library resources, exit surveys of graduates and surveys of alumni; and
      iii. Uniform criteria for expected learning outcomes and program goals.
   b. The graduate office will use these criteria to incorporate the review of graduate programs into the ongoing departmental program review process to ensure they are of highest quality.
   c. The graduate office will review proposals for new graduate programs and curriculum to ensure that they respond to the standard criteria (see “a” above) and that they are consistent with the mission of graduate education.

2. The graduate office, working with the Graduate Council and the deans, will establish a task force on current and new program initiatives that will recommend the establishment of new programs, the enhancement of existing programs, and the elimination of moribund programs. These decisions will be based on:
   a. The program’s potential for growth in enrollment;
   b. The program’s appropriateness to be offered at the university’s centers;
   c. The program’s innovative interdisciplinary and unique characteristics.
   d. The program’s potential to meet the needs of the state and the region and for which CWU has resources and qualified faculty to provide sufficient support.
   e. The program’s suitability for alternative delivery formats such as non-traditional time frames and electronic mediation.

3. The graduate office, working with the Graduate Council, deans, and representatives of both the Faculty Senate and the United Faculty of Central, will identify how the role of faculty in the graduate program is different than the role of faculty in undergraduate education including
   a. Identifying differential compensation or work load related to faculty involvement in graduate education; and
   b. Developing guidelines on individual graduate faculty roles and loads appropriate for different types of graduate programs [For example, those that require intensive individual research supervision (laboratory sciences, English, History) in contrast with those that involve cohorts of students in a classroom situation, with
supervised internships (school psychology), or those that use or plan to use online and distant education resources.

4. The graduate office will develop a plan to expand sources of support for graduate students, including as options:
   a. Increasing fellowship, assistantship, and waiver support from the CWU Foundation, the CWU Research Foundation, and the state and tuition general fund.
   b. Increasing research/grant funding that supports graduate students.
   c. Strengthening existing and developing new ties with state agencies, business and industry for graduate student support in the context of projects, e.g. transportation project surveys, industrial engineering firms, private business.
   d. Exploring eligibility for WICHE (Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education) status for existing or new programs;
   e. Reallocating existing fund support; and
   f. Continuing to expand involvement with the Central Washington University Research Foundation (CWURF).

5. The graduate office, working with the office of enrollment management and other appropriate entities, will establish desired levels for each of the following variables and identify strategies to achieve these goals:
   a. Percentage of students at CWU that are graduate students [Six percent, comparable to our sister institution Western Washington University, has been recommended.];
   b. Number of students who apply to graduate programs;
   c. Number of international students who apply to graduate programs;
   d. Percentage of students who are admitted that matriculate;
   e. Academic quality of incoming students;
   f. Racial, ethnic, and geographic diversity of the graduate student population;
   g. Time to completion for enrolled students; and
   h. Completion rates.

6. To improve Central’s competitive position with respect to other universities, the graduate office, working with the Graduate Council, will improve the graduate application process and timeline including:
   a. Processing applications in a timely manner;
   b. Giving consideration to an earlier “priority” date for graduate student applications for the following fall and an earlier date for preliminary allocation for assistantship funds and tuition waivers;
   c. Pursuing plans for on-line submission of files and reference letters for students applying for admission;
   d. Establishing a password-protected intranet site for applicant file sharing between the graduate office and the departments during file development;
   e. Encouraging departmental and interdisciplinary program graduate admissions committees to contact and encourage students with incomplete files; and
   f. Ensuring that the Graduate Office’s review of a final thesis containing no errors is complete within a month after submission.

7. The graduate office, working with program directors of M.Ed. programs, will explore with the state the viability of establishing an education specialist degree option.
8. The graduate office working with the graduate faculty, department chairs and
departmental graduate program directors will ensure the continued high quality of
graduate student learning through careful evaluation of the each graduate student’s work
in the classroom, the laboratory or studio, and in his or her thesis or project. Graduate
students are expected to display competency in the following areas:
   a. A sophisticated understanding of the literature relevant to their specializations;
   b. Enhanced critical thinking;
   c. Creative and analytical approaches to acquiring knowledge; and
   d. Communicating, artistically expressing and applying that knowledge
effectively in professional settings.

Relation of Graduate Mission and Goals to University Goals: The graduate mission supports
the mission and goals of the university in the following ways:
   • It maintains and strengthens academic life on the Ellensburg campus and at the
     university centers through periodic review and subsequent improvement of graduate
     programs;
   • It maintains and strengthens academic life on the Ellensburg campus and at the
     university centers by modeling the context for the discovery and dissemination of
     knowledge in which undergraduate students also participate;
   • It strengthens funding and infrastructure by building partnerships with various
     constituencies (public sector, industry, professional groups, institutions and
     communities) which will enhance the programs themselves through graduate research
     and practice as well as bring benefits through the work of our graduates in the state and
     region;
   • It increases state and national prominence of the university through recognition of the
     quality of its graduate programs and the accomplishments of its degree recipients; and
   • It builds inclusive, respectful, cooperative and diverse communities which involve
     faculty, staff, graduate and undergraduate students in shared intellectual and applied
     endeavors.

Notable Accomplishments: The above goals rest on the accomplishments of the past. For
example, two CWU graduate students have been honored with the Western Association of
Graduate Schools Distinguished Thesis Award, the first in 1996 and the most recent in 2007.
Many of our students go on to prestigious Ph.D. programs. For example, Dr. Crickette Sanz was
an undergraduate McNair scholar who stayed at CWU to complete her M.S. in Experimental
Psychology – Primatology. She was accepted at Washington University’s Ph.D. program in
Anthropology. Her ground breaking research on heretofore unknown chimpanzees in the
Republic of the Congo was featured in a National Geographic program. Presently she is on the
faculty of the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology in Leipzig, Germany. Our
professional degrees have notable successes as well. Mental Health Counseling masters taking
the National Counseling Examination in October of 2008 scored three standard deviations above
the mean on their total scores, placing them at the 99.9 percentile and providing evidence that
our program is one of the strongest in the country.