Provost Listening Sessions
Graduate Education – research intensive programs
February 2024, Office of the HSC Provost

Overview
Ten (10) in-person and virtual listening sessions were conducted at HSC between January 8 and January 29. The following summarizes themes discussed during the sessions with the 157 faculty, staff, and student attendees. The questions below were used in the listening sessions to guide the conversations pertaining to the December 2023 Task Force on Graduate Education Report.

1. **Take a minute to reflect on our current training of graduate students. What do we currently do exceptionally well? How could we better prepare our students to contribute to HSC's research?**

   Strengths:

   - We have many pockets of excellence but are somewhat siloed.
   - Poster sessions as a tool to engage broadly with faculty.
   - Transparency of courses for the medical science program is positive for the students.
   - Student navigators added to one program to help enhance student experience.
   - Actions taken to improve communication with the students.
   - Actions taken to help students be more aware of their milestone progress.
   - Implemented a tracking system for student milestones, etc.
   - More services implemented around student wellbeing.
   - Quality of faculty that wish to see students succeed.
   - Graduate invited back to connect with students.
   - Small community feel – strong relationships with faculty.
   - Close relationships with major mentor and student (personal communication).
   - Generated awesome products – great post doc, industry jobs, etc (doing well).
   - Excellent training grants.
   - Smaller program – more time for mentorship.
   - Thoughtful on the front end – matching students to mentors at the beginning.
   - Some stipends are perceived to be competitive.
   - Teaching and mentoring are a priority for faculty.
   - Students get a lot of hands-on research opportunities from the beginning (abstracts).
   - Cohort model for student training – graduate placement is positive.
   - Placements are going up.
   - Funding for travel for some students is available.
   - Set clear goals and expectations for students.
   - Curriculum is well structured to prepare for independent research.
   - More collaboration with HSC, institutes, and other colleges.
   - CEPH accredited program is a strength – provides rigor.

- Long history of graduating outstanding graduate students from this department.
- Active in professional societies and involvement of trainees.
- Students have formed internal groups – arrange and lead events, etc.
- Some students get extensive experience in teaching.
- Many graduates are leaders within their profession.
- "Works in Progress" course has been instrumental.
- International – friendly institution – support is present.
- Response to feedback from student perspective.

Improvements:

- Dual degree students – better support, pathways (residency/fellowship alignment).
- Improve web presence of our programs and research labs; make user friendly.
- Co-curricular activities and career development activities could be enhanced.
- More opportunities for public speaking.
- Build structure to guide students through research pathways that are non-biomedical science – community-based research, etc.
- Some lab productivity is dependent on students which could limit their success.
- Day-to-day operations of a lab should not be dependent on student workforce.
- Metrics for student success needed – customized to students (e.g. experience with their specific areas of interests). Competency based process can be evaluated.
- More Internships and experiences outside of labs.
- "My PI will not let me" – how do we move beyond this?
- Students can work across disciplines; graduate advisors that can be cross disciplinary.
- Focus on making students more competitive.
- Change mindset for siloes at all levels – broad collaborative attitude.
- Support more skill development (publishing, placed in labs with funding).
- Link training to workforce needs around us (career readiness) – industry careers.
- Train faculty to provide higher standards (e.g. mentoring).
- Funding of research labs important to overall quality of education; non-lab based research would be different – does the institution have strength and multiple people to support the training.
- Graduate faculty member definition – look at the criteria / how to review.
- Assigned labs? Versus rotations – how does this impact training.
- Remove barriers that prevent students from participating in internships (e.g. faculty approval).
- Streamlining forms to make them more accessible to students.
- Students would like to have access to more information. Find more avenues to push key information out to the students.
- Train for a variety of career pathways including soft skills.
- Cross list courses across our schools and colleges as well as external courses.
- Personalize student tracks better – maximize use of what we have.
- Hard to take students in between funding – what mechanisms could help.

- Better job marketing externally where our graduates go or do in their careers.
- Centralized placement of students into the research areas is difficult.
- Students wish to join labs that do not have sufficient funding to take students.
- Adopt the most up to date instructional strategies (e.g. active learning).
- Sustainability for funding – allowing placements that student interests.
- Some who are successful but refuse to take students (burden, time).
- Didactic courses – missing out on opportunities to consolidate courses.
- Create community experiences with linking courses.
- Excellent catalog of advanced courses – invite other students to join them.
- Anatomy and Physiology – foundational concepts for many professional programs.
- Funding of graduate students and how to create new avenues for funding.
- Approach to continue funding - # and duration are important.
- Enough time in faculty schedule to teach additional courses (in other programs) due to overall teaching workload.
- Include students in the evaluation/feedback of mentors.
- Develop a public calendar for students to see seminars and key events.
- Process for payment for tuition in the first 18 months versus after 18 months.
- Process for registration so students don't have so many holds on their accounts.

2. Imagine five years from now. What would ideally be different or improved upon? What is needed to support faculty?

- Provide students more opportunities to get the experiences they need for their career.
- Align students better to the specific labs as it relates to their interests.
- Faculty should have research support to run operations; not built on students.
- Individualized career development plan for each faculty member and student.
- Students also should have individualized career development plan.
- Grass roots change to build a culture that support these principles.
- Training tools available for existing and new faculty who train these students.
- Evaluate selection process to ensure rigor.
- Provide more competitive stipends.
- Expand recruitment pathways to HSC.
- Recruit faculty who are funded; competitive for ongoing and future funding.
- Upgrade and diversify our degree offerings – attract broader applicant pool.
- Ensure more modern programs – more personalized, flexible, and targeted.
- Clinician researcher programs – explore how to expand; recruit with protected research time (e.g. 50-70%)
- Faculty retention and development programs.
- Add faculty lines.
- Optimize teaching workloads and explore areas of streamlining (e.g. committees).
- Program of support for mid-career and senior faculty.

- Mentoring skills – important to develop across stages; programs for faculty.
- Difficult to be independent – how do we fund more projects (programs to help them).
- Mechanisms to reward faculty for areas that they are good at such as teaching, service, etc.
- Better defining workloads – need more balance.
- More standardization for cost-of-living raises/adjustments.
- Administrative support – use faculty time wisely.
- Don't ignore mid-career faculty for pilot grants or other granting mechanisms.
- Create master course schedule to know what is being offered (identify redundancy).
- Decrease competition between courses – due to offering at same times.
- Secure additional training grants- requires faculty investment.
- More stability from OSP (particularly post award).
- Students have fewer options for electives – could be expanded with more resources.
- Accept students in PhD/MS that are more focused on areas like biostats, etc.
- Faculty mentorship program
- Increased capacity for community-engaged research, including DrPh.
- Train faculty in emerging areas such as AI/ML, etc – or other areas that emerge.
- Faculty composition that is a balance of early, mid, and more advanced careers (mentors).
- Resources for faculty for student recruitment.
- Service commitments can be high – look for ways to streamline.
- **Better communication** – example: space moves, renovations, etc

3. In that future state, are there scientific research areas that should be created or expanded to train students and enhance our research?

- Clinical & translational – brain aging, cancer, eye disease, heart, stroke
- Lifespan aging / gestation to death / life course – clinical research focus
- Policy focused implementation science
- Bioinformatics/ big data / data science
- Nanotechnology/biotechnology/drug delivery
- Biostatistics – how to look at bioinformatics across diverse communities
- Linking AI/ML/ computational/data analytics
- Women's health (especially after menopause and age-related dementia)
- Nutrition (disease prevention focus); nutrology
- Lifestyle changes and alignment to Whole Health
- Substance use disorders; T32 possibility; addiction interest group
- Provide "minor" or alternative credentials for students; dual degrees
- Forensic medicine
- Genetic-centric focus; genomics; genetic epidemiology
- Regenerative medicine

- Better connection with existing research institutes
- Geospatial analysis; GIS – seek ways to build upon
- Environmental Health Focus – continue to develop
- Maternal child health – strength
- More infectious diseases
- Climate + health + policy
- Community health and epidemiology
- Health literacy
- Community based participatory research
- Established labs where faculty are joined by common themes
- Unite topic strengths by focusing on methodologies
- Health Disparities – cross cutting
- Integrated Anatomy & Physiology degree
- Standalone degrees (masters) may be interested – career mobility
- Basic science core courses may be constraining – may hurt recruitment
- Anatomical Sciences
- Translational Medicine Science (integrated)
- Genetic counseling
- Forensic Anthropology/ Biological Anthropology

4. **How should the College be organized to deliver that future state? Should we promote more interdisciplinary collaborations?**
    - Explore ways to reduce current siloes and use resources more wisely.
    - Reduce UNT/HSC barriers that limit collaborative research and education practices.
    - Ensure students get the best experiences regardless of who has funding.
    - Find ways to engage all faculty in training of students.
    - Balance research intensive and education intensive aspects.
    - Include all stakeholders in the process.
    - Provide more resources in career mentoring.
    - Streamline forms/structure for key processes (one stop for all key items).
    - Create dissertation review process at the university level.
    - Create more personalized via curriculum and mentoring.
    - Move courses needed by all (e.g. responsible conduct of research) to Graduate College.
    - Ensure services also support post doc success also.
    - Ensure better support for dual degree students.
    - Provide more funding to conduct pilot studies, etc.
    - Maximize the use of existing technologies/machines on campus.
    - Expand clinical partners to get populations for clinical research aspects.
    - Make it easier to work together including within the local communities.
    - M.S. funding is different so additional resources are needed.

- Partner with industry who have employee benefits to pay for students to be in research master degrees.

5. What would you like to see from this process?

- Definitive action items with timelines and responsible individuals identified.
- Foster more interaction between departments and research centers/institutes.
- Keep progress visible with communication opportunities like listening sessions.
- Desire to not negatively impact any school or program with future changes.
- Retain freedom to conduct science in areas of personal interests.
- Use funding wisely to best steward the college.
- Maximize ways to collaborate across schools and share resources.
- Explore what courses could be used from other schools as electives.

<u>Recommendations</u>
The following were provided by two departments in advance of scheduled listening sessions as recommendations for consideration and points of conversation for the listening sessions.

- To strengthen and grow graduate education and research at HSC, issues regarding faculty morale and retention must not only be considered but addressed.
- Provide additional specifics regarding proposed structure and function of Graduate College. It is difficult to provide constructive feedback with minimal details.
- Leverage/incentivize revenue from existing and/or future MS programs to support PhD stipends and training.
- Retain existing graduate programs within departmental homes.
- Preserve existing departments and their affiliated graduate programs/disciplines.
- Prioritize faculty retention and boost morale to secure stronger support for the proposed changes.
- Revise recruitment strategies by identifying areas of student interest enabling direct communication between faculty and prospective students.
- Embrace outcome-based approaches for research faculty or faculty in between funding by investing in and supporting students from their lab.
- Implement effective mentoring programs, especially for first-time mentors.