

Task Force on Graduate and Professional Education: Selective Excellence

**Final Report
February 12, 2010**

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Executive Summary

1) Graduate programs at The University of Iowa administered by the Graduate College were evaluated by an interdisciplinary cross-collegiate Task Force through a process that involved examination of data, input from the individual programs and the Collegiate Deans, and open forums. Programs were grouped into five categories and the results are summarized below:

- Exemplary (16 programs, 14.4%)
- High Quality (46 programs, 41.4%)
- Good (29 programs, 26.1 %)
- Additional Evaluation Required (14 programs, 12.6 %)
- Too New to Assess (6 programs, 5.4%)

2) The Task Force made specific recommendations for additional evaluation of a number of graduate programs with issues requiring attention. These programs may become candidates for restructuring and/or closure. Further evaluation of these programs should include deliberations between the Collegiate Deans, the Graduate College Dean, the Provost and the individual departments.

3) The Task Force made specific recommendations for restructuring of graduate programs. Restructuring was considered separately from the rating process because the Task Force felt that there were programs across all rating categories that could benefit from restructuring. In some cases restructuring was recommended for graduate programs that were not viewed as viable due to size or other factors and in other cases, restructuring was recommended based on redundancy and overlap in programmatic offerings. The Task Force recommends restructuring of graduate programs in several areas, including:

- Languages and closely related disciplines
- Health, sport and recreation disciplines
- Biological science programs

Details of the restructuring are provided in the full report. The Task Force also recommended the relocation of several graduate programs to different colleges.

4) The Task Force considered other issues related to improving the quality of graduate education at The University of Iowa. The Task Force makes the following recommendations for strategic investments:

- **Financial support**- maintain competitive stipends and the tuition scholarship program; enable all graduate students to have both teaching and research assistantship experiences; prioritize Graduate College Fellowship and Strategic Investment Funds (SIF) programs to align with Task Force evaluations; increase private fundraising on behalf of graduate programs
- **Interdisciplinary graduate programs (IDGPs)**- the majority of these programs should continue to report to the Graduate College and additional financial and administrative support should be provided to the Graduate College to serve this role.
- **Graduate recruitment and admissions**- coordination and potential centralization of admission activities currently performed by the Office of Admissions, the Graduate College and individual programs.
- **Diversity**- continued emphasis on diversity, focusing future efforts on recruitment, mentoring and retention.

I. Introduction

The Task Force on Graduate Education: Selective Excellence was charged in April 2009 by Provost Loh. The charge and related issues that the Task Force may consider are listed below.

A. Charge

Articulate a strategic vision and priorities for increased excellence in graduate education at The University of Iowa.

Issues to address may include:

- Based on the vision, the forthcoming NRC rankings, and other relevant criteria (quality, centrality, etc.), which areas—among the 100 or so graduate programs, including 70 doctoral programs—should get enhanced investment from new or reallocated resources, or be supported at the current level, or be downsized, or be phased-out?
- What emerging opportunities in graduate education should the University pursue?
- How can the recruitment, retention and time to degree of doctoral students and professional master's students be improved?
- How can graduate student support from all University sources be better coordinated?

B. Task Force Members

The Task Force was assembled with broad-based representation from UI colleges and Graduate College disciplinary groups (Arts and Humanities; Social Sciences; Physical Sciences and Engineering; Health Sciences; and Biological Sciences). There were at least three members from each disciplinary group and there was a graduate student representative as well. The Task Force members and their home departments are listed below.

Chair: **Sarah Larsen**, Professor, Chemistry

Tim Ansley, Associate Professor, Psychological & Quantitative Foundations

Kurt Anstreicher, Professor, Management Sciences

Gail Bishop, Professor, Microbiology and Immunology

Tom Boggess, Professor, Physics & Astronomy

Sandra Damico, Dean, College of Education

Maureen Donovan, Professor, Pharmaceutics

Bernd Fritzschn, Professor, Biology

Keri Hornbuckle, Professor, Civil & Environmental Engineering

Michael Jones, Professor, Biostatistics

Tom Lewis, Professor, Spanish & Portuguese

Ann Marie McCarthy, Professor, Nursing

Cathleen Moore, Professor, Psychology

Alexandra Nica, Graduate Student, Economics

Andrew Russo, Professor, Molecular Physiology and Biophysics

John Beldon Scott, Professor, Art & Art History

Alberto Segre, Professor, Computer Science

Claire Sponsler, Professor, English

Marc Wold, Professor, Biochemistry

Ex officio: **John Keller**, Associate Provost for Graduate Education

Ex officio: **Don Szeszycki**, Associate Vice President, Office of the Provost

C. Timeline and Overview of Process

The Task Force held a series of meetings in spring 2009 to discuss the assessment process that would be implemented to evaluate the graduate programs. The charge was defined to include all graduate and professional programs administered by the Graduate College. The Task Force decided to seek input from the individual graduate and professional programs, from the Collegiate Deans and from the University community through Open Forums. The Task Force developed a strategic assessment document to be completed by each program being evaluated (Appendix A). The strategic assessment is a brief, narrative self-study covering three critical areas related to graduate and/or professional education within a specific program: Admissions Processes and Criteria, Program Outcomes, Program Characteristics. A complete copy of the request for strategic assessments is included in Appendix B. The request along with data from the Graduate College (Appendix C) was sent to graduate and professional programs in June 2009 with a due date of September 15, 2009. The completed strategic assessment documents (Appendix D) were submitted to the Task Force and were also provided to the Collegiate Deans. The Task Force met with the Collegiate Deans to discuss the programs within their colleges. The Task Force discussed each of the programs, and using the taxonomy described in Section II, the Task Force categorized each of the programs. Draft documents including the program rating and a brief summary rationale were provided to each graduate program and to the Collegiate Deans in early January 2010. The programs were given the opportunity to respond to the draft documents. All program responses were reviewed by the Task Force and final ratings and rationales (Appendix E) and program responses (Appendix F) are included in this report.

D. General Observations and Comments

Overall, graduate programs at Iowa are doing a very good job of producing well-trained scholars (and in some cases professionals) and meeting the educational needs of Iowa and beyond. There are over 100 graduate programs administered by the Graduate College in 5 disciplinary groupings: i) Arts and Humanities; ii) Social Sciences; iii) Mathematical, Physical Sciences and Engineering; iv) Health Sciences; and v) Biological Sciences. The Task Force has the following comments regarding graduate education and the rating process.

- The Task Force evaluated graduate and professional programs administered by the Graduate College. The Task Force did not evaluate graduate or professional programs administered by other colleges (i.e., JD, MD, DDS, PharmD, MBA, MPA). The Task Force did not evaluate departments, faculty scholarship or teaching, or undergraduate programs. There are examples in which strong academic departments have issues related to the management of graduate education that need attention and these graduate programs may not be as highly rated for this reason. For example, a very low doctoral student completion rate or a very long time to degree (TTD) in an otherwise strong department resulted in a lower than expected rating for some programs. There are also graduate programs that the Task Force categorized as a candidate for possible reorganization or closure while recognizing that the department has a viable or popular undergraduate major.
- The new National Research Council (NRC) rankings of graduate programs are not yet available. If programs included other rankings in their strategic assessments the Task Force considered this information. However, in rating programs, the Task Force weighted student-based indicators (outcomes such as % completion, time to degree and placement) more heavily than overall department reputation or productivity.

- In order to evaluate programs consistently, using data available for all programs, the Task Force used the doctoral median TTD and doctoral completion rate data for entering doctoral students for the 5 year period from 1996-2001. The Task Force also considered the retrospective median TTD data for PhD's awarded during the time period 2003-2008. The Graduate College data is provided in Appendix C. The University of Iowa Graduate College computes the median TTD of all PhD graduates as the median time it takes for graduate students to earn their Ph.D. at Iowa. Previous graduate work at another institution is not taken into consideration since it was felt that the program has no control over that previous work. Thus, the UI reported median TTD is almost always lower than those reported nationally which typically include all graduate work.
- The Task Force's objective was to rate programs consistently across the 5 disciplinary groups, recognizing that there are a wide range of programs, missions and disciplinary norms. For example, there are graduate programs with more professional versus research-oriented missions and there are master's versus doctoral programs.
- The Task Force rated programs as objectively as possible based on the programs' strategic assessment and on available data. The Task Force would like to note that these ratings represent a snapshot in time and do not reflect any temporal component or trajectory for the programs.
- The University of Iowa is smaller than our peer CIC institutions. Most of our departments have fewer faculty than similar departments at our peer institutions. As far as size can often be equated with quality, there are many programs that can argue that if given resources to grow they would be more competitive with peers. Many graduate programs at UI are better than would be predicted based on their size as reflected by numbers of faculty and graduate students. Given the constraints related to program growth, continued excellence in graduate education at UI will require strategic focus and enhanced collaboration at curricular, programmatic, and collegiate levels.
- The current distribution of graduate programs at The University of Iowa has evolved over time and in some cases is not optimal. Some reorganization of graduate programs may increase efficiency while continuing to meet the educational needs of the University and the state of Iowa. It is important for related disciplines to work together.

II. Assessment of Graduate Programs

The Task Force conducted an evaluation of the graduate programs as described below and placed each program into one of five categories: Exemplary, High Quality, Good, Additional Evaluation Required, and Too New to Assess. Program evaluations were based on:

- A. Information on all programs provided by the Graduate College which included size of the program, number of fall applicants and enrollment (selectivity and yield); average GRE scores and GPAs; Graduate College fellowships awarded; and completion, time to degree, and placement of doctoral students for specified time periods. (Appendix C)
- B. Strategic assessments provided by each graduate program (Appendix D) that included information on:
 - Mission of the program
 - Admission processes and criteria, including recruitment, selectivity, diversity and financial support
 - Program outcomes, including degree completion, time to degree, fellowships, awards, honors, publications, and placements of graduate students

- Program characteristics, including program size, comparison with other programs such as national rankings, centrality to the University, and perceived strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats of the program and plans for the program's future.

C. Discussion with Deans from each college

Based on these evaluations, each program was rated and placed into one of the following categories:

Exemplary: These programs stand out in terms of their overall quality and capacity to provide national/international prestige to The University of Iowa. Programs may be exemplary in different ways, depending upon their mission. Exemplary programs are generally rated highly in all areas.

High Quality: These programs are strong and have the potential to enhance the national reputation of The University of Iowa. These programs rate very well in most areas, but improvements could be made to strengthen the programs. In areas in which these programs are not as highly rated, plans should be created (if not already in place) to demonstrate improvement.

Good: These programs are doing well, but have issues that preclude a higher ranking. Clear plans for improving areas of relative weakness should be created (if not already in place) that will solidify the program's reputation.

Additional Evaluation Required: These programs have significant problems related to two or more of the following without viable plans for improvement in the problem areas:

- Incongruent mission, size and/or structure
- Admission processes and criteria, such as recruitment, selectivity, diversity and financial support
- Program outcomes, such as degree completion, time to degree, fellowships, awards, honors, publications, and placements
- Program characteristics, such as program size, comparison with other programs, centrality to the University, and plans for the program's future.

Some programs may be candidates for restructuring and/or merging with other related programs. Some programs in this category may become candidates for closure. Further evaluation of programs in this category should occur in consultation with the Collegiate Deans, the Graduate College Dean, the Provost and the program faculty.

Too New to Assess: These programs are either too new (< 5 yrs) to have significant student outcomes, or have recently undergone significant transitions that require time for the program to develop.

III. Categorization of Graduate Programs

Following the assessment process described above and TF discussions, the graduate programs were categorized as: Exemplary (14.4%; 16/111), High Quality (41.4%; 46/111), Good (26.1%; 29/111), Additional Evaluation Required (12.6%; 14/111), Too New to Assess (5.4%; 6/111). The graduate programs in each category are listed in the tables below by disciplinary group. Summaries with the rationale for the rating were prepared for each program by the Task Force. The summaries are provided in Appendix E.

Exemplary (14.4%; 16/111)

Arts and Humanities	Social Sciences	Mathematical, Physical Sciences, Engineering	Health Sciences	Biological Sciences
Communication Studies M.A., Ph.D.	Psychology M.A., Ph.D.	Actuarial Science M.S.	Biostatistics M.S., Ph.D.	Immunology Ph.D.
Creative Writing M.F.A.	CRSD: Rehabilitation Counselor Education Ph.D.	Civil and Environmental Engineering M.S., Ph.D.	Nursing M.S.N.	Neuroscience Ph.D.
English M.A., M.F.A., Ph.D.	CRSD: Community/ Rehabilitation Counseling M.A.		Pharmacy M.S., Ph.D.	Speech and Hearing Science Ph.D.
	Psych/Quant: Educational Measurement and Statistics M.A., Ph.D.		Physical Therapy D.P.T.	

High Quality (41.4%; 46/111)

Arts and Humanities	Social Sciences	Mathematical, Physical Sciences, Engineering	Health Sciences	Biological Sciences
Art History M.A., Ph.D.	Accounting M.Ac., Ph.D.	Biomedical Engineering M.S., Ph.D.	Dental Public Health M.S.	Biochemistry M.S., Ph.D.
Art M.A., M.F.A.	CRSD: Counselor Education and Supervision Ph.D.	Chemical and Biochemical Engineering M.S., Ph.D.	Epidemiology M.S., Ph.D.	Free Radical and Radiation Biology M.S., Ph.D.
Classics M.A., Ph.D.	CRSD: School Counseling M.A.	Chemistry M.S., Ph.D.	Health Management and Policy M.H.A.	Genetics Ph.D.
Library and Information Science M.A.	CRSD: Student Affairs Admin and Research Ph.D.	Computer Science MCS, M.S., Ph.D.	Health Services and Policy Ph.D.	Microbiology M.S., Ph.D.
Spanish and Portuguese, M.A., Ph.D.	CRSD: Student Development in Postsecondary Education M.A.	Mathematics M.S., Ph.D.	Nursing Ph.D.	Molecular and Cellular Biology Ph.D.
Theatre Arts M.F.A.	Economics M.A., Ph.D.	Mechanical Engineering M.S., Ph.D.	Occupational and Environmental Health M.S., Ph.D.	Pharmacology M.S., Ph.D.
	EPLS: Higher Education, M.A., Ph.D.		Oral Science M.S., Ph.D.	Speech Pathology and Audiology M.A.
	Geography M.A., Ph.D.		Orthodontics M.S.	
	Management and Organizations Ph.D.		Pathology M.S.	
	Psych/Quant: Counseling Psychology Ph.D.		Physical Rehabilitation Science Ph.D.	
	Psych/Quant: School Psychology Ed.S., Ph.D.		Master of Public Health (MPH)	
	Second Language Acquisition Ph.D.			
	Social Work M.S.W			
	Sociology M.A., Ph.D.			
	Teaching and Learning: Science Education M.S., MAT, Ph.D.			
	Urban and Regional Planning M.A., M.S.			

Good (26.1%; 29/111)

Arts and Humanities	Social Sciences	Mathematical, Physical Sciences, Engineering	Health Sciences	Biological Sciences
Dance M.F.A.	Anthropology M.A., Ph.D.	Applied Math and Computational Science Ph.D.	Operative Dentistry M.S.	Anatomy and Cell Biology M.S., Ph.D.
Film and Video Production M.F.A.	Finance Ph.D.	Geoscience M.S., Ph.D.		Biology M.S., Ph.D.
French and Francophone World Studies M.A., Ph.D.	Leisure Studies M.A.	Electrical and Computer Engineering M.S., Ph.D.		Molecular Physiology and Biophysics M.S., Ph.D.
History M.A., Ph.D.	Management Science Ph.D.	Industrial Engineering M.S., Ph.D.		
Journalism M.A.	Marketing Ph.D.	Physics M.S., Ph.D.; Astronomy M.S.		
Mass Communications Ph.D.	Political Science M.A., Ph.D.	Statistics M.S., Ph.D.		
Music M.A., M.F.A., D.M.A., Ph.D.	Psych/Quant: Educational Psychology M.A., Ph.D.			
Philosophy M.A., Ph.D.	Social Work, Ph.D.			
Religious Studies M.A., Ph.D.	Teaching and Learning: Secondary Education M.A., MAT, Ph.D.			
	Teaching and Learning: Special Education M.A., Ph.D.			

Additional Evaluation Required (12.6%; 14/111)

Arts and Humanities	Social Sciences	Mathematical, Physical Sciences, Engineering	Health Sciences	Biological Sciences
American Studies M.A., Ph.D.	EPLS: Educational Administration M.A., Ed.S., Ph.D.		Stomatology M.S.	Integrative Physiology Ph.D.
Asian Civilizations M.A.	EPLS: Social Foundations of Education M.A., Ph.D.			Exercise Science M.S.
Comparative Literature M.A., Ph.D.	Health and Sport Studies M.A., Ph.D.			
Comparative Literature-- Translation M.F.A.	Teach and Learn: Elementary Education M.A., Ph.D.			
Film Studies M.A., Ph.D.				
German M.A., Ph.D.				
Linguistics M.A., Ph.D.				

Too New to Assess (5.4%; 6/111)

Arts and Humanities	Social Sciences	Mathematical, Physical Sciences, Engineering	Health Sciences	Biological Sciences
			Community and Behavioral Health M.S., Ph.D.	Human Toxicology M.S., Ph.D.
			Nursing DNP	Informatics M.S., Ph.D.
			Translational Biomedicine, Ph.D.	Speech Pathology and Audiology Au.D.

IV. Recommendations for Restructuring, Relocation and Possible Closure of Graduate Programs

A. Background

Along with its assessments of current graduate program offerings, the Task Force noted a number of possible situations in which a re-envisioning of graduate program offerings may be beneficial to The University of Iowa. This includes graduate programs which may not be viable in their current configuration and strong programs that the Task Force feels would be strengthened by a restructuring. The Task Force noted that many programs assessed to be “Exemplary” or “High Quality” demonstrated substantial formal and informal interconnections across a variety of campus units, including departments, colleges, and centers. While many traditional disciplines remain relevant, other possibilities emerge which have the potential to strengthen and improve graduate program offerings at The University of Iowa. These possibilities include:

- restructuring graduate programs into logical programmatic “clusters”;
- enhanced intellectual synergies through “clustering of curricular offerings” and research and scholarly effort;
- administrative re-location of graduate programs in order to create administrative synergies with other collegiate units; and
- in a few cases, identification of a graduate program as a candidate for closure.

These recommendations are in sync with national trends that tend to offer more integrated, cohesive graduate programs by drawing on interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approaches to address disciplinary questions and key issues that challenge our society in the twenty-first century.^{1,2} For many small graduate units that remain relevant, but struggle to draw student interest, enhanced collaboration is key to bringing selected graduate programs together to provide relevance and viability for the future.

Merging with other like units may present opportunities for:

- intellectual communities offering more collective courses, seminars and research opportunities;
- enhanced academic and scholarly engagement for faculty and students;
- an evolution of new and timely graduate programs.

B. Restructuring of Graduate Programs in the Languages and Closely Related Disciplines

The University of Iowa offers a number of advanced degrees in languages and related disciplines. MA and PhD degrees are offered in the following CLAS departments: French and Francophone World Studies, German, Spanish and Portuguese, and Linguistics. A PhD in Second Language Acquisition is offered through an interdisciplinary graduate program administered by the Graduate College but sponsored by FLARE (Foreign Language Acquisition and Research), which is located in International Programs. Master’s degrees are offered in Asian Civilizations (MA) and Comparative Literature-Translation (MFA).

Within the grouping of language programs and closely related disciplines there are several programs that the Task Force felt required additional evaluation: Asian Civilizations, Comparative Literature-Translation, German, and Linguistics. In Fall 2009, admission to the German PhD program was suspended due to low enrollments and declining faculty numbers. Asian Civilizations, which offers an MA degree focused on Chinese Studies and Japanese Studies, has stopped admitting master’s students

¹ Council of Graduate Schools, *Communicator*, Vol. 42(7), Aug-Sept. 2009

² *Inside Higher Ed*, May 2009

planning to study Japanese due to faculty losses. The viability of these programs is in jeopardy in part due to declining numbers of students and faculty.

The formation of a *division of languages and cultures* has been discussed by language departments located in Phillips Hall. The Task Force supports the proposed restructuring of these departments and feels that there are many potential advantages for the graduate programs. The proposed merging of the administrative structures of these departments could provide opportunities for graduate programs with declining disciplinary graduate prospects to work with a larger pool of graduate students. The proposed division could also lead to synergistic research collaborations between faculty in the languages and in other closely related disciplines. These graduate programs may also benefit from the increase in critical mass resulting from larger student and faculty cohorts.

The Task Force also recommends that the Second Language Acquisition (SLA) Ph.D. program be relocated to CLAS as part of the proposed division (*section III.G.*). The SLA doctoral program has flourished in the Graduate College and while the Task Force recognizes that this program is unique in its position as an interdisciplinary program, the Task Force feels that this program could be an important part of the proposed division. If the proposed division is not formed, further evaluation of whether SLA should be relocated will be required.

C. Restructuring of Graduate Programs in Health, Sport and Recreation Disciplines

CLAS has several graduate programs in the broadly defined area of health, sport and recreation. Graduate degrees are offered in Exercise Science (MS), Leisure Studies (MA), Health and Sport Studies (MA, PhD) and Integrative Physiology (PhD). In the strategic assessment and response submitted by Integrative Physiology, an Integrated Health Sciences formed by combining Integrative Physiology, Leisure Studies, and part of Health and Sport Studies was discussed. The Task Force supports restructuring these programs. However, the Task Force has concerns related to the impression given by the proposed name of Integrated Health Science. It was felt that this name at a university with a large health science complex typically suggests an affiliation with traditional health science colleges such as pharmacy, medicine, nursing and dentistry. Furthermore, while the Task Force recognizes the overlap between the Exercise Science MS and the Leisure Studies MA, the Task Force felt that more natural intellectual overlap would occur for the doctoral program in Integrative Physiology with the doctoral programs in Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation Science, Anatomy and Cell Biology (anatomy/gross anatomy component), Biomedical Engineering and potentially other programs in several health science colleges. The Task Force feels that the Department of Integrative Physiology should consider options for building the graduate program through increased interactions with one or more of these programs. Health and Sport Studies, a largely social sciences program, has also been suggested in the proposed administrative restructuring of these disciplines. The Task Force does not see a compelling intellectual overlap between Health and Sport Studies and the Integrative Physiology doctoral program, but potential synergies of Health and Sport Studies with Leisure Studies and Exercise Science should be explored.

D. Proposed Restructuring of Biological Science Graduate Programs

Currently, The University of Iowa offers fourteen doctoral programs categorized in the biomedical and life sciences disciplines. Department-based programs are located in the CCOM (6) and CLAS (3) while the interdisciplinary graduate degree programs are located administratively in the Graduate College (5). While providing a broad spectrum of program offerings, the ability of the programs to recruit students, provide cogent, synergistic curriculum and a clear administrative structure is often viewed as confusing

and inefficient. Over the past few years, improvements have been made to recruitment and curricular issues to offer a collaborative approach to recruiting and educating doctoral students. However, the breadth of program offerings remains confusing to students and faculty alike, a fact that is exacerbated by the involvement of many faculty in multiple interdisciplinary as well as departmental programs. The Task Force recommends restructuring of these programs to address current and future needs. The Task Force makes its recommendations based on:

- a). assessments of program quality including size of the programs, student characteristics, TTD, % completion, centrality, etc;
- b). the program narratives and mission statements (in which the Task Force recognizes many similarities and redundancies in the current biomedical programs), and;
- c). the extent of participation by departmentally-based faculty in the interdisciplinary programs.

Although their faculty participate in the interdisciplinary programs, significant components of departmentally-based graduate programs such as Biochemistry, Microbiology, and Speech and Hearing Science as well as the interdisciplinary programs in Neuroscience, Genetics and Immunology are more distinctive in their mission and research foci. Human Toxicology was determined to be too new to assess, while the Task Force makes a specific recommendation (see IV.C.) to address Integrative Physiology.

The graduate program in Biology poses a significant challenge at The University of Iowa. This program is located in CLAS, is geographically separate from the majority of other bioscience programs and has a very different teaching environment with faculty who are both involved in departmental and interdisciplinary programs. The Biology program offers four formal subtracks (Cell and Developmental Biology, Genetics, Neurobiology, and Evolution) that are used in both graduate and undergraduate teaching, three of which overlap by name with interdisciplinary graduate programs. The fourth, Evolution, is unique to Biology. The majority of the departmental faculty are active members in several of the interdisciplinary programs. Biology faces further challenges by having to compete for students with the other bioscience programs via the Biosciences admissions portal and by having a large undergraduate major and service teaching load. Biology also has a large number of graduate teaching assistantships that are not available to the other bioscience programs and are needed to maintain the undergraduate teaching as is the case for other science graduate programs in CLAS such as Physics, Chemistry, etc.

The Task Force recommends a reorganization of the bioscience graduate programs focusing on the programs with the most overlap. As one option, the Task Force suggests that current programs in Biology, Biochemistry, Microbiology, Speech and Hearing Science, Neuroscience, Genetics, and Immunology, be maintained, while departmentally-based programs such as Molecular Physiology and Biophysics, Anatomy and Cellular Biology, Pharmacology and Free Radical and Radiation Biology and the interdisciplinary Molecular and Cellular Biology be merged or reorganized. This reorganization could include faculty in these programs joining other programs with appropriate overlapping interests or the creation of a new broader interdisciplinary program with an appropriate subtrack structure offering flexibility in defining areas of interest (e.g., cancer biology or molecular medicine). The Task Force also notes that the current Molecular and Cellular Biology program has substantial overlap with the other programs (many of the faculty in the programs already are members of the MCB program) and could serve as the foundation for a broader based interdisciplinary program.

E. Restructuring of Other Graduate Programs

The Task Force recommends that graduate programs in other areas could also be strengthened through connections with related disciplines. For example, communication-related disciplines should explore the option of combining graduate programs including: Mass Communications (PhD); Journalism (MA); Communication Studies (MA, PhD). The intellectual overlap between these programs may lead to fruitful collaborative efforts that could enhance graduate education in these areas. The merger of the Stomatology MS into the Oral Science (MS, PhD) program is also recommended.

Restructuring of graduate programs could also alleviate stresses associated with budget reductions that have resulted in an increase in the minimum enrollment required for graduate courses in CLAS, for example. Assuming the lack of resources available in the near future for things like faculty hiring, some programs may have issues with viability in the near term if restructuring does not occur. For example, a doctoral graduate program size of 25 implies 5 new students per year (assuming a TTD of 5 years) which may be below new minimum course enrollments being implemented due to budget reductions. This will inevitably lead to difficulties with delivering a rigorous graduate curriculum and maintaining small graduate program viability. Programs vulnerable to this scenario should think proactively regarding restructuring. Some of the challenges to this reorganization are location and space. If two units are located in different buildings or on different parts of campus, building connections between programs will be more difficult. In these cases, the Task Force recommends investment in the infrastructure required to accomplish the proposed reorganizations.

F. The Task Force carefully considered and makes the recommendations to relocate the following graduate programs

1). **Second Language Acquisition (SLA) from the Graduate College to the proposed division of world languages and cultures that is under consideration in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.** A number of the current language programs are suffering from declining numbers of faculty, declining interest in selected graduate programs and pressure to economize the administration of small language units into a cohesive unit. Several language programs were assessed as needing restructuring/merger and in some cases closure of the doctoral programs. The SLA program, on the other hand, is thriving, with high-quality student interest, and strong faculty support. Although SLA was originally approved as an interdisciplinary program administered in the Graduate College, most, but not all faculty are from CLAS (others are appointed in the College of Education), and a significant number of graduate (teaching) assistantships are provided by CLAS units. The Task Force recognizes that some of the unique aspects of SLA as an interdisciplinary program could be lost in such a merger but feels that the potential benefit to the proposed division is compelling.

2). **Applied Mathematical and Computational Sciences (AMCS) from the Graduate College to the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.** Since its original approval, AMCS has been closely integrated with the graduate program in Mathematics. AMCS and Math provided one narrative in response to the Task Force's request, thus it has been assumed by the Task Force that the programs themselves see AMCS as part of Math. Math provides administrative support for AMCS, as well as graduate (teaching) assistantships. Many, but not all faculty affiliated with the program are from Math. Other affiliated faculty are appointed in related physical science programs across campus. Many students matriculate into AMCS from Math, while others are direct admits.

3). **Economics from the Tippie College of Business to the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.** This possibility has apparently been discussed prior to the work of the Task Force. At most peer institutions,

Economics is located in Liberal Arts colleges as a central social science unit. The Task Force sees Economics as central to the UI's mission, however it is not certain as to the level of priority it receives in the TCOB. There have been a number of lost FTE faculty positions over the past few years. Economics appears to provide considerable undergraduate instruction to majors and as service courses to undergraduate students in CLAS. Previous discussions about such a relocation apparently identified serious obstacles to such a move; however, the Task Force determined that if Economics is to thrive at the UI, relocation to CLAS or re-investment in the program by TCOB should be seriously considered.

G. Suggestions for Administering Reorganized Graduate Programs

In an era requiring more accountability and data sharing, it is imperative for the Graduate College to be able to adequately track graduate student progress. Restructuring of graduate programs could create administrative challenges that will require coordinating efforts between programs, departments, colleges, the Graduate College, and the university's admissions and registrar's offices to ensure that degree majors and subtracks that might be created are organized consistently in order to facilitate data reporting on graduate students. The Task Force recommends that concurrent with program restructuring, degree majors and subtracks be formed consistently and in collaboration with the Graduate College and the Registrar to facilitate data tracking. Although a tracking problem was most apparent to the Task Force within programs in the College of Education, other graduate programs with subtracks (e.g., Civil and Environmental Engineering) would benefit from the ability to track students from the time of admission by an appropriately coded subtrack in order to facilitate data reporting.

H. Emerging Opportunities in Graduate Education

Even in this climate of budget reductions and programmatic shrinkage, it is imperative to consider emerging opportunities in graduate education to build on existing strengths and develop new areas of academic excellence.

The Task Force would like to note the Spanish Creative Writing MFA proposed by the Department of Spanish and Portuguese that would train members of new generations of writers in Spanish. At present only one such MFA program exists in the U.S., and only a handful of U.S. colleges and universities offer any course at all in Spanish creative writing. The proposed MFA would build on the UI's superior reputation in creative writing through the Iowa Writers' Workshop (IWW) and the International Writing Program (IWP), both of which would offer experience and infrastructure to the proposed Spanish Creative Writing MFA program. The Department of Spanish and Portuguese has a long-standing tradition of support for creative work.

The Center for the Book has proposed a new MFA in Book Studies which takes advantage of the unique strengths available at The University of Iowa. Drawing students from several humanities disciplines, the new MFA will train its graduates for academic careers in book arts, as well as for professional careers in book trades and in libraries and studios. The Graduate Council has approved the proposal which awaits completion of the formal approval process.

There are several new programs which, although rated as "Too new to assess," seem to be well-positioned for the future. It should be noted that two of these are interdisciplinary degree programs administered by the Graduate College (Human Toxicology and Informatics), two are new degree programs from departments that already have exemplary programs (Nursing DNP and Speech Pathology and Audiology AuD) and one is located in the College of Public Health (Community and Behavioral Health). The graduate program in Translational Biomedicine, with its affiliation in the Health Sciences

Center and the Clinical and Translational Science Awards (CTSA) program, is also viewed as beneficial to the long-term success and reputation of the University.

V. Additional Considerations Related to Achieving Excellence in Graduate Education

In addition to assessing the graduate program offerings at The University of Iowa, the Task Force on Graduate Education considered a number of important issues pertinent to the delivery of graduate programs at the University. The Task Force has determined that these issues need attention in order for graduate programs and graduate education in general, to reach their full potential.

A. Financial Support for Graduate Students and Programs

The Task Force is concerned with the declining support for graduate assistantships as a result of recent budget reductions. Many colleges have been faced with reducing teaching assistantship (TA) lines and the Graduate College has been forced to reduce its support of research assistantship (RA) positions to meet budget reversions. Continued losses in these areas, if not coordinated with the recommendations of this Task Force, as well as that of the Research and Undergraduate Task Forces, will have serious implications for graduate education at Iowa.

The topic of insufficient and in some cases, declining financial support for graduate students and programs was pervasive throughout the self-assessments submitted by programs. The Task Force recognizes that through negotiations with COGS (the UI's graduate employee union) substantial progress has been made to offer competitive compensation packages, including stipends, benefits and tuition scholarships. As indicated in the most recent "[Purdue Report](#)" ([click](#)), Iowa ranked third and fourth, respectively in the average net compensation offered to Teaching and Research Assistants. **The Task Force strongly recommends that The University of Iowa continue to maintain its competitive stature amongst its Committee on Institutional Cooperation (CIC) peers through stipends and the tuition scholarship program.**

Nonetheless, considering the number of highly rated programs (~56% assessed as Exemplary or High Quality), **additional support and a restructuring of current support mechanisms are recommended, in order to adequately support these programs as well as provide incentives for improvements to other programs (Good, Too New to Assess).**

Graduate Assistantships: A number of recent reports, including the Council of Graduate Schools' report on PhD Completion and Attrition³, advocate for a blend of dedicated funding mechanisms for doctoral students for a specific number of years, to include fellowships and teaching and research assistantships. funding mechanisms for doctoral students, including fellowships, and teaching/research assistantships. Many graduate programs at UI are dependent upon graduate TAs as the main mechanism of support for their students. The Task Force recognizes the importance of the synergistic relationship between many graduate programs and the complementary undergraduate programs. We recommend that, where appropriate, such affiliations be promoted for the intellectual, educational, and career benefits of graduate students, undergraduates, and faculty. The Task Force recognizes the value of teaching opportunities as a component of graduate student training and encourages programs with strong research support to also consider including formalized teaching assistantships for graduate students funded from research.

³ Ph.D. Completion *and* Attrition: Policy, Numbers, Leadership, and Next Steps. Council of Graduate Schools, Washington, D.C., 2004.

Limiting graduate support to solely TAs may impede student progress towards their degree leading to a longer time to degree, and in some cases may not be the most appropriate vehicle to deliver undergraduate instruction. The Task Force recommends that the model for graduate student support for all programs include several years of non-TA support for graduate students. This might require that the number of TA positions be reduced in selected areas, and then a portion of the released funds could be redeployed to provide competitive fellowships and assistantship positions through the Graduate College's Fellowship programs and the Strategic Initiative Fund (SIF) program.

Fellowships/SIF: Concurrently, the Graduate College is encouraged to revise its Fellowship and SIF programs with the goal of promoting and maintaining excellence through support of *exemplary* and *high quality* programs and building excellence in *good* and *too new to assess* programs. The Task Force encourages the Graduate College to prioritize Fellowship opportunities for students in programs rated as *Exemplary* and *High Quality* followed by those in *Good* and *Too New to Assess*. The Task Force also recommends that the Graduate College reserve a portion of the SIF for investing in programs that are on upward trajectories but with ratings that do not yet reflect the program improvements that are being implemented. The Task Force feels that some enhanced SIF investments could yield high returns for the Graduate College and for the University.

Programs are encouraged to hold annual seminars for their students with the staff from the Graduate and Professional Student Resource Office, sponsored by the Graduate College and Sponsored Programs, for expert assistance in seeking external funding to support research, dissertation, travel, and other scholarly activities. Program websites could also include links to funding resources.

Considering the strengths and national prominence of many graduate programs at the University, **the Task Force strongly recommends that private fundraising on behalf of graduate programs and graduate education become a high priority for University fundraising efforts.** As is occurring at other peer institutions, new collaborations between departments, colleges, and the Graduate College with the UI Foundation should be explored to address the challenges of seeking support for graduate education.

B. Administrative Organization and Oversight of Interdisciplinary Graduate Degree Programs

The Task Force recognizes the importance and value of the interdisciplinary graduate degree programs (IDGPs) at The University of Iowa. A number of these programs are assessed as "Exemplary" or "High Quality" and bring prestige and recognition to the University. Historically at Iowa, IDGPs have arisen from the "grass-roots" level, when faculty from a breadth of units across campus come together to organize and deliver a non-departmental or collegiate-structured graduate program. Some IDGPs at Iowa have been in place for over 25-30 years, while others are more recent. Over time, the Graduate College has become the administrative home for these programs, providing financial support in the form of graduate assistantships, and in some cases staff and program support.

The IDGPs face a number of challenges, many of which are similar to other "interdisciplinary" activities on campus:

- Many of the participating faculty essentially volunteer their time and effort to the IDGPs, thus the issue of faculty credit and responsibility for participation, recognition and support are problematic;
- Since faculty are appointed in "colleges", program directors have little to no authority or leverage to assign or negotiate teaching and service commitments to program faculty;

- Due to strained infrastructural resources, there is no uniform support structure to promote and maintain excellence among the programs;
- In some cases, physical location is problematic as well.

To address these issues **the Task Force recommends that the majority of the IDGPs continue to report to the Graduate College. However, the Task Force also recommends that additional financial support (in the form of student, program and faculty support) and administrative authority be granted to the Graduate College to serve this role.** The Task Force recognizes the Graduate College's role in administering the IDGPs. The Graduate College is viewed as a central and neutral administrative home that can provide a collaborative environment for interdisciplinary graduate education. The Task Force is concerned that a closer affiliation of the IDGPs to specific departments or academic colleges would, over time, diminish the broad participation by faculty across campus, and may, in fact, result in a replication of competing intellectual graduate communities across campus.

C. Increased Institutional Support and Coordination for Graduate Recruitment and Admissions

Currently, admission of graduate students to the University's graduate programs is administered by individual graduate programs in conjunction with the UI's Office of Admissions. **The Task Force recommends that enhanced coordination of graduate recruitment and admissions become a priority, either directly from the Office of Admissions, or through relocation of these activities to the Graduate College.** Enhanced prioritization of graduate admissions could provide coordination for enrollment management and provision of funding to admitted students, which is not able to be optimized with the current mechanisms.

D. Promotion and Advocacy for Graduate Education

The Task Force recommends that the Graduate College continue in its role to be a leader in the promotion and advocacy for graduate education at The University of Iowa. The Graduate College should be recognized for its efforts to share and distribute information relative to national trends in graduate education, to assure student success, and to improve graduate program outcomes. Using the recommendations of the Task Force as a starting point, the Graduate College should be encouraged to continue its efforts to foster "best practice" initiatives in graduate education, including guaranteed funding packages, competitive stipends and tuition scholarships, annual evaluations of students, program data sharing, etc.

E. Diversifying the Graduate Student Body

There are numerous efforts to increase diversity in the graduate student body across the many graduate programs at UI. The Department of Mathematics is nationally recognized for its successful diversity efforts in graduate education. Likewise, the College of Medicine's *Office of Cultural Affairs and Diversity Initiatives* and the College of Engineering's *Office of Ethnic Inclusion Efforts for Iowa Engineering* have been active in spearheading successful diversity initiatives in their graduate programs. Several Graduate Assistance in Areas of National Need (GAANN) fellowship programs funded by the Department of Education exist across campus (Applied Mathematical and Computational Sciences; Chemical and Biochemical Engineering; Chemistry; Mathematics; Nursing) and more are being actively sought (Psychological and Quantitative Foundations). The Graduate College promotes diversity through the Dean's Graduate Fellowships to qualified students from underrepresented groups and through its Office of Graduate Ethnic Inclusion (OGEI) that serves graduate students from underrepresented groups. The Graduate College and OGEI also administer Iowa's component of the AGEP program. The CIC Summer

Research Opportunity Program (SROP) and the Ronald E. McNair program are also administered by OGEI and serve to introduce underrepresented undergraduate students to high quality research and graduate programs. The Iowa Bioscience Advantage Program also has targeted efforts to enhance diversity in the STEM fields. **The Task Force recommends continued emphasis on diversity, focusing future efforts on recruitment, mentoring and retention.**

F. Recommendations for Implementation

The Task Force on Graduate Education evaluated all graduate programs at The University of Iowa administered by the Graduate College. Programs were placed into five categories, Exemplary, High Quality, Good, Additional Evaluation Required and Too New to Assess. The Task Force provided recommendations for restructuring and relocation of graduate programs based on its final assessment and general recommendations related to achieving excellence in graduate education. Recommendations for further evaluation of some programs are provided so that identified issues can be addressed. Some of these programs may be candidates for closure and others are recommended for restructuring or merging as discussed in Sections IV A-D. Further evaluation of these programs should occur in consultation with the Collegiate Deans, the Graduate College Dean, the Provost and the graduate program faculty.

Appendix A: List of Graduate and Professional Programs Administered by the Graduate College

Appendix B: Request for Strategic Assessments from Graduate and Professional Programs

Appendix C: Graduate College Data

Appendix D: Strategic Assessment Documents Submitted by Graduate and Professional Programs

Appendix E: Task Force Rating and Summary Rationale for Each Program

Appendix F: Responses Submitted by Graduate and Professional Programs