

**Purdue Graduate School Transformation
Final Report and Recommendations
Eric Barker, Associate Provost for Graduate Programs (Acting)
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Background: In June 2023, President Chiang and Provost Wolfe requested that Dr. Barker conduct a thorough and thoughtful review of current functions of the Purdue Graduate School with an emphasis on identifying mechanisms to enhance graduate and professional student support and career preparation while removing administrative barriers to student success.

A deep-dive of all Graduate School functions was conducted over the fall 2023 semester. Key stakeholders were also engaged in this review, including the academic deans, the college-level associate deans for graduate education, the associate deans in the Graduate School, the Purdue Graduate Council, and University Senate leadership. The focus of these stakeholder conversations was asking fundamental function and structure questions such as: Is the term “Graduate School” necessary and relevant to the scope of activities currently housed in Purdue’s Graduate School? Are there other options? If there is to be a new structure, it cannot devalue graduate education and should impress the importance of graduate students, professional students, and post-doctoral fellows at Purdue.

Overall, the intent is to better support graduate and professional programs at department, college, and university levels with the following overarching principles:

- The North Star is student success. As feasible, more resources should be devoted to students directly and processes streamlined for the ease of student life as graduate programs at Purdue grow.
- All essential functions at the university central level will continue, including hosting certain interdisciplinary graduate degree programs.
- Since graduate admissions have always been run mostly at department/program and college levels, faculty in individual graduate degree programs will be further empowered to innovate in graduate education.

Benchmarking: A key question was, *how do the Top Five Public Universities handle graduate programs?* The following structures exist:

- UC-Berkeley – Berkeley Graduate Division led by Vice Provost and Dean
- UCLA – Division of Graduate Education led by Dean, Division of Graduate Education
- University of Michigan – Ann Arbor – Rackham Graduate School (or School of Graduate Studies) led by Dean and Vice Provost for Academic Affairs – Graduate Studies
- University of Virginia – Office of Graduate & Postdoctoral Affairs led by Associate Vice Provost and Director
- University of Florida – The Graduate School led by Associate Provost and Dean

Of note, three of the top five public universities have a support structure distinct from a traditional “Graduate School.”

Recommendations:

1. To better align with the overall functions, rename the Purdue Graduate School to the Office for Graduate Students and Post-Doctoral Scholars to be housed in the Office of the Provost.

2. The Office for Graduate Students and Post-Doctoral Scholars would be led by the Vice Provost for Graduate Students and Post-Doctoral Scholars.

3. The Vice Provost will be supported by Associate Vice Provosts and Directors as deemed necessary to support core functions.

4. The following specialized and centralized services for graduate students and post-doctoral scholars will continue:

- Interdisciplinary Graduate Programs
- Program and curricular approvals
- “GRAD” courses
- Graduate records database
- Fellowship management
- Post-doctoral fellow support
- Admissions management
- Professional development
- Graduate assistance and advocacy
- Graduate student success programs

5. All graduate and professional degrees will be awarded by the home College. Admissions decisions and offers will continue to be managed by the home College with continued support from the Office for Graduate Students and Post-Doctoral Scholars. Interdisciplinary program students will “officially transfer” into their home College/Department (program) in their final semester so that their degree will be awarded by the home College.

6. The Graduate Council charter and charge from 1949 should be reviewed in Spring 2024. The membership and purpose for the Graduate Council should be updated. A joint Task Force between the Graduate Council and University Senate should be charged with this review with a target of having any changes approved by both Graduate Council and University Senate by May 2024.