

Higher Learning Commission
Self-Study Questionnaire/Report for Non-Instructional Units

Non-Instructional Unit: [The School of Graduate Studies](#)

Individual(s) Completing the Questionnaire/Report: [John Stone](#)

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. Describe in a paragraph or two what your unit does (i.e., the services it provides).

[The unit supports the campus in its commitment, “To offer graduate education built clearly upon its undergraduate emphases and strengths with particular emphasis in the fields of business, education, communication, and human services.”](#)

[Specifically, the School oversees and provides administrative support for all aspects related to recruiting, receiving and processing applications, admitting students, monitoring progress toward degree, and graduation. The School of Graduate Studies also oversees the revision of graduate policy and revisions to graduate curriculum \(via Graduate Council\), oversees exceptions to graduate policy, and is responsible for the administration of programs designed to support students, including graduate assistantships, non-resident fee remissions, and graduate fellowships.](#)

2. Who is/are the constituency/ies you serve, and approximately how many of each constituency do you serve annually? (e.g., students, academic departments, classified staff, etc.)

- [prospective students \(2,300\)](#)
- [current students \(1,000\)](#)
- [graduate faculty \(Graduate Council\) \(43\)](#)
- [graduate program coordinator \(15\)](#)
- [academic deans \(4\)](#)

3. Overview and evaluate the adequacy of the human, physical, and fiscal resources your department deploys to serve students and meet other programmatic needs by answering the questions below:

Human Resources

Evaluate the general adequacy of the human resources (i.e., the # of employees (including student help) and their skills) relative to the unit’s ability to serve the constituencies identified above and achieve other programmatic goals. Do this by assigning a number between “1” (completely inadequate) to “9” (completely satisfies needs).

8 1-9

In a paragraph or two, discuss why you’ve assigned the score you have. Include, in particular, a discussion of unique strengths as well as important needs not being met or opportunities not being explored because of limitations.

[We’ve had the good fortune, despite the loss of two GPR-funded positions over the past ten years, of having the Program Revenue support from the dean’s office that has allowed us to hire LTE help and a graduate assistant.](#)

Physical Resources

Evaluate the general adequacy of the physical resources (e.g., office and storage space, supporting technology, other equipment) allocated to the unit relative to the unit’s ability to serve the constituencies

identified above and achieve other programmatic goals. Do this by assigning a number between "1" (completely inadequate) to "9" (completely satisfies needs).

9 1-9

In a paragraph or two, discuss why you've assigned the score you have. Include, in particular, a discussion of unique strengths as well as important needs not being met or opportunities not being explored because of limitations.

The opportunity to secure additional financial support from program revenue efforts in the unit's credit outreach area has helped, in particular, with the purchase of current technology.

Fiscal Resources

While recognizing that every unit would benefit from a larger budget, evaluate the general adequacy of fiscal resources allocated to the unit to serve its constituencies and achieve other programmatic goals by assigning a number between "1" (completely inadequate) to "9" (completely satisfies needs).

9 1-9

In a paragraph or two, discuss why you've assigned the score you have. Include, in particular, a discussion of unique strengths as well as important needs not being met or opportunities not being explored because of limitations.

Two words. Help with the general purpose revenue budget from "program revenue" generated by credit outreach initiatives allows us hire additional staff, fund a graduate assistantship, fund additional student help, order new technology, and fund fundamental marketing initiatives.

4. In a paragraph or two, overview significant changes made in your unit since 1996 (i.e., the last North Central Association Accreditation Visit). (e.g., re-organized, key staff changes, change in purposes, etc.) Since the last visit, the School of Graduate Studies has:
1. developed and published a Graduate Council-approved mission statement;
 2. developed and secured approval of a list of five graduate global learning outcomes (through Graduate Council), and (piloted and) launched an online student perception survey relevant to these outcomes;
 3. developed and began hosting the Graduate Orientation Event in August of each year to support newly enrolled graduate students;
 4. drafted and secured a course currency policy that eliminates graduate-portions of dual-level courses (300/500, 400/600 level) reducing the number dual-listed courses on the curricular register by approximately one-third;
 5. developed, in consultation with Graduate Council, a list of criteria (to be included in all course proposals and course syllabi for 300/500 and 400/600 level courses) that articulates the unique expectations of graduate students in these courses;
 6. launched a graduate student grant program that allows graduate students to secure funding to support their basic and applied research initiatives;
 7. provided a \$250 professional development fund to any faculty who functions as a thesis advisor;
 8. supported the launching of the Graduate Student Organization;
 9. launched the School of Graduate Studies web-page, complete with online application;
 10. witnessed the creation of an MS in Computer Science, the MPA in Accounting, the online MBA program, the addition of an Educational Specialist degree in School Psychology, and the demise of the MSE in Music Education;
 11. lost approximately ten (10) general purpose revenue graduate assistantships (including four minority bonus assistantships) to administrative give-backs;
 12. secured, approximately, \$200K (to \$250k total) additional to award to non-resident students through the non-resident graduate scholarship fund (fee remission program);
 13. witnessed the increase in overall graduate enrollment from approximately 475 FTE in 1997 to over 700 FTE in fall 2003; and

14. changed graduate dean three times.

In another paragraph or two, describe why these changes occurred.

The first eight items were done, largely, in response to concerns and recommendations made by the North Central visiting team during its 1996 visit. Items #9 and #10 are a function of time, as well as cultural and educational trends. Item #11 was the result of the changing financial fortunes of the University and the need to increase the pool of instructional FTE (by reducing the number of graduate assistantships). Number 12 was the by-product of relentless negotiating and begging. Item #13 came with the creation of the online MBA and revision of the MPA in the College of Business and Economics (and the pressure of the Chancellor establishing increased enrollment goals for the University). And, last but not least, #14, was fate.

MISSION & PLANNING

5. In a paragraph or two, describing any significant projects/initiatives that your unit is planning or currently has underway, but has not yet completed.

The School of Graduate Studies is currently working to secure permanent funding to add four graduate fellowships and as many 20 half-time graduate assistantships each academic year. The office is currently in the initial stages of moving to a paperless imaging system that will replace hard-copy transcripts (etc.) with digital documentation.

6. Below are five “core values” the University identifies as central to its purposes and operation. Please evaluate the importance of each core value in terms of how each aligns with the purposes of your unit (i.e., take a hypothetical 100 points and distribute them among the five values, with those values that align more closely to the purposes of your unit receiving more points).

Core Value	Importance (100 points)
Commitment to the pursuit of knowledge and understanding	40
Development of the individual	45
Personal and professional integrity	5
Commitment to serve	5
Commitment to develop a sense of community, respect for diversity, and global perspectives	5
Total=	100 points

7. Each and every academic and non-academic unit engages in planning for the future. Review the list of variables below and evaluate the extent to which each of the following influences decision-making behind the planning process for your unit (i.e., take a hypothetical 100 points and distribute them among the planning variables listed below, with those variables playing the larger role in your unit’s planning efforts receiving more points)

Planning Variables	Importance (100 points)
The mission of the university or the unit	0
Academic assessment data/information relevant to student performance against learning outcomes	0
Other data/information gathered relevant to performance (e.g., Audit & Review feedback)	5
Societal/Cultural trends (e.g., changes in demographics, lifestyles, professions)	5
Campus trends (e.g., changes in university-initiated needs and demands)	30
Technology trends (e.g., technology developments that affect delivery of service)	10
Professional trends (e.g., changes evident at other universities/colleges)	10
Available human resources (e.g., # of employees, talents, etc.) within the unit	5
Available financial resources (e.g., budget, available and accessible \$)	5
Available physical resources (e.g., space, existing technology, etc.)	0
Other: Accreditation Strictures and UW-System Mandates	30

Total= 100 points

8. Does your unit have a mission statement?
 Yes No

If you answered "yes," please list the mission statement here. or, if your mission statement can be accessed on the web, please list the URL here.

<http://www.uww.edu/gradstudies/>

If you answered "yes," please describe how, if at all, this mission statement plays a role in your unit's planning and/or decision-making.

The mission was drafted more as a chronicle of what the School of Graduate Studies understands to be its purpose, and less a weathervane to direct or aid in the planning of future strategic decisions.

OPERATION AND PERFORMANCE

9. What are the major or measurable objectives of the unit?
1. Concordant with the Chancellor Jack Miller goal, "Increase productivity in graduate programs from 5% of total FTE to 8% and from 10% of total headcount to 16%, an increase of 60% on each from 1998-1999 baseline data."
 2. Work collaboratively with the Graduate Council to promote and oversee the approval and implementation of policies and curricula that ensure a basis for a "true graduate experience."
 3. Effectively provide and coordinate services for graduate students from the point of initial inquiry, through application, matriculation, and graduation.
 4. Manage, in a manner concordant with UW-System and UW-Whitewater policy, the equitable distribution of general purpose revenue allocations made available to graduate students, including, but not limited to, graduate assistantships and non-resident fee remissions.
10. What outcome measures (i.e., data, information) provide evidence that your unit's objectives are being met?

Objective #1

"Increase productivity in graduate programs from 5% of total FTE to 8% and from 10% of total headcount to 16%, an increase of 60% on each from 1998-1999 baseline data."

Term	Total UW-W HC	Grad HC	Grad %		Total UW-W FTE	Grad FTE	Grad %
Fall 98	10,632	1,033	9.71%		9,037	455	5.03%
Spring 99	9,808	945	9.63%		8,287	426	5.14%
Fall 99	10,654	1,071	10.05%		8,999	486	5.40%
Spring 00	9,780	1,041	10.64%		8,249	483	5.85%
Fall 00	10,540	1,120	10.62%		8,859	504	5.68%
Spring 01	9,815	1,183	11.59%		8,260	535	6.47%
Fall 01	10,473	1,140	10.88%		8,791	563	6.40%
Spring 02	9,869	1,271	12.88%		8,198	561	6.84%
Fall 02	10,792	1,231	11.40%		9,215	625	6.78%
Spring 03	10,040	1,320	13.14%		8,546	635	7.43%
Fall 03*	10,540*	1,110*	10.53%		9,096*	570*	6.26%
		Goal=	16%			Goal=	8%

*Note: The figures for fall 2003, unlike previous semesters, reflect a conversion of over 170 graduate FTE into Extension Accounts to help the University hit its UW-System enrollment target. As such, **actual graduate FTE for fall 2003 was approximately 740**, which if added to the Total UW-W FTE reported above, would **represent 7.98% of the total FTE for the campus**.

Objective #2

Work collaboratively with Graduate Council to promote and oversee the approval and implementation of policies and curricula that provide a basis for a “true graduate experience.”

During the review period, the Graduate Office worked with the Graduate Council to articulate and approve a set of five global graduate learning outcomes that define skills and perspectives endemic to any graduate program on campus. These five outcomes are operationalized in the chart below, along with the responses of 512 graduate students who have completed the *Graduate Outcomes and Satisfaction Survey* required of all graduating graduate students for the previous six terms (summer inclusive).

Question	Average Answer 1= Strongly Disagree 5= Strongly Agree	Average Answer 1= Not at all Important 5=Extremely Important
I'm more knowledgeable about the professional literature of my discipline.	4.3 (SD=0.753)	4.3 (SD=0.776)
I can identify and formulate perspectives on important issues in my discipline.	4.3 (SD=0.685)	4.5 (SD=0.670)
I understand the links between theory and professional practice in my discipline.	4.2 (SD=0.763)	4.3 (SD=0.804)
I've improved by ability to synthesize complex information into meaningful wholes.	4.2 (SD=0.799)	4.3 (SD=0.779)
I've improved my ability to collect data/information in solving problems.	4.2 (SD=0.829)	4.4 (SD=0.789)
I've improved my ability to analyze and interpret data/information.	4.1 (SD=0.753)	4.4 (SD=0.753)
I'm better able to identify solutions to problems that are a part of the practice of my discipline.	4.2 (SD=0.829)	4.6 (SD=0.744)
I've improved my ability to implement solutions to problems in the practice of my discipline.	4.1 (SD=0.808)	4.5 (SD=0.630)
I've improved my ability to use technology in the professional practice of my discipline.	3.8 (SD=1.041)	4.2 (SD=0.791)
I've a better understanding of the current and potential use of technology in my discipline.	3.7 (SD=1.034)	4.2 (SD=0.829)
I've improved my ability to orally express my thoughts and/or positions.	4.0 (SD=0.951)	4.5 (SD=0.720)
I've improved my ability to express my thoughts and/or positions in writing.	4.2 (SD=0.893)	4.5 (SD=0.696)

Objective #3

Effectively provide and coordinate services for graduate students from the point of initial inquiry, through application, matriculation, and graduation.

Since summer of 1997, the School of Graduate has fielded approximately 20,000 requests for information, received over 5,000 applications, and cleared approximately 1,800 students for graduation.

The responses of 516 graduating students on the *Graduate Outcomes and Satisfaction Survey* indicate that students rate the service provided by the Graduate Office as “good” on a four-point scale (poor, fair, good, excellent)—the highest score among all service providers on the instrument (bookstore, parking, financial aid, financial services, international program, technical support).

Objective #4

Manage, in a manner concordant with UW-System and UW-Whitewater policy, the equitable distribution of general purpose revenue allocations made available to graduate students, including, but not limited to graduate assistantships and non-resident fee remissions.

Since 1997, the Office has:

- contracted over 260 graduate assistantships worth over \$2.1 million;

- overseen the distribution of \$792,180 in non-resident fee remission authority to over 220 nonresident students;
- monitored the eligibility of over 110 graduate assistants who received over \$1.3 million in nonresident fee remissions; and
- used approximately \$19,000 of the unit's program revenue dollars to fund 38 Graduate Research Grants made to the School of Graduate Studies.

11. Related to question #10, does the unit regularly collect data/information to evaluate how effectively it serves its constituency(ies)? (This might include surveys of constituencies.)

Yes No

If "yes," please list specific data/information sets that the UW-W Self-Study Committees, and/or the Higher Learning Commission's Visiting Accreditation Team can access to review/consult.

- Graduate enrollment data available
- Graduate Exit Survey (see above)
- History of Graduate Fee Remissions and Graduate Assistantship Distributions
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12. In a paragraph or two, describe specific changes to the unit's operation or planning, if any, have resulted from the collection and use of the data/information identified in the preceding questions. Please be specific.

Based upon the University goal of increasing graduate enrollment and the inability to meet that goal, the School of Graduate Studies worked collaboratively with a team of faculty from the College of Education during the 2000-2001 academic year to develop a list of recommendations for revising the array of graduate degree offerings, programs, and curriculum within the College. The list of recommendations was tabled by the larger body of graduate faculty within the College.

13. Please provide a list of services, if any, that your unit provides for constituencies that are external to the university.

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14. Please list any partnerships your unit has developed with the community (external to the campus, at the local, national, or global-level).

- The School of Graduate Studies has a collaborative agreement with the Wisconsin English as a Second Language Institute (WESLI) in Madison. The School will waive the Test of English as a Second Language (TOEFL) requirement upon an international student completing a previously agreed upon set of 700-level of courses at WESLI (achieving a certain outcomes score in each course).
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STUDENT LEARNING (COMPLETE THIS SECTION ONLY IF YOUR UNIT HAS AS PART OF ITS MISSION OR PURPOSES THE DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENTS)

15. If your unit serves students as its primary constituency, does the unit have learning or development-related objectives relevant to its work with students? That is, does your unit expect that students will acquire certain knowledge or skill sets as a direct result of working with your unit or its programming?

Yes No

If "yes," please list these outcomes/objectives.

- Comprehend and discuss advanced theoretical questions and current issues;
- Collect, analyze, and interpret data applicable to complex questions and problems;
- Conceptualize, evaluate, and implement solutions to complex problems;
- Use appropriate technologies as needed; and
- Synthesize and articulate multiple concepts in a clear, concise, and persuasive manner.

16. Does the unit use data/information to evaluate the extent to which these learning or development-related objectives are, or are not being met?

Yes No

If "yes," please list specific data/information sets that the UW-W Self-Study Committees, and/or the Higher Learning Commission's Visiting Accreditation Team can access to review/consult.

- Please see the response to question #10, objective #2 above. Information from Digital Measures, the firm that collects this exit data can be accessed with a password provided by the School of Graduate Studies.
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17. What specific changes to the unit's operation or planning, if any, have resulted from the collection and use of the data/information identified in question #15? Please be specific.

The outcomes and the data collection were designed to assist individual graduate programs in their assessment of student learning outcomes. To date, no information has been shared with specific programs since students are informed that all data will be shared with the program on an anonymous basis in five-year intervals concordant with the Audit and Review process. Only three years of data have been collected to date.

SELF-EVALUATION

Strengths

18. List and prioritize no more than three primary strengths that have emerged in your unit's efforts to meet its mission, goals, or objectives. To identify these strengths, you may wish to consider: What does your unit do very well? What good things do people say about your unit? How has your unit aided the campus in meeting its mission? In what ways has your unit "gone beyond the call of duty?"

After identifying each strength, specify supporting evidence that suggests that the statement is true. This may include data/information gathered relevant to unit performance, trend data, information gathered from audits or external agencies visit, etc.

1. Specific Strength: The unit has a very good staff of service-oriented professionals who respond quickly to potential and current student questions and requests, and graduate program coordinators.
 - Supporting Evidence: This conclusion is based on responses from graduating students (see objective #3 in question #10) and upon interviews and discussions with graduate program coordinators conducted by an independent group of faculty conducting Office Planning and Review study for the School of Graduate Studies.
2. Specific Strength: The School of Graduate Studies has been effective in adding to fiscal resources to support full-time students, particularly non-resident graduate students.
 - Supporting Evidence: During the course of the review period, the average allocation of non-resident fee remission dollars has grown from approximately \$27,500 per semester (fall terms 1996 and 1997) to over \$110,000 per semester (fall term 2004 and spring term 2005). Further, despite the loss of approximately 6.0 FTE General Purpose Revenue (12 full-time assistantships) since 1995, the School has secured funding (through Program Revenue Reserves) to offer four full-time graduate fellowships beginning in fall 2005, and approximately 20 additional part-time (10 hour week) graduate assistantships.
3. Specific Strength:
 - Supporting Evidence:

Concerns

19. List and prioritize no more than three primary concerns that have emerged in your unit's efforts to meet its mission, goals, or objectives. To identify these concerns, you may wish to consider: What could be improved? What is done poorly? What do we, as a unit, avoid doing, even though we know it's important?

After identifying each concern, specify supporting evidence that suggests that the statement is true. This may include data/information gathered relevant to unit performance, trend data, information gathered from audits or external agencies visit, etc.

Finally, identify one or more recommended actions to address the area of concern. This may include actions that your unit has already begun, actions being planned, or preliminary thinking about how to address the area of concern.

1. Specific Concern: Although the School of Graduate Studies oversees the administration of the Graduate Council specifically (and all graduate faculty generally), it is difficult to enforce many graduate policies, specifically as it relates to oversight of graduate faculty providing a "true graduate experience" in their courses.
 - Supporting Evidence: Despite a policy being approved by the Graduate Council in spring 2004 that required faculty teaching all dual-level courses include in their syllabus a

section that indicates how the work required of graduate students is unique from the undergraduates (regardless of graduate enrollment in the course), and a reminder sent to all faculty slated to teach dual-listed courses in fall 2004 (sent in April 2004), there was little adherence to the policy. Out of the hundreds of dual-listed courses offered in fall 2004, only a small handful included the stipulated differences.

- Recommended Actions: Work with the Graduate Council to identify a plan for enforcing the implementation of this policy.
2. Specific Concern: A general decline (or increase in ambiguity) regarding the role of scholarship in the graduate experience. As the mission suggests, graduate programs at this University are largely professional, practitioner-oriented programs that don't support or endorse conducting research for basic or applied purposes.
- Supporting Evidence: The number of graduate programs that developed capstone options other than the thesis during the review period increased by three (3) (of thirteen). The number of theses completed annually during the review period dropped: 1996 – 17; 1997 – 15; 1998 – 16; 1999 – 11; 2000 – 19; 2001 – 8; 2002 – 9; 2003 – 3; 2004 – 3.
 - Recommended Actions: Work with the Graduate Council to clarify the role of scholarship in graduate enterprise. Hold “campus dialogues” to discern the role of scholarship in the context of the graduate experience on this campus.
3. Specific Concern:
- Supporting Evidence:
 - Recommended Actions: