

College of Graduate Studies Impact Statement

When I arrived, the college had fewer than 10,000 students, trouble recruiting graduate students and post docs, non-competitive pay for GTAs and GRAs, inconsistencies in program communication and collaboration, high turnover among staff as well as a general sense that the graduate community was invisible at UCF. We have made progress in many areas and continue to work on finding ways to improve the student experience. My goal is to build a graduate environment that will attract the best students in the nation while providing excellent support to our students and programs.

Progress toward UCF's strategic goals:

Reach at least 200 postdoctoral appointees

We are well on our way to achieving this goal. You'll find it listed under OR goals as well because graduate students and postdoctoral scholars are critical for research success.

- Developed and implemented the P3 program to cooperatively fund post-doctoral fellows. Total number of fellows before the program (November 2016) was 62; there are currently 162, with over 45 more in the pipeline (i.e., search underway, going through hiring process)
- It is anticipated that additional funding and transition back to "normal operations" will see the number increase to our goal of 2020.

Expand to 10,000 graduate students

- Goal met. In Fall 2016 there were 8,031 graduate students. In 2019 we hit 10,000.
- Implemented new Graduate School Application system, SLATE, to improve the efficiency of application services, modernize business practices, improve communication systems with all potential and actively applying students, and enhance recruitment efforts
- Hired an Associate Director of Recruitment to allow for the development of focused initiatives and efforts both internal and external to UCF
- Developed the Diverse Academic Opportunities Program to recruit students of diverse backgrounds to our STEM Ph.D. programs
- Facilitated the establishment of new Graduate Enrollment data reports that better link college-level enrollment projections to meeting the institutional goal of 10,000 graduate students.
- Continue to work with programs to grow in systematic, rational, and sustainable ways

Achieve 300 PhD and M.F.A degrees annually

- Goal met and growing. In 2020 there were 349
- Continue to work with program on Study Plans to help students finish their degrees

Other Initiatives not directly connected to strategic goals, but which will create a vibrant graduate student community.

- Facilitated the state-level approval of four new Ph.D. programs (in Big Data, Anthropological Sciences, Aerospace Engineering, and Strategic Communication)
- Since AY 2016-2017, consistently funded up to 102 doctoral students each year on ORCGS Doctoral Fellowships. Despite the challenges of the pandemic, 73 new doctoral students enrolled as ORCGS Doctoral Fellows in spring AY 2020-2021

- Raised salaries of doctoral-level Graduate Teaching and Graduate Research Assistants to be competitive with other Florida and University Innovation Alliance peers
- Implemented a graduate research grant program for doctoral students, to assist with small research expenses to complete dissertations
- Began implementation of a digital annual reporting system to track progress of doctoral students and post-doctoral fellows, consistent with NIH requirements for an Individual Development Plan
- Instituted a doctoral student “bridge” funding program to cover stipends of students whose faculty mentors have a brief (less than one year) interruption in grant funding for students
- Instituted a reevaluation and reworking of how graduate student academic and other misconduct is handled
- Launched first ever College of Graduate Studies Annual Report to better inform UCF community about our services
- Launched Climate surveys in 2019
- SMST launched as stand-alone school
- Hiring a director for SMST
- Developed methods to encourage graduate program directors to better communicate with each other to increase consistency of graduate student experience across programs, departments, and colleges