



Task Force on Graduate Education
(Research Intensive PhD and MS Programs)
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Background:

In the dynamic landscape of higher education, universities must continually adapt and evolve to serve the needs of their student populations. This is particularly true in graduate education, where the stakes are high, and the demands of research, instruction, and professional preparation converge. It is with these challenges in mind, as previously identified by the Academic Committee, that the Provost initiated the formation of a Task Force on Graduate Education.

Key Reasons for the Task Force on Graduate Education:

Student Benefits: A centralized graduate school offers a multitude of benefits to students, which include:

- **Unified Resources:** Centralization offers an integrated platform for students, streamlining access to diverse school/college/university resources and optimizing the provision of support services.
- **Standardized Support Services:** From academic advising to mental health resources, a centralized graduate school ensures that students receive uniform, high-quality support regardless of their specific program or department.
- **Cohesive Curriculum Development:** A unified structure can allow for the creation and implementation of a cohesive curriculum across disciplines, ensuring students receive a well-rounded education.
- **Improved Research Opportunities:** Centralizing graduate programs can enhance interdisciplinary research collaborations and allow students to participate in innovative and impactful projects.
- **Efficient Administration:** A centralized system can streamline administrative processes, resulting in quicker response times for matters such as enrollment, funding, and thesis or dissertation reviews.
- **Consistent Communication and Updates:** With a centralized system, students receive standardized communications regarding institutional updates, opportunities, and changes, ensuring that all graduate students are uniformly informed and reducing the likelihood of miscommunication.

Evolving Educational Landscape: Rapid changes in the fields of biomedical sciences, public health, pharmacy, nursing, and other professional studies necessitate a structured and cohesive approach to graduate education. Establishing a centralized graduate school can be pivotal in adapting to these changes effectively, especially with the addition of new graduate program at HSC. Thus, the responsibility of the Graduate School would be to align potential new Ph.D. programs (e.g., System College of Pharmacy, School of Nursing) and existing Ph. D. programs (School of Biomedical Sciences, School of Public Health).

Competitive Advantage: Many leading universities have centralized graduate schools, which offer them a competitive edge in attracting top talent, both in terms of faculty and students. Adopting a similar model could enhance our HSC's position in the state and national arena.

- **Streamlined Resources:** Centralization facilitates the efficient allocation and utilization of resources, making sure that both faculty and students have access to the best tools, research opportunities, and support mechanisms available.
- **Unified Vision:** A centralized structure often translates to a more unified vision and direction for graduate education, ensuring that all programs are aligned with the institution's overarching goals and standards.
- **Interdisciplinary Collaborations:** Such a structure promotes interdisciplinary interactions, allowing students and faculty from various departments to collaborate seamlessly. This not only enriches the academic experience but also results in groundbreaking research that cuts across traditional discipline boundaries.

- **Attracting Top Talent:** The transparency, organization, and comprehensive support provided by centralized systems become key attractions for top-tier faculty and promising students. They are often drawn to institutions where they feel their work will be supported, recognized, and where they can thrive academically.
- **Enhanced Reputation:** An effective centralized system often elevates the reputation of the institution. The consistency in quality, research output, and academic excellence leads to higher rankings and greater recognition on both state and national platforms.

Transitioning HSC to a similar centralized model could considerably strengthen our competitive stance. This shift could further enhance our reputation, making our institution a beacon for top-tier faculty and the brightest students, ultimately fortifying our position in the state and on the national academic stage.

Efficiency and Accountability: A unified structure provides clearer lines of accountability and can lead to improved resource allocation, ensuring that funds are deployed where they are most needed to serve students and reduce doubled efforts from faculty.

Charge of the Task Force:

Under the directive of the Provost, our task force was charged with answering the following questions:

1. What broad responsibilities should be charged to a centralized HSC unit, and which should remain with schools/colleges

Discuss and define the primary duties and overarching responsibilities that a centralized HSC graduate unit should assume to ensure effective management and support for graduate education across the institution. In tandem, recognize that schools, departments, and faculty inherently carry significant authority and responsibilities. While adhering to the standards and minimums set by the Graduate School, it is crucial to delineate which specific functions schools and departments should continually oversee and manage, preserving their essential roles in the academic system.

2. How should a unified, graduate governance structure be organized?

The committee is tasked with deliberating on the optimal organization of a unified governance structure for graduate education. Within this discussion, it is imperative to consider various models and best practices that foster both centralized efficiency and school/college autonomy, especially when it comes to program accreditation. Recognizing that every school/college has its unique needs and challenges, the governance structure should strike a balance between providing overarching guidance and allowing individual schools/colleges the flexibility to cater to their specific program accreditation requirements. Factors to consider include representation from various departments, student input mechanisms, the role of faculty within this structure, and the interface between centralized governance and individual schools/colleges. The ultimate objective is to design a governance framework that enhances the quality, coherence, and efficiency of graduate education across the institution.

3. Are there graduate policies, procedures, or standards that should be HSC-wide?

The committee is entrusted with the significant responsibility of examining the current landscape of graduate policies, procedures, and standards. A crucial question to address is whether there are elements among these that should be standardized and applied HSC-wide to ensure uniformity and fairness. As the conversation progresses, it's vital to determine which policies might benefit from a broad, institutional approach and which ones should remain localized, reflecting the distinct nature

and nuances of individual programs. Consideration should also be given to the potential challenges and benefits of standardizing certain procedures, keeping in mind both the overarching goals of the HSC and the specific needs of individual academic units. The objective is to cultivate a harmonized academic environment where standards uphold quality, while procedures and policies enhance the student and faculty experience institution-wide.

4. What metrics could be used to monitor the performance of a centralized HSC unit?

The committee is called upon to deliberate on the selection of effective metrics to gauge the performance of a centralized HSC unit. It is imperative to consider both quantitative and qualitative measures that offer a comprehensive view of the unit's efficacy, impact, and responsiveness. Factors to contemplate include academic outcomes, operational efficiency, faculty and student satisfaction, and the timeliness of service provisions. Additionally, it is essential to assess how these metrics align with the broader institutional goals and how they might evolve with the changing landscape of graduate education. As the HSC seeks continuous improvement, identifying the right metrics is foundational. The objective is to ensure that the centralized unit remains accountable, transparent, and continuously strives towards excellence in serving the diverse needs of graduate students, faculty, and academic programs.

Task Force Report Out from Town Hall:

Prevalence and Benefits of Separate Graduate Schools/Colleges: Most state Universities and Health Science Centers have separate Graduate Schools/Colleges, which offer numerous advantages to both existing and prospective programs. Academic Health Science Centers with Ph.D. programs across multiple academic units tend to have a distinct graduate school or college that oversees essential functions and policies.

Advantages of Centralization for HSC: As HSC continues to introduce more Ph.D. programs, establishing a centralized graduate school/college can promote course and function sharing, thereby conserving resources for both current and new programs. One primary role of the graduate school/college would be to synchronize potential and current Ph.D. programs across various units like SCP, School of Nursing, SBS, and SPH.

Maintaining Autonomy within Centralization: While a centralized approach is recommended, schools, departments, and faculty must continue to wield significant authority and duties. Adhering to standards and minimum thresholds set by the Graduate School, individual schools and departments should persistently oversee certain specific functions. All Ph.D. programs should autonomously manage elements crucial for their respective accreditations.

Implementation and Collaboration: The establishment and operationalization of the graduate school/college should be a collective effort, encompassing input from all pertinent stakeholders. A vital prerequisite for the graduate school/college is to be sufficiently staffed and resourced to effectively execute its designated roles.

Faculty Concerns and Aspirations: Faculty members are keen on ensuring the new school or college is properly staffed and funded. There have been apprehensions regarding the financing source for the new school/college, particularly in terms of its potential implications on faculty retention.

Potential Ways to Phase in a Graduate School at HSC:

Staged Implementation: The introduction of the graduate school should be executed in phases. The initial phase should prioritize Ph.D. and Thesis-based Masters programs. This phased approach allows for the strategic allocation of resources and ensures a smoother transition. The staged implementation needs to be methodical, and the quantity and quality of personnel should align with the responsibilities at each phase. This ensures efficiency and effectiveness as the school grows. For a potential breakdown of the phasing, please refer to Figure 1.

Scope of Graduate School's Responsibilities: The graduate school or college should specifically oversee research-intensive degree programs, which mandate the submission of a dissertation or thesis. This specialized focus ensures in-depth expertise and consistent quality across these rigorous academic programs.

Governance and Representation: The governance structure of the Graduate School must be democratic and inclusive. Representatives from participating Schools and Colleges should have seats at the decision-making table, ensuring that all key stakeholders have a voice.

Potential Models for the Graduate School's Administrative Structure:

Independent Dean Model: Many Health Science Centers favor a model where an autonomous Dean, equipped with a dedicated staff and Assistant Deans, manages all graduate programs. This structure offers clarity in roles and allows for centralized decision-making. For a visual representation, see Figure 2.

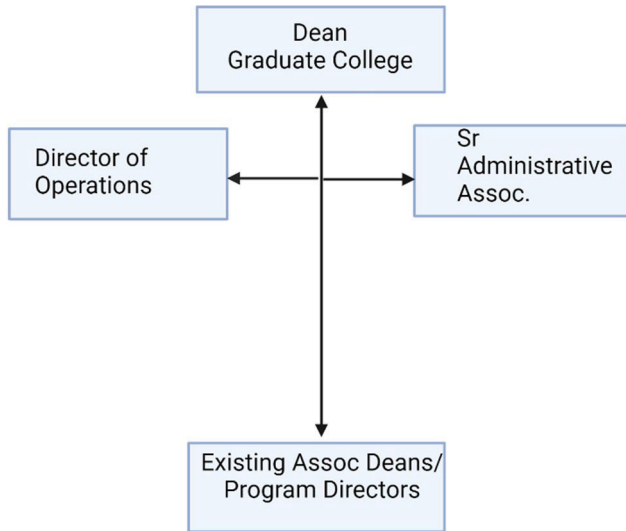
Central Graduate College Model: Another prevalent model showcases a central Graduate College, where programs are categorized as individual schools. Each of these schools is represented by a senior associate dean. These senior associate deans, in turn, oversee all programs or disciplines within their schools, collaborating closely with program or discipline directors. This model is illustrated in Figure 3.

Senior Vice Provost Model: An alternative model, diverging from traditional approaches, involves the graduate school or college being administered by a Senior Vice Provost. This individual collaborates directly with existing schools, ensuring a more integrated approach. Refer to Figure 4 for a comprehensive visualization.

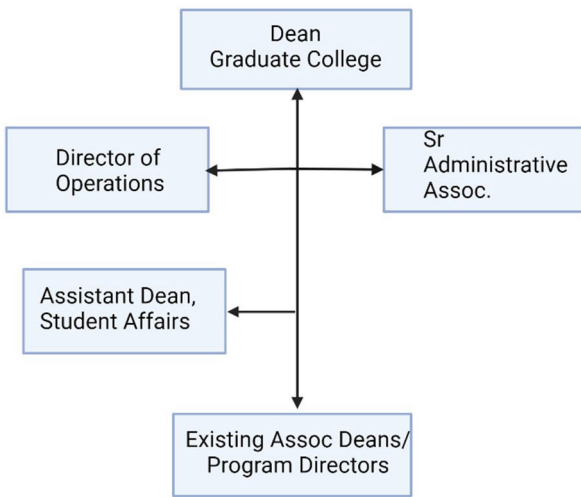
In conclusion, the task force recommends carefully assessing the unique needs and aspirations of HSC while considering these models. Adopting a model that aligns with HSC's mission, values, and resources will be pivotal in the successful implementation and long-term success of research-intensive degree programs and the students that they serve.

Figure 1

Phase 1



Phase 2



Phase 3

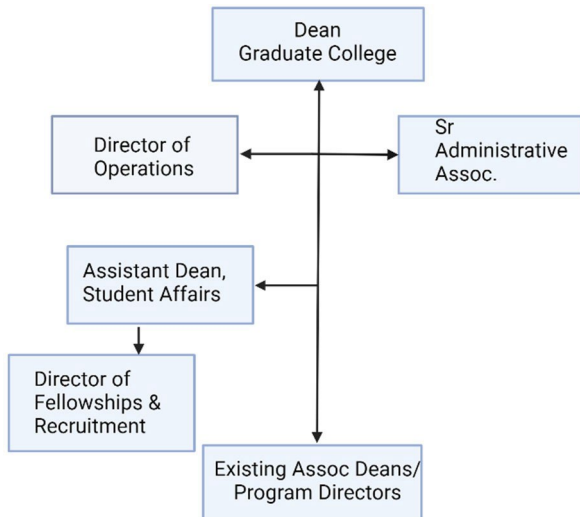


Figure 2

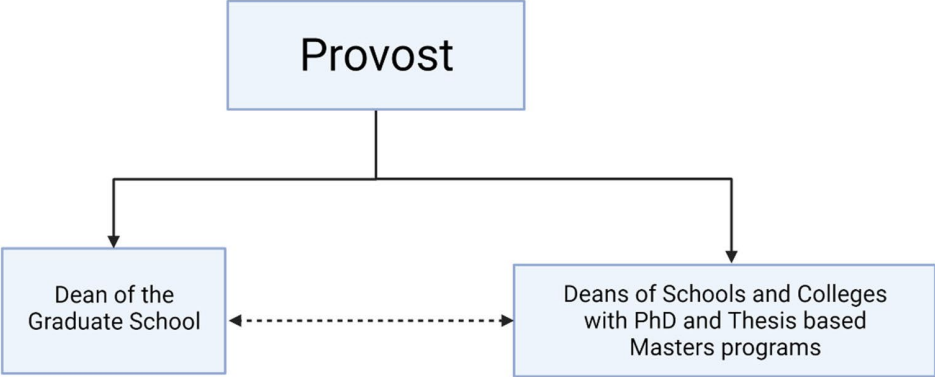


Figure 3

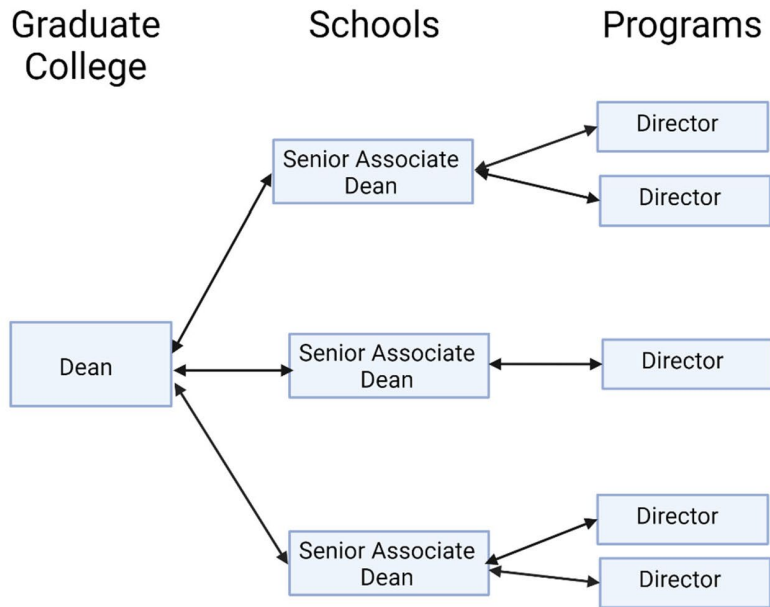


Figure 4

