Over the 2010-11 academic year, the Wright State University Graduate School engaged in a strategic planning process. This process involved extensive consultation with key faculty and administrators on campus, broad surveys of graduate students, faculty, and outside stakeholders, and two strategic planning sessions held with a committee of faculty, staff, administrators, students, and outside partners. The result of this year-long effort is presented here—a plan to guide the major efforts of the Graduate School for the next five years.
Graduate education at Wright State University encompasses a very significant portion of the university’s activities. In 2010-11 there were over 4,000 graduate students on the main campus, representing an FTE enrollment of nearly 2,400. These students accounted for nearly 100,000 credit hours and generated some $34.5 million in tuition revenue, which accounts for 22% of the university’s total tuition revenue ($158M) (figure 1).

Graduate education has grown to encompass all eight of Wright State’s colleges and schools. In addition to eight doctorates—five research-based PhD programs and three professional doctorates—there are over 60 master’s programs, running the gamut from business administration and English to public health and pharmacology. While WSU cannot offer graduate degrees in every field, the expansion of graduate programs over the past twenty years has brought tremendous opportunities to people in the Miami Valley region and beyond.

Graduate education is also closely linked with the success of WSU’s research endeavors. In recent years the university has enjoyed tremendous success in attracting research dollars, topping over $80 million in sponsored research and contracts (figure 2). Many of these grants are made possible by the success of our graduate programs, which in turn are made stronger by the resources that grants bring.

*Total Funding for FY11 and FY10 does not include SSI/Recovery Funds.*
The survey feedback and the Strategic Planning Committee unanimously agree that Wright State has a very strong graduate program. There are three great strengths in Wright State’s graduate education. The first was mentioned above: our **breadth of programming**. With graduate degrees across many different fields from education to engineering, Wright State has a major impact in developing the kind of well-educated workforce that Ohio needs to build its future.

The second area of significant strength is **flexibility and innovation**. Wright State’s vision is to be Ohio’s most innovative university, and it has demonstrated that in the development of its graduate programs and Centers of Excellence. Many of our graduate programs—like biomedical engineering, environmental sciences, and human factors psychology—are on the cutting edge of knowledge in their fields. And many are built around interdisciplinary areas—our “matrix departments”—that cut across departmental and college lines.

Finally, Wright State’s graduate programs have developed particular **strength in the fields of science and engineering**. This is particularly true of the many biomedical programs—from neuroscience to pharmacology and toxicology to biomedical engineering—as well as the study of human performance from medical, engineering, and psychological standpoints. These strengths in turn bolster the strength of many cognate fields in science, mathematics, engineering, and medicine, leading to a cluster of strength in both research and graduate education in the sciences that rivals that of many larger universities. In fact, in a recent study, the National Research Council ranked the aerospace related engineering Ph.D. programs at Wright State University the best in Ohio (figure 3).

**Figure 3: NRC Rankings of Aerospace Engineering**

**Ph.D Programs - 2010**

Survey-Derived Weighting Method

The dot represents the Best Reported Rank for an individual program (i.e. The program was ranked in the range of reported ranking results for an individual program high or higher 5% of the time).
CHALLENGES

As the survey feedback and the discussion in the Strategic Planning Committee indicate, the challenges faced by the Graduate School in fulfilling its mission are not simply a matter of resources. During challenging times, it’s always easy to blame problems on a lack of dollars. But it is not the lack of funds that poses the most significant obstacle to success in the Graduate School’s strategic plan. Rather, the Strategic Planning Committee feels that our key challenges lie in three areas: **Incentives, Leverage, and Strategic Investment.**

**Incentives:** The challenge of lack of incentives stems from both structures and culture inherited from the past. Wright State has done very well for itself in its short history—but as times change, systems and patterns must change along with them. At present, there are many successful graduate programs at Wright State that have additional capacity to grow, to take on more students and bring in greater revenue for the university while expanding educational opportunities for people who want to get into new fields. But these programs lack the incentive to do so; for many of them, accepting additional students means taking on additional work and stretching beyond their comfort zone without any direct reward or benefit. With no incentive structure in place to reward program growth or development, it will be difficult to expand and develop new programs in the future.

**Leverage:** Alongside the challenge of the existing incentive structure is the lack of leverage on the part of the Graduate School. The Graduate School’s mission is to lead graduate education at Wright State, to pursue opportunities to expand and develop the excellence of our graduate offerings. But at present, the Graduate School has relatively few tools to work with in persuading colleges, departments and programs to move in new and promising directions. We have few if any incentives to offer (see above), and we control relatively few resources that the
colleges and departments care about. Of the total budget of university support for graduate education – over $16 million in all – a mere $3.5 million (about 20%) passes through the Graduate School, and much of that resource stream (70% of the $3.5M) is tied to entitlement programs which cannot be easily redirected (figure 4).

**Figure 4:**
Campus Graduate Student Support By College

- Business, $1,632,691
- Education, $362,109
- Engineering, $499,107
- Lib Arts, $531,770
- Nursing, $20,977
- Sci & Math, $2,127,829
- SOPP, $791,717
- GS, $3,557,998

**Strategic Investment:** Finally, we need strategic investments in a few key areas. Although investment is a matter of resources, this is not primarily a question of producing more money. Rather, the challenge is to target investments to areas that have tremendous potential for breakout growth – where we can get a lot of “bang for the buck” and recoup the investment relatively quickly. Some examples are spelled out below in the Opportunities section. This is an area in which the Graduate School needs the ability to provide incentives and leverage in order to follow up on the most promising ideas. In the absence of the ability to make strategic investments in a timely fashion, Wright State will miss a great many opportunities in favor of simply preserving the status quo.
OPPORTUNITIES

Opportunity comes from a confluence of two factors: external circumstances (demand in the marketplace) and internal strengths (what are we good at?) Opportunities can be created by action (changing what we do and what we’re good at in response to market needs), but that takes a great deal of time and effort. Where opportunities exist already, they need to be exploited.

In the realm of graduate education, what are Wright State’s internal strengths? As discussed above, our most distinctive areas of strength are in the sciences and engineering. In particular, we have great strength in the areas related to aerospace engineering, biomedical sciences, biomedical engineering, and the science of human performance.

These are all, by happy circumstance, areas that are in demand in the broader marketplace (figure 5). Even given the slump in the national economy, there remains a high demand for engineering—and that demand is even stronger overseas. Likewise, the medical field in the United States remains a strong growth area, and medical research continues to be one of America’s great strengths in the world. Regionally, the Miami Valley has hitched its economic development hopes to the fields of aerospace technology, medicine, and higher education.

Opportunities exist, therefore, to grow graduate education in these fields at Wright State. Moreover, we lack the constraints that often prevent universities from taking advantage of opportunity. Our fiscal position is strong, with a very low debt load. We have a good base of relationships with the surrounding community. And we have a history of both interdisciplinary innovation and flexibility uncommon in research universities. The strategic plan below outlines ways in which we can use our strengths to take advantage of the opportunities available to us to grow and strengthen Wright State University’s graduate programs.

Figure 5: Percent of students who are denied admission due to program capacity, indicating high demand and the potential to grow.
The Graduate School has adopted a vision and mission statement based on feedback from faculty, staff, students, outside stakeholders and, most importantly, our strategic planning committee. It encompasses our aspirations and goals—who we are, who we hope to be, and what we do.

**Vision Statement:**

We aspire to be one of the most innovative graduate schools in the nation, facilitating change, advancing knowledge, and educating people to enrich our communities and our world.
**Mission Statement:**

The mission of the Graduate School is to provide leadership in graduate education at Wright State by:

**I. Growth and Improvement:** Facilitating the development, growth, improvement, and maintenance of innovative, high quality graduate programs at Wright State.

**II. Visibility:** Bolstering the visibility and reputation of Wright State’s graduate programs locally, regionally, nationally and internationally.

**III. Efficiency:** Delivering efficient and effective services in support of graduate education.

**IV. Research and Economic Development:** Supporting scholarly research, creative endeavors, economic development and community engagement.
STRATEGIC GOALS AND INITIATIVES

Based on the Mission Statement above, and based on the analysis of our strengths, challenges, and opportunities, we have developed a set of Strategic Goals and Initiatives. These will guide our actions in the coming years, and form the nucleus of this Strategic Plan. Each goal or initiative is linked to one of the main points of the Mission Statement as indicated in bold letters below.

I. Facilitating Development, Growth & Improvement of Graduate Programs

1) Recruit high-quality graduate students
2) Support students: increase their success in program completion
3) Support diversity in graduate education
4) Strengthen the most productive graduate programs
5) Develop new programs
6) Develop domestic and international partnerships

II. Bolstering Visibility & Reputation

7) Increase the visibility of Wright State graduate programs locally, nationally, & internationally

III. Delivering Efficient & Effective Services

8) Develop more efficient admissions processes
9) Increase training for employees in customer interaction & support
10) Improve communication with units and constituencies inside & outside campus

IV. Supporting Research & Economic Development

11) Increase opportunities/chances for Wright State graduates to succeed in the marketplace
12) Develop interdisciplinary programs that focus on real-world or societal problems
1) **Recruit high-quality graduate students and support enrollment growth**

**Goal:** Increase recruitment of graduate students 2% annually.

**Areas of Action:**

- Work with programs and campus administration to facilitate change in admission practices and achieve enrollment growth
- Workshop for Program Directors on Recruitment
- Graduate School Website Redesign
- Identifying Growth Areas in Graduate Programs, Working with Program Directors and Faculty to become active recruiters
- Work with Alumni office to find alumni willing to help recruit; Acquire stories of successful alumni for use in marketing

2) **Support students: increase their success in program completion**

**Goal:** Increase retention and completion rates of graduate students by 2% annually.

**Areas of Action:**

- Build a Communications Plan using the Retain software tools
- Reconstitute Enrollment Management Committee connected to the Graduate Council
- Gather and analyze data for patterns in retention/completion; use data to develop metrics and formulate additional plans
3) **Support diversity in graduate education**

**Goal:** Bolster the diversity of the graduate student population through improved recruitment, retention, and completion

**Areas of Action:**

- Work with the Bolinga Center and graduate student organizations to identify unmet or underserved academic support needs for minority students
- Work with faculty in utilizing funded training grant programs to increase underrepresented minority applications to WSU grad programs
- Partner with Student Affairs, Affirmative Action, and the Diversity Office to develop additional programs to support recruitment and retention of minority graduate students

4) **Strengthen those graduate programs that are the most productive and that have high potential for growth**

**Goal:** Boost productivity (in enrollment and production of degrees) by 2% annually and facilitate investment in high-potential and high-growth programs

**Areas of Action:**

- Work with the Provost to identify additional resources for supporting high-potential programs
- Work with Associate Deans of academic colleges to refine the allocation of Graduate Tuition Scholarship funds
- Work with the AVP for Budget & Planning to create a permanent solution to the research tuition support budget (601)
- Gather data to identify programs with high growth and degree productivity potential, direct resources and assistance their way
5) **Develop new programs**

**Goal:** Increase graduate offerings by eight new programs by 2016—four new degree programs and four combined-degree programs

**Areas of Action:**

- Master of Social Work (MSW) Program
- Cyber Security Program
- Biostatistics Program
- On-Line Master of Science Teaching (MST) in Earth Sciences
- 5-Year Bachelor’s-Master’s Combined-Degree Programs within Wright State
- Ed.D. in Organizational Leadership
- Develop Strategic Marketing/Launch Assistance Resources and Program
6) **Develop domestic and international partnerships**

One of the best ways to create pipelines of individual students is through partnerships—relationships through which Wright State can offer benefits to outside undergraduate students and their home institutions in return for their coming to WSU for their graduate study. Done well, these partnerships offer something for everyone—the student gets both bachelor’s and master’s degrees in less time and for less money, the sending institution gets to use the affiliation for its own marketing purposes, and Wright State gets a stream of well-prepared students directly into its graduate programs. Moreover, these pipelines tend to build on themselves; once a few successful students have gone through, word gets back and more are willing to come.

**Goal:** Develop three international and three domestic partnerships in the next five years; at maturity each should involve active collaboration in joint or combined degrees, student exchange, and/or joint research.

**Areas of Action:**

- Chung-Yuan Christian University: Strengthen existing ties and formalize joint MS degree program
- PSG: Strengthen existing ties and formalize joint MS degree program
- Dalian Institute of Science and Technology, China
- Dalian Jiaotong University, China
- Shanxi University of Economics and Finance, China
- Taiyuan University of Technology, China
- Shanxi University, China
- Atilim University, Turkey
- IU-East, Indiana
- Wilmington, Ohio
- Cedarville, Ohio
- Central State, Ohio

Signing Ceremony for Memorandum of Understanding between WSU and Atilim University, September 2011
**BOLSTERING VISIBILITY & REPUTATION**

7) Increase the visibility of Wright State graduate programs locally, nationally, and internationally

Reputation is a function of two things: the excellence of what you do, and the extent to which you make what you do visible. In the long run, reputation comes from results—producing valuable research and training excellent students who become successful in their fields. In the shorter run, however, marketing is necessary to get the word out about what we are doing and how it is important to our region, our state, and our nation.

There are three elements needed here. First, we need market research to know what the public perception is of Wright State. History and anecdotal evidence suggest that we are known primarily for being public (and therefore inexpensive) and for our undergraduate programs (since undergraduates make up 80% of the student body, and some of the most prominent elements of the university—like the basketball team—are undergrad in origin). It is also likely that the farther one gets from southwestern Ohio, the more likely it is that people have simply not heard of Wright State. We need to know what the public perception is in our region, across the state, and across the country with respect to Wright State’s graduate programs so that we can effectively target our marketing efforts.

Second, we need traditional marketing of our graduate programs, focusing on areas of strength. These efforts serve both to help recruit students and to build reputation and awareness of Wright State as a good place for graduate education. Marketing should be targeted in areas that prospective students are likely to be looking (on the internet, in field-related publications, etc.) as well as in more broadly visible places that will help build awareness of Wright State.

Third, we need concerted efforts to “tell the story”—to broadcast the good work and valuable research being generated by our graduate programs. This is traditionally the realm of PR and communications, and while the University has an office that does such things, its attention is drawn across the whole of the institution. We need to find the most marketable stories and get them out into the public realm.

**Goal:** Increase visibility, awareness and reputation of WSU graduate programs
Areas of Action:
• Market Research—What are public perceptions of Wright State?

• Marketing Campaign/Paid Advertising (Includes internet advertising, Search Engine Marketing, and traditional outlets)

• Facebook Page

• “Newsroom” on Website/feed to Facebook/Marketing & Communications

• Annual Sponsored Event? “Graduate School Forum”

• Fall & Spring Open Houses

• Grad School Day/Open House for the Office

• Op-Eds in Dayton Daily News
DELIVERING EFFICIENT & EFFECTIVE SERVICES

8) Develop more efficient admissions processes

Goal: Streamline the admissions process, reducing time-to-decision by 5% on average, and increasing yields in admitted students

Action Areas:
• Implement a Workflow System for Graduate Admissions
• Integrate international admissions into the Grad School office
• Set up auto-admission processes for select graduate programs

9) Increase training for employees in customer interaction & support

Goal: Provide excellent customer support throughout the Graduate School operation

Action Areas:
• Quarterly workshops/brainstorming sessions on customer service and other office efficiency topics
• Institute Customer Satisfaction surveys

10) Improve communication with units and constituencies inside and outside campus

Goal: Increase awareness and influence of Graduate School as a unit on and off campus, reduce communications difficulties

Action Areas:
• Identifying and fixing gaps in Graduate School Communications [internal & external]; Develop “for Dummies” cheat sheets and materials
• Workshops/Annual Retreats on Graduate Recruitment & Advising with Graduate Program Directors
• Handbook for Graduate Program Directors
  ❖ Survey Grad Program Directors – what do they most need to know?
  ❖ Pull together “for Dummies” materials explaining processes
  ❖ Survey GS staff – where do people run into the most problems?
SUPPORTING RESEARCH & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

In order to advance graduate studies at Wright State University, graduate education needs to be more thoroughly integrated with both research and economic development. Research and graduate programs are mutually-supporting activities that need each other to thrive. Graduate education is enriched by active student participation in ongoing research, while students provide additional capacity for faculty to engage in more research than they could do alone. Graduate students can, through research and other forms of community-engaged projects, also contribute significantly to economic development initiatives, while becoming better attuned to the marketplace and helping to ensure their future success. Connections with partners outside the university will thus be crucial to the success of Wright State’s graduate programs in the future.

11) Increase opportunities/chances for Wright State graduates to succeed in the marketplace

12) Develop interdisciplinary programs that focus on real-world or societal problems

Action Area:
• Meet with External Advisory Board to consult and generate ideas on how to increase opportunities for WSU graduates and on what additional programs might best serve the economic development needs of the community

Agreement Signing between Mound Laser Photonics Center and WSU, July 2011