Inaugural Graduate and Professional Education Assembly
Tuesday, November 2, 2010

Questions to Facilitate Discussion

1. Within the next three to five years, what are the most important things the University of Minnesota could do to facilitate completion of the Ph.D. degree, both in terms of the overall number of students who complete the Ph.D. and reducing time to degree in some disciplines?

   - What steps might the university take to improve the quality of Ph.D. student advising?
   - How might requirements for the Ph.D. degree be modified to encourage more timely completion, maintain the rigor of the Ph.D., and enhance the quality of the student experience?
   - What changes might we consider in how we structure tuition for the Ph.D. degree?
   - What changes might we consider in how we support students (e.g., graduate assistantships and fellowships) over the course of their study?
   - What are the characteristics of a supportive graduate program environment? What strategies and approaches might we use to ensure that all Ph.D. programs exhibit these characteristics?
   - How can we ensure that Ph.D. students receive professional development preparation appropriate for their chosen career objectives?

2. The University of Minnesota faces a budget challenge of historic proportions. Given this context, what are the most important strategies, approaches and actions the university should take within the next three to five years to finance graduate and professional education in ways that are consistent with university goals and objectives?

   - How do funding needs of Ph.D. students differ from those of master’s students? What principles and criteria should guide our decisions to fund Ph.D. students and master’s students, respectively?
   - What is the ideal support package for Ph.D. students? How does this vary across the disciplines? How can we ensure that sufficient attention is given to increasing all forms of graduate student funding?
   - What strategies and approaches should the university use to communicate to a lay audience—including the state legislature—the value of investing in graduate education?
   - Are there strategies and approaches the university could use to increase federal grant support, including NSF-IGERTs and other federal training grants? If so, what are these?
   - How can we create more industry partnerships that include student funding opportunities?
• What is the role of fundraising and development in supporting graduate and professional education? What innovative sources of private support could we pursue?
• How should the university manage graduate program enrollment? What are the critical considerations in decisions to “right-size” graduate programs?
• Can tuition be structured differently to reduce the overall cost of a graduate degree and yet ensure sufficient revenue to help meet operating costs?
• Would changes in the budget model enhance the university’s ability to fund graduate students? If so, what are these changes?

3. Graduate education and research are becoming increasingly international, often engaging faculty, students, programs, and facilities in other countries, and seeking to recruit the best students from around the world. Within the next three to five years, what are the most important steps the university could take to further internationalize graduate and professional education at the highest levels of excellence for the University of Minnesota?

• Some institutions have created joint-, dual-, or co-directed graduate programs with international institutions. How might we encourage the adoption of such mechanisms by university colleges and departments?
• What other models for international collaborations/global partnerships might the university consider?
• What strategies should we consider for recruiting excellent international graduate students?
• What challenges do our international graduate students face? How should we address these challenges? Who should address them?

4. Within the next three to five years, what are the most important things the university could do to recruit the very best U.S. students to our graduate and professional programs?

• How should we market our graduate and professional programs to attract the best U.S. students? What strategies, approaches and techniques should we use to persuade top students to apply?
• How can we ensure that we land the most promising applicants? What best recruitment practices should we embrace?
• Are there special strategies and approaches that we should consider to attract promising prospective students from underrepresented groups?
• How can we enhance the climate for our underrepresented graduate and professional students, reduce attrition, and enrich the quality of these students’ educational experience?
5. In addition to well-established professional master’s programs, such as in business and education, there is growing demand in the workplace for employees with postbaccalaureate preparation in various applied areas. In response, there has been a growing trend toward the establishment of professionally oriented master’s degrees. Within the next three to five years, what are the key issues the university should address to serve workforce needs for training at the master’s level while maintaining strong Ph.D. programs and promoting the development of Ph.D. programs in emerging disciplines?

- How should the university balance master’s and Ph.D. education, given institutional goals and budget?
- What should be the relationship between professional master’s education and the Ph.D.?
- How should we fund students in professional master’s degree programs? What new funding opportunities might we tap for this purpose?
- What should be the relationship between the university and the professional community in the support and delivery of practitioner-oriented master’s degrees?