

## **The UF Graduate Student Experience: A Living Document**

The purpose of this document is to enumerate graduate student experiences with proposed actions that can be taken at all levels of the University of Florida administration to improve the graduate student experience. As mentioned by President Fuchs, we agree that the time is now, while transitioning from the former Dean to the new Dean of the Graduate School, to have a full independent review of the Graduate Student Program. The items in this document come from UF faculty, UF graduate student Councils, UF graduate advising staff, and the GAU guiding areas that are identified as important. This document should be used by Faculty Senate councils and committees when considering their agenda as well as leadership at all levels of the UF administration when considering proposals and decisions that affect the UF graduate student experience. Progress on the action items included in this document will be reported back to the Faculty Senate.

### **Representation**

1. It has been recommended that the development of a Graduate Student Consulting Committee within the graduate school, in conjunction with the colleges will provide representation. A suggested schedule of such a committee will be to meet monthly to discuss important issues that impact graduate students, the university, and the graduate school. The Dean of the Graduate School will participate directly or through representation and will serve as the primary liaison for this body.
  - a. The committee will be chaired by a representative Faculty named by the Faculty Senate Chair.
  - b. The committee will have as the 2 liaisons, the President of the Graduate Student Council (GSC) and the President of Graduate Assistants United (GAU).
  - c. Each college shall have one faculty representative that is named by the College Council.
  - d. This committee shall include efforts to build community. For example, many students of color feel isolation at this university. A charge of this committee will be to build diverse\* student communities within and across disciplines. This effort could be made in consultation with CDO, or the various Diversity Liaisons from each Colleges.

### **Communications, Mentoring and the Work Environment**

2. Review and Update, as applicable, the code of conduct that shall be contained in the faculty and in the Student handbook. This material will provide both faculty and graduate students with expectations for workplace conduct and behavior.
3. Develop a formal process with the Ombudsman office to provide processes/flow charts outlining how graduate students can report experiences of inappropriate behavior including, but not limited to, bias, discrimination, and/or harassment, and/or toxic work environments.
4. Implement programs in support of graduate students in distress by, and in support of faculty to improve:
  - a. Providing financial support as a set aside from the Graduate School/University to fund students of abuse as they transition to other advisors (as exemplified by the MIT Program).
  - b. Provide updated mental health counselors specifically focused on graduate students with stress related to their relationship with their faculty advisor.
5. Create a centrally administered mentor/teamwork training program for all graduate students and faculty to improve interpersonal skills and relationships of campus partners.
6. Review advisee to student ratios. If a faculty member is carrying a high dissertation advising load, there should be course release at a certain point (e.g., ~8 active dissertations) so that the faculty can provide effective mentorship to students.

## Recruitment, Retention, and Training for Career Opportunities

7. Consider creating a centralized resource with most info and numbers with what UF has to offer to the Graduate Student Experience, such that Colleges can use and adapt such info for their own recruitment campaign. Continue to be creative as we are competing against all top institutions for the same graduate students. Provide resources to facilitate such recruitment at National and International meetings. Provide adapted training for all aspects of the next career opportunities.

## Inclusion and Diversity

8. Provide a common curriculum syllabus statement to assure an equity and diversity curricula strand/readings are contained within each syllabus to assure all graduate students are culturally represented and welcomed and encouraged to share differing perspectives, and antiracism is promoted.
9. Enhance recruitment efforts to acquire faculty and graduate students from marginalized groups, parents, etc.
10. Provide opportunities for students to engage in scholarship with faculty and research projects addressing diversity (e.g., brown bag lunches, meet/greet, guest lectures/seminars, mentorship, co-authoring/co-presenting).

## Living, Health, and Wellness

11. Develop and improve graduate student affordable housing, which disproportionately impacts international students and graduate students with families through:
  - a. Developing public-private partnerships to provide affordable and Safe housing communities near or on campus. Making these communities safe would be by encouraging primarily graduate students to live there and having UF staff offer programs at these apartments to build community.
  - b. Providing housing subsidies for graduate students for home purchases and rental properties.
12. Promote programs of paid parental/family leave for graduate students commensurate with other aspirational peer institutions.

Top 5 Public Universities providing Paid Parental Leave for Parenting Graduate Assistants 2021

U.S. News & World Ranking	University	Paid Parental Leave Policy for Graduate Assistants
#1	UCLA	6 weeks paid leave
#2	University of California Berkeley	6 weeks paid leave
#3	University of Michigan – Ann Arbor	8 weeks paid leave
#4	University of Virginia	8 weeks paid leave
#5	University of North Carolina Chapel Hill	6 weeks paid leave

13. Develop eyeglass and additional dental care programs for graduate students.
14. Develop a program of academic and work accommodations for graduate research assistants (RA's), with provisions for an extended time as graduate research activities do not extend accommodations for mental health issues (as undergraduates have with DRC).
15. Review the based salary for RAs and GAs.

## Work Support

16. Produce a centralized system of notices within the University on new research assistantships as new grants are received, so all graduate students have equal access to apply.
17. Develop UF-funded small grants for research projects - not only does this give students experience applying for grants, but some students need a small amount of money to conduct independent research that is in addition to their dissertation.

18. Investigate alternatives to mitigate student fees. Currently, student fees of \$81.96/credit hour are collected. UF will attract graduate students with stipend offers, but these are not the amount available to graduate students for attending UF after subtracting the mandatory student fees of \$1229 for a 15-credit hour semester.

### **Reporting**

19. Recommendation that at least once a year the President meets with a Town Hall with all Graduate Students.
20. Recommendation that at least once a year the Dean of the Graduate Student Affairs meeting with the President.
21. Recommendation that at least once a year, the Dean of the Graduate Student Affairs, and the representative of the Graduate Student Consulting Committee meet with the BOT to provide a brief report of activities and future.
22. This document will be updated annually and presented to the University Faculty Senate in May. The Graduate Student Consulting Committee will each April present actions and accomplishments to the Faculty Senate Scholarship and Research Council with information to be included in the updated document.

This document was produced with the cooperation of the Scholarship and Research Council, the UF Graduate Student Council, the Herbert Wertheim College of Engineering Graduate Student Council, Dr. Diana Beaulieu, Dr. Stephanie Bogart, Dr. Cliff Haynes, Dr. Aida Hozic, Dr. Sarah Lynne, and constant support from Dr. Sylvain Doré, Chair of the Faculty Senate, who originally commissioned this document.

*\* In this document, diverse individuals refer to those who are minoritized as a result of their race, ethnicity, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, religion, and national origin.*