



2015 to 2018 Strategic Plan

The people who work at the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research (FGSR) believe in a simple truth: *smart people can change the world.*

That vision guides how we work with students and our University colleagues every day.

Introduction

July 2015 brought new leadership to FGSR: a new Interim Dean, Assistant Dean and Associate Deans. This strategic plan was developed as a result of this leadership team consulting with Faculty Deans, members of FGSR Council, the Graduate Enrolment and Funding Advisory Committee (GEFAC, composed of Associate Deans-Graduate from across campus), the Graduate Program Administrators Committee (GPAC), and FGSR staff. The Dean connected with colleagues at national and international graduate organizations on issues such as improving the student experience and preparing students for careers after graduation. FGSR also checked the alignment of this strategic plan with the early direction of the University's institutional strategic plan.

Organizational Objectives

UAlberta's graduate programs are a differentiator. Educating students in an array of disciplines and specializations, and ensuring they have marketable and relevant professional skills when they graduate, will not only heighten the reputation of the University, but will also contribute to a stronger and more diversified Alberta economy. FGSR's objectives for the next three years are:

- Improve the reputation of FGSR and deepen its connections with faculties and departments across the University
- Position UAlberta as a preferred institution for graduate education in Canada
- Contribute to a strong and diverse Alberta economy.

Strategic Priorities

1. Service Focus

FGSR's Admissions, Program Services and Awards Advisors serve scores of students and dozens of departments every day. The team is keenly focused on providing top notch service, and work is well underway to increase the satisfaction of both students and departments. Key focus areas are:

Staffing and staff development: FGSR is now fully resourced and prepared to meet the needs of students and our department colleagues. New roles in the areas of governance and policy, and communications, as well as a staff commitment to build stronger working relationships are in place.

IT Tools and Systems: FGSR is actively involved in three IT projects through 2016: a new enterprise-level Graduate Admissions solution; a new graduate awards and scholarships management solution; and fully adopting the University's electronic document and records management system (EDRMS).

Office Processes, Decision-making and Productivity: New tools and appropriate staffing levels mean FGSR can focus on improving processes and decision-making to ensure we are providing the best possible service to students and departments. There is renewed emphasis on training – on FGSR processes and IT tools – for FGSR staff and department counterparts.

2. Comprehensively prepare students for careers beyond the University

Excitingly, 85% of PhDs have careers ahead of them that they've potentially not yet begun to imagine or prepare for. In April 2015 UAlberta received funding from the Province of Alberta for student professional development programs for the next three years. Under the guidance of an advisory board, FGSR developed a Graduate Student Professional Development Strategic Plan, which was approved by FGSR Council in May 2015.

The Dean, FGSR has brought on two dedicated staff resources to implement the plan, which focuses on graduate student entrepreneurialism and mentorship; internships; PD skills training; and curricular change.

3. Activate and promote greater interdisciplinarity among faculties, departments and students

The Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research occupies a special place on campus: connected to every graduate-degree-offering unit, with responsibility for bringing new programs into being, it affords a view of research connectivity and trans-disciplinary possibility. The Dean is a connector, and FGSR is a hub. FGSR will build cross-Faculty programs and facilitate interdisciplinary research through:

- Makerspaces: explore establishing one or more makerspaces on campus.
- Elevate the conversation around major societal (e.g. Truth and Reconciliation Commission; health promotion), business (the marketability of cross-discipline graduates), and educational trends, issues and opportunities.
- Develop an outreach program to bring First Nations, Metis and Inuit students into graduate studies, and help build cross-disciplinary programming in Indigenous studies.

4. Establish and solidify the academic mission of the Faculty

This component of FGSR's strategic plan aims to increase the quality of graduate education through three areas of focus. Each area is being led by a current or incoming Associate Dean:

- Teacher training (led by AD Suzanne Kresta/John Nychka)
- Quality Assurance (led by AD Debby Burshtyn)
- Supervision (led by AD Naomi Krogman)

Teacher Training: We recognize teaching experiences as a core part of graduate education, just as we recognize teaching as a core part of the work of the professoriate. It is a strategic priority to engage and collaborate with other units across campus that provide teaching development to graduate students, including the Centre for Teaching and Learning, to maximize impact and leverage resources. Key objectives include:

1. Review the current GTL program.

2. Restructure the GTA awards to ensure that they provide a meaningful recognition of teaching excellence in line with our recognition of research excellence.
3. Increase access to formal courses with strong pedagogical content for all graduate students.

Quality Assurance for graduate education should include regular review of institution-wide standards, of general graduate services and supports provided by FGSR, and of individual graduate programs. Arm's-length review that provides meaningful feedback is critical to assure stakeholders of the rigor of the process. We will:

1. Develop a proposal for a program review system under the auspices of FGSR. Consultation with Faculties and Central units, as well as an inventory of the current review processes (here and at peer institutions) are critical. Stakeholders include Provost and Vice Provost's Council, Deans Council, GEFAC, FGSR Council, Chairs Council, GSA.
2. Develop Implementation Plan.
3. Run 2-4 Pilot Reviews that represent diverse disciplines in Spring 2016.

Supervision: What students expect from supervisors is evolving in conjunction with greater awareness of learning styles, the desire for more flexibility in program delivery, greater emphasis on preparing students for a variety of careers, and changing expectations from funders and other stakeholders. Over the coming years, we will build a stronger culture of supervision and mentorship through the following:

1. Implement the recommendations from the April 2014 Krogman report:
 - a. Provide earlier guidance to students to improve student success;
 - b. Increase accountability of supervisors and departments for good supervision to address hidden weaknesses;
 - c. Provide training and mentorship to supervisors to raise standards of supervision and mentorship;
 - d. Provide various forms of guidance and mentorship to students to improve culture of mentorship;
 - e. Better integrate postdoctoral trainees into department culture; provide more training on postdoc scholar supervision and more professional development opportunities for postdocs.
2. Establish new awards recognizing high-quality supervision and mentorship.
3. Explore the possibility of making qualitatively assessed graduate supervision a mandatory component at FEC.

How We Measure Success

- Student satisfaction surveys
- Department feedback (formal and informal)
- Student participation and commitment levels in PD programs
- Communications measurements like website analytics
- Participation in training
- Attendance levels at FGSR Council, GPAC
- Grad program review results and period over period improvement
- Rankings
- International research collaborations (e.g. CREATE)