Session One: Graduate Education in Florida: Perspectives and Issues—Group Responses Related to Nancy Marcus’s Presentation

What are some of the ways other institutions support student stipends for the duration of the doctoral program?
- Add to the budget from the state, top-offs for fellowships, etc.
- Fundraising efforts to increase funding for graduate students. FSU has created an Office of Graduate Fellowships and Awards.
- Students look for outside extramural support.

Does the state’s emphasis on STEM students negatively impact student enrollment in terms of resource availability and the type of students institutions try to recruit?
- It’s important to balance.
- It’s not necessarily causing reduction, and we have sensitivity at FSU to not put money into STEM that would result in the deterioration of arts and humanities programs.

Does graduate education in Florida have a visibility problem? All groups answered affirmatively.
- There is not as much recognition of graduate student achievement.
- Graduate programs are decentralized, so it’s up to the individual programs to highlight their own graduate students.
- The State’s lack of metrics for graduate education appears indicative of a lack of interest in graduate education.
- SUS schools do an outstanding job in recruiting undergraduate students, but there is no targeted effort to do anything with them beyond that.
- State legislators may need more information regarding graduate education, as there seems to be a major emphasis on undergraduate students moving directly into the workforce after graduation while there are a number of opportunities for graduate and professional education that will garner significantly higher incomes.
- False narratives at play in statements such as “The three wealthiest people in the United States do not have a college degree.” The fact is that in general people with graduate degrees make more money than those without.

What are some ways to help increase visibility?
- Educate students from a young age about graduate education whenever possible—even in elementary schools. Faculty have young children at schools and volunteer at schools, so they can take these opportunities to talk about graduate education with students.
- Increase visibility of graduate education with state legislators.
- Host Graduate Student Appreciation Weeks and similar events.

What can graduate deans/graduate schools do to promote the visibility and importance of graduate education to the state of Florida?
- Be proactive. Reach out to your school’s Office of Communications. Encourage them to highlight students and faculty, because faculty members are less likely to do so.
• Highlight graduate students in the admissions brochure.
• Put graduate school logos on anything you can.
• Have an active Graduate Student Association.
• Plan student retreats. Students want to know they have faculty and staff support.
• Promote the value of graduate education in terms of workforce development as well as quality of life and income enhancement.
• This conference shows that we need to come together as graduate schools with statements that define the value of post-baccalaureate education. United, we will have a stronger voice.
• Talk to students at the beginning of their college careers to promote graduate education.
• Put emphasis on a pipeline so students see value, especially students of ethnic minorities.
• Florida Institute of Technology (FIT) and the University of Miami (UM) have no tuition at the PhD level on funded research projects.
• Promote external funding and help students write grants proposal, use connections to help get donors.
• Teach students about application process for proposal funding
• Encouragement and motivation.

What issues and concerns come to mind when you consider Graduate Education in Florida?
• How do we handle monetary difference in stipends, such as between Education and Engineering?
• Some departments bring in underrepresented students because they think they will get state funding, which is called “strategic admissions.”
• Sometimes STEM students enroll at certain universities because they need to get training from specific researchers, not because they want to attend a specific university.
• Contentious graduate student assistant battles
• FIT is 50/50 split undergraduate and graduate students, 85% are in science and engineering, which are hard areas in which to recruit. Engineering deans in Florida could use legislative influence to promote holistic approaches rather than individual.
• BOG metrics encourage us to deemphasize the non-strategic graduate degrees.
• Few doctoral students are paying for education, but their living expenses are not covered.

What do we want from BOG regarding grad education?
• More money. More than for them to just feel good about graduate education, we want them to fund it.
• We have to influence what the BOG values, because they are missing the value or graduate education. We should have meeting with BOG or their staff.
• Unused Bright Futures scholarships could be applied at the graduate level and be used to fund a graduate student’s first year.
• Recent dual-enrollment survey discussed at recent SACS meeting—it’s somewhat a failure in that it was designed so students could quickly finish their degrees. But, students are still taking four years and earning two bachelor’s degrees. The money pumping into the community colleges and high schools for dual-enrollment could be reallocated.
Session Two: Florida Graduate Schools: Graduate Education and the Promise of Collaboration—Group Responses Related to Henry Frierson’s Presentation

When promoting graduate education to undergraduate students, where is the responsibility? Should it be the Graduate Schools?

- Graduate Student Appreciation Week and Graduate Education Day for undergrads. The goal is to have an effect on culture, and proselytizing.
- For students wanting to be lawyers, physicians or to earn their M.B.A., students sometimes change their minds, so the best prospects for graduate education are those who don’t know what they want to do. You can display your graduate programs and let them see the wide range available, because there are so many programs students do not know of. Take advantage of the vacuum created when students change their minds by providing pertinent information on graduate education.

What is effective in getting students interested?

- During fall, one of the culminating events for Graduate Student Week at UF was a seminar on graduate education, but only a handful of students attended.
- We (administrators) have to decide that this is something we’re going to tackle. Change will take time and won’t happen overnight.
- Graduate education has to be a message from the time undergraduates come in the door, such as at undergraduate orientation. Graduate studies requires a great deal of support,
- Provide the message (about graduate education) at various points in the undergraduate student’s education.
- Establish wide a range pre-PhD program, which would engage undergrads at the end of sophomore or maybe even their freshman year and allow them to have high research opportunities. This would be a way to engage our faculty in working with undergrads.
- Students should be fully informed that there are opportunities at or near their home sites; places like UF, FSU, and USF are major research institutions that have large enrollment of undergrads who would be attractive to graduate applicants.
- Promote to your school’s own undergrads, let them know of available graduate programs. If they are not a fellowship or scholarship student, they may not know about certain programs.
- Expose undergrads to the research process.
- Reach out to programs and the students within them. Mobilize faculty; one faculty member went around at an undergraduate event and gave out his business card and encouraged them to think about graduate education.
- Have to encourage undergraduate students—“You can do it!”
- Events like the 3MT make graduate education seem fun.
- For those institutions that have first year experience classes for undergraduates, have a module included on graduate education.
- Have Graduate Studies/Graduate Schools host events and have the events involve all disciplines.
- Have a statewide Facebook page for graduate education. The eighteen minute TED talks have been very popular; outstanding 3MT students could be posted on the FB page.
- Connect with students at career resource days.
- What drives education most is passion, so seek out passionate faculty.
- Have a statewide graduate fair.
- Recruit young alumni as faculty.
- Encourage undergraduate advisors to promote graduate education.
What are our challenges?

- Speak to programs and then the programs can trickle that information down.
- Another issue with recruiting is diversity and inclusion. What are the nuances of recruiting minority students?

**Session Three: Funding for Graduate Education—Panelists: Dr. Lawrence Morehouse (FEF); Dr. Henry Frierson (UF); Dr. Deborah Floyd (FAU); Dr. David Jackson (FAMU)**

- What opportunities are there when these professional development programs occur to send other send other students (minority)?

**Florida Educational Fund (FEF)**—Call the FEF office, professional development opportunities are available to any graduate students.

- With the issue of insurance, are any universities dealing with a consortia?

  (FSU) There are questions about which student health plans will be allowed under ACA. FSU provides health insurance under a subsidy, but health plans cannot be subsidized and must be rolled into stipends. Student health plans are viewed as individual plans, not compliant with ACA. Cost of having them in-state plan would be exorbitant. A state cannot offer another state’s plan. Students may need to go to the open market/exchanges to obtain coverage.

  (UF) We have bifurcated plans for student health insurance. Student employees get insurance through Source A (a self-insured package); non-employee students have to go through market/exchanges to buy their own coverage.

  (UM) Students on assistantships can get insurance benefits that UM offers.

- We raised the issue of fees and where those fees go. For those of us with unions, that’s a big issue. Fees associated with them being a student and not an employee.

  (UM) Miami has an à la carte plan and graduate students can opt out of certain fees, but the fees vary by school so students can opt out of fees at one school but not necessarily at another school.

- Budget management. Academic deans sometimes say that they need additional funds for students but then we (graduate schools) look deeply into their budgets and see that they do have available funds. There is a lack of knowledge by deans about budget because they do not have team members who can analyze it for them. Does anyone else have this issue on their campus?

  (FIU) Historically, 70% of FIU’s funding is in the college’s budget, 30% is in the graduate school. That created a problem in that if the graduate school wanted to fund a college based on performance, it could be done with the 30% but then the dean could undo it by shifting around the larger budget that the college has. So, is it better to give it all to colleges and have expectations of performance or is it better to have it in graduate school or should money in the graduate school be used strategically, more incentive based?

  (UF) We do not dole out assistantship money or engage in the admissions process; those things are not in our purview. Some may see this as giving up power but we see it as not having to deal with major headaches when you have insufficient staff members. Funds go directly to the colleges and they disseminate it based on their perceptions. We control graduate school fellowship money, which is used as leverage in a number of ways.
We are very transparent and the units know what has to be done to get the money and get additional fellowships related to various criteria such as graduation rates and underrepresented minority enrollment percentages coupled with graduation rates. Fellowships can be given fully or divided to provide top-ups to existing stipends. If a program’s teaching assistantship stipends are not competitive, a department can divide full fellowships to increase stipend levels. We try to serve as support mechanism for academic units and graduate students. We want to ensure that our PhD students are not without funding. When students come to us in dire financial situations, we put pressure on the academic unit to determine for certain that they do not have funding and we record this. If academic units are dishonest they pay the price of using us as a bail-out resource. We want to be seen as helpful and supportive but not pushovers.

(FAU) We’re essentially talking about centralized versus decentralized funding. One idea we have done is we have gathered info using CIP codes, assuming $15/hour minimum wage. This process helps non-STEM areas more than STEM. We manage $9.3M tuition waiver money. About three years ago, we implemented a new waiver policy; this is an accountability policy and the graduate college is charged with auditing those programs. That money goes to business managers to colleges and monitored monthly and sometimes daily, and we adjust it if needed. We’ve saved money and tightened up on areas that we have had issues. This process frees up additional dollars to reallocate.

Session Four: Completing the Graduate Degree. Panelists: Dr. Andres Gil (FIU); Dr. John Kantner (UNF); Dr. Paul Duncan (UF)

• For professional development opportunities that are geared toward underrepresented minority students: are there other efforts and time that students get to spend on professional development that is not research or teaching time?

(FIU) AGILE is a two year program. Programs are very different-some brag about students’ time to degree but there is variation. Our top program in terms of how quickly student finish has lot of weaknesses is in. Have to be careful not to get them out so quickly that they are not well-prepared. Not enough programs or efforts focused on finishing and the other problem is special programs that are more centrally managed in the university is at they see them as not part of the college.

(UF) We decided that if academic units are going to participate in Bridge to Doctorate (BD) or obtain McKnight fellowships, have to ensure that when supported by the units, students’ stipends continue at no less than the level the average student receives. Our BD program is a doctoral program. After two years of funding ends, academic units have to commit for the remaining time. McKnight stipends alone are not sufficient, so you have to add substantial amount of money into it and commit to all five years of support. If a unit says they will admit a student if they get a McKnight, they are rejected.

Additionally, we worry about students who have external funding and not teaching or with a research group, not being sufficiently engaged in the culture of their department. We do not like the idea of people being “pure fellows” where they do not have teaching or research assignments. Further, we insist departments have skin in the game—there should be an appointment in the department that includes teaching.

(UNF) Most graduate schools have research grant program, we have one that is non-competitive. Eligible to receive twice in master’s career. $500 to do some kind of professional development activity.
Repurposed money from GA stipend money to help students and can be used for recruitment, conference, internship.

- **(UM)** Miami offers Fellowship Writing Clinic, which helps identify a manageable number of external funding opportunities. Most are discipline specific, women in STEM, NSF. We submit early for review and engage faculty in review process. We provide small stipends to students who participate and help them put together their application. This is a collaboration in the graduate school. Are there any other tangible programs or efforts any other schools are doing?

**(FEF)** We do encourage the McKnight fellows to apply for additional support. All students can participate in special meetings e.g., a University of Michigan program for student research training in the summer. Set aside money in budget to make money available in budget. Would help if school would be willing to match/share expenses.

**(FIU)** With central support, cost matching with graduate students has been sort of a disconnection between those students getting outside funding and those who do not. We do cost match on research grants. Though there is some reluctance to cost match; some examples seen as separate from units such as the Bridge to the Doctorate. It is a big concern that BD students are seen as separate from the academic units as the initial funding is external and separate. Programs such as the BD should be placed within a college as a solution—there are too many centralized things in the Graduate School.

**(UF)** Regarding the question about professional development, we had a group of students that were McKnight students. They attended conferences and get all this support, but found that their peers did not have the same level of resources. They establish Gator McKnight United, independent but UF recognized professional development group that meet after hours. This group helps their peers prepare for qualifying exams, research projects and presentations and is peer-to-peer so nothing is taken away from the academic units but it brings the resources they receive at McKnight conferences back to their peers.

- **(FEF)** Each year we (Florida Education Fund) have students come from all over the state who have issues they can’t resolve. For example, a student called last semester having a problem with their major professor-she’s not ABD but her professor was not accepting her research project. She asked how to get her professor to move forward one way or the other. How would you handle that? What should we say to student? Who can they talk to beyond professor?

**(FSU)** Someone in our office meets with students who have conflicts, but normally there is a chain of command. If the issue is still not worked out, the student may come to graduate school dean but depends on what the issue it is. We will work with program, find out all sides of the story and find workable solutions.

**(UF)** The critical thing is to remember there are multiple sides of the story. First, contact dean of graduate school to let them know. Often GS deans are not aware or students call FEF that they have no money. In cases such as those, we find that the student actually had the money, but spent it.

**(FEF)** Questions are persistent. Students not getting the answers they want on campuses and ask FEF to intervene. Maybe universities should have some discussion on conflict resolution with graduate students. Some instances are so serious and so severe that they can affect graduation or the student drops out. FEF offers conflict resolution workshops based on real scenarios.

**(FSU)** When you talk to faculty and department, you find that they are not good about doing annual reviews of students, and haven’t made clear what the expectations are. It’s necessary to remind them
and tell them that they have to give students notice and be open and transparent if there are issues, just as you would with employee.

(UM) Put everything in writing. Have documentation of missing milestones, what they needed to do and due dates. Encouraging documentation can help.

(FIU) After you see all the sides, who makes the final determination? Each side assumes the other will make final decision. We don’t have clarity at institutions who makes final decision.

### Final Remarks and Conference Evaluation: Where do we go from here with conference?

- Holding the conference and the Statewide Graduate Research Symposium together is good. If they are tied together, a centralized meeting spot is preferable because stress for students to get from one end of state to the other is more acute than the issues we as administrators face regarding travel.
- We have several centrally located schools but it may get boring to have meetings essentially in the same locations.
- There are issues of resources and money to host annually but there is value in visiting each campus and in trying to send students around to visit each school.
- The possibility of meeting every other year. Problem with having meeting every other year is that issues change and we may lose focus.
- Make the conference longer (by even half a day) to help build these relationships that we are establishing.
- Come to the conference with ideas and projects to tackle and then have relevant guests attend. For example, in light of the BOG enrollment goal, we could have BOG representatives or state legislators attend, or at the least, their staff members.

### Beyond sharing problems that we’re faced with and learning how things are done at each of our campuses, what are examples of collaborative efforts?

- (UF) Pointing out concerns to BOG (in light of the increase from 20,000 to 35,000 graduate students annually graduating goal). We need to find champions that understand the importance of graduate education, particularly to the state as well as the nation. We can work together to increase the number of graduate students particularly at the master’s level. We can work in a collaborative way on grant opportunities. We can set up master’s and PhD pipelines and undergrad to graduate program pipelines. We could set up executive group with a constitution and bylaws in relation to our conference.
- (FEF) If a student is not succeeding at one place, have them transfer to another university. Develop that kind of mechanism to help them since we’ve already invested money into them.
- (FAMU) We can come up with a purpose vision or principles and also produce white paper yearly of concerns and present them in a unified fashion.
- (UWF) UWF is quite isolated so this kind of opportunity is invaluable. We will make whatever sacrifice is needed to attend future conferences.

After discussion and email exchanges, the Conference of Florida Graduate Schools meeting will be held next year at the University of South Florida in Tampa.

Award Recipient: Dr. Nancy Marcus (Florida State University) “In honor of your valuable contribution and years of dedicated service to advance graduate education in the state of Florida. April 2016, Conference of Florida Graduate Schools.”