

JCAP Subcommittee on Task Force Review
of the
Graduate Education Task Force Report

December 12, 2010

General Comments

The charge of the Graduate Education Task Force overlaps with that of the Global Education and of the Interdisciplinary Solutions Task Forces. This report includes a number of good suggestions.

Recommendations In Progress

Enhance research and innovation

Conduct and expand the annual campus-wide research day. Link this to other programs if possible, such as Road to the State House. Put together a brochure or webpage of all opportunities for presenting research, either as a poster or in a symposium, during the year. It is important to have a schedule with dates for the entire year so that graduate students have ample time to prepare their presentations.

Continue to provide and increase grant support for graduate students. Identifying external funding sources to support graduate student stipends will be important to recruiting and enrolling the best students. In addition, exploring opportunities for funding to enhance diversity in our graduate student population is also critical. Securing additional funds to be used for supplies, travel, and summer salary would also be beneficial, although the current Graduate Enhancement Fund provides some support for these purposes.

Work to establish new programs that serve a documented need in society, that have the potential to generate revenue for URI, and that capitalize on areas of URI expertise. There are opportunities to develop attractive and relevant professional Master's programs in strategically defined areas and/or certificate programs within departments or involving multiple departments.

Strengthen the financial base of the Graduate School

The subcommittee underscored the need to examine the cost effectiveness of existing graduate programs in light of the resources currently invested in them. Evaluation of the investment must include quality, costs, completion rates and timelines. Furthermore, the balance between the role of students as teachers and as learners should be carefully examined. Revenues should be considered for graduate students who teach both as teaching assistants and on a per-course basis. Some departments rely heavily on their graduate programs for entry-level, per-course instruction. Finally, it may be appropriate to consider TA's as a portion of department/college instructional FTE as well as credit hour producers.

Complete an inventory of URI's current strengths in graduate education. Develop a process for gap analysis of our strengths against national needs.

Recommendations in Need of Faculty Involvement

Expand international/global programs

Build on existing opportunities for expanding international/global programs. URI faculty members who have relationships with faculty throughout the world have an opportunity to maximize the time and money invested in international travel by promoting their graduate programs at international conferences and institutions. The relationships that grow from this investment could potentially take on momentum of their own. Students who finish programs at URI could become a part of the process to sustain such programs and recruit other international students. Continue the academic ambassador exchange of visiting international scholars who give talks to the campus community.

Increase the diversity of students and faculty

Seek federal grant funding for student fellowships and minorities and make them available campus-wide. There is a need to identify and write grants to recruit underrepresented populations, and advertise and promote programs to diverse communities.

Increase the Graduate School's support of interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, transdisciplinary, and experiential programs and research

New interdisciplinary program initiatives are emerging, such as Neuroscience, and 'Green/Sustainable' and 'Blue' MBA programs. Incentives need to be developed to motivate departments to share in interdisciplinary initiatives. The recruitment of highly capable students may be sufficient incentive. Cross-listed courses can be a problem in terms of credit assigned to departments and faculty. Credit should follow the faculty teaching the courses rather than the departments listing the courses. However, there is potential for increasing our population of students in such courses. Interdisciplinary approaches would not only benefit teaching but could also improve enrollment for graduate courses. Students with different backgrounds and skill sets learn from each other. Interdisciplinary approaches may lead to more interactions with diverse faculty and graduate students. As well, we need to seek external funding for new interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, and transdisciplinary programs.

Recommendations In Need of Resources

Explore the creation of professional programs that would be supported primarily by tuition dollars. Develop components of programs that are practical to offer in the summer.