GRADUATE SCHOOL MISSION

Graduate study at Ball State supports the institution’s mission by seeking to develop the intellectual breadth and specialized training necessary for careers in teaching, research, and other professions. Graduate programs emphasize the knowledge, methods, and skills needed for scholarly teaching, problem solving, developing original research, creative inquiry and expression, and intellectual leadership. This commitment prepares responsible civic and professional leaders for our community, the state, nation, and world.

The problems and issues facing society require new knowledge and new ways of using existing knowledge, especially with the continuing advancement of technology. To meet the challenges of working in a global society, graduate programs provide an atmosphere which fosters scholarship, creative activity, intellectual freedom, interdisciplinary study, student/faculty collaboration, and integrity of action within a diverse climate of teachers and learners.

DIRECTORS OF GRADUATE STUDIES (DGS)

At Ball State we have many titles for those academic professionals who are charged with the direction of their graduate programs. For clarification purposes, we will refer to this role as Director of Graduate Studies (DGS).

A DGS will often be more experienced faculty within the graduate program. Many (but not all) programs provide some type of incentive for faculty serving in administrative roles, such as course release time or salary supplements (flat amount or percentage of salary). Such responsibilities are sometimes considered in merit pay.

This guide is established in two parts:

• Part One: Role of Director of Graduate Studies
• Part Two: Fostering Success in Your DGS Role

We hope you will focus on Part One, and when you are ready, review Part Two. This guide serves to make suggestions and consideration; it is not intended as a mandate.

“Ball State Graduate School prepared me for my first position as Assistant Professor at Chattanooga State College academically as well as giving me hands-on real-life experience as a professional in my field.”

Jennifer Arbogast, ’12
Columbus, Ohio, DA in music
A Place to Start: Role of DGS

- Understand critical times for these responsibilities so that you can plan for some administratively-heavy weeks, especially near the beginning and end of semesters.
- Establishing a percentage of time expected to devote to these responsibilities, as balanced with your own research and teaching, is common. The percentage of time will fluctuate depending on the time of year and students’ needs.
- Play a key role in fostering excellence, innovation, and diversity in your graduate school program(s).
- Serve as a liaison between the department and the Graduate School for policy clarification, special or unique situations, and general inquiries. Use the Ball State Graduate School catalog as a key resource for policy and process information.
- Communicate to students their academic responsibilities and information about how to access various resources.
- Be responsible for the initial response to most graduate student situations, including grade appeals, grievance, or mentoring/advising issues.
- Remind students about important deadline dates, such as graduation applications and thesis/dissertation submission deadlines.
- Consider individual or group meetings with each graduate student at the beginning of each academic year. Use this time to:
  - Maintain connections with the students.
  - Check in on progress relevant to research or graduation.
  - Identify any issues students may be facing.
  - Share any relevant information with other graduate faculty.
  - Consider recording notes of these meetings, as they represent a continuous assessment of progress as part of the student’s records.
- Lead efforts to revise, maintain, and evaluate the academic requirements and standards of the graduate degree programs. Often this will include coordinating

a graduate affairs or advisory committee with program faculty and graduate student representatives. This role may also involve maintaining an internal graduate program handbook or guidelines.
- Coordinate the efforts of multiple area/specialty directors when there are multiple programs (unique to specific programs), including serving as a resource on policies and procedures.
- Coordinate graduate student selection processes for identifying students to be nominated for Graduate School fellowships and awards such as Excellence in Teaching, Distinguished Creative Project, Distinguished Thesis, etc.
- If course releases are provided in your program, consider the best timing for the release depending on your own program’s cycle of activities. For example, the fall may be busy with new students and checkpoint meetings and the spring may be busier with admissions activities.
- Gain an understanding of Graduate Merit Fellowships.
- Review Graduate Assistant Guidelines.

Working with Prospective Students and Applicants

- Create a small, written strategic plan for recruitment with measurable outcomes. A few areas to include in this report:
  - Work with industry associations. (e.g. conferences, web ads, guides, magazines).
  - How to reach feeder institutions visits/contact/mailing.
  - How to reach Ball State students and alumni.
  - How to reach students from complementary disciplines.
  - How to utilize social media.
  - How to create events to showcase your program and secure prospective students and applicants.
  - How to manage your student prospect data.
- Create a “Call to Action” on your website. Suggested actions include:
  - Make an appointment with an advisor.
  - Attend an information session.
  - Request more information.
  - Succinct, easy to find information on the website.

“If I had to describe my graduate school experience in one word, it would be Connections.”

Derek Anger, ’12
Brownsburg, Indiana, MA in architecture
Serve as the first point of contact for the majority of inquiries from prospective students. Ask your colleagues—faculty, staff, and graduate students—to address some queries but be prepared to spend your own time recruiting the program’s top candidates.

Recognize that visiting Ball State has often positively impacted applicants’ decision about accepting admission here. The friendliness of faculty, staff, and students, as well as the local area cost of living, are considered very important to applicants considering offers of admission from various universities.

Determine ways to utilize students in your recruiting efforts. A few suggestions: student testimonials (examples include videos or short quotes with student photos), return to their home institutions/departments/family for presentations or information sessions, and meeting with prospects.

Plan recruitment events as desired, including prospective student campus informational visit/webinar and interview events. Maximize your time with prospective students and provide a call to action on your website.

Coordinate the applicant review and recruitment efforts for your graduate degree program.

Be mindful of how travel constraints, including international travel and financial costs, may impact the applicant’s plans.

Oversee and maintain all recruitment materials, both online and print materials.

Coordinate communications with applicants, including funding offers, to ensure the most competitive offers possible, including assurance of multiple years of funding, if possible. Stay aware of funding offers provided by graduate program peers to ensure competitiveness for the best students.

Establish an admissions committee and select staff and students, as appropriate, to assist with setting priorities for recruitment, identifying common decision criteria, reviewing applications, ensuring the diversity of incoming students, making admissions decisions, and recruiting prospective students.

Stay abreast of resources on campus that can assist in recruitment endeavors (Teleplex, New Media, etc.)

Utilize the Graduate School Recruiter’s assistance whenever possible.

Target online materials and your program website for frequent updates. Strong websites answer many questions for applicants, but most importantly, they are the primary recruitment tool for today’s prospective students. Be sure the information is easily accessible and intuitive (limit the amount of jargon or Ball State abbreviations).

Each fall, the Office of Institutional Diversity will send out the Ronald E. McNair Scholars Database. The directory is a database of Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program scholars projected to graduate this year or next year. The database serves as a valuable recruitment tool by allowing program directors to directly contact a cohort of highly talented and motivated students.

Working with Current Students

Communicate their academic responsibilities and provide them with information on how to access various resources.

Monitor student progress through key deadlines such as comprehensive exams, proposal defenses, and graduation application and thesis submission deadlines. Ensure adherence to University and Graduate School guidelines. These include time limits on degrees, continuous enrollment, and grade change deadlines.

Encourage students to share their work. This can be through conferences, publications, the annual Student Symposium on campus, or departmental functions.

Consider exit interviews with graduate students and make use of institution-wide surveys and other data to identify areas of strength and an opportunity for the program. Implement suggested changes accordingly.

“My graduate school experience opened new doors for me professionally, connected me to amazing people, and allowed me to discover new directions my life can take.”

Margaret Cude, ’15
Smithland, Kentucky, MA in public relations
PART TWO

Fostering Success in your DGS Role

• Preserve the values of a respective graduate school program while serving as a support resource for students, creating a balance between the two responsibilities. Program requirements and expectations, as well as the needs of the students, should be equal in importance.
• The DGS does not work in isolation. Most programs have a graduate affairs or advisory committee that assists with difficult issues, appeals, or exception requests. Involve graduate students in these committees when appropriate to secure feedback from all perspectives.
• Feel comfortable consulting other DGS designees and staff in the Graduate School about unusual situations. There are many campus resources and most situations need not be handled alone.
• Communicate with your program’s graduate faculty and staff regularly, and rely on them to provide input on student progress and to engage with their students. Solid advising and routine feedback are essential for students to make continued progress. The entire program must be involved in these efforts, especially when dealing with below standard performance.
• Within your department/program, initiate conversations about, and advocate for, improvements that promote excellence, innovation, and inclusive community building. Use data and student input to support your efforts.
• Consider ways your program can recruit from various target audiences, including underrepresented populations.
• Consider various formats for information sessions for prospective students. Possibilities include a campus visit day, webinar, or informational lunches.
• Establish your program and discipline priorities for standardized aspects of applications. How much weight will the GRE scores and undergraduate GPA hold? How will you value professional or research experience? Engage department colleagues in these discussions to establish common benchmarks for the admissions committee to use.
• Help connect prospective students with current graduate students and faculty whose research areas are good matches. These individuals will be able to sell the program and identify if the candidate is a good fit. Student ambassadors are critical to a successful recruitment program. In fact, students tell us that their interactions with other students may be one of the most important aspects of recruiting new students.
• Consider various formats for interview weekends or recruitment visits. Possibilities include multi-day visits, short and local events such as dinner, or informal events at faculty homes. Keep budget constraints in mind when planning events, both your own program budget and what you are expecting the candidates to cover.
• When making a financial recruitment pitch, do not forget to include information about the local cost of living (housing and transportation) and job opportunities for following family members.
• International student recruitment and admissions is a complicated process. Rely on key offices, such as the Graduate School and Rinker Center for International Programs for clarification on questions.
• Consider surveying students who were admitted and did not choose to enroll in your program. While your response rates may be small, any information gathered may aid in improving your admissions and recruitment processes in future years.
• The Graduate School offers virtual webinars in the summer prior to the start of the fall terms for on-campus students. We offer a Pre-Arrival Orientation Webinar and Graduate Assistant Webinar. Additionally, a session regarding campus resources is offered for all graduate students at the start of every term. We also encourage departments to work with us to develop webinars that offer orientation for their own specific programs.

“My professors challenged me to become a better student, but also a better person. They challenged me to communicate better and step outside of my comfort zone.”

Larron Smith, ’12
Indianapolis, Indiana, MS in accounting
LIST OF KEY CONTACTS
If you have a question regarding one of the following areas, find the right person to contact in the list below.

Admissions
Mindy Wagner
(765) 285-1286
mjbeard@bsu.edu

Graduate Assistantships
Linda Conwell
(765) 285-1301
gradschool@bsu.edu

Graduation
Mandy Lowe
(765) 285-1301
mslowe@bsu.edu

Recruiting and Website Changes
Stephanie Wilson
(765) 285-6130
shuffman@bsu.edu

CALENDAR OF EVENTS
The following events are suggestions for a program with fall admits. You may want to adjust for your specific situation. View the academic calendar for important deadline dates.

Fall Semester
• Graduate admissions open for the following academic year cycle (Early July)
• Encourage students to attend Graduate School Orientation (Thursday before classes start)
• Guide students to ensure they enroll in appropriate classes
• Host department orientation
• Finalize recruitment plan for next academic year
• Remind students of graduation deadline and submission deadline
• Distinguished Thesis Award Due (early October)
• Excellence in Teaching Award Due (early November)

Spring Semester
• Encourage newly enrolled students to attend the spring Graduate School orientation (held the week before classes start)
• Continue recruiting efforts
• Make assistantship offers
• Admit students for fall semester
• Remind students of graduation deadline and submission deadline
• Nominate students for recognition ceremony (mid February)
• Graduate School’s Annual Graduate Student Recognition Celebration
• Review criteria and nominate students for McNair Scholars Program (nominations accepted as submitted)
• Review criteria for housing scholarships
• Creative Project Awards Due (mid January)
• Distinguished Dissertation Award Due (mid February)

Summer Semesters
• Encourage newly enrolled students to attend the summer Graduate School orientation (held the week before classes start)
• Deadline for Graduate Merit Fellowships materials (July 1)
• Communicate with incoming students
• Remind students of graduation deadline and submission deadline
• Plan your departmental orientation for August

HELPFUL LINKS
Graduate School Forms
Graduate Assistant Guidelines

“...The best part of my Ball State graduate experience was being so closely tied to my department, faculty, and fellow graduate students.”

Kory Carey, ’12
Indianapolis, Indiana, Ph.D in counseling psychology
This document has benefited from the work of the Graduate School at the University of Oregon. Materials are used by permission. These guidelines are intended to be constructive and instructive to faculty and graduate students. They do not constitute a contract with current or prospective students.

The information presented here, correct at the time of publication, is subject to change. Ball State University practices equal opportunity in education and employment and is strongly and actively committed to diversity within its community. 9457-14 umc