
GRADUATE SCHOOL STRATEGIC PLAN FOR GRADUATE EDUCATION AND POSTDOCTORAL TRAINING AT UW-MADISON

2023-2028

To improve the quality and clarity of our shared priorities in graduate education, the Graduate School started a collaborative process in 2022 to develop a strategic plan for graduate education at UW-Madison. The dean of the Graduate School appointed a steering committee of faculty, staff, graduate students, and campus leaders from across the academic disciplines. The group was guided by consultants from the Office of Strategic Consulting to examine strengths and opportunities for graduate education at UW-Madison, complete an environmental scan, and discuss the school's current mission and values. The process engaged the graduate education community and Graduate School staff through focus groups and surveys, and the resulting vision, mission, values, priorities, and initiatives for 2023-2028 follow. In 2025, the strategic plan was edited to reflect the addition of postdocs to the Graduate School's mission.

A unique factor in this strategic plan is that it relies on partnerships between the Graduate School and other schools, colleges, departments, and central units to advance shared goals for graduate education within a decentralized environment. While the school plays a vital role in establishing university-wide standards and policies, it also serves as a dedicated advocate and campus-wide collaborator, actively enhancing the overall excellence of the institution. Initiatives enhancing mentorship, belonging and mental health support, access to career services, and multi-year funding support and competitive stipend levels cannot be achieved by the Graduate School alone. Success in these areas relies on engagement, cooperation, and shared responsibility across campus.

We invite you to join us as a collaborator on these strategic priorities to further increase the quality of graduate education and postdoctoral training at UW-Madison moving forward.

VISION The Graduate School cultivates an inclusive environment of excellence that inspires innovation, advances knowledge, furthers the Wisconsin Idea and prepares the next generation of leaders by empowering every graduate student and postdoc to reach their greatest potential.

MISSION The Graduate School fosters excellence in partnership with graduate programs, faculty and staff by advancing graduate students' and postdocs' research, learning, career development, and professional success.

VALUES Excellence, open exchange of ideas, respect, integrity, inclusion, and collaboration

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PRIORITIES & INITIATIVES

(A) Advance innovative graduate education, career development, and professional success

1. Offer high-quality graduate programs and postdoctoral training that enhance academic and professional success
2. Utilize and enhance data resources within the Graduate School to support graduate program and postdoctoral training quality and success
3. Sustain resources to help graduate students and postdocs develop academic and professional skills, as well as explore and prepare for various career pathways
4. Create opportunities for and celebrate student and postdoc achievements in living the Wisconsin Idea

(B) Foster access and engagement to recruit and retain a talented graduate student and postdoc body

1. Implement tools and resources to help train admission committees to recruit and evaluate applicants using a holistic perspective
2. Develop coordinated and collaborative pipeline programs for recruitment
3. Assist graduate students and postdocs in developing awareness of resources and processes to support their success.
4. Prepare graduate students and postdocs to foster environments of inclusive excellence, access, and engagement

(C) Establish and support university-wide expectations for consistent and high-quality graduate student and postdoc mentorship

1. Promote use of evidence-based mentorship best practices, such as compacts and goal setting
2. Advocate for expanded participation in mentorship training for faculty, staff, and directors of graduate study
3. Offer training for graduate students and postdocs to work effectively with faculty and staff mentors
4. Ensure graduate students and postdocs have access to teaching- and mentoring-related professional development

(D) Strengthen collaboration among campus partners to support the success, wellbeing, and belonging of graduate students and postdocs

1. Strengthen processes and resources to train and support graduate coordinators
2. Grow current partnership with the Office of Student Assistance and Support (formerly the Dean of Students Office) to focus on assistance and support for graduate students
3. Ensure that all graduate students have access to career services
4. Support and offer programming that promotes a sense of belonging among graduate students and postdocs

(E) Facilitate access to funding, resources, and opportunities

1. Promote and expand access to extramural funding for graduate students and postdoctoral scholars by developing and maintaining a centralized repository of opportunities and offering targeted workshops on securing external support
2. Set competitive stipend levels that take into consideration cost of living
3. Collaborate with programs to offer multi-year funding commitments and address gaps in student support as needs arise
4. Advocate with campus partners to promote attention to providing opportunities such as conference funding and professional development
5. Cultivate philanthropic partners to increase grants and opportunities

(F) Sustain the Graduate School as a high performing organization

1. Embed equity and accessibility principles across all Graduate School operations, including recruitment, admissions, funding allocation, advising practices, and career development initiatives.
2. Increase transparency regarding goals, processes, and budgets
3. Embrace continuous process improvement and invest strategically in technology and infrastructure
4. Prioritize the professional and personal development of staff