March 1, 2008

Dru Marshall, PhD, Professor and Deputy Provost
Office of the Provost and Vice-President (Academic)
University of Alberta
2-10 University Hall
Edmonton, Alberta  T6G 2J9

Dear Dr. Marshall:

On behalf of the Unit Review Team for the University of Alberta Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, I am pleased to enclose our report. We hope that you and Provost Carl Amrhein find it helpful. If you detect important errors of fact, we would be pleased correct them and submit a revised version.

Thank you for the opportunity to visit your campus and learn more about the University of Alberta. Thank you also for the warm hospitality shown by your office and everyone we met, despite the weather outside.

Yours very truly

Bruce P. Clayman
Executive Summary

Upon the invitation of the University of Alberta Provost and VP Academic, a Unit Review Team examined the structure and operations of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research (FGSR) through study of written materials and a two-day site visit in early 2008. Much is working well in the Faculty but there is always room for improvement.

To that end, the Unit Review Team has made a number of recommendations; the most important are listed below; these must be read in the context of the rationale and elaboration found in the body of this report. These recommendations also appear in the body of the report, along with other recommendations:

Key Recommendations

1. The position of the Dean be expanded to Vice Provost and Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, the mandate be more clearly articulated and the university more quickly to the new leadership structure
2. After the appointment of the next Vice Provost and Dean, a review of the governance structures within the Faculty, their operations and relation to university governance be performed, including a through review of FGSR workload, with the goal of increased efficiency and effectiveness
3. The FGSR assume a wider responsibility for oversight of the quality of the entire graduate student experience from enquiry about admission through orientation to graduation including: a revamping of the graduate funding program consistent with goals of Dare to Deliver, the development of a more comprehensive generic skills and professional development program for graduate students, and administrative processes that are efficient and effective - especially admissions and registration functions, quality review of graduate programs and provision of relevant quantitative data analysis
4. The configuration of the FGSR space in the Killam Centre for Advanced Studies be revisited and identified deficiencies remedied, with high priority
5. An enrollment management strategy be developed, including recruitment efforts of the FGSR which concentrate on facilitating of recruitment activities of departments and academic Faculties, and
6. Electronic processes be further developed including the reworking of the FGSR website to make it more transparent, user-friendly and better linked to specific programs of study.
Background

Purpose of the Review: These key items were extracted by the Unit Review Team from the full Review Terms of Reference and Evaluation Criteria (see Appendix A) that were presented to us.

a) Assess the health and vitality of the unit. What are its strengths and weaknesses?
b) How is the unit fulfilling an important mandate? How should its goals be narrowed or broadened?
c) How does the unit compare to similar units nationally and internationally?
d) Explain the adequacy of the facilities, space, and other resources. How does this contribute to the support of the unit?
e) Provide recommendations for improving the unit or redirecting the function. Provide other brief comments as appropriate
f) How does the staffing of the unit support or limit the accomplishment of its mission, goals, and objectives?
g) How do the physical resources of the unit enhance, meet, or restrict the accomplishment of its mission, goals, and objectives?
h) How is the unit’s Web Page(s) used to advance its mission, goals, and objectives?

Unit Review Team

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Dates of Site Visit: January 28 and 29, 2008

Documents Reviewed: See Appendix B

Meetings: See Appendix C
Observations and Recommendations

These are mostly organized in the same order as in the FGSR Self-study Document.

Overall Mission and Mandate of the Office and the Dean

As a university with an ambitious agenda, the University of Alberta needs a highly qualified and committed Faculty for Graduate Studies and Research (FGSR) and strong leadership from the Office of the Dean of the FGSR. As stated in the Self Study (November 2007), the mission of the FGSR is to ensure outstanding quality graduate programs and an education that prepares U of A students for future responsibilities to the local, national and international communities.

The Unit Review Team agrees with the basic purpose and mandate of the FGSR but recommends that the mandate for the Dean (and the FGSR) be articulated more specifically and more clearly.

The mandate should be defined in relation to the challenges outlined in the academic plan for the university entitled *Dare to Deliver*. *Dare to Deliver* provides exciting opportunities and challenging possibilities for the FGSR and the Dean to engage in the four areas of commitment: discovery learning, incubating scholarship, community engagement near and far, and building the transformative organization.

In order to reach the goals and achieve its aspirations, the Faculty must be headed by a proven, strong and effective leader with strong academic credentials. The ideal person would be innovative, imaginative, and entrepreneurial with a clear grasp of the big picture for the University of Alberta. We recommend that the current decanal position be expanded to Vice Provost and Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research.

It is important that the leader of the FGSR have an enhanced platform for advocacy within and outside U of A. The Vice Provost and Dean should work closely with the Provost and other academic administrators especially, the Deans of the academic Faculties at the University of Alberta. Partnership with key academic leaders is critical.

**Governance:** The Council of the FGSR is a subcommittee of the General Faculties Council, and is composed of representatives from each unit/department offering graduate programs, as well as a number of university officials. The Council normally meets five times each academic year--the third Friday in September, November, January, March and May.

The FGSR website states that, according to the Alberta Universities Act, the powers of the Council of the FGSR are extensive (see Appendix D). It is unclear to the Unit Review Team the extent to which the Council of the FGSR exercises these powers, in comparison with ways that the academic Faculty Councils exercise their powers.

There is also a Dean’s Advisory Council composed of the Associate Deans, three Graduate coordinators and a GSA representative that meets monthly. Its mandate includes provision of
advice to the Dean “regarding proposal and recommendations to Council on matters of policy, priorities, and objectives.” It appears to the Unit Review Team that this group could act like an Executive Committee of the Faculty and we support that idea.

In any event, the present ‘system’ does not appear to be effective in providing timely, focused advice on policy issues. Some Graduate Coordinators spoke of their frustration over extended discussions at the Council of the FGSR, without resolution.

**Recommendation:** The next Dean perform a review of the governance structures within the Faculty, their operation, and their relation to the governance of the rest of the University, with the goal of optimizing the effectiveness and efficiency of the structures and processes.

**Overview of Specific Activities of the FGSR**

There is necessarily some overlap in the following comments of about the various aspects of the activities of the FGSR, since activities in one area often impact another.

**Graduate Programs** Found among the current specific activities of the FGSR are oversight of graduate program quality, enrollment, graduate student funding, graduate student research, program and professional development, interdisciplinary efforts, and student engagement and services. The FGSR is and should continue to be a valuable resource to departmental graduate coordinators and administrators in the interpretation of and adherence to regulations, and interpretation of applicant documentation. Although the detailed list referenced in the Self-study was absent from the documentation provided to the University Review Team, we gained a sense of the extent of these activities through conversations during the visit. Many of these activities should continue, but they should be reviewed by the new Dean, in conjunction with the examination of the organization and structures recommended above.

**Enrollment** Participation in university-wide enrollment management should be included among the activities of the FGSR. Specifically, the targeted growth by 2,500 students will require strategic planning involving both the FGSR and academic Faculty Deans, as well as massive infusions of resources for supervisory faculty members, capital expenditures and student support. This is discussed in more detail below.

**Student Funding** Another key factor is competitive graduate student funding and adequate resources. After reviewing current polices and programs, we recommend revamping the present graduate funding programs to ensure that the support levels and numbers of awards are optimally supportive of institutional goals and that the administrative processes are both efficient and effective. Some specific comments follow below:

a) Award values appear to be competitive with those at peer institutions
b) Numbers of entrance awards (far too few) are out of line with effort (too much) to apply for and adjudicate
c) Entrance award applications and admission applications should be combined into one web-based process, with electronic transfer of information
d) Major funding (consolidated and augmented as the GRAF program) now flowing directly to academic Faculty Deans should be folded into one central system overseen by the FGSR, once that system is revamped.
e) International student tuition differentials are problematic in many cases, but political and budgetary realities make removal unlikely.

**Research** As stated in the Self-study, the FGSR advances and promotes graduate student research. The present, ongoing activities appear to be sufficient and relevant to the academic progress of U of A graduate students. We have no specific recommendations other than the encouragement to continue to utilize the expertise of external examiners and, wherever possible, bring these individuals to campus.

**Program Support, Candidacy Oversight and Professional Development** The staff of the FGSR are to be commended for their successful efforts to orient and assist departmental graduate studies staff. Graduate Administrators generally felt that these FGSR processes are working well.

Candidacy oversight, consistency and transparency in the development and application of policy, and provision of effective student services and support are institutional responsibilities. The appropriate location for these is the FGSR. We **recommend that the FGSR should assume wider responsibility for oversight of the quality of the entire graduate student experience from initial enquiry through orientation to graduation and should develop effective ways to do this.** Consultation and collaboration with the Graduate Student Association (GSA) is likely to be valuable in this regard. Data gathered as part of exit surveys and the G13 graduate data collection should provide a strong foundation for this oversight.

As one example, orientation of incoming graduate students is a critical period when targeted information and awareness can make a substantial contribution to early success in their programs. There was a strong belief that the FGSR should take a leadership role in expanding the orientation program for new graduate students – both domestic and international. In recognition of the importance of graduate studies, the senior leadership of the University should be invited to participate, as we understand occurs with undergraduate orientation.

The Community Outreach Program is an excellent and clearly successful element of professional development for graduate students and valuable to U of A’s public profile. It involves about 700 graduate student volunteers who come in approximately equal numbers from the arts/humanities and the sciences. It is supported by the FGSR via a modest allocation of soft money to cover organizational needs.

The FGSR recognizes the need for development of professional skills in its graduate students and has made a modest start, including a required Ethics education program. Given the recent Canadian Tri-Council paper on the need to provide opportunities for research students to acquire professional skills and generic competencies, as well as widespread international recognition of the importance of acquiring these skills, we **recommend that the FGSR develops a more comprehensive generic skills and professional development program for U of A graduate students.**

**Interdisciplinary Activities** In view of the increasingly interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary nature of research and scholarship, it is important that interdisciplinary research and graduate education be supported and encouraged. The FGSR should continue its support for and encouragement/facilitation of interdisciplinary programs. The manner in which this might be
accomplished should be included in a review of the structure and function of the Office of the Dean (which is recommended below).

**Killam Centre for Advanced Studies** The Review Team spent most of their time in the Killam Centre and had numerous opportunities to observe its attributes.

Newly renovated space in the former South Laboratory has become the new Killam Centre within which the offices of the FGSR, those of the Graduate Students Association and the newly-created Postdoctoral Fellows Office are all located. The architects have created a wonderful feeling of space and light. The bringing together of all three organizations can provide an excellent opportunity for improved communication. In addition, there is dedicated space where students and post docs can gather outside of their home departments and their specific disciplines. Clearly, this facility makes a clear, positive statement regarding the importance of graduate and postdoctoral studies within the University.

However, there are aspects of the design which present challenges for the operations of the FGSR. Entry to the building is unattractive and unwelcoming – there is no reception area at the building entrance. The offices of the FGSR are located on the second floor - access to the facility, particularly for handicapped students, is less than ideal. The staircase leading up to the second floor and the reception desk is forebodingly black and has a slick, potentially slippery surface. An elevator provides access for the handicapped and for freight to the second-floor reception area. The reception area itself is very limited in size and very public. There are a few seats around the periphery, but the elevator opens into this space reducing possible seating space further, so that the inevitable presence of more than a few students would necessitate some waiting on the stairs or standing – further congesting the area.

It appears that most interactions between the support staff and students are intended to take place over a small and narrow counter bordering the reception area. Thus, it is very public, quite limited in capacity, and potentially intimidating for students and other visitors. Thus, if a student has a problem which he or she wishes to discuss, the current setup will not provide any kind of privacy. The stone, brick and glass interior finish of this facility means that sound travels readily along corridors and between cubicle work spaces, making conversations that should be private, very public. The crowding and lack of privacy in this area are unacceptable.

Apart from the offices of the Dean and Associate Deans, rooms are all glass-walled, with no provision for blinds that would allow for privacy when needed. Indeed, the main conference room in which we held most of our meetings had limited sound isolation (the door could not be fully closed) and, in the absence of blinds or curtains, we could be readily viewed from the reception area at all times. This lack of privacy is unacceptable.

Finally, the current allocation of space might suggest a clear hierarchy with the FGSR on the second floor and the GSA and PGA offices on the first floor.

We recommend that the configuration of the FGSR space in the Killam Centre for Advanced Studies be revisited and identified deficiencies remedied, with high priority. Specifically:
a) The configuration of the reception area should be revisited and, if possible, a reception desk
be relocated to the main floor closer to the entrance. Students could then be redirected to the
second floor or elsewhere, as appropriate. This would not adversely affect security and could
serve to improve it.

b) The reception area should be enlarged and configured to create a friendlier environment.

c) Matters requiring confidential discussion should be addressed in private areas, not in the
reception area.

d) Blinds or curtains should be installed in offices and meeting rooms to allow for privacy when
it is required.

e) Sound transmission needs to be examined and methods found to increase privacy.

Outcome Measures The FGSR has made a commendable start through its exit survey which is
completed by many students on degree completion. We recommend the use of on-line
submission of the exit survey, rather than paper at the time of completion; an email with link to
the Survey – adding a draw for a prize as an incentive – has worked well elsewhere to increase
response rates.

However, in addition, there needs to be more rigorous, quantitative reporting of graduate student
programs, satisfaction and outcomes, including clear data on completion rates and completion
times, by program. New surveys are not required – at least not in the first instance. There is a vast
amount of data gathered for the G13 Survey of Graduate Students, which includes U of
Alberta. This survey covers many aspects of the graduate student experience, including
satisfaction with the program, supervision and resources, provision of professional skill
opportunities, completion times and rates, other outcomes, and so on. The data are broken down to
discipline level and they allow consideration of responses both within the institution and also
comparison between disciplines across the G13. We recommend that the FGSR provide more
rigorous, quantitative reporting of graduate student programs, satisfaction and outcomes,
including clear data on completion rates and times by program.

In addition, the data systems within the U of A should contain information on completion times
and rates that could be “mined” to provide further quantitative measures of the student
experience in every department.

We encourage the FGSR to analyze these data centrally for systematic oversight and quality
assurance purposes. The FGSR should provide the analysis of results to Deans of the academic
Faculties and the wider University to inform improvement. It is almost irresponsible to ask
students to provide such data and not to make the best possible use of them. It is highly desirable
for feedback to be given to student groups about the ways in which their answers have been used
to improve the quality of the graduate student experience.

Lobbying – The Self-study reported several lobbying efforts by the FGSR either alone or in
consort with others, but did not report on the level of success of lobbying activities - this areas
was not addressed during the site visit.
Structure, Roles and Responsibilities

Leadership and Structure  As noted above, the Unit Review Team is in complete agreement with regard to the need for a strong, Faculty-level graduate studies unit, to be headed by an academic appointed as Dean. This Faculty has wide responsibilities to enhance the experience and outcomes for all graduate students and must work closely and collaboratively with other faculties and graduate program units. It should also be responsible for Quality Assurance of graduate programs and services on behalf of the University.

As mentioned earlier, we also recommend the addition of a Vice Provost role to the Dean’s portfolio. It was seen as particularly important to provide an enhanced platform for advocacy both within and external to U of A. Graduate students need strong representation at the highest levels. This role should be seen as distinct and additional to the Dean’s roles.

We believe that it is critical to move quickly to adopt the new administrative structure without having any interim or caretaker period, which would slow the momentum and reduce the impact of this review. It will be important to set annual mutually-agreed Key Performance Indicators (KPI) for the Vice Provost and Dean of the FGSR to provide focus and give clear direction to the mandate. One of the KPIs for the FGSR Dean should be to provide much more effective communication both laterally and vertically between and among administrative units of the institution. We **recommend that the university move quickly to this new leadership structure for the FGSR and establish KPI’s for the new incumbent focused on achieving the mandate.**

The FGSR Associate Deans also play a key role and their activities generally brought praise from several groups. It was also noted that the quality of support provided varies with individuals and that therefore Associate Dean selection, ‘training’ and communication of processes that produce consistency in practice were important. This is NOT to say that all disciplines should be treated in exactly the same manner. There should be clear recognition in the FGSR that disciplines *are* different, that this is understood and that there is a *defined* level of flexibility that takes these differences into account. The GSA called for a more equitable application of rules across campus, without perhaps appreciating the large differences between the constraints and requirements of different programs.

Interestingly in this context, comments were variously that the FGSR was too ‘rigid and inflexible’, ‘unfailingly good’ and ‘too flexible!’ While this might mean that, on balance, their processes are about right, it does suggest a lack of transparency in the application of policy and we **recommend improvement in consultation and communication between the FGSR and the wider university community.**

We support the retention of a ‘research’ context for the FGSR. Indeed graduate research students are the University’s top graduate students; they contribute to much of the university’s research output and are best supported by a graduate student focused body. There is mobility between various graduate programs and often a student’s early work is common to both masters and PhD students.
Roles and Responsibilities  Almost every group with which we spoke felt it was essential for the ‘mandate’ of the FGSR to be clearly and explicitly defined. It would also be appropriate to use this mandate to redefine the Strategic Plan for the FGSR and to develop this plan collaboratively, in discussion with the various stakeholder groups. The Strategic Plan should embed quality decision-making, effectiveness and efficiency, improved communication, quality assurance and should require regular review to avoid overlaps and gaps in the services provided by the FGSR and various other units across the campus.

We are in clear agreement that the FGSR must play the lead role in policy development and advocacy for the interests of graduate students. It was felt by some that the FGSR and its committees could be more consultative in policy development and implementation.

We also believe that Admission and Registration processes are most efficiently and effectively carried out separately from the Registrar’s office – the nature of the decisions, particularly with regard to PhD admission, are quite different from more routine decisions made regarding undergraduate students. We therefore recommend that Admission and Registration continue to be a function of the FGSR.

We believe that it would be constructive to avoid referring to the actions of the FGSR as ‘police functions’ and ‘enforcement.’ The activities of the FGSR should be seen and promoted as being about providing equity and consistency in the application of policy leading to transparency and improved quality assurance.

The Chair’s Council provided an informative report to the Unit Review Team in regard to the roles and operations of the FGSR. They also listed what they believed to be the five core functions of the FGSR all of which we agree with (apart from taking a more constructive view of ‘policing’).

One aspect that arose in discussion was that recognition of graduate teaching and supervision workload by faculty members varied widely across the campus. We recommend that the FGSR should work to ensure workload recognition of supervision and graduate teaching and provide guidance and promote examples of good practice in this regard. 1

Dispute Resolution  the FGSR was seen to be extremely helpful in resolution of conflict. The Ombudsperson has been working well with FGSR staff and the Dean and this involvement also helps bring a level of consistency to the practices of the Associate Deans. The Ombudsperson reports to Dean of Students and thus is at arm’s length from the FGSR. He indicated that is rare for a dispute to go forward to formal appeal and he believes that the process is working very well due to having appropriate people in the various roles.

However, there appears to be a conflict of interest in the role of the Dean in disputes related to graduate student employment. The FGSR Dean represents the University in the administration of

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1 The Unit Review Team learned, during the writing of this report, of a proposed revision to Article 13 of the U of A Faculty Agreement regarding the guidelines for Faculty Evaluation Committees (FEC’s) pertaining to graduate supervision. The FGSR is well positioned to provide input to the President’s Review Committee on FEC, assuming that the revision is ratified.
dispute resolution (and some other areas) under the collective agreement with the GSA on graduate student employment, which is a clear conflict of interest between being an advocate for students on the one hand and his responsibilities as part of the senior administration, reporting to the Provost, on the other. “Thus, we recommend removal of the Dean from a role in formal dispute resolution in the context of graduate student employment.

Unit Reviews Participation by the FGSR in the ‘new’ unit reviews should include consideration of output measures (such as completion rates and times, and student satisfaction), as well as input measures. Good performance by units should be rewarded in meaningful ways, such as financial support and faculty positions.

Human Resources in the FGSR Office

Feedback on the quality of service provided to the majority of clients, i.e. faculty, support staff and students, was almost uniformly positive. Faculty Graduate coordinators (usually Associate Chairs) and departmental graduate support staff found FGSR staff very knowledgeable and ready to provide advice and help. The FGSR has run several workshops on major issues such as evaluation of the credentials of Chinese applicants. The staff are prepared to visit departments and give on-site help and orientation. A major of area expertise is the interpretation of foreign transcripts and the detection of fraudulent documents. These services were valued by all consulted.

Staffing The Self Study report reveals that FGSR support staff numbers have increased from 24 to 35 individuals (46%) and the budget by 100% over the last 10 years. Over the same period the graduate student population has grown from 4,257 to 6,051 (42%). Comparison with other institutions both in the US and Canada indicate that, on a per graduate student basis, the U of A has a very large FGSR staff. Further, at most comparable universities, their graduate Faculties provide a wider scope of services. Thus, the Unit Review Team had a difficult time determining the rationale for the size of the current unit. This could not be explored in detail during the site visit.

One area of particular interest, given the apparently stalled attempts at improving the delivery of a comprehensive electronic student file system, was the size of the information technology (IT) group within the FGSR. At present, there are six individuals dedicated to computer support and change management. Yet there seems to be general agreement that the FGSR website is in considerable need of updating, the electronic file and application process needs to be integrated between the Faculty and departments and electronic submission of theses would be highly desirable. Also, few of the forms required for award applications are readily available in an electronic format and these are not coupled with the process for admission.

We recommend a thorough review of FGSR staff workloads and the efficiency and effectiveness of throughput of the entire unit, including the IT staff, who should be able to meet all the desired and proposed needs for revision of application processes and development of electronic files and databases. This should not only be a Faculty priority but should be readily achievable with the current staffing levels.
Competition for students - present enrolment levels

It is clear from experience at other institutions and from discussions with program directors at the U of A, that program/supervisor reputation and quality are the main attractants for most graduate students. Prospective students typically do not look at the overall quality of the University for graduate studies, but consider the reputation of a particular supervisor or graduate program. Thus recruitment efforts (e.g. participating in recruitment fairs) by the FGSR are unlikely to productive. There was unanimous agreement that the FGSR role in recruitment should primarily focus on facilitating recruitment efforts by departments and academic Faculties, rather than actively participating at education fairs or on international recruitment trips. There are examples of good practice in recruitment strategies along these lines across Canada – for example, through the CAGS network. We therefore **recommend that the recruitment efforts of the FGSR should concentrate on facilitating of recruitment activities of departments and academic Faculties**.

Effective communication with prospective applicants requires revamped FGSR website with improved functionality and 'look and feel'; and better, unified information about awards. This is covered in more detail below.

Financial support is a very important factor when students are selecting a graduate program. Even relatively small differences in award levels can be the deciding factor when students have offers from several institutions. We note that the present level of awards per student are competitive within Canada and appear to provide the highest rates in country (ref: Self-study Table 4).

Effective April 1, 2006, the previous Graduate Intern Tuition Supplement (GITS) and Graduate Assistantship (GAp) funding were combined into a new pool called the Graduate Research Assistantship Fund (GRAF); they were also augmented by $250,000 from central university funds. These funds are now allocated directly to academic Faculties rather than centrally to the FGSR.

It is clear that there exists the (usual) disparity of support levels across academic disciplines. The Faculty of Arts in particular has a high proportion of part-time students which may reflect the fact that only partial support is available for many individuals. This situation will not only affect the ability to recruit students to some disciplines but likely also extends completion times and lowers completion rates.

The present entry scholarship program is having a negligible impact upon recruitment. There are two reasons this assessment. In the first place there only twelve awards for Canadian applicants and another 12 for international students. Given an approximate entry each year of 1,200 students this represents awards for only 2% of recruits. Another major problem with the current process is the application deadline and the time to adjudicate and process the awards. The difficulty in aligning decisions by the Tri-councils on awards, the programs and FGSR makes for an unworkable system in which it is too late to offer an award to recruit another applicant if the originally successful applicant declines the award – typically deciding to go somewhere else.
Other items raised related to recruitment were differential fees, availability of housing and international student orientation. It is clear that the removal of differential fees – if budgetarily and politically feasible - would assist in recruitment of international students. Housing was identified as another problem for recruitment. The FGSR should facilitate improved orientation and support for incoming international students that are more uniform across the University. Chemistry ran their own good programs and provide an example of good practice in this.

**Competition for students - under “Dare to Deliver”**

The University has set a very clear goal in “Dare to Deliver” - to increase the graduate student population by 2,500 students over the next five years. However, it is clear from the discussion in the previous section that, at present, there are insufficient funds to sustain adequately all the current programs across the academic Faculties. Growth will require a substantial infusion of support funds for these students. CIHR, NSERC and SSHRC grant and scholarship numbers are not increasing substantially and the value of a Principal Investigator’s research grants are not sufficient to allow for increased numbers of graduate students to be funded through research grants. Additional administrative support at the university and department level will also be needed to administer expanded programs. The implementation of comprehensive electronic records and databases would help to reduce the overall impact of this expansion.

A substantial expansion of the number of graduate students will also require a commensurate increase in supervisory and capital resources (i.e. space, equipment, etc.). If the “Dare to Deliver” target of 500 new professors over five years is also realized, then this should address the needed supervisory capacity. However, they will need additional research space, offices equipment etc. for their research programs within which the graduate students will work. Also, these new students will need desk space and computing resources. Many departments cannot provide these resources for their current students. Part of this expansion of the student population is planned to be realized through the recruitment of international students. This will in turn put significant pressure on student support services and the proposed residence expansion would become a key component of such a recruitment strategy.

The huge increase proposed in graduate student numbers will require an effective recruitment strategy and a large financial commitment. The need for the latter was mentioned at almost every meeting we had. The FGSR should work with other units (departments, graduate programs, Faculties and central units) to develop a university-wide strategy for the recruitment of high quality graduate students. There were different perspectives among academic Faculties about the desired level of involvement of the FGSR, which should inform the strategy. The FGSR should provide assistance in the University-wide profiling of graduate studies opportunities.

The higher tuition fee for international students represents a significant irritant across campus and presents a potential barrier for the recruitment of more students from abroad. The Unit Review Team understands the necessary redistribution of funds which would result from the elimination of these fees, so if in the future a decision was made to apply a single level of graduate fees, there would need to be a business plan developed to deal with this difficult issue.
Implications of these observations:

- It is desirable to provide more uniform levels of student funding across Faculties and programs.
- It is desirable to develop a business plan to find a way to eliminate the international student fee differential.
- Significant funds, in the range of many millions of dollars, will be needed to provide graduate student support for an expanded student population.

FGSR Website, Application Process and Electronic Records: The review team considered the electronic resources and processes of the FGSR. Our comments refer to several areas:

FGSR Website  On the current University’s home page, there is no direct link to Graduate Studies, the FGSR or the graduate application process, but we understand that the new home page will have such a link. The FGSR pages themselves are convoluted and typically duplicate the description of each department’s research programs, rather than providing direct links to the individual departmental or program websites. Further it is quite possible that prospective students will not know in which U of A department a particular specialized teaching or research program is housed, but there is no explicit listing on the FGSR website of programs, only departments. The present “Find a Program” link does not narrow the search very much. This has the potential to lose a significant number of prospective students who tire of trying to navigate the site and following links to departments that are not relevant to their interests.

Graduate Application Process and Electronic records: Currently, students apply to specific U of A graduate programs via a web-based form operated centrally by the U of A. It takes a significant number of clicks to access the application process and appears to be potentially very confusing, especially for foreign applicants. Indeed the process appears to take applicant in circles (unless one notices the “Next” button) and the URL of the online application itself is difficult to locate. The requirements for creating a userid and password are on a separate page from the self-registration page, inviting errors (and totally opaque error messages) and frustration. Once registered, the prospective applicant is directed back to the log-in page, rather than to the application page….again putting a counter-productive barrier between the person and his/her goal.

Once a student has submitted an application online, the FGSR accesses the information and notifies the home Department or Faculty of each applicant by email. However, the Departments can only access the information provided on the form through the PeopleSoft system and must then print this for review and collect additional (print) material needed to complete the processing of the application. The print material for applicants whom the Department wishes to accept is then sent to the FGSR for final approval of admission. Reportedly, the FGSR is developing an electronic database in which to store all the records of each applicant and student. However, currently, Departments must keep a hard copy of all documents in their own files as this electronic record is not now and likely will not be available to them. Thus, there are two copies of each student’s file which may or may not be identical – inviting errors and confusion.
Recommendations:

1. The FGSR website should be completely reworked to make it more transparent, user-friendly and link better to individual graduate programs.

2. A single, transportable, accessible electronic student file system needs to be developed immediately to remove duplication and the potential for errors. This system should allow for tracking by supervisors, departments, Faculties and the FGSR on student progress through their programs. It should also enable the collection of statistical data on completion times and rates and drop-out rates, etc. to allow for ready analysis of program effectiveness and quality.

Conclusion

The FGSR has served the University of Alberta well and many strong graduate programs are clear evidence of that. We hope that our recommendations will enable the University and the Faculty to build on previous successes to the benefit of all.

The Unit Review Team wishes to express our appreciation for the warm welcome and great hospitality shown to us by everyone we encountered during our visit, during which we experienced the coldest weather that any of us had every seen.
Appendix A

Review Terms of Reference and Evaluation Criteria – these are as presented to the Unit Review team. All are not applicable to the FGSR, but the documents provide a useful outline of areas of interest.

Unit Review Team Terms of Reference

The Unit Review Team is asked to address the following issues in their report:

1. Assess the health and vitality of the unit. What are its strengths and weaknesses? What is your assessment of the unit’s strategic plan as it relates to the University’s Academic Plan?
2. How is the unit fulfilling an important mandate? How should its goals be narrowed or broadened?
3. How does the unit compare to similar units nationally and internationally? Be as specific as possible.
4. How does the unit compare to related units on campus?
5. Explain the adequacy of the facilities, space, and other resources. How does this contribute to the support of the unit?
6. Provide recommendations for improving the unit or redirecting the function. Provide other brief comments as appropriate. What redirection of resources would be required to make the unit more effective?

Factors Considered in Evaluating the Quality of the Units

The following factors and measures are not ranked in order of importance. The relevance and importance of a given measure will depend on the unit being evaluated, and it is recognized that some measures may not apply to all units.

1. Has the unit developed a comprehensive Strategic Plan (mission, goals, measurable objectives, and strategies)?
2. Are the unit’s mission, goals, and objectives consistent with the University’s Strategic Plan, the Academic Plan, and other standards?
3. What is the status of the unit’s accomplishment of its goals and objectives?
4. How does the staffing of the unit support or limit the accomplishment of its mission, goals, and objectives?
5. How do the physical resources of the unit enhance, meet, or restrict the accomplishment of its mission, goals, and objectives?
6. How does the budget of the unit contribute to, meet, or limit the accomplishment of its mission, goals and objectives?

7. How do the policies, procedures, protocol of the unit help or hinder operationalizing its mission, goals, and objectives?

8. How are assessment activities utilized by the unit as planning and evaluation tools?

9. Web Pages:
   a. Has the unit defined the primary audience(s) and the purpose of its Web Page(s)?
   b. How is the unit’s Web Page(s) used to advance its mission, goals, and objectives?
   c. Does the Web Page meet the University’s guidelines?

10. What other findings are unique to the unit that should be considered? (Unusual situations or circumstances; legal issues; etc.)

Performance Factors

- Satisfaction of Users
- Efficiency (inputs compared to outputs)
- Effectiveness (outcomes based on goals)
- Utilization of services by appropriate populations (are all populations who should be served being served?)
- Needs of users (extent to which needs of users are known and met)
Appendix B

Documents Reviewed

- FGSR Self-study and Appendices – November 2007
- Dare to Deliver – Academic Plan 2007 – 2011
- Brief on the Future of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research Presented to the FGSR Unit Review Team – by the Chairs’ Council Executive – January 2008
- Collective Agreement on employment of AEGS between GSA and the Governors of the U of A – 2007/8
- Data on Student completion …After 9 years. – G13 data exchange
- Graduate Student Experiences at the University of Alberta Report – December 2006
- Results of the 2006/7 University of Alberta Graduate Student Survey and Graduate student CVs
- Email comment from an administrative staff member – January 2008
## Planned Meetings

In a few cases, additional persons joined the meetings and/or others were unable to attend; this is not documented below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Persons</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| Monday       | Opening Meeting                            | Dr Carl Amrhein, Provost and VP Academic  
               | 8:00 - 9:00                               | Dr Dru Marshall, Deputy Provost  
               |                                            | Mrs Irene Hacke, Unit Review Coordinator |
|              | Dean Dale                                  | Dean Mark Dale                                                         |
| 10:00 - 10:30| Tour of Killam Centre for Advanced Studies | Sharon Milne, Executive Assistant to the Dean |
| 10:45 - 12:00| Graduate Coordinators and Graduate         | Nat Kay, Agricultural, Food and Nutritional Science  
               | Ombudsperson                               | Alan Wilman, Biomedical Engineering  
<pre><code>           |                                            | David Cooper, Business PhD                |
</code></pre>
<p>|              |                                            | Christina Rinaldi, Educational Psychology                               |
|              |                                            | Jill McClay, Elementary Education                                         |
|              |                                            | Jason Acker, Lab Medicine and Pathology                                    |
|              |                                            | Moin Yahya, Law                                                             |
|              |                                            | Toni Samek, Library and Information Studies                                |
|              |                                            | Peter Minev, Mathematical and Statistical Sciences                         |
|              |                                            | Moira Glerum, Medical Genetics                                              |
|              |                                            | Susan Dunn, Pharmacology                                                   |
|              |                                            | Chris Hackett, Graduate Ombudsperson                                      |
| 12:30 - 1:30| FGSR Associate and Assistant Deans (Lunch) | Dr Marion Allen, Dr Jerry Varsava                                         |
|              |                                            | Dr Locksley McGann, Ms Heather Hogg                                      |
|              |                                            | Dr Mazi Shirvani, Ms Lynne Blair                                          |
| 1:45 - 3:00 | Department Chairs                          | Tom Hobman, Cell Biology                                                   |
|              |                                            | Fraser Forbes, Chemical and Materials Engineering                        |
|              |                                            | Jed Harrison, Chemistry                                                    |
|              |                                            | Jan Selman, Drama                                                          |
|              |                                            | Andre Plourde, Economics                                                   |
|              |                                            | Horacio Marquez, Electrical and Computer Engineering                      |
|              |                                            | Garrett Epp, English and Film Studies                                     |
|              |                                            | Michael Walter, Medical Graphics                                           |
|              |                                            | John Beamish, Physics                                                      |
|              |                                            | John Spence, Renewable Resources                                          |
|              |                                            | Jonathan Schaeffer, Computing Science                                     |
| 3:00 - 4:00 | FGSR Staff                                  | Verda Norlin, Admissions and Records                                     |
|              |                                            | Ilona Baker, Admissions and Records                                      |
|              |                                            | Colleen Hanrahan, Awards and Scholarships                                |
|              |                                            | Leora Jevne, Change Management and IT                                     |
|              |                                            | Renee Polziehn, FGSR Outreach Program                                    |
|              |                                            | Carmen Pallett, International Admissions                                 |
| 4:00 - 5:00 | Representative of Graduate Scholarship    | Dr Anthony Lau, Killam Scholarship Unit Review Team                      |
|              | Unit Review Teams                          | Carol Boliek, Graduate Scholarship Unit Review Team                      |
|              |                                            | Tong Yu, Recruitment Scholarship Unit Review Team                         |
|              |                                            | Pamela Willoughby, Recruitment Scholarship Unit Review Team               |
|              |                                            | Ben Jar, Graduate Scholarship Unit Review Team                            |
|              |                                            | Charles Lucy, Graduate Scholarship Unit Review Team                      |
|              |                                            | Jerry Varsava, Associate Dean, FGSR                                       |
| 8:15 - 8:30 | Dean Dale                                  | Dean Mark Dale                                                           |</p>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>Graduate Administrators</td>
<td>Jody Forslund, Agricultural, Food and Nutritional Science&lt;br&gt;Janice Lockhorst, Agricultural, Food, Nutritional Science&lt;br&gt;Gail Matthew, Anthropology&lt;br&gt;Edith Drummond, Computing Science&lt;br&gt;Sharon Mackenzie, East Asian Studies&lt;br&gt;Winnie Vanderkloof, Educational Studies&lt;br&gt;Natasja Larson, Educational Studies&lt;br&gt;Kim Zahara, Health Promotion Studies&lt;br&gt;Lydia Dugbaza, History and Classics&lt;br&gt;Janey Kennedy, Interdisciplinary Studies&lt;br&gt;Joanne Hilger, Library and Information Studies&lt;br&gt;Gail Anderson, Mechanical Engineering&lt;br&gt;Janis Davis, Medicine&lt;br&gt;Sharon Campbell, Medicine&lt;br&gt;Sharon Gannon, MS, Internetworking&lt;br&gt;Cheryl Erickson, Oncology&lt;br&gt;Joy Pederson, Pharmacology&lt;br&gt;Judy Deuel, Pharmacology&lt;br&gt;Joyce Johnson, Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences&lt;br&gt;Tara Checknita, Psychiatry&lt;br&gt;Felicity Hey, Public Health Sciences</td>
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<td>9:45 - 11:00</td>
<td>Graduate Coordinators</td>
<td>Joan Greer, Art and Design&lt;br&gt;Heather McDermid, Biological Sciences&lt;br&gt;Robert Hayes, Chemical and Materials Engineering&lt;br&gt;Nelson Amaral, Computing Science&lt;br&gt;Loren Kline, Dentistry&lt;br&gt;James Neil McMullin, Electrical and Computer Engineering&lt;br&gt;Roseline Godbout, Oncology&lt;br&gt;Yves Sauve, Ophthalmology&lt;br&gt;Sharon Morsink, Physics&lt;br&gt;Lois Harder, Political Science&lt;br&gt;Anthony Joyce, Psychiatry&lt;br&gt;Paul Hagler, Rehabilitation Medicine&lt;br&gt;Peter Blenis, Renewable Resources&lt;br&gt;David Pimm, Secondary Education</td>
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<td>11:00 - 12:00</td>
<td>Faculty Deans and Associate Deans</td>
<td>Marc Arnal, Campus Saint-Jean&lt;br&gt;Fern Snart, Education&lt;br&gt;Ingrid Johnson, Education&lt;br&gt;Marco Adria, Extension&lt;br&gt;Teresa Krukoff for Tom Marrie, Medicine and Dentistry&lt;br&gt;Dr Martin Ferguson-Pell, Rehabilitation Medicine&lt;br&gt;Dr Gregory Taylor, Science</td>
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<tr>
<td>12:00 - 1:00</td>
<td>GSA Exec and FGSR Council Reps (Lunch)</td>
<td>Names not provided</td>
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<tr>
<td>4:15 – 4:30</td>
<td>In-camera Meeting</td>
<td>Dr Carl Amrhein, Provost and Vice-President (Academic)&lt;br&gt;Dr Dru Marshall, Deputy Provost</td>
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<tr>
<td>4:30 - 5:30</td>
<td>Final Meeting</td>
<td>Dr Carl Amrhein, Provost and Vice-President (Academic)&lt;br&gt;Dr Dru Marshall, Deputy Provost&lt;br&gt;Mrs Irene Hacke, Unit Review Coordinator&lt;br&gt;Dr Lorne Babiuk, Vice-President (Research)&lt;br&gt;Dr Mark Dale, Dean FGSR</td>
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Appendix D

Powers of the Council of the FGSR

The FGSR website http://www.gradstudies.ualberta.ca/gradmanual/one.htm states that:

“The Council of the FGSR is a subcommittee of the General Faculties Council, and is comprised of representatives from each unit/department offering graduate programs, as well as a number of university officials. The Council normally meets five times each academic year--the third Friday in September, November, January, March and May.”

The FGSR website also states that, according to the Alberta Universities Act, the powers of the Council of the FGSR are extensive (as follows):

“Subject to the control of the General Faculties Council, a Faculty Council is empowered to
(a) determine the programs of study in any branch of learning for instruction in which the Faculty is established;
(b) appoint the examiners for examinations in the Faculty, conduct the examinations and determine the results of them;
(c) provide for the admission of students to the Faculty, subject to the admission standards and policies determined by the General Faculties Council [n.b. this authority (among others) has been delegated to the Dean of the FGSR];
(d) determine the conditions under which a student must withdraw from or may continue his program of studies in the Faculty;
(e) authorize the granting of degrees in course to persons in any branch of learning for instruction in which the Faculty is established.”