
A VISION FOR GRADUATE EDUCATION

GEORGIA SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY

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INTRODUCTION:

The goals of graduate education at Georgia Southern University are to provide a learning environment which fosters creative thinking in the minds of our students, and to produce graduates who improve and enrich society. As stated in Georgia Southern's mission, our programs "prepare a diverse and select undergraduate and graduate student population for leadership and service as world citizens. Faculty, staff, and students embrace core values expressed through integrity, civility, kindness, collaboration, and a commitment to lifelong learning, wellness, and social responsibility."

Our academic distinction arises from the quality and integrity of our programs. A graduate degree from Georgia Southern is a valued statement of this distinction, as such degrees are earned only by those individuals who have achieved the standards of this community of learners.

MAINTAINING INTEGRITY AND QUALITY

The hallmarks of graduate education at Georgia Southern University are integrity and quality. Increasing enrollment must be met with resources to improve programs.

We maintain our *integrity* when we have students who are qualified to earn graduate degrees, who are taught by graduate faculty who are qualified to teach in graduate programs. This is accomplished by only accepting qualified students and qualified faculty. The graduate faculty within each college may define additional standards for qualified students and qualified faculty, thus empowering the college faculty in strengthening their graduate programs according to their needs.

In the future, there may be more students in online graduate programs than in traditional graduate programs. This is because there are a finite number of students who can come to the Georgia Southern campus. However, online education is not and should not be more important to Georgia Southern University than face-to-face graduate education. Faculty should be provided with the resources they need in order to sustain the high quality of graduate education at Georgia Southern, regardless of the method of delivery. A logical evolution toward online delivery is expected in some, but not all, programs.

We maintain our *quality* through the use of qualitative measures, including student evaluations of faculty; uniqueness of courses and programs; teaching methods; and the quality of scholarship of students and faculty. While COGS' mission includes developing, reviewing, and assessing graduate policies and programs, college-level responsibilities include assessing the dispositions of incoming and outgoing students; assessing the programs internally; providing internship programs; maintaining accreditations; providing qualified faculty; planning appropriate student/faculty ratios; delivering cutting-edge practices; and distributing an appropriate workload/teaching load.

These high-quality graduate programs should be provided with the resources needed to sustain them. Such investments in graduate education are vital to maintaining integrity and

quality. For example, some of the funds from the e-tuition rate for online courses should flow back to departments and to Henderson Library, in order to directly support the needs of growing programs.

CULTIVATING OUR GRADUATE CULTURE

As one step in the university's development as a doctoral-research university, Georgia Southern needs to identify and develop the values which support its graduate programs. In the effort to meet our goal to cultivate a distinct graduate culture, we should ensure that the graduate programs at Georgia Southern are effective, creative, and cutting-edge.

The growth of a graduate culture also includes the belief that the graduate student body is capable of and invested in developing critical thinking and analytical skills, intellectual curiosity, effective interpersonal skills, and professional dispositions appropriate to the program, the university, and a global society. Graduate programs should be designed to inspire students to not only attain a high level of professional training, but to develop a graduate mindset regarding research and contribution to one's profession.

A commitment to multicultural awareness and knowledge is integral to sustainable graduate programs. Abiding by diversity-oriented and ethical policies and procedures will contribute to the growth of open, inquiry-based learning. Programs must remain motivated to sustain academic rigor and provide a transformative educational experience.

By fostering a strong bond with the undergraduate culture, it is important that each college create a graduate experience which best reflects each college's unique and vibrant mission and strengths.

Overall, graduate education at Georgia Southern University shall:

- ◆ Offer programs which are of high quality, consistent with the overall mission of the university, and which build upon existing strengths;
- ◆ Be responsive and supportive;
- ◆ Have an efficient, timely and transparent admission process, which is committed to continuous assessment and improvement; and
- ◆ Have an open and welcoming environment for all people, so that students, staff, and faculty feel valued, respected, and appreciated.

DEFINING OUR VISION AND MISSION

The vision and mission of the Averitt College of Graduate Studies at Georgia Southern University shall be compatible with the University's Strategic Plan and student-centered focus, as well as the Board of Regents' Strategic Plan and Goals for Graduate Education. It is important that each college create a graduate portfolio to reflect that college's unique and vibrant mission and strengths.