



**Office of the Executive
Vice President and Provost**

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July 22, 2024

Amanda Haertling Thein
Associate Provost for Graduate and Professional Education
Dean, Graduate College

Dear Dean Thein:

In accordance with University of Iowa policy, colleges are required to undergo a review at least every seven years and the Executive Vice President and Provost is responsible for organizing and directing the process and formulating conclusions.

An abbreviated review was completed for the Graduate College that focused on the following questions:

1. Is the Graduate College successfully promoting the UI research mission by ensuring that the graduate programs offered by the university are of high quality and stimulate the creation of new knowledge and information?
2. Is the Graduate College optimally deploying resources to achieve the UI strategic plan objectives of:
 - a. supporting graduate student and postdoctoral success through academic support and professional career development?
 - b. cost containment through efficiency and innovation?
3. Does the organizational structure of the Graduate College:
 - a. meet the needs of the college?
 - b. support the departments/programs that report to the dean as part of the Graduate College?
 - c. enhance its ability to contribute to the university's strategic plan?

The Collegiate Review Committee examined the college's 2024 self-study and conducted interviews with the Graduate College's dean, leadership team (including associate deans, budget officer, and unit directors), associate deans for graduate education, and other campus leaders, partners, and constituents. The dean received the review report on April 23, 2024 and was asked to review and respond with any factual errors. A response was submitted on May 3, 2024 providing several clarifications.

As is reflected in the review report, the Collegiate Review Committee acknowledged many strengths and identified opportunities to enhance the Graduate College's core mission. After reviewing the committee's report and the Graduate College's self-study and response, I have the following observations and recommendations.

The Graduate College fosters innovations in culture, practice, and policy that significantly contribute to the university's high-quality graduate education. Examples of this include:

- Creating an innovative peer-to-peer mentoring program to enhance the graduate student experience.
- Providing leadership to develop learning objectives and outcomes for graduate programs across campus.
- Actively supporting interdisciplinary graduate training programs to enable faculty members and graduate students to engage in research opportunities and explore innovative areas.
- Strategically adjusting the timing and deployment of awarded fellowships to maximize support for graduate students.
- Taking a leadership role within the Big Ten Academic Alliance, particularly in responding to the recent federal changes in admission policies.
- Operating a student-oriented service organization, with leadership and staff committed to providing excellent service to students, postdocs, faculty, and staff.

To enhance the Graduate College's effectiveness in meeting its core mission, I propose the following recommendations.

- Conduct a review of the collegiate strategic plan, and determine which activities are essential and which are tangential. Insights gained from this assessment will help prioritize where resources and staffing efforts should be invested.
- Develop and implement a best practice guide for directors of graduate studies, including a document outlining their responsibilities and links to relevant resources.
- Determine and implement the best, most cost-effective method to improve tracking of professional and career development outcomes.
- Clearly articulate the value of interdisciplinary programs and faculty to all colleges by better delineating the role of Interdisciplinary Graduate Programs.
- Regularly survey graduate students about their experiences and share results at the program level with expectations for improvement where needed.
- Using current resources, elevate the visibility of services provided to postdocs.
- Improve the visibility of Graduate College services and functions to academic units, graduate students, and postdocs through enhanced marketing and communication.
- Provide leadership for campus efforts to enhance graduate student recruitment (e.g., providing a forum to share best practices, offer consultation to campus programs, recommending areas of automation, etc.).
- Enhance efficiency of Graduate Council procedures through the utilization of consent agendas, administrative desk approvals, electronic voting for off-cycle requests, etc. when appropriate. These procedural changes will allow more

space for timely and effective discussion of other items during the Council meetings.

- Graduate College leadership should evaluate whether units housed in the Graduate College could be more effectively managed elsewhere and share findings with the provost.

I ask that you work with Graduate College's leadership team to develop and implement plans to address the recommendations above and incorporate them into the Graduate College's strategic plan.

In conclusion, the Graduate College has excellent leadership with talented staff who are highly respected across campus. The college's commitment to student success will provide a foundation for moving the college forward as it meets its strategic goals and those of the university. I look forward to hearing updates during our regular meetings.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "K. Kregel", written in a cursive style.

Kevin C. Kregel, PhD
Executive Vice President and Provost

cc: Barbara Wilson, President
Lois Geist, Associate Provost for Faculty