Strategic Plan 2024-2029

Transforming Graduate Education for the Public Good

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Contents

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* The Graduate College Strategic Plan incorporates Academic Success Goals [ASG] and CGS Strategic Consultation Report Recommendations (CGS R). It serves as the College's Inclusive Excellence Action Plan (IEAP) and cross-references the Graduate College's Graduate Enrollment Management Strategy (GEMS).

Preamble:
Transformational Change for People and Planet

Graduate education is a public good. Today's graduate students are tomorrow's leaders in academia, government, industry, business, and the social impact sector. Graduate degrees carry benefits not only for the individuals pursuing them—higher life-time earnings; personal and professional mobility; sustained employment; and quality of life—but also for societies. Advanced degree holders lead their disciplines and professions and fuel the nation's economic competitiveness through research and innovation. They tackle grand challenges—from the climate emergency and loss of biodiversity to forced migration and global pandemics—nurture the health of individuals, communities, and environments, and foster cross-cultural understanding in our globally connected world.

Excellence in research, scholarship, and creative activity at the University of Vermont requires excellence in graduate education. UVM's land-grant mission, too, depends on the highest-quality graduate and post-baccalaureate professional education to support workforce and economic development in the State of Vermont. As a premier research university and Vermont's flagship land-grant institution, UVM, then, relies on outstanding graduate programs and students, as well as on superb postdoctoral scholars, who in turn help attract world class faculty. Excellence in graduate education and postdoctoral research underwrite and amplify UVM's impact, for people and planet.

This Strategic Plan, *Transforming Graduate Education for the Public Good*, incorporates broad input from our graduate education community and campus partners (see Appendix A). We are adopting this Plan at a time when graduate education is at a crossroads, at UVM, nationally, and globally. Profound changes in demographic, geopolitical, technological, financial, and workforce contexts, as well as intellectual shifts in the disciplines, challenge us to examine and re-imagine the very purpose and the desirable characteristics of advanced degrees to prepare tomorrow's scholar-leaders who will tackle grand challenges in interdisciplinary, multi-cultural teams. We seek to educate a workforce of graduate degree holders from various backgrounds and lived experiences who will help narrow equity gaps from technology to public policy and health care – in the State of Vermont and beyond. We will know that we are succeeding when our trainees thrive and move on to high-impact careers and lives of meaning and consequence.

As we center graduate education in UVM's strategic priorities, our inclusive strategic planning process has reaffirmed our considerable strengths: a collaborative rather than hyper-competitive culture in graduate education, anchored in the shared values of *Our Common Ground*; faculty commitment to mentoring; strong student outcomes in many programs; significant growth in extramural research funding; an emphasis on interdisciplinary research and education; a strong brand in a compelling location; senior leadership committed to elevating graduate education, paired with campus-wide recognition that graduate education at UVM warrants systematic attention and a desire to enhance support for graduate students, their programs, and faculty, with a mature Graduate College as a change catalyst.

Seizing Opportunities, Now

UVM is well positioned, then, to grow innovative graduate education as a public good. Our core strengths allow us to seize opportunities while overcoming weaknesses and mitigating threats. As we launch this plan, UVM's graduate enterprise remains small compared to our peers; participation in graduate education is uneven across the disciplines. The Graduate College has been a minimally staffed, primarily transactional unit. Standard services long taken for granted among our peers and rightly expected by students and programs have been offered at modest levels, if at all, including program marketing, enrollment management, data sharing, professional development, communications, and alumni relations. There has been very limited systematic philanthropic engagement to diversify and grow the Graduate College's inadequate resource base.

At this juncture, significant opportunities to grow the breadth, scale, visibility, and impact of excellent graduate and postdoctoral studies at UVM are within our grasp – provided we meet them with strategic focus and enterprise-wide commitment. As a late-maturing Graduate School among research universities, relatively unencumbered by systems and practices, UVM has the opportunity to absorb insights from decades of incremental reform efforts nationally to now innovate rapidly and align ourselves with the most advanced Graduate Schools in the country.

Our ambitious goals require that we embrace expansion and improvement of services, culture change to center graduate education and students and to differentiate UVM through innovative leadership in priority areas, and significant enrollment growth as mutually supportive and interdependent. To translate our vision and aspirations into reality, we must allocate appropriate resources to ensure efficient and effective centralized services for students, faculty, and programs and to incentivize and catalyze transformative change through the sustained collaboration of diverse stakeholders. [†]

The path to amplifying our students', faculty's, and programs' impact leads through disruptive change. It calls for new levels of engagement and collaboration across and beyond campus,

insightful, courageous and responsible leadership, and resources commensurate with our ambitious new charge. We can thus propel our leap from latecomer to a mature and soon transformational Graduate School that will be recognized as a leader in student-centric, equitable, outcomes-focused graduate education as a public good. With clear priorities and with confidence in the excellence of our faculty, students, and staff, as One UVM we will amplify our impact for the benefit of people and planet.


[†] CGS, *The Organization and Administration of Graduate Education: A Guide for University Leaders* (2019), 2, 8; L. Cassuto and R. Weisbuch, *The New PhD: How to Build a Better Graduate Education* (2021).

From Plan to Implementation

In what follows, we next state our values, vision, and mission. Three broad Strategic Pillars map onto the three areas of the University's strategic framework, Amplifying Our Impact, and its implementation via the Academic Success Goals. For each pillar, we articulate strategies and KPIs. Timelines for the delivery of new and enhanced support for students, faculty, and programs are contingent on the pace at which additional resources will be mobilized. Foundations of Excellence ground the pursuit of our strategic opportunities.

Completing the Graduate College's first Strategic Plan is a significant step but not our end goal. As we implement its recommendations, we will continuously evaluate and, as needed, refine our goals, strategies, tactics, and timelines. The Graduate College cannot accomplish these ambitious goals alone: they require the partnership of all academic units, our graduate faculty and students, and many other valued campus partners, as well as our alumni and external stakeholders. As we implement the strategies laid out in this plan, the Graduate College will continue to deepen such collaborations and communicate with our stakeholders about the status of priorities and initiatives.
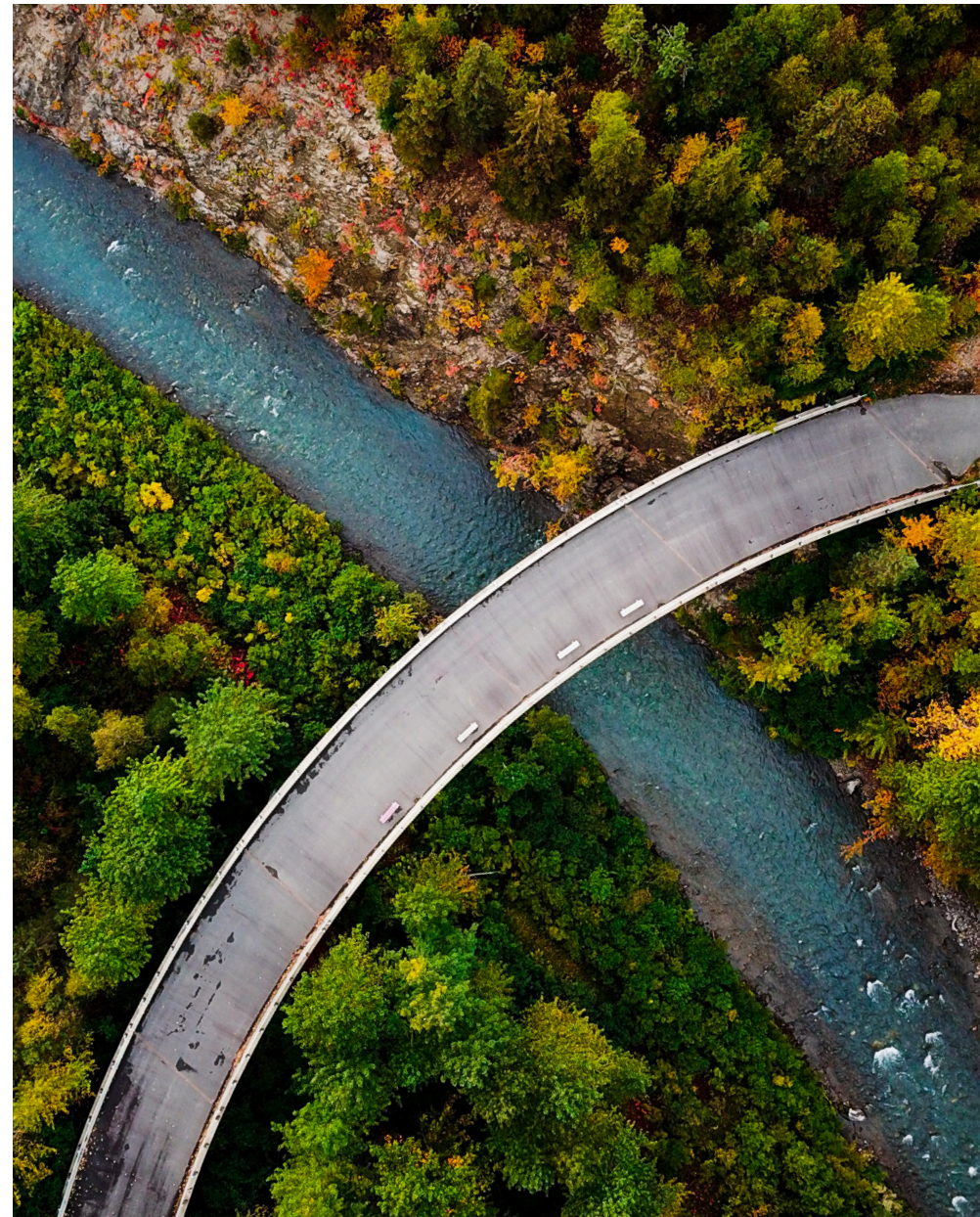
Values

The Graduate College stands on *Our Common Ground* – our shared values of respect, integrity, innovation, openness, justice, and responsibility. We invite our graduate education community to articulate these values through a student-centered lens.

Anchored in *Our Common Ground*, the Graduate College is committed to graduate education that is inclusive, student-centric, data-informed, broadly purposed, and outcomes-focused. As a graduate education community, we embrace collaboration and compassion, courageous and responsible leadership, and accountability as foundations of excellence.

Vision

UVM is *the* university for graduate students and postdoctoral scholars committed to a thriving future for people and planet.

The Graduate College is a vibrant hub and effective advocate for high-quality, student-centric graduate education and for a superb postdoctoral experience.

Through their discoveries, creativity, and action, our students, postdoctoral scholars, faculty, and alumni lead change for a more just, healthier, and regenerative world.

Mission

The Graduate College serves UVM's graduate education and postdoctoral communities as an intellectual and resource hub, champion, and advocate.

In partnership with academic units and faculty, we promote inclusive excellence, innovation, and growth in graduate and postdoctoral studies

We provide thought leadership and central expertise and collaborate to offer seamless services for graduate students, postdoctoral scholars, and their faculty.

We articulate and champion the value of graduate education for individuals, communities, and societies, as our trainees prepare for a comprehensive range of careers and lives of meaning and consequence.

By educating versatile scholar-leaders who advance knowledge, drive innovation, and generate creative solutions to complex problems, we enhance UVM's strengths and reputation in research and student success and advance its land-grant mission.

Strategic Pillars

I. **Fostering Excellence and Impact** We recruit, educate, mentor, and holistically support graduate students and postdoctoral scholars from various backgrounds, lived experiences, values, and worldviews and prepare them for long-term career success across all sectors.

II. **Transforming the Ph.D. to Serve Students and Society Better** As we grow the breadth and scale of Ph.D. education at UVM, and further enhance its quality, we transform the degree to serve both students and society better.

III. **Growing With Vermont** We advance UVM's land-grant mission by supporting workforce development and helping fuel economic growth in Vermont.

I.

Fostering Excellence and Impact

We recruit, educate, mentor, and holistically support graduate students and postdoctoral scholars and prepare them for long-term career success across all sectors.

To attract and retain high-achieving students as well as postdoctoral scholars from various backgrounds, lived experiences, values, and worldviews, we nurture an environment and experience that compare favorably to other leading public research universities.

As the Graduate College, academic units, and faculty continue to advance the highest standards of academic excellence, we reimagine graduate education as student-centered.

The Graduate College fosters the academic, professional, and personal success of our students. In partnership with graduate programs, academic units, and other valued campus partners, we support initiatives that incorporate best practices to ensure success across the student life cycle.

Valued partners: OIRA | DEM| VPAASS | VPFA | Faculty Senate | DOIE |DOSA| OVPR | PACE | EDIPP/OIE) | StratComm | GSS

ASG: 1.1A, 1.1.E, 1.3A, D, E; 1.6C; 2.1B; 2.1F

STRATEGIES

I.1 Recruit and Retain Students

[1.1A, 1.1.E] (IEAP 1,2,5) (Graduate College Leads: DAdm; SSC)

Recruitment and Admissions

To help grow applications and yield, the Graduate College will help coordinate and supplement recruitment efforts of units and programs (CGS R4, 5). To this effect, the Graduate College must be resourced to:

- represent UVM at recruitment fairs and conferences (AY25)
- participate in national consortia and name exchanges (AY25)
- collaborate with academic units to create and expand SROP (AY26)
- collaborate with programs to host campus visits for prospective and/or accepted students (by AY26)
- develop pathway partnerships between UVM graduate programs and partner MSIs and PWIs (AY25-)
- design and implement an international marketing and recruitment strategy to recruit more international students (with PACE, StratComm, EDIPP) (AY25-)

We promote holistic review practices: assist programs in developing and using equitable and transparent admissions practices to enroll cohorts of students poised for success (AY25/AY26).
(CGS R3)

Retention of Students

The Graduate College will:

- work with academic units for graduate programs to respond to data and best practices to identify and close student attainment gaps (TTD, completion rates, career outcomes; requires dashboards: AY25)
- support student organizations (ongoing) (SSC) (IEAP 2)
- collaborate to develop, implement, and assess centralized mentoring and programming for students who benefit from additional support (AssDSS) (IEAP 2)
- assess needs of international students and enhance support for their success, including collaborating on orientations and programming (with OIE, DOIE, DOSA) (IEAP 5) (AD; SSC)
- ensure programming and communications are culturally aware and inclusive (IEAP 5)
- embed non-discrimination and CARE reporting resources in Graduate College communications (website, newsletters) and urge programs to incorporate these in program handbooks (AY25, SSC; KPI: % of CCS respondents aware of bias reporting protocol) (IEAP 1)

I.2 UVM-GRAD: Cultivate a Distinctive Student Experience

◢ C4: A Culture of Collaboration, Compassion, and Care

We value one another and foster a sense of belonging for all. The Graduate College models a holistic conceptualization of graduate students and postdoctoral scholars and considers their wellness a foundation of academic success. We advocate for, and collaborate to provide, holistic support, including for academic, professional, and personal development, mentoring, and physical and mental health and wellbeing.

Throughout the strategic planning process, students emphasized the culture of collaboration prevailing in many programs, compared to the hyper-competitiveness often characteristic of Ph.D. education in particular. We invite faculty and programs to intentionally foster a graduate experience across campus that is characterized by collaboration, compassion, and care. We can thus further differentiate UVM-GRAD as a small-medium scale research powerhouse with rigorous academic expectations where graduate students thrive in a value-driven, supportive setting.

Our graduate education policies and program requirements, and our funding models and academic support practices, must prioritize the needs and aspirations of students over exclusive normative disciplinary legacies and the value of students to the university in supporting its teaching or research mission.

◢ Policy and Processes (GCDeans)

The Graduate College will:

- engage GEC to broaden representation of graduate students (completed AY24: from 1 to 9 seats) (CGS R16)
- monitor trends in graduate (and postdoctoral) education to reform practices at UVM (ongoing)
- collaborate with GEC to identify policies in need of revision to render them fully transparent, clear, student-centric, fair (AY24: Constitution; Graduate Student Parental Accommodation; Academic Appointments)
- review and update procedures to more efficiently and equitably implement academic policies (ongoing)
- collaborate with GEC, ADGEs, and programs to ensure students understand upon matriculation what is required for degree completion and share resources they need to succeed and thrive (DegreeWorks; urge up-to-date handbooks on program websites; Graduate College orientation resources) (CGS R13) (IEAP 1)
- navigate the newly unionized environment in a mission-focused manner
- enhance the visibility of the Ombudsperson for Graduate Students

◢ Student-Centric Program Design and Practices

(GCDeans)

The Graduate College will work with ADGEs and VPAASS to encourage and support faculty efforts to examine and adjust program design and practices and definitions of success through a student-centered lens. We foster faculty exchange across programs about incorporating students' evolving educational, scholarly, and professional aspirations in the design of curricula, research, advising, mentoring, and other support practices.

◢ Academic Support Practices: Mentoring, Professional Development, Mental Health

(GCLeadership)

We will prioritize three areas to embed evidence-based best practices across programs and enhance central resources: mentoring; professional and career development; mental health. As we embrace student wellness as a foundation of academic success, we will model and encourage innovation at the intersections of these three areas.

A Culture of Excellence in Mentoring

[for Ph.D. students, see also: II.1] [1.3A] (GCDeans)

Mentoring is critical to the success of every graduate student and postdoctoral scholar. The Graduate College fosters a culture of excellence in mentoring practices. We will build on the faculty's broad commitment to mentoring and work with GEC to embed evidence-based best practices across programs so that faculty are optimally positioned to mentor across differences.

Action Items:

- revisions of Graduate College Constitution and appointment to graduate faculty incorporate value of evidence-based mentoring (AY24, complete)
- new policies for Annual Academic Progress Review and IDPs for Ph.D. students (AY24, complete)
- develop best practice guidance, resources, and training for mentors and mentees (with VPFA), with new Provost Faculty Fellow and/or additional Graduate College personnel (AY25 or AY26)
- expect new Graduate Faculty to complete evidence-based mentoring training; advocate for participation of all Graduate Faculty (with GEC, VPFA, IEAP 3)
- promote a culture of multiple mentors to support students' academic and professional aspirations, including alumni, industry, public sector (see also for Ph.D. students: IDPs, II.2) (ongoing)
- create and sponsor new awards for excellence in mentoring of graduate students (AY25-)
- work with GEC, OEO, Ombudsperson, and other campus partners to ensure robust reporting mechanisms for ineffective and abusive mentoring situations
- work with units and programs to evaluate effectiveness of mentoring

KPIs: implementation of best practices; type / number of trainings offered; satisfaction of graduate students with mentoring as measured by a new graduate student experience survey (e.g., GradSERU).

Professional Development [1.3E] (CGS R8, 9) (DPCD)

We will improve professional development opportunities to prepare all graduate students for diverse career trajectories. [for Ph.D. students, see also: II.3]

As graduate students and scholar-practitioners will continue to seek impact, we support them in pursuing evolving possibilities for their diverse career trajectories. Through a new unit in the Graduate College, and in collaboration with faculty, programs, and campus partners, we will design and implement professional and career development resources and programming. We will help faculty and students improve their understanding of diverse career pathways for graduate degree holders. We promote aligning the objectives of academic programs and their measures of success with students' career aspirations.

Action Items:
- assess student needs and campus-wide professional development provision; launch career training platforms *Beyond the Prof/Beyond Graduate School* (AY24, completed)
- establish Professional and Career Development (PCD) unit in Graduate College and launch new PCD programming and credentialling for strategic competencies, and career coaching; support integration of PCD and experiential learning in curricula (AY25-, DPCD)

ASG KPIs: number of and participation in cross-disciplinary graduate courses, m/CGS, and professional development programming

Mental Health (CGS R10) (SSC)

The Graduate College prioritizes graduate student mental health and wellness. We will collaborate with DOSA, graduate programs, OEO, and other campus partners to develop and implement a comprehensive, evidence-based approach to supporting graduate student mental health and wellness, grounded in CGS and JED, *Supporting Graduate Student Mental Health and Well-Being: Evidence-Informed Recommendations for the Graduate Community* (2021). This approach will include attention to reducing stigma and promoting a campus culture of access around mental health; education of students, faculty, and staff; graduate programs articulating expectations clearly, reducing common academic stressors where possible, and supporting students through stressful transitions; addressing all forms of harrassment and discrimination. We will attend to the intersections with healthy mentoring relationships; professional development and career diversity; community; physical health; financial wellbeing; housing and food security.

KPIs: mental health gatekeeper training: graduate program directors and administrators and new graduate faculty participate (AY26–) | increased degree attainment rates; more students and alumni report satisfaction with the supportiveness of the graduate program environment.

Community

The Graduate College will help nurture an inclusive community of early career scholars and professionals anchored in our commitment to inclusive excellence and _Our Common Ground_ values. (CGS R10) (AssDSS/SSC, AssDMPDA)

Action Items:

- support and offer programming that promotes a sense of belonging among graduate students and postdoctoral scholars (with DOIE/ student groups) (IEAP 2) (SSC)

- collaborate with GSS and student organizations, including via orientations, resource fairs, Graduate and Professional Student Appreciation Week (SSC)

- having identified and refurbished a professional GSS office at the center of campus in AY24: identify and launch "Graduate Lounge" on campus (by AY26, with DOSA) (GCDeans)

- collaborate with Postdoctoral Association to foster community among postdoctoral scholars (AssDMPDA)

- celebrate the success of students and postdoctoral scholars, including through GPSAW, Student Awards, and via Graduate College and University communications (with StratComm; see also: Foundations of Excellence, 4)

I.3 Grow Research Graduate Students, Postdoctoral Scholars, and Related Funding Mechanisms

The numbers of Ph.D. students enrolled, of Ph.D. degrees awarded, and of postdoctoral positions are not at levels appropriate to UVM's status as a very high research activity institution. As we advance as an R1, we will work with academic units and OVPR to grow enrollment in Ph.D. programs with strong student outcomes, related funding mechanisms, and postdoctoral positions across the disciplines.

Action Items:

- assess Ph.D. programs' capacity for growth, set enrollment targets (with Provost, ongoing) [1.3A]

- create new, innovative interdisciplinary Ph.D. programs, principally homed in the Graduate College

- increase engagement of graduate students in research enterprise across disciplines [2.1B]

◢ **Funding Mechanisms**

Action Items:

- enhance resources supporting graduate student pursuit of external fellowships (with OVPR)

- work with programs to set expectations for competitive fellowship applications by Ph.D. students

- expand scaffolded teaching opportunities for Ph.D. students as GTAs

- support academic units in growing externally funded GRAs

- assess capacity for expanded pursuit of training grants and develop innovative new training grants (with OVPR)

ASG KPIs: number of Ph.D. students enrolled; number and disciplinary distribution of GRAs; number and distribution of nationally competitive Fellowships supporting >1 semester: submitted/funded; submissions of new and renewed training grants; graduate student participation in UVM Research Week; philanthropic support.

◢ Postdoctoral Scholars

[2.1F] (Dean/VPGPS; AssDMPDA)

Action Items:

- establish Office of Postdoctoral Affairs (OPA) to serve as a central source of expertise, guidance, support, and advocacy for Postdoctoral Scholars, their faculty, and administrators (AY25)

- support, enhance, and promote professional development to help prepare Postdoctoral Scholars for successful research careers in the academy, government, industry, and other sectors (AY25–27)

- grow the number and disciplinary breadth of Postdoctoral Scholars from various backgrounds, lived experiences, values, and worldviews (IEAP)

KPIs: number and disciplinary distribution of postdoctoral scholars; development of professional development programming (no/ongoing/complete)

I.4 Sustain Program Excellence and Continuous Quality Improvement

(CGS R12, 15)

Value-driven data informs our decision making and actions. To help graduate programs meet high standards of excellence, UVM must ensure a meaningful, sustained process for program review.

Action Items: The Graduate College will,

- participate in the Provost's Program Metrics Working Group and engage stakeholders to develop graduate program metrics (in progress, AY24–) (Dean/VPGPS)

- work with OIRA to develop interactive data dashboards to share program and student success data with internal and external audiences (in progress, AY24–) (GCLeadership)

- collaborate with GEC, VPAASS, Faculty Senate, and academic units to ensure robust and holistic graduate program assessment via APR (CGS R12, 15) (GCDeans, AY25–)

- collaborate with ADGEs and programs to ensure programs respond to data on retention, progression, and completion of graduate students across demographics (GCDeans, ongoing)

- oversee the continued development of contemporary, competitive graduate-level curricula; fully end co-location of undergraduate and graduate courses as soon as possible in the few programs with interim exceptions; support programs in updating existing curricula for greater breadth and flexibility in graduate training, with emphasis on interdisciplinary opportunities [1.3D; see also below, II.4] (ADAAI, ongoing).

II.

Transforming the Ph.D.
to Serve Students and Society Better

As we grow the breadth and scale of Ph.D. education at UVM, and further enhance its quality, we transform the degree to serve both students and society better.

We embrace the opportunity to absorb insights from decades of incremental reform efforts nationally to rapidly reimagine the purpose and restructure the characteristics of the Ph.D. degree so as to intentionally prepare versatile scholar-leaders for the mid-21st century and beyond.

The Ph.D. degree, as practiced in the U.S., does not serve students or society adequately. With times to degree typically too high, completion rates unacceptably low, and the cost to institutions very significant, the conventional Ph.D. fails to intentionally and robustly prepare students for the diverse and dynamic career trajectories we know they will navigate. Ph.D. education remains focused on preparing the future R1 professoriate, even though we have long known that the majority of Ph.D.s pursue careers in industry, government, the non-profit sector, and in a wide range of other roles in Higher Education. Decades of studies and reports, and hundreds of millions of dollars in agency and foundation-funded reform projects, notwithstanding, Ph.D. education in most universities has at best changed incrementally. Universities that will boldly reimagine and restructure the Ph.D. degree to educate and train future scholar-practitioners more broadly, as well as deeply, and graduate much higher proportions of doctoral cohorts in a timely manner, will have a defining advantage. UVM has the potential to be such a leader: as we prepare tomorrow's versatile researcher-leaders, we will thus powerfully re-articulate the value proposition for Ph.D. education. ‡

Valued partners: OVPR | Research Centers and Institutes | Alumni | VPFA | DOIE   ASG: 1.3A, C, D, E; 2.1B

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‡ Cassuto and Weisbuch, *The New PhD;* AAU, *Ph.D. Education Initiative*; CGS, *Ph.D. Career Pathways*; NASEM, *Graduate STEM Education for the 21st Century* (2021).

STRATEGIES

II.1 Champion the "New Ph.D." [1.3D] (GCDeans)

- re-imagine the purpose and characteristics of the Ph.D. degree; reverse-engineer training and academic support practices from desired outcomes and known career trajectories

- guiding principles: student-centric, data-informed, broadly purposed, outcomes-focused, career diverse

- honor students' career aspirations: render diverse careers visible, valued, and viable

- increase exchange among graduate faculty and programs to assess and refresh curricula, milestones, advising, and mentoring to incorporate students' diverse intellectual and professional aspirations and their passion to make a broad impact (includes: research ethics, science communication, Open Scholarship)

- definitions of scholarship expanded (e.g., action-oriented, engaged)

- robust interdisciplinary experiences accessible to all students

- reconsider comprehensive exams as a bridge not a high-stakes barrier to research phase

- more flexible models for dissertations support students' intellectual and career aspirations

- experiential learning and professional development integral to Ph.D. education

- a more broadly purposed Ph.D. speaks to students who wish to give back to their communities (IEAP 2)

- strength model: attrition and TTD reduced; completion rates significantly above disciplinary averages as a distinguishing feature of UVM Ph.D. education (aim for >80% by 2029) §

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§ Long TTD discourages some prospective students, especially those with limited financial means. (IEAP 2)

See also: fostering a culture of excellence in inclusive mentoring:

- Ph.D. students empowered to forge mentoring teams (replace "proprietary model" of mentoring)
- IDPs for all Ph.D. students, irrespective of funding source (AY24: GEC policy, complete)

◢ Funding Models [1.3A]

The Graduate College will collaborate with academic units to:

- optimize deployment of university, College, and departmental resources and sequencing of academic appointment types in support of timely progression and degree completion
- guarantee 4+ years of 12-month funding for all Ph.D. students who make good progress toward degree
- consider dis/incentives in relation to TTD and completion targets in program allocations
- grow internal fellowship support, students' external fellowship capture, and training grants
- work with campus partners to design and fund professionally enhancing "third assistantships" (GAs)

KPIs: # of Ph.D. programs engaged with one or more dimensions of reformed training experience in "New Ph.D."; student outcomes; new Ph.D. programs model "New Ph.D.";
see also KPIs for funding mechanisms (I.3)

II.2 Explore New Program Models [1.3C]

(GCDeans, ADAAI)

In collaboration with academic units, GEC, and OVPR, we will explore the potential for:

- Individual Interdisciplinary Ph.D. (with potential Planetary Health track)
- Industry Ph.D.
- innovative cross-collegiate, interdisciplinary Ph.D. programs that integrate Humanities and Social Sciences

   KPIs: new programs established; Graduate Faculty engagement broadened; enrollment

II.3 Transform Professional Development

[1.3E] (DPCD) [see also I.2, for strategies pertaining to all graduate students]

The Graduate College will collaborate with academic units, programs, and campus partners to support all Ph.D. students (and postdoctoral scholars) in achieving their academic and professional goals.

Action Items:

Establish professional and career development hub in Graduate College (AY25) to create and promote accessible, integrated professional and career development programming critical to Ph.D. students' success in their programs and their transition to impactful postdoctoral careers across sectors.

Improve understanding among graduate students and faculty of diverse career pathways for Ph.D. students.

In AY25-27:

- support IDP process for Ph.D. students and faculty
- create strategic competencies program and credentialling (e.g., communication, leadership, data and digital literacy, innovation and entrepreneurship) to prepare versatile scholar-leaders with intellectual mobility, enhance innovation in UVM graduate education, and manifest value proposition for Ph.D. education
- offer 1:1 career coaching for Ph.D. students
- create opportunities for Ph.D. students to engage with Open Scholarship
- expand internship opportunities
- ensure Graduate Writing Center is providing needed services
- collaborate with alumni relations

IEAP (1)

Enhance educational and professional development opportunities for all graduate students to contribute to environments of inclusive excellence. This will support students in learning how to contribute to professional environments that involve individuals from a wide range of backgrounds, lived experiences, values, and worldviews.

KPIs for II.3: participation of Ph.D. students in programming; alumni engagement; student outcomes

## II.4 Incubate Inter- and Transdisciplinary Innovation [1.3C] (GCDeans)

Scholarship will be increasingly collaborative and inter- and trans-disciplinary. We will build on UVM's strengths in problem- and problem-in-practice-centered, inter- and transdisciplinary research for graduate students, postdoctoral scholars, and faculty, aligned with external funding trends, to provide the highest quality education and bolster UVM's reputation in areas of our distinctive research strengths to address grand challenges. Excellence in interdisciplinary graduate education and research training attracts high-caliber students, cultivates creative faculty collaborations, and is critical to UVM's distinction as a premier research university.

We will expand the suite of intercollegiate interdisciplinary Ph.D. programs in the Graduate College, including by exploring an Individualized Interdisciplinary Ph.D. Program, and foster

interdisciplinary training spaces for doctoral students supported by a broader range of graduate faculty.

We will seek to resource an Incubator with seed funding to incentivize innovation in creating interdisciplinary programming and programs (with Deans, research institutes, other campus leaders). Invite proposals for:

- new interdisciplinary Ph.D. programs, including those integrating STEM with other domains
- expansion of interdisciplinary learning and research opportunities for Ph.D. students in areas of strategic priority for UVM, including Planetary Health
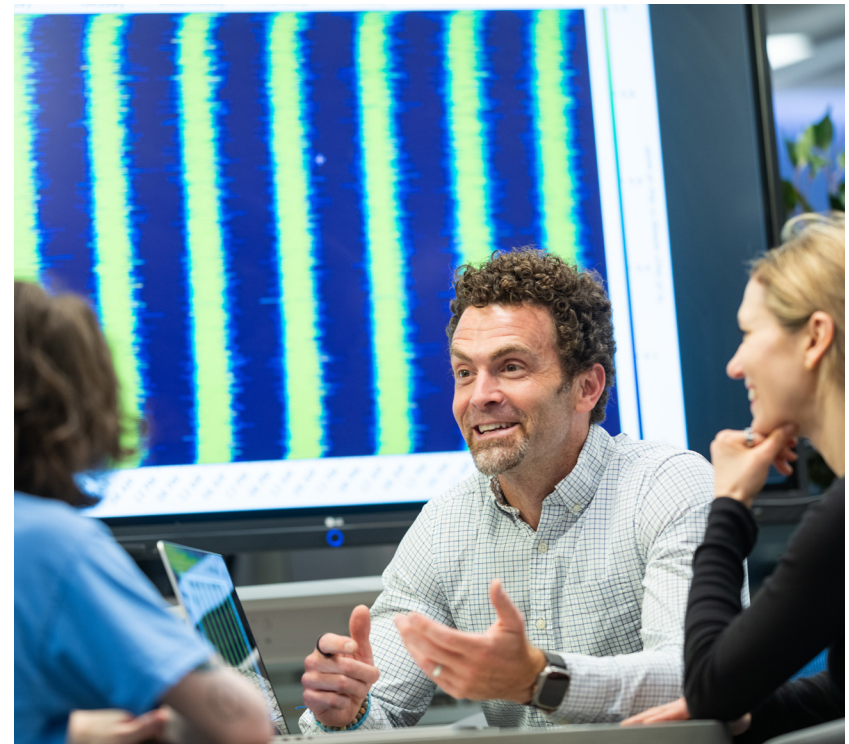
III.
Growing With Vermont

We advance UVM's land-grant mission by supporting workforce development and helping fuel economic growth in the State of Vermont.

As we continuously refresh our educational offerings for graduate learners, we create flexible pathways into graduate education and generate revenue to reinvest in the broader graduate endeavor while also seeking to bend the cost-curve for graduate education. We collaborate to educate a workforce of graduate degree holders who will help narrow equity gaps across domains and sectors. (IEAP 2)

UVM's first Graduate Enrollment Management (GEM) Strategy for all program types and modalities will consider internal and external environmental scans, nimble and robust program development processes, structured marketing efforts, a strategy to optimize for NTR, and integral attention to student retention and success as well as to faculty and other resource needs.

The Graduate College will optimize its partnerships with academic units and PACE to identify, develop, and deliver new professional master's, certificate and micro-certificate, and professional doctoral programs, mostly online and low-residency. To reverse our unfavorable online market position, we will pursue competitive niche opportunities that are responsive to post-bacc learner aspirations and workforce needs in areas of our academic strengths. We will develop opportunities to partner with the private sector as well as with communities. Via a continuously refreshed program portfolio, we aim to reverse recent enrollment decline in a very competitive external environment, supported by academic units' accountability to the Provost for targeted enrollment growth and student success.

Valued partners: PACE | VPAASS | Faculty Senate | OVPR | DEM | StratComm | Alumni Relations | Career Center | CFO
ASG: 1.3B; 1.6D; 3.3F | CGS R14

STRATEGIES

III.1. Graduate Enrollment Management

(GCDeans; DAdm) (see also GEMS | 1.3B; 1.6D; 3.3F)

We must urgently resource the Graduate College GEM Strategy, including:

- marketing
- additional Graduate Recruitment Managers and robust recruitment budgets
- more responsive lead-to-enrollment lifecycle
- scholarshipping model to optimize NTR for self-pay master's programs (with DEM)
- online student support infrastructure (with PACE)

The Graduate College's data-driven GEM Strategy integrates academic affairs (including expedited program review, program development), enrollment management, and holistic student support in an inclusive excellence framework. It will be adaptive to demographic shifts, technological developments, cost, and student debt.

In collaboration with academic units, PACE, and OVPR, we will grow enrollment across graduate programs that meet learner aspirations and workforce needs in areas of campus strengths and via programs with unique value propositions: (IEAP 2)*

- Master's: existing programs, including alternative or additional online modalities, and new programs
- AMPs
- Pathway Partnerships (external undergraduate to UVM graduate program pipelines): establish policy (2024, in progress); develop new pathway partnerships (AY25-)
- stackable mCGS and CGS responsive to workforce needs: bespoke credentials for corporate partners to broadly relevant credentials; stackable m/CGSs build toward "Mini-Master's"
- corporate partner relationships enhance upskilling of VT workforce
- up/re-skilling credentials, including for alumni, developed with PACE, Career Center, Alumni Relations
- non-credit credentials for just-in-time upskilling as on-ramps to for-credit post-bacc credentials
- Professional Doctorates provide practitioners with advanced research preparation

* We continue to advocate for loan forgiveness programs for Master's students staying to work in VT.

Foundations of Excellence

1. Our Common Ground

We lean into Our Common Ground values – respect, integrity, innovation, openness, justice, responsibility. We are committed to sustaining a climate where all are supported and respected, where innovation is valued and promoted, and where integrity and responsibility guide both professional and personal actions.

Action Items

(in addition to those embedded in I, II, III, above) (GCLeadership)

- continue diagnosis of policies and processes to inform inclusive excellence planning
- create the role of Assistant Dean for Student Success in the Graduate College (by FY27)
- Faculty Fellow and/or GA for Inclusive Excellence help implement aspects of IEAP
- encourage programs to attend to inclusion in curricula and pedagogy (with CTL) (IEAP 1)
- advance Universal Design: physical, digital, cognitive (with ETS, StratComm, SAS, CDCI) (IEAP 4) (SSC)
- work with campus partners to enhance graduate students' awareness and skills to foster environments of inclusive excellence (IEAP 1)

2. Grow and Diversify Our Resource Base

We must urgently grow and diversify the Graduate College's financial resource base, via base budget, grants, philanthropy, and industry partnerships. Only a Graduate College and Dean/VPGPS with a strengthened resource base will be empowered to incentivize and lead sustained collaboration of diverse stakeholders to accelerate transformative change across the strategic pillars and deliver services our students, faculty, and programs need. (CGS Report)

Action Items   (Dean/VPGPS)

Advocate for significantly enhanced base budget; design and implement philanthropic strategy with UVM Foundation; pursue agency and foundation grants. Re-examine funding model for the Graduate College, including graduate tuition revenue share to support centralized services such as recruitment, professional development, professional advising (with OTP, CFO, COD). Explore the creation of a Board of Advisors to support the Dean's strategic and philanthropic work.

3. Engage Our Constituents—Tell Our Story (CGS R17) (GCLeadership)

The Graduate College's effectiveness as hub and advocate, and its charge to raise the profile of graduate education at UVM, require a **comprehensive communications strategy.** The Graduate College will continue to advocate for a Communications Lead to help articulate an institutional perspective on, and the value proposition for, graduate education; support enrollment growth; communicate Graduate College initiatives to internal stakeholders and enhance participation in programming; inform constituent audiences, especially program directors and faculty, about important trends and initiatives in graduate education; promote the talent, research, and impact of our students, postdoctoral scholars, and faculty and the value added the Graduate College offers; support enhanced alumni engagement and connectivity.

4. Promote Operational Excellence and Workplace Quality

The Graduate College aims for operational excellence in all we do. We nurture the Graduate College as an excellent workplace. We advocate and collaborate to ensure the university builds the infrastructure and staffing (whether housed in the Graduate College and/or other units) to effectively and efficiently support key functions of graduate administration (including marketing, admissions, data collection and analysis, academic program development, graduate professional and career development).

Action Items (GCLeadership)

We will enhance infrastructure that supports the graduate education community:

- develop electronic workflows to replace manual processes where feasible (InfoReady: 2024)

- introduce contemporary systems (Slate, application launched summer 2024; DegreeWorks, by fall 2025)

- responsibly take advantage of the affordances of AI

- use evidence-based best practices to inform decision making and actions; Graduate College, with OIRA, shares timely, relevant data with stakeholders (interactive data dashboards, in progress, AY25)

- revise policies: student-centered, efficient, aligned with Our Common Ground values

- embrace continuous process improvement

- launch a new Graduate College website with audience-focused structure and content (summer 2024)

We will increase interaction between **staff** in the Graduate College and staff supporting graduate programs to foster information flow and feedback, training for procedures associated with graduate education, and collaboration.

We will support graduate **program directors** and acknowledge outstanding leaders for excellent work.

We will celebrate graduate **programs** exhibiting leadership through adoption of best practices.

We strive to nurture the **Graduate College** as an excellent workplace: appropriate hybrid work policies; professional space and support systems; expanded opportunities for staff to improve their knowledge of advances, trends, and good practices in graduate education; support professional development of staff (IEAP 3, with HR/DOIE). A cohesive, highly motivated, accountable team operates with appropriate cross-training and mutual support and enabled by appropriate technology to ensure seamless service. (BOM)

Appendices

A. Strategic Planning Process

In AY24, as the Graduate College laid foundations for its relaunch (filling numerous staff vacancies, collaborating with academic units and GEC on systems and process improvements, enacting constitutional and policy revisions), UVM undertook its first strategic planning process for the Graduate College and UVM's graduate enterprise. Dean Hoock set out guiding principles for the process and the resulting plan at this inflection point for graduate education at UVM and nationally:

- center graduate education and research in the strategic priorities of Amplifying Our Impact and integrate Academic Success Goals: a cohesive Strategic Plan leads with the student experience and student outcomes and centrally considers the intersections with UVM's research and land-grant missions

- collaborate as One UVM to expand the breadth, scale, visibility, and impact of graduate education: planning for the Graduate College and UVM's collaborative graduate endeavor

- set goals that reflect and shape the national conversation about improving graduate education: student-centric and supporting the whole graduate student; data-informed; broadly purposed, outcomes-focused, career diverse

- foster a distinctive culture of graduate education and a distinctive graduate experience at UVM

- develop capacity for national leadership in graduate education

- planning and plan inform and inspire stakeholders, create a sense of commitment from faculty, students, staff, and other campus partners, and lay the foundation for organizational teaming and workstreams

The Plan should –

- be informed by internal data and analysis of external environments

- articulate our values, vision, and mission

- set the high-level direction for the Graduate College and its partners, with strategic opportunities, objectives, strategies, and accountability measures

- help align the functions and capacities of the Graduate College with the needs of graduate students, postdoctoral scholars, faculty, staff, and alums to position the College as an effective hub and advocate

- make a clear case for resource support

The Strategic Plan serves as the unit's Inclusive Excellence Action Plan: a single plan will advance student-centric graduate education from data-informed and outcomes-focused vantage points.

A strong plan for the growth of the Graduate College and graduate enterprise, with a strong GEM Strategy anchored in the Strategic Plan, will drive enrollment growth and revenue generation.

Appendix A: Strategic Planning Process *continued*

The Graduate College consulted widely from January to June 2024: this plan incorporates broad input and feedback from the graduate education community and campus partners. Drawing on insights from focus groups convened in advance of the 2023 Dean's search, academic unit Strategic Plans and IEAPs, internal graduate education data, and a collaborative SWOT analysis with academic deans, Dean Hoock formulated preliminary strategic opportunities. These were refined iteratively in response to feedback from Deans and their leadership teams, graduate program directors, graduate student leaders, Graduate Executive Committee, the Graduate Faculty, the Graduate College Team, and numerous other campus partners. In March, UVM hosted a Strategic Consultation visit by the Council of Graduate Schools, involving graduate students, faculty, staff, campus partners, and university leadership (Report May 2024, see Appendix B). A "virtual inbox" on the Graduate College website invited community input. Preliminary vision and mission statements as well as strategic pillars were reviewed by COD, Associate Deans, GEC, and PILT and shared with the Graduate Faculty. PILT and ALC considered a draft Strategic Plan in summer 2024. The draft was shared with GEC and Program Directors in early fall and was adopted, with final revisions, in September 2024. The Graduate College is deeply grateful to all who contributed to this collaborative and inclusive process.

B. Abbreviations

ADAAI	Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Innovation (GC)
ADGE	Associate Dean(s) for Graduate Education (in academic Colleges/Schools)
ADSS	Associate Dean for Student Success (GC)
ALC	Academic Leadership Council
AMP	Accelerated Master's Pathway
ASG	Academic Success Goal(s)
AssDSS	Assistant Dean for Student Success (GC, by FY27)
AssDMPDA	Assistant Dean and Manager of Postdoctoral Affairs
BOM	Business Operations Manager
CCS	Campus Climate Survey
CDCI	Center on Disability and Community Inclusion
CFO	Chief Financial Officer
CGS	Council of Graduate Schools
	Certificate of Graduate Study
COD	Council of Deans
DAdm	Director of Admissions and Enrollment Management, GC
DOIE	Division of Inclusive Excellence
DEM	Division of Enrollment Management
DOSA	Division of Student Affairs
DPCD	Director of Professional and Career Development (GC, recruiting in FY25)
EAB	Education Advisory Board
EDIPP	Executive Director for International Partnerships and Programs
GA	Graduate Assistant
GC	Graduate College
GEC	Graduate Executive Committee
GEMS	Graduate Enrollment Management Strategy
GPSAW	Graduate and Professional Student Appreciation Week
GRA	Graduate Research Assistant
GSS	Graduate Student Senate
GTA	Graduate Teaching Assistant
IEAP	Inclusive Excellence Action Plan
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
mCGS	micro-Certificate of Graduate Study
OIE	Office of International Education
OIRA	Office of Institutional Research and Assessment
OTP	Office of the Provost
OVPR	Office of the Vice President for Research
PACE	Professional and Continued Education
PILT	Provost's Integrated Leadership Team
SSC	Student Success Coordinator, GC
StratComm	Strategic Communications
VPAASS	Vice Provost for Academic Success and Student Success
VPFA	Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs
VPGPS	Vice Provost for Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies