

GRADUATE EDUCATION VISION AND STRATEGY AT TCU

**A Position Paper Prepared by the Committee on
Graduation Education**

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Introduction and Overview

In Fall 2003, Chancellor Victor Boschini unveiled Vision in Action, a campus-wide strategic planning process that focused on setting the priorities for TCU's advancement. An important component of VIA is the recognition that expansion of graduate education is a critical factor in strengthening TCU's distinction and quality. This committee, the Graduate Education Vision and Strategy Group, was convened in order to identify and explore the opportunities and challenges associated with expanding graduate programming, enabling TCU to flourish as a research intensive university. The charge to the Committee, as delivered by Provost Donovan, was to:

Prepare a position paper that articulates an appropriate vision and goals for graduate education at TCU and describes a University program (product mix) strategy that can serve as a guide for the Deans as they define the developmental paths (strategies/initiatives) for graduate education in their colleges/schools.

The charge included the following strategic questions:

1. What types of graduate programs should TCU build? Traditional doctoral? Non-traditional doctoral with a graduate professional orientation? Traditional Master's? Professional graduate Master's or 1st professional programs? What is the recommended balance/mix across program types?
2. What specific guidelines should be considered when redefining/repositioning existing or establishing new graduate degree programs?
3. What role should new or refined interdisciplinary/multidisciplinary programs (especially ones crossing college/school boundaries) play in the program mix?
4. What is required for TCU to build more competitive strategies for programs, so that they can attract a sufficient student enrollment to be robust, have an adequate resource base, and meet desired quality standards?
5. What opportunities in the current local/regional market represent demand for graduate education that matches TCU's current strengths?
6. What internal issues must be faced and resolved for TCU to be successful in implementing this graduate vision?

Over the course of our deliberations, the following key points quickly emerged:

- **Research and creative activity must be seen as equal and valued partners in the learning community.**
- **There are significant synergies between graduate studies and the undergraduate learning environment**, especially as they relate to TCU's core educational paradigm, namely the role of faculty as teachers and scholars. TCU is neither a research institute nor a degree factory. Our distinctive character derives from our capacity to unite scholarship with teaching. Scholarship involves the creation and dissemination of new knowledge, its integration and synthesis, and its application to new or persistent problems. Teaching requires not just the effective communication of this knowledge, but also the creation of a capacity for criticism and self-examination. Given TCU's strong commitment to the teacher-scholar model, it is imperative that we place a high value both on scholarship that has an impact on the learning experience of students and on teaching that is informed by scholarly activities. Ultimately, excellence in research and creative activity among faculty is the best way to ensure the quality of undergraduate education at TCU. We note that this connection was also strongly advocated in the Commission on the Future of TCU report.
- **The ability to sustain first-rate education at all levels depends on the development and maintenance of excellence in research programs, which in turn depend upon recruiting**

and retaining excellent faculty. Top research universities achieve recognition by attracting and retaining outstanding faculty and providing the infrastructure and incentives for first-rate research. These faculty attract the best students, and they establish and maintain the intellectual climate of learning that is the essence of the university community. Thus, in order for TCU to be recognized as an institution of excellence, significant new investment in research infrastructure will be required, including both recruiting new faculty and supporting successful existing faculty members, and in training and supporting both postdoctoral researchers and graduate students.

- **Graduate programs should not be judged solely in monetary terms.** Rather, they should be judged on quality, contribution to the University's mission, and competitiveness. They should not be judged on size or profitability alone.
- **The University must work to ensure a supportive environment for graduate education as well as quality research and creative activity.** At TCU, time spent on teaching and related activities generally exceeds that spent on research and creative activity. If graduate education is to grow at TCU an equitable process of recognition and reward for all graduate faculty activities should be developed.

Our report is structured as follows. We first present our response to the charge and the strategic questions that were raised as part of that charge. In our discussions it became apparent that questions 4 and 6 frequently overlapped. Consequently, we combined questions 4 and 6 into our present question 4. Then, we offer a series of recommendations that we believe can and should be implemented, some immediately, others with perhaps a longer-term view. These recommendations are aimed at raising the profile of research and graduate education among the faculty, the administration, and trustees at a time when many aspects of TCU are under discussion. We hope our findings will stimulate both discussion and action.

Response to the Charge

1. *What types of graduate programs should TCU build? Traditional doctoral? Non-traditional doctoral with a graduate professional orientation? Traditional Master's? Professional graduate Master's or 1st professional programs? What is the recommended balance/mix across program types?*

With the overriding goal of enhancing the prestige of the University and the role of faculty as teachers and scholars, graduate study and the associated research should be increased and advanced. A TCU graduate enrollment of 20-30% of the student body is reasonable. The recent environmental scan of the VIA (Spring 2004) confirms the dominance of universities with prominent graduate programs and established research emphases.

We do not suggest modeling TCU graduate programs after large research institutions; rather, we suggest programs that (i) fit with the needs of undergraduate programs, (ii) are in keeping with the high level of student-faculty interaction that is a TCU hallmark, (iii) promote and nurture the scholarship of the faculty and student body, and (iv) are responsive to the graduate education needs of the Metroplex.

While graduate programming is part of TCU's mission, it fulfills additional goals that include the creation and dissemination of new knowledge, its integration and synthesis, the development of techniques for generating new knowledge, and the application of knowledge to new or persistent problems.

TCU's graduate programs must include:

- Existing Ph.D. programs. These programs must be strengthened with an eye to improving the quality of students who are recruited, improving the graduation rates (i.e., the number of students who finish within five years), and increasing size when and where appropriate
- New programs
 - Selective, professional programs with a demonstrated demand (through market analysis) and potential for institutional profit should be considered. Professional director positions may be needed to administer these programs, depending on current faculty expertise
 - Traditional academic programs at the masters' level should be considered as resources/costs allow and demand is demonstrated. Such programs include research and creative activities and an expectation of external funding
 - Consideration must be given to programs that raise the caliber of undergraduate study, e.g., those that provide opportunities for undergraduate student research or mentoring relationships between graduate and undergraduate students
 - Programs that provide opportunities for collaborative relationships are also encouraged. We define collaboration in a broad way: interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, global environment, other institutions of distinction in research enterprise
- A viable balance of both traditional research programs and professional programs. Both need to be represented in the academy, but there is an expectation that an institutional balance must be achieved
- Philosophy of purpose
 - Additional programs should not be initiated at the expense of existing programs
 - Professional or certificate programs should not be considered the primary means for enhancing graduate populations. Professional and traditional graduate programs are *both* integral to advancing the University's stature

2. *What specific guidelines should be considered when redefining/repositioning existing or establishing new graduate degree programs?*

Graduate programs should:

- Be considered as a critical component in the fulfillment of the University's mission and as an active partner in the TCU academic community
- Directly contribute to the creation, dissemination, and application of knowledge
- Promote the University's vision and core values
- Enhance the University's prestige and stature
- Foster the University's teacher-scholar model
- Enrich the University's undergraduate programs
- Be responsive to local, regional, national, and/or international needs
- Be locally, regionally, or nationally competitive
- Be marketable
- Enhance a department's ability to recruit and retain highly qualified faculty and graduate students
- Have the financial resources to enable a department to recruit and retain faculty and graduate students
- Have appropriate teaching loads and overall work loads for faculty
- Have the necessary infrastructure to maintain programmatic health and viability

- Be able to demonstrate a high level of job placement for graduates, or the potential for a high level of job placement
- Strive to achieve excellence in one or more specific areas or fields

3. *What role should new or refined interdisciplinary/multidisciplinary programs (especially ones crossing college/school boundaries) play in the program mix?*

Interdisciplinary/multidisciplinary programs could play a prominent role in the University's graduate education offerings, especially as they create opportunities for small departments, lacking in critical mass, to develop and participate in graduate programs with significant external value. Such programs should provide the opportunity for outstanding scholars at TCU to work together in a manner that would not normally occur in today's environment. The University needs to be creative in fostering the development and success of these programs by addressing the difficult issues that arise, such as appropriate faculty and school incentives, course schedule planning, the creation of centers and institutes, and a university process for facilitating development of such programs.

Interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary programs should:

- Further the research enterprise
- Extend the philosophy of interconnectivity and relevance, which underlies the new undergraduate core curriculum
- Foster cooperation and integration across disciplines
- Provide a mechanism, along with the creation of centers and institutes, in order to organize faculty and resources that would enrich the academic community

4. *What internal issues must be faced and resolved for TCU to be successful in implementing this graduate vision?*

Implementation of the graduate vision will necessitate a climate change in which graduate programs and research activities are perceived as being vital to the life of the University. Money committed to the research enterprise should be viewed as an investment in TCU's future, one that would significantly enhance its capacity to fulfill its institutional mission. We recognize that increasing the resources for research involves a partnership between faculty and the administration. Certainly, the faculty bears a significant portion of the responsibility for attracting external funding for their research. However, the role of the University is to provide the necessary infrastructure and incentives to facilitate these efforts. We, therefore, affirm that all avenues of research and scholarship, even when externally funded, require a commitment of support by the institution.

Issues include:

- Addressing the true costs of developing and maintaining graduate programs
 - Ensuring necessary funds
 - Graduate stipends that fall within the top third of stipends offered by comparable peer institutions
 - Sufficient numbers of tuition scholarships and assistantships
 - New faculty lines
 - Acknowledging an appropriate graduate faculty workload
 - Recognizing that size alone does not indicate how robust a program is
- Adjusting TCU's marketing plan to include graduate programs and research endeavors in a significant way

- Developing a process to facilitate interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary program development
 - Addressing incentives for sharing faculty and credit hours across programs and across disciplinary boundaries
- Recruiting and retaining excellent faculty and students
- Addressing the development and implementation of an institutional review process
- Clarifying the vision of graduate education at TCU
- Developing a governance structure to enhance and facilitate graduate education

5. *What opportunities in the current local/regional market represent demand for graduate education that matches TCU's current strengths?*

With a population of 3.5 million, the Metroplex provides a rich market for graduate programs. We believe this market has not been fully developed and that opportunities exist for forging stronger community, municipal, and regional connections. Considerable market research will be required to help academic units understand the needs and opportunities in our local and regional market. These opportunities will vary from one discipline to another, and each unit will need access to market research to determine how local and regional markets will affect demand for their programs. A helpful market analysis would include:

- An understanding of how local and regional markets see TCU's strengths and programming options
- An understanding of the region's changing population demographics and forecasts for programming needs for both employers and potential graduate students (for example, who is currently hiring our students, and what needs do these employers have that the current applicant pool is lacking?)

While we did not want to make specific programming recommendations, some observations regarding opportunities in our market include:

- Based on the number of large employers in the area, there seems to be an opportunity to develop strategic partnerships
- Given the prevalence of Spanish-speaking workers and residents in our local/regional market, programs that combine bi-lingual studies with other areas of study may be warranted
- Appealing to local/regional needs may qualify TCU to secure federal grants or resources from private foundations. The Office of Research and Sponsored Projects could help coordinate opportunities in this area
- Nontraditional models for program delivery may enhance current graduate programming and create greater economy of scale. Some specific suggestions include:
 - Evening and weekend programming
 - Programs that offer on-line coursework with the potential to meet for intensive study briefings
 - Programs that prepare those who already have bachelor's degrees for professional programs, such as medical or law schools
 - Current graduate programs be taken off campus to selected hi-impact sites
 - Certification in specialized areas may appeal to local professionals as well as serve as a lead into graduate study

Recommendations

We recommend:

1. A strong advocacy of graduate education and research at TCU. Such possibilities for advocacy are (1) the appointment of a full-time Dean or Associate VC of Research and Graduate Studies, along with the necessary infrastructure to provide adequate support for strategic planning, graduate student recruiting, and support for graduate students and postdoctoral scholars. We are not, however, recommending a centralized control of programs. Tactical decisions are best made within individual schools and colleges. (2) The creation of a Research Council, comprised of leading research faculty, the Dean or Associate VC of Research and Graduate Studies, and the VC for Advancement. The council should meet frequently to discuss key issues associated with the research environment at TCU. The group would serve in an advisory capacity, proactively investigating new research opportunities and proposing mechanisms to strengthen ongoing programs and address shortcomings. The Council would make recommendations to the Provost and serve as an advocate for faculty interests in decisions associated with research and graduate education.
2. Incentives be provided for external funding efforts. First, we suggest that a portion of grant indirect charges be set aside for incentive programs. These monies might go to the Principal Investigator or unit to support research. They might be used for bridge funding to support graduate students when a researcher is between grants. They might provide travel grants for research assistants. They might enable a fund to support visiting professors who will collaborate in interdisciplinary programs. Second, ways to recognize faculty, departmental, and unit efforts and successes in seeking external funding should be developed. Public forums to celebrate these achievements, regular publicity of research endeavors, and participant inclusion in an advisory research council are some suggestions. Finally, tuition at full-time levels should be provided as part of the in-kind contribution of grants that fund research assistantships.
3. Policies concerning tenure, promotion, merit, and workloads for graduate faculty be reviewed. No single formula for an equitable faculty workload can be devised for all departments. This does not absolve us of the responsibility to ensure that faculty actively engaged in graduate programs and scholarly activities do not have excessive or unreasonable workloads. Such policies must allow for equitable workloads, including graduate teaching, supervision of graduate students, mentoring of students, and scholarship expectations. A flexible framework that allows adjustment of individual workloads will serve the University well, as it would provide faculty members timely opportunities to focus on particular aspects of their work.
4. Expand the Office of Research and Sponsored Projects. Provide a proposal development professional who can assist with the development of large, interdisciplinary or multi-institutional applications. Also, explore ways to better support faculty interested in obtaining funds for arts, humanities, and social science-based research projects.
5. Improve partnerships with international scholars and institutions. For example, organize or host visits from or to international institutions, assist faculty and departments in developing joint programs, and work with faculty and students on exchanges and in identifying fellowships for international study.
6. Explore opportunities where graduate programs may benefit from being combined through centers, such a humanities center and a social sciences center. In this way, research resources could be combined.
7. Existing seed programs (such as RCAF) be expanded to encourage and reward success. We also suggest that RCAF funds be used for both new and continuing research projects. TCU should also look to creating an endowment for faculty fellowships that could be used for direct support of faculty research and/or to obtain a sufficient number of teaching assistants to create

opportunities for faculty to have teaching load reductions for scholarship, sabbaticals, and academic leaves.

8. A major development initiative to support graduate fellowships be initiated as one of the highest development priorities of the University. We recommend a target of 10% of the projected graduate population.