

January 31, 2017

David Kieda, Dean, Graduate School and Professor, Physics and Astronomy
Bill Johnson, Professor, Geology and Geophysics, Co-Chair
Lisa Aspinwall, Chair and Professor, Psychology, Co-Chair
Anne Jamison, Associate Professor, English
Nicole Robinson, Interim Assistant Vice President, Equity and Diversity, and Professor, Music
Diane Pataki, Associate Dean, Science, and Professor, Biology
Ross Whitaker, Chair and Professor, School of Computing
Maria Franquiz, Dean and Professor, Education
Katie Ullman, Associate Dean, Graduate School and Professor, Biochemistry

Dear Colleagues,

I am writing to invite you to serve on a working group to outline our strategy for graduate education at the University of Utah. As you may have observed, the past three years have been intensely focused on raising the profile and success of undergraduates at the U. As the state's flagship institution, and a major research institution with national and international relevance, it is vital that we give thought to our current standing, aspirations, and strategic agenda in graduate education. The issues that I hope your working group will consider, include:

- Conduct a brief self-study of doctoral education at the U, relative to peer institutions. The following metrics are relevant (by college or academic unit), and qualitative indicators drawn from program reviews may also be informative.
 - Academic preparation of entering doctoral students (as indicated by baccalaureate institution, GPA, GRE, other relevant indicators)
 - Diversity of entering doctoral students
 - Time to degree completion
 - Rate of attrition
 - Placement/employment after completion
 - Summary of the total number of doctoral students by program and college, as well as the average entering cohort, and number of doctoral degrees granted each year, by program and college
- What are the strengths of doctoral education at the University of Utah?
- What challenges exist for doctoral education at the U?
- What actions could be taken – within our current resource base – to strengthen doctoral education at the U, such as . . .

- Improve the transition from coursework to research/scholarly activities
- Develop process to provide graduate student support to ensure success of new academic initiatives (e.g. interdisciplinary or TEP hiring)
- Develop graduate writing support which will support faster completion and improved student writing and publications/faculty productivity.
- Foster the development of broader skills (academic integrity, public speaking, networking, time management, career planning, and leadership) in our graduate student population.
- With additional resources - from grants, private donations, corporations, foundations, tuition or state sources - what priorities for investment would you recommend to strengthen doctoral education at the U, for example . . .
 - Strengthen fellowship office to broadly support student applications to many existing programs (NSF-GRFP, Fulbright, Hertz, Boren, Gates, etc.).
 - Development of a named University-wide graduate fellowship to improve the acceptance yield for the most talented and diverse graduate students across campus, regardless of discipline.

As you consider these questions, you may find it beneficial to gather input from the faculty and campus community more broadly, perhaps through open dialogue sessions or other means.

I've asked Bill Johnson and Lisa Aspinwall to serve as co-chairs of this group, and they have graciously agreed to do so. If for any reason you are not able to serve as this time, please let me know as soon as possible.

I look forward to talking with you as you begin your work, and will stay in contact with you via Dean Dave Kieda over the course of the spring semester. I hope that you will have an outline of your recommendations by May 1, 2017. Thank you in advance for your time and thoughtful effort on this vital work for the University of Utah.

Sincerely yours,



Ruth V. Watkins
Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs