

# VISION 2025

ADVOCATE \ CULTIVATE \ CONNECT

The Graduate School enhances the University's reputation for academic excellence by maintaining and promoting the highest quality master's and doctoral education in a highly collaborative and interdisciplinary environment. We promote a transformative educational experience for graduate students and postdoctoral trainees at Northwestern University.

## Strategic Plan: Vision 2025

Our strategic plan, "Vision 2025," serves as our road map to promote our values and align our goals with the strategic priorities of the University. Through this plan, we are building on current excellence, supporting growth in emerging areas, and prioritizing graduate funding and programming. Our mission is to create and communicate an intentional and adaptable educational infrastructure for a diverse population of graduate students and postdoctoral trainees in an accessible and equitable environment.

We **advocate** for excellent graduate and advanced educational opportunities; **cultivate** a healthy, diverse, and engaged community; and **connect** graduate students and postdoctoral trainees with supportive communities and global opportunities.

## \ FY2019: Year of Structure \

For FY2019, we focused on building a strong foundation on which to grow the intellectual and research eminence of the University. This included an evaluation of programs, structures, practices, and policies, prioritizing those that are essential to our populations.

### Strategic Plan Accomplishments

#### Expedited Financial Decision Timeline

- We successfully partnered with Central Administration and the Office of Budget and Planning to expedite our financial decision timeline to provide schools and programs advance notice when recruiting and admitting PhD students.
- We evaluated our current financial commitments and implemented a new tracking system to build efficiency around the financial commitment process.
- We enhanced our detailed forecast and budget activities and our graduate financial aid consolidation and risk assessment process for our partner schools.

#### Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Council

- We convened a Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Council to align with University priorities and create a forum for discussing the efficacy of our initiatives.
- The first meeting was held in spring quarter and meetings will continue in FY2020.

#### Course Catalog System Migration

- In collaboration with the Office of the Registrar, we migrated the graduate academic policy and degree course catalog to the new CourseLeaf online system.

#### Concentrated Alumni Outreach

- We identified a director of development in Alumni Relations and Development (Kelly Colpoys) to help us engage with potential donors by adding TGS to her current development portfolio.
- In partnership with the Northwestern Alumni Association, we held a Graduate Alumni Homecoming Gathering. This inaugural event brought together alumni, current students, and staff to foster a stronger sense of community and celebrate our shared accomplishments.
- We continue to host small group meals locally and regionally with alumni donors and friends of the University. These meals provide an intimate setting to articulate our strategic vision, seek advice, and cultivate relationships with engaged alumni, enabling Alumni Relations and Development to build relationships and strategize engagement/philanthropy opportunities.

#### Website Redesign

- We revamped our TGS website to make information and resources more accessible.
- We introduced a new Postdoctoral Affairs website to address the specific needs of postdoctoral trainees.

## Additional Year of Structure Highlights

- We streamlined technical processes, such as moving TGS Forms from CAESAR to the Graduate Student Tracking System (GSTS).
- We implemented Conflict Resolution/Adviser Guidelines.
- We promoted equity for prospective students by increasing the number of available fee waivers through TGS and working with the Provost to obtain additional fee waivers mid-cycle.
- We are implementing new graduate student organization policies regarding funding allocations and eligibility.
- We are centralizing the postdoctoral trainee appointment process.
- We now provide transparent program statistics, such as admissions, retention, and diversity information to enable current and prospective students to make informed decisions.
- We are a nationwide leader in openly publicizing the career outcomes of our graduate population, providing a template for other graduate schools.

# \ FY2020: Year of Well-Being \

## Strategic Plan Goals

### Convene a TGS Well-Being Advisory Council

- We will consider specific graduate student and postdoctoral trainee issues related to well-being with an advisory council comprised of faculty, staff, postdoctoral trainees, PhD students, and master's students from TGS.
- This council will meet quarterly in order to:
  - Conduct an appreciative inquiry of the resources and support currently in place for graduate students and postdoctoral trainees.
  - Consider best practices and communication methods for existing resources.
  - Identify and propose short-term and long-term well-being initiatives.
  - Explore benchmarking information from other institutions and graduate schools.

### Recognize and Develop Mentoring

- We will recognize mentoring efforts through Ver Steeg and McBride Awards.
- We will expand and strengthen how we teach mentoring skills to graduate students and postdoctoral trainees.
- We will pilot a mentor training for training grant program directors and faculty.

### Inform Constituents of Well-Being Resources and Best Practices

- We will highlight on-campus resources and programs through our existing graduate student, postdoctoral, and graduate faculty communication modes.
- We will craft a best practices toolkit on unconscious bias in admissions and recruitment processes.

### Standardize Policies, Funding, and Awareness of Medical Leave of Absence (MLOA)

- We will establish clear criteria and processes for applying for financial assistance for MLOA.
- We will align financial processes with the dean of students' MLOA processes.
- We will advocate for increased funding from Central Administration (similar to parental accommodation).
- We will increase awareness of MLOA resources for graduate students.

### Pilot a Mental Health First Aid Program

- We will give a group of directors of graduate studies and graduate student leaders the skills to provide initial help and support to someone who may be developing a mental health or substance use problem or experiencing a crisis.
- We will collaborate across the University with our wellness liaison (Lesley Lundeen) to provide training opportunities to these audiences.

## Additional Goals

- We will continue to focus on structural goals and priorities.
- We will develop long-term goals through the Program Review process.
- We will advocate for financial long-term planning, such as 3-year block budgeting.