



a place of mind
THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

A black and white photograph of a sculpture depicting two figures reaching upwards with their arms. The figures are dark and appear to be made of wood or stone, set against a light background.

Faculty of
Graduate Studies

2011 External Review

SELF STUDY



a place of mind

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



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Preface



It has been my true privilege to serve the Faculty of Graduate Studies (FoGS) as Dean *pro tem* for the past 6 months. During this time, and especially during the preparation of this self-study, my respect for the outstanding staff and Associate Deans in the Dean's office, and the engaged broader graduate and postdoctoral community at UBC, has only grown. It is my hope that the creativity and hard work of the many people who contribute to the graduate and postdoctoral experience at UBC is recognized here. As in every human endeavour, however, there is room for improvement, and I also look forward to hearing suggestions of what those areas might be, and how the quality of education at UBC can be raised even further.

To help prepare us for this self-study, to better understand how the members of the graduate community perceive the quality of services and resources we provide to them, and to learn what we might be doing better, we conducted an online survey of all graduate program advisors, Graduate Council members, and graduate program staff this past summer. A summary of the responses are provided in Appendix 1, and we will refer to the feedback throughout this document.

Overall, there was a very high level of satisfaction with our services, and with the contribution FoGS makes to the vigour of graduate education in the University. Specific concerns were identified in some areas; we are already addressing some of these issues, and will respond to the concerns in this document.

This self-study was a team effort, and I would like to sincerely thank and acknowledge the many people who contributed to it. I also extend in advance my deep appreciation to the reviewers for their valuable time and insight, and I look forward to a fruitful conversation.

Dr. Susan Porter, Dean *pro tem*

Executive Summary

The UBC Faculty of Graduate Studies (FoGS) is the fourth largest graduate school in Canada, overseeing the administration and education of 10,000 graduate students in 277 degree programs, and providing support to 800 postdoctoral fellows. A large structural change of the Faculty occurred in 2007, with the transfer of responsibilities for interdisciplinary research to the newly formed College for Interdisciplinary Studies, and a reinvigorated mission of the Faculty in supporting excellence in graduate education was articulated and led by a new dean and leader in graduate education, Dr. Barbara Evans. Among the accomplishments of her 3 ½ year term were improved graduate award systems and funding, improved data analysis and provision, a greatly expanded and broadened professional development program for graduate students, enhanced recruitment efforts, the provision of professional development offerings for supervision, and the establishment of the Postdoctoral Fellows Office to provide much-needed support and advocacy for UBC postdoctoral fellows (PDFs). With her return to Australia, the University will shortly be seeking a new dean.



UBC graduate students and postdoctoral fellows are part of an extraordinarily rich research and scholarly environment, in a university that takes seriously its mission to create “an exceptional learning environment that fosters global citizenship, advances a civil and sustainable society, and supports outstanding research to serve the people of B.C., Canada and the world”. We are fortunate to have committed and effective staff and faculty in the Faculty of Graduate Studies who provide efficient and responsive administrative service for the very complex and diverse graduate community at UBC. Through collaborative processes, we articulate and uphold standards of academic excellence to ensure the highest quality educational experience across all programs, and provide outstanding professional development opportunities for both graduate students and postdoctoral fellows to support their formation as scholars who will make a positive difference in the world.

Executive Summary

We face challenges, as do all graduate schools. Despite a recent increase in central graduate student funding (largely from a provincial initiative to increase graduate student enrolment), inflation-adjusted graduate student support per capita has remained relatively constant since 2006. Although doctoral students (in their first four years) receive an average of \$25,000 from all sources, there is insufficient funding to provide a guaranteed funding package to every doctoral student, and many graduate students are unfunded. Our admission processes are still paper-heavy and therefore not as efficient as they should be, nor are our student progress tracking processes as efficient or as rigorous as they should be; not all research graduate students are mentored in the most exemplary fashion; we do not support all graduate students and PDFs adequately in their preparation for the diversity of careers they will pursue; and some students and PDFs feel a sense of isolation or lack of integration into the vibrant intellectual and social community of UBC.

We are forward-looking in this document to the extent we are able, given the transitional time we are in. We believe there are, and have articulated here, real opportunities for continued enhancement of the graduate and postdoctoral experience at UBC. We have embarked on planning for a new student management system that would, if funded, substantially and positively impact the administration of graduate education and the student educational experience. We will continue to streamline administrative processes related to awards and curriculum approval. There are numerous opportunities to enhance the lived experience of graduate students and PDFs as it relates to supervision, intellectual community, and career development. Broad and continuous dialogue across the graduate and postdoctoral community is essential, and will be the foundation for further initiatives to enhance graduate administration and the experience of UBC's graduate students and PDFs.



Overview of FoGS & UBC

UBC

UBC is one of North America's largest public research-intensive universities, and regularly ranks among the world's 40 best universities. Student enrolment on the Vancouver campus (UBC-V) is approximately 47,000, with graduate students constituting 21% of the student body, or 9900 (9200 of whom fall under FoGS's administrative oversight). There are nearly 800 postdoctoral fellows distributed across all Faculties. The university attracts more than \$550 million per year in research funding, and hosts and 2700 full-time faculty members in 11 disciplinary Faculties, two Colleges, over 80 research institutes and centres, and 10 affiliated hospitals or medical centres.

A second campus in Kelowna (UBC-O) is home to an additional 7900 students, of whom 700 are at the graduate level. Although the campuses share a Board of Governors, UBC-O is overseen by a distinct Senate, and graduate education there falls under a separate Dean and College of Graduate Studies.

History and Changing Role of FoGS

The Faculty of Graduate Studies was established in 1949 to oversee the university's growing activities and responsibilities in graduate education. The role of the Faculty has also included, over the years, responsibilities for research coordination and initiatives, and in the 1980s and '90s responsibility for the increasing number of interdisciplinary research centres and institutes, with direct oversight of their graduate programs. As the size and complexity of the research enterprise expanded, research administration responsibilities were transferred to a Vice-President Research office. In January 2007, in response to concerns about the breadth of responsibility for the Faculty, the College for Interdisciplinary Studies (CFIS) was created to promote interdisciplinarity across UBC and to provide a home for the numerous interdisciplinary research units and graduate programs that had previously fallen under FoGS's jurisdiction. (As we write this self-study, a major re-structuring of CFIS is being planned, and will include a shift in administrative oversight of the larger research units to disciplinary Faculties.) The Interdisciplinary Studies Graduate Program was the one program that was retained under the direct oversight of FoGS. Unlike the interdisciplinary graduate programs that migrated to CFIS, this program is individualized for each student, and is not thematically-based.

FoGS has also been instrumental in establishing the two graduate residential Colleges at UBC, beginning with that largely funded by Cecil Green (Green College), followed by that built through the generosity of alumni of St. John's College at Shanghai (St. John's College). We continue to support and carry responsibility for these stellar graduate communities. More recently (March, 2010), we have undertaken the responsibility for providing support and advocacy for postdoctoral fellows at UBC through the establishment of our Postdoctoral Fellows Office (PDFO).

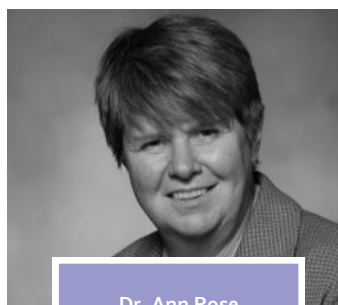
Overview of FoGS & UBC

Recent Leadership

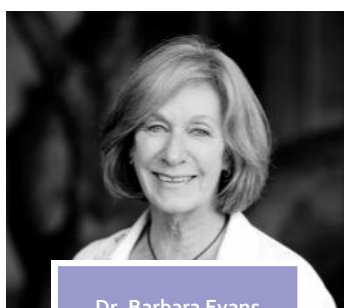
At the time of the last review, the Dean was Dr. Frieda Granot from the Sauder School of Business, a vigorous advocate for the advancement of interdisciplinary research at UBC. Dr. Ann Rose served as Dean *pro tem* upon the completion of Dr. Granot’s term, and in late 2007, the university appointed Dr. Barbara Evans as Dean. Dr. Evans was the former Dean of Graduate Studies and pro-Vice Chancellor at the University of Melbourne, and a worldwide leader in graduate education. Her mandate was to provide leadership and direction to the “new” Faculty of Graduate Studies (following the FoGS/CFIS split), and under her guidance, FoGS re-evaluated its priorities, aligning them with the UBC Strategic Plan, *Place and Promise*. With broad input, she led the development of a *Graduate Student Strategy and Operational Plan (2010-15)* for the university and 2010-13 *Faculty of Graduate Studies Strategic and Operational Plan* working documents. See Appendix 2 for all these strategic plans. Dr. Evans stepped down in April 2011 to return to Australia, and Dr. Susan Porter (then Associate Dean, Professional Development) was appointed Dean *pro tem* for one year while the university carries out a decanal search.



Dr. Frieda Granot



Dr. Ann Rose



Dr. Barbara Evans

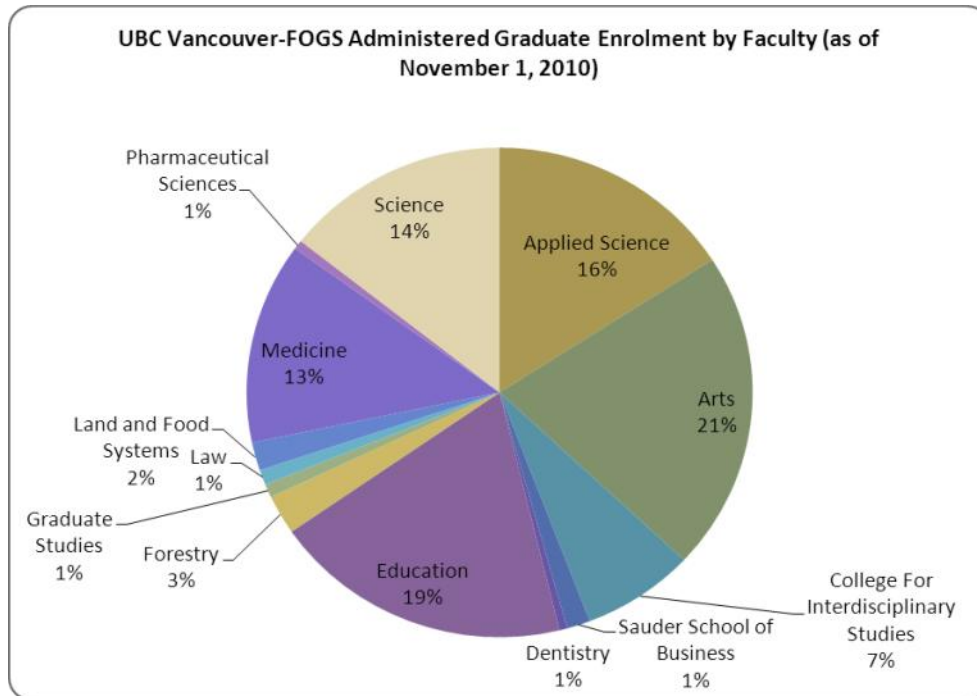


Dr. Susan Porter

Graduate Programs

The Faculty of Graduate Studies has responsibility for 277 degree programs housed in 137 units. Of the FoGS graduate student body, 37% are enrolled in doctoral programs, 22% are pursuing thesis-based master’s degrees, and 42% are in course-based or thesis-optional master’s degree programs. A small number of professional graduate degree programs at UBC (MBA, PharmD, MEng and MM) fall under the jurisdiction of their disciplinary Faculties.

Overview of FoGS & UBC



Mission

The current mission of FoGS can be summarized as supporting excellence in graduate and postdoctoral education by:

- ◆ Establishing and articulating a vision and standards of academic excellence for graduate education, and advocating for high quality graduate education within and outside the university;
- ◆ Providing responsive and responsible administration of graduate programs and students that is transparent, consistent and equitable;
- ◆ Providing superior service to the graduate community, with activities and support programs for graduate students, faculty and staff;
- ◆ Facilitating and encouraging a rich intellectual and social environment that enhances the quality of graduate and postdoctoral education, in part through liaising with the multiple units and individuals on campus relevant to graduate and postdoctoral affairs to ensure a coordinated and comprehensive approach;
- ◆ Providing a central resource for graduate student and PDF advice, information, networking, and assistance with problems;
- ◆ Providing outstanding opportunities for professional development of graduate students and PDFs that enhance career options and encourage them to contribute positively to a civil and sustainable society;
- ◆ Directly supporting and ensuring excellence of the Interdisciplinary Graduate Studies Program; and
- ◆ Working closely with Green and St. John's Colleges to ensure an outstanding intellectual and social experience in these graduate residential environments.

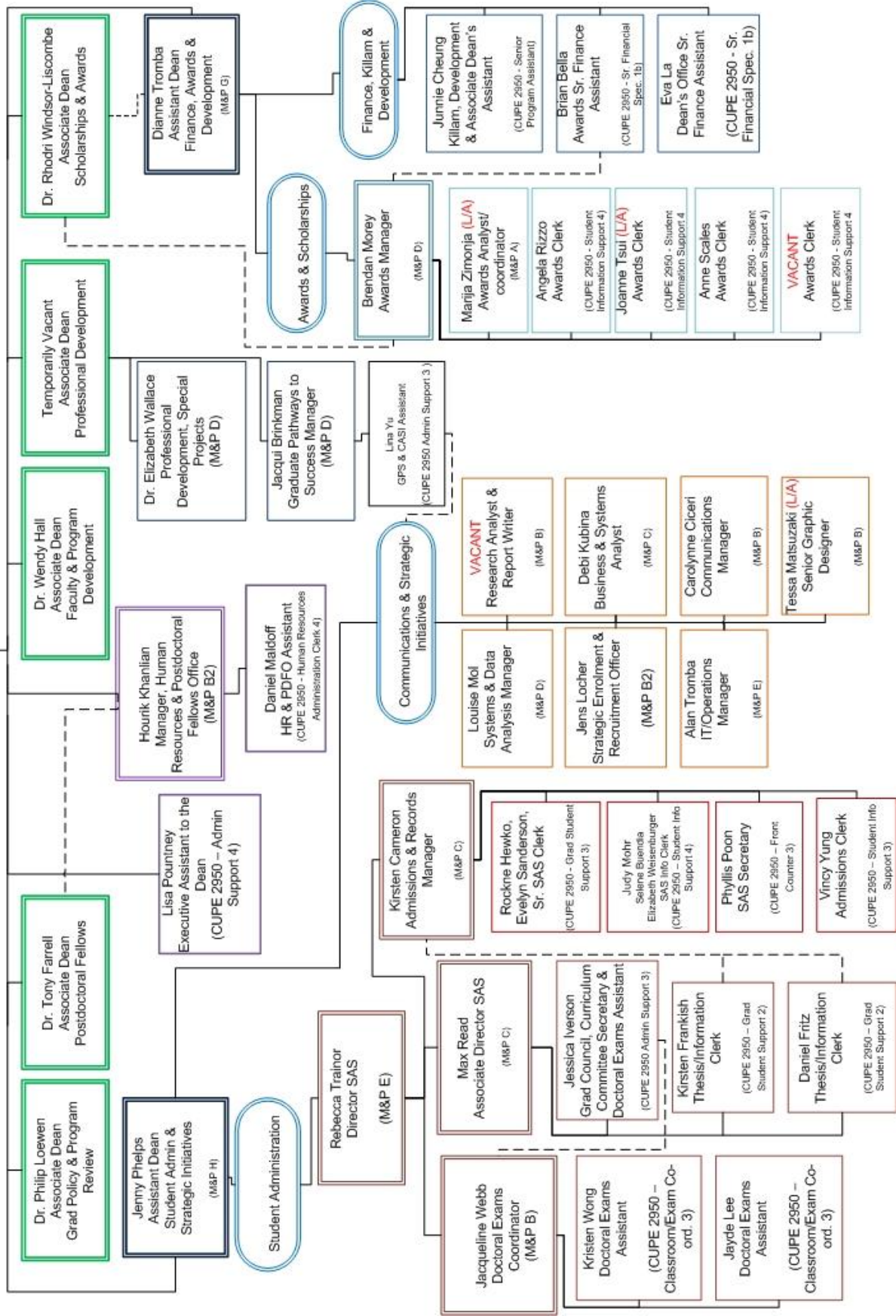
Administration, Resources & Infrastructure

Dean's Office & Administration



September 27, 2011

Dr. Susan Porter - Dean Pro Tem



Administration, Resources & Infrastructure

Dean's Office & Administration

Overview

The current Dean's office comprises 39 staff members and 4 Associate Deans (see Organizational Chart opposite) The following is a general delineation of responsibilities, with more detailed descriptions in subsequent sections:

FTE Responsibility

- 16.0 Student academic services
- 6.9 Student awards
- 6.4 Communications and strategic initiatives
- 2.7 Finance (including administration of Killam trust funds and development)
- 2.1 Student professional development
- 1.3 Dean and Associate Dean administrative support
- 1.0 Human resources
- 1.0 Postdoctoral Fellows Office
- 1.0 IT and operations
- 0.7 Graduate Council and associated committee support

Current Associate Dean Portfolios

- ◆ Graduate Policy & Program Review (0.3 FTE)
- ◆ Faculty & Program Development (0.3 FTE)
- ◆ Scholarships & Awards (0.3 FTE)
- ◆ Postdoctoral Fellows (0.2 FTE)

A fifth Professional Development portfolio (0.3 FTE) is temporarily vacant. For short biographies of Dr. Evans, Dr. Porter and the Associate Deans, please see Appendix 4.

Administration, Resources & Infrastructure

Administrative Efficiency & Employee Engagement

Administrative Efficiency & Employee Engagement

The Awards team and the Student Academic Services team are the two largest ‘workhorse’ units, providing essential and complex service to the graduate community. Efficiency is critical, therefore, and workflow processes in these areas are regularly reviewed, with practice altered accordingly. Recent changes in admissions and doctoral exams processes, as the result of such reviews, are described in later sections.

An analysis of staff/student ratios in selected Faculty of Graduate Studies Dean’s offices in Western Canada was carried out by Dr. Fred Hall in 2010. Considering actual FTE positions and part-time student status (counted as 0.33 full-time students), the values of staff/1000 students ranged from 3.5 (Simon Fraser) to 14.8 (University of Regina); UBC’s value is 4.6. A more crude analysis of a broader spectrum of the larger Canadian universities, using available 2009 enrolment figures and staff head-counts from directories showed a range of 3.4 (Toronto) to 4.6 (Queen’s and McGill); our value by this analysis is 4.1. As different Graduate Studies offices have varying degrees of administrative responsibilities (and many don’t have activities related to post-doctoral affairs or professional development), it is difficult to make meaningful comparisons; our staff/student ratios, however, appear to be well within the normal spectrum across Canada.

Engagement of the staff is a high priority for the Dean’s office, and we have instituted a number of measures to encourage a sense of personal fulfillment, ownership and positive association with the mission of FoGS. In addition to the extensive UBC staff professional development program which our employees are eligible for, we provide our own professional development funds and regularly host “Lunch and Learn” sessions on topics such as wellness, intercultural communication, stress management, and the academic activities of the Associate Deans. Regular staff meetings are held to update the office on key developments and to ensure lines of communication are open. A “suggestion box” has recently been instituted (and well-used), and numerous team-building activities such as participation in community runs, potluck lunches, and outings are organized. We have begun to more proactively publicly recognize those among us who have demonstrated particular commitment and outstanding service.



Administration, Resources & Infrastructure

Administrative Efficiency & Employee Engagement



Challenges

- ◆ A challenge that has arisen this year is the removal of Associate Deans from the Faculty Association bargaining unit. The primary ramifications of this are that Associate Deans are not eligible for the normal merit and other salary-related increases through their disciplinary Faculties, nor can they accrue sabbatical leave eligibility during their time as Associate Dean. Thus, even if we can successfully negotiate with disciplinary Deans with respect to salary, FoGS Associate Deans are still penalized for their service despite the fact they continue to carry normal faculty responsibilities. (The same is not true for disciplinary Associate Deans, as they are less likely to lose merit and other increases, and can accrue eligibility for administrative leave in lieu of that for sabbatical leave.) This is an obviously unfair situation for current Associate Deans, and will heavily impact recruitment to these critical positions. We are working with the Provost, Faculty Relations, and the Faculty Association to address these issues.
- ◆ Within the last six months we have also experienced significant HR administrative and staffing challenges related to performance management and a large number of extended leaves. We believe that we have been able to maintain our high level of service despite these challenges.



Administration, Resources & Infrastructure

Budget and Financial Administration

Budget

Sources of revenue for the operations of the Faculty of Graduate Studies Dean's Office and affiliated units are central UBC General Purpose Operating funds (GPOF), graduate application fees, endowment funding through the I.W. Killam Endowment for Advanced Studies (for Killam program administration), other endowments for Green College and St. John's College, ancillary funds for St. John's College and occasional one-time funding. The 2011-12 revenues for the Faculty are approximately \$4.8M, broken down as follows:

Dean's Office	
Central GPOF	2,167,557
Application Fee revenues	970,000
IT Staff Cost recovery	6,500
Killam Staff Cost recovery	41,000
Provost's funds for PDFO	125,000
Dean's Office Sub-total	3,310,057
ISGP	
Central GPOF	144,220
Specific Purpose (TLEF)	33,699
ISGP Sub-total	177,919
Green College	
Central GPOF (Housing)	420,000
Endowments	198,576
Specific Purpose	1,400
Green College Sub-total	619,976
St. John's College	
Central GPOF (Housing)	432,958
Endowments	1,109
Ancillary Funds	236,936
Specific Purpose	3,558
St. John's College Sub-total	674,561
FoGS Grand Total	4,782,513

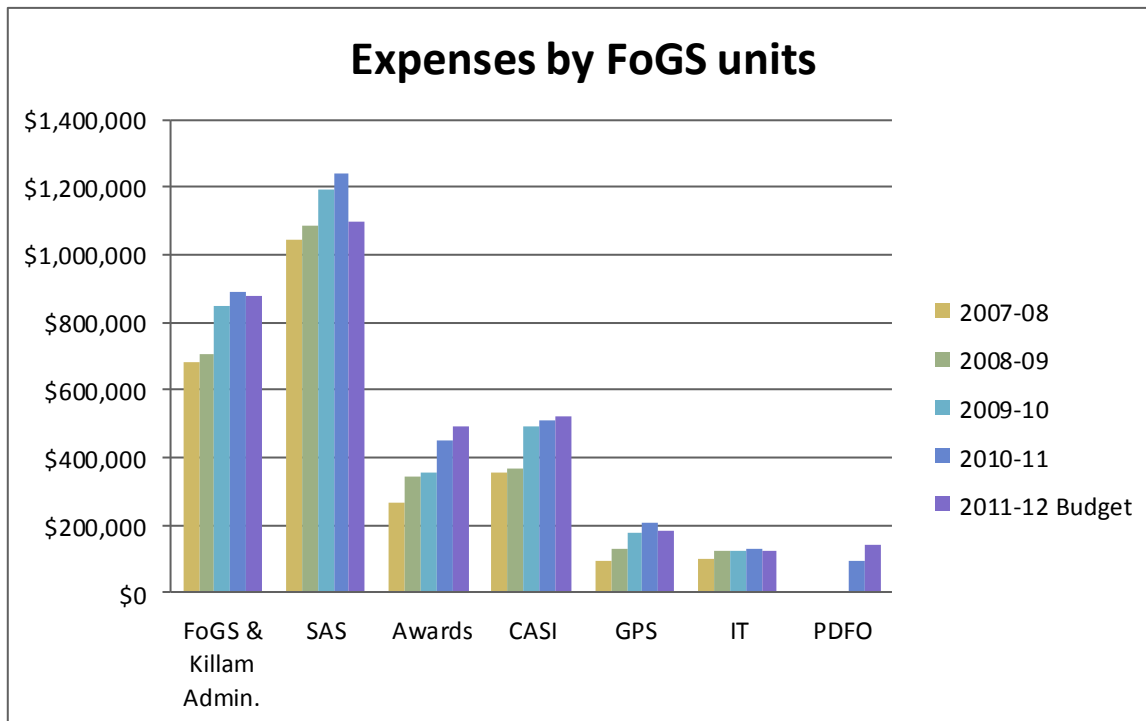
Administration, Resources & Infrastructure

Budget and Financial Administration

Budget cont'd

Graduate application fees cover some of the operational costs of applications, admissions and awards processing and administration, and are shared 55/45 (domestic) or 73/27 (international) between the Faculty of Graduate Studies and the admitting graduate program. Current graduate application fee levels are \$91.80 for domestic applications and \$153 for international applications. The fees are waived for applicants from the fifty poorest nations as defined by the United Nations.

Among Dr. Evans's priorities upon her arrival were to increase staffing levels to meet the changing needs related to rising graduate enrolment and increased award complexity, as well as to enhance data collection and analysis, recruitment, and student professional development. The Provost was supportive of these priorities and the Faculty received new recurring GPOF funding of up to \$440,000 over the next three years (2008- 2010). Additional recurring funds were also provided starting in 2010-11 for the newly established Postdoctoral Fellows Office in FoGS.



SAS = Student Academic Services

CASI = Communications & Strategic Initiatives

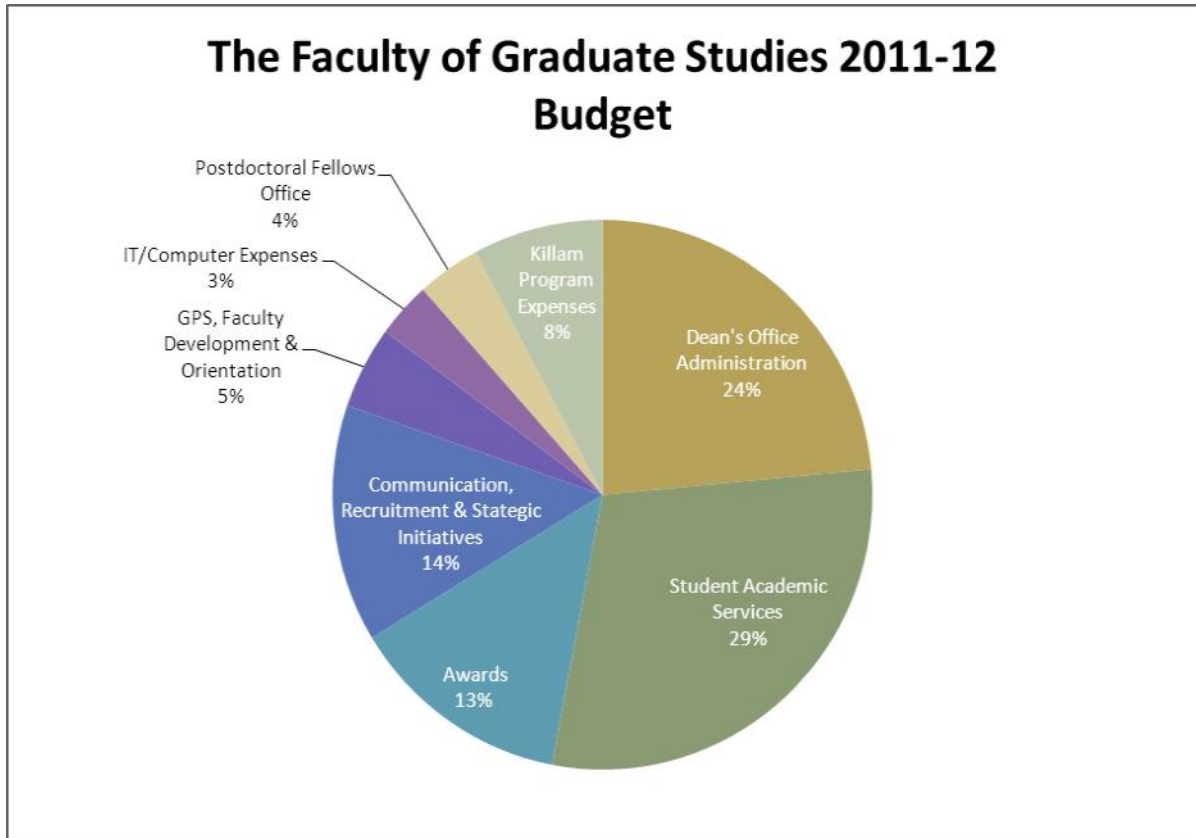
GPS = Graduate Pathways to Success

IT = Information Technology

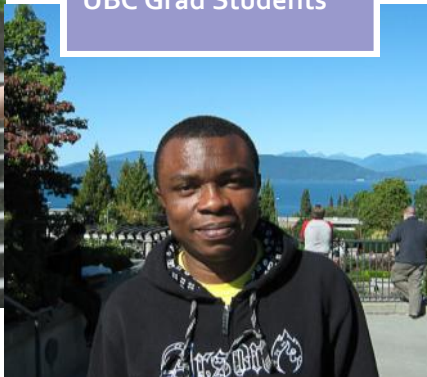
PDFO = Postdoctoral Fellows Office

Administration, Resources & Infrastructure

Budget and Financial Administration

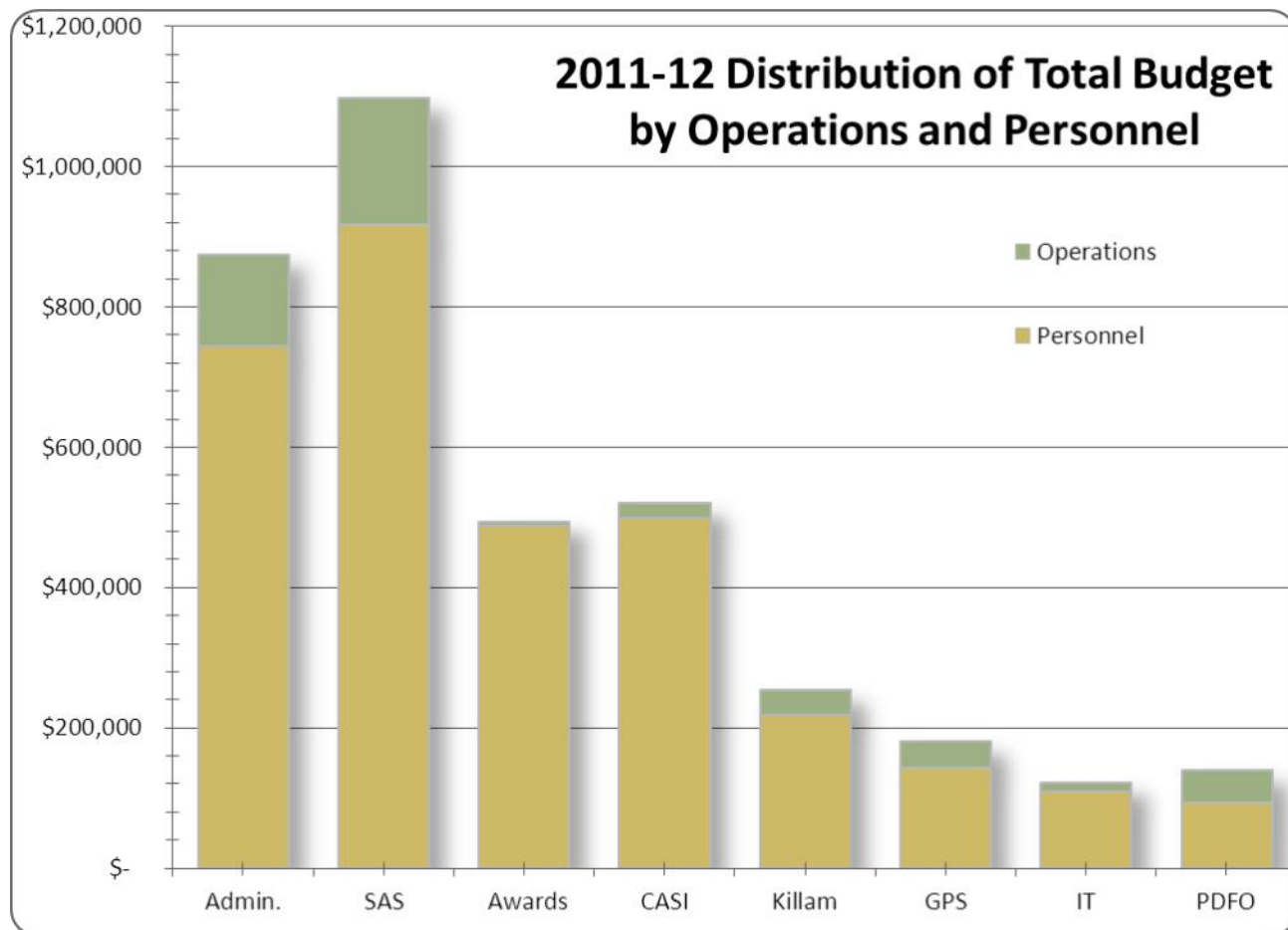


UBC Grad Students



Administration, Resources & Infrastructure

Budget and Financial Administration



SAS = Student Academic Services

CASI = Communications & Strategic Initiatives

GPS = Graduate Pathways to Success

IT = Information Technology

PDFO = Postdoctoral Fellows Office

Prior to 2008, the FoGS front counter was in a windowless basement room. To create a more welcoming space for students to interact with FoGS staff, we undertook a significant renovation to create a bright, street-level access point. This was funded in part from an internal (UBC) loan, which has a ten-year repayment schedule lasting through to 2021-22. The annual cost to cover the principal and interest for the loan is approximately \$30,000.

Administration, Resources & Infrastructure

Budget and Financial Administration

Financial Administration

The Finance unit (approximately 2.7 FTE) provides financial management and assists with strategic planning for the Faculty. It is also responsible for the financial management of merit-based graduate awards and development activities on behalf of the Faculty.

Current and Future Priorities

Key priorities over the next year include training in and implementation of new online financial systems:

- ◆ **Hyperion budget.** This is a flexible, campus-wide budgeting tool that is based on a new Faculty allocation model developed in 2010-11 for UBC.
- ◆ **New reporting tools.** As part of the Hyperion Budget, finance staff will work with the central Budget Office to develop and implement new tools to facilitate multi-year forecasting (based on university wide budget assumptions), funding scenario modeling and analysis, and financial reporting capabilities by allowing us to draw information from many campus-wide information/management systems.
- ◆ **Financial Management Information System (FMIS).** Financial transactions in the Dean's office are being moved over to this online processing system. We are in the process of training our staff and ensuring certification of all those with financial responsibilities in this system.

Challenges

- ◆ With staff savings (including mid-year hiring) in 2010-11 relative to 2011-12, and no revenue increases in 2011-12, we have had to make operational cut-backs this year and face a \$68,000 shortfall for the Dean's office. We are reviewing budget needs with the University.

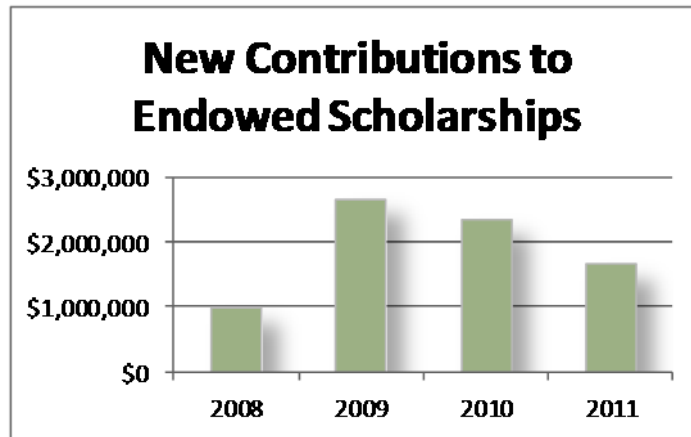
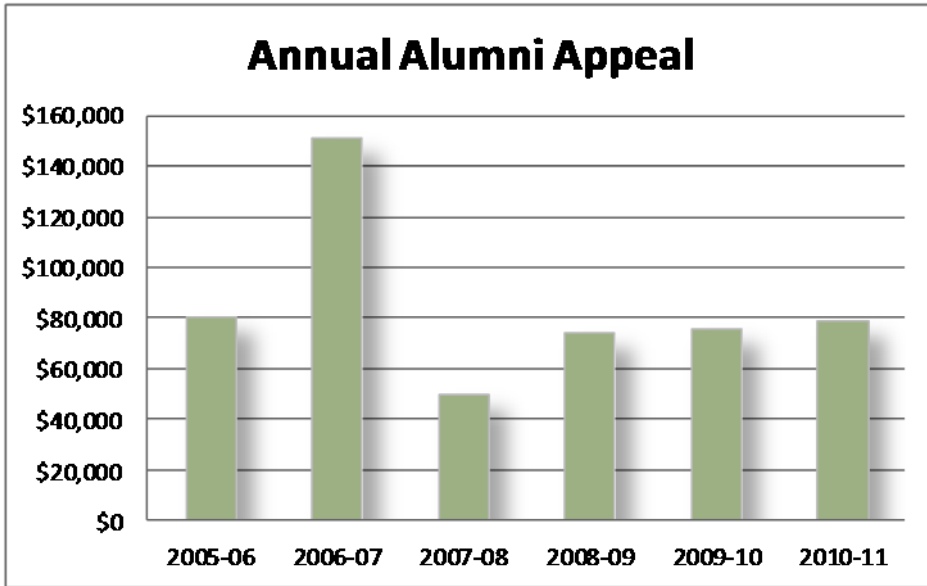
Development

Development work on behalf of FoGS is carried out in partnership with the central UBC Development Office and with other Development Offices across campus. FoGS's roles are to identify priorities, to assist with the development of solicitation materials, to provide financial reports and financial feasibility studies, and to engage with donors in scholarship development and recognition events. The primary fundraising avenue for the Faculty as a whole is an annual alumni appeal, and we will be working this year as well on securing sponsorship for the Three-Minute Thesis competition (see the Professional Development section).

The annual appeal includes both mail and telephone solicitation, and has resulted in a small but steady increase in revenue since 2007. The 2010-11 funds represented 9.3% of the total raised by UBC through this avenue (which included fundraising for specific capital projects).

Administration, Resources & Infrastructure

Budget and Financial Administration



New contributions to endowed graduate scholarships in recent years included \$1.6M in 08-09 for the Faculty of Arts Audain Foundation Graduate Fellowships, and in 2009-10, \$1.2M towards fellowships shared by the Faculties of Land and Food Systems and Forestry.

Administration, Resources & Infrastructure

Budget and Financial Administration

Development cont'd

Current and Future Priorities

UBC is launching an ambitious 7-year development campaign this fall, the goals of which include raising \$1.5 billion and doubling alumni engagement in volunteer and other activities. FoGS has been working with the central Development Office to identify priorities for giving during this campaign as well as opportunities for alumni engagement.

Key priorities for these appeals will be:

- ◆ **Alumni recruitment.** Both through the campaign and through partnership with the Alumni Office, FoGS will work to enhance alumni participation in its activities. A particular focus is the GPS program, especially the career-related events.
- ◆ **General graduate scholarship fund.** Although scholarship funding has improved over the past decade, we are a long way from being able to provide all research students a reasonable minimum funding package, or to provide sufficient scholarships and bursaries to the many worthy course-based program students who have chosen or would have chosen to attend UBC. Support for scholarships is thus still a high priority for the Faculty.
- ◆ **Aboriginal scholarships.** The goal of increased funding in this area is in recognition of the University's strategic objective for Aboriginal engagement, and in acknowledgment that Aboriginal graduate students continue to be under-represented and insufficiently funded. See the Awards and Aboriginal Engagement sections below for a description of these scholarships and the challenges and successes of Aboriginal engagement.
- ◆ **Graduate student travel awards.** FoGS supports student mobility in a number of ways, but our financial support for student travel is limited generally to a one-time \$400 award. Funds raised in this category will support student mobility, both domestically and internationally, for study, research, or conference participation.
- ◆ **Graduate Global Leadership Fellowships.** In alignment with UBC's strategic priority of international engagement, a new priority for FoGS is the creation of a doctoral fellowship to enable promising international student leaders from developing countries to pursue graduate studies at UBC.

Challenges

- ◆ As for all those charged with fundraising, the recent economic uncertainties in the world present a challenge in enhancing or even maintaining the level of giving we have enjoyed in the past. The dispersed nature of graduate education and the usual flux in career activities over the years immediately after graduation also present challenges for alumni engagement, both in terms of keeping in contact with graduates and in identifying their career tracks and experiences. This is, however, of critical importance beyond that for development and engagement, and we will need to work closely with the programs and with the Alumni Office to improve our tracking of and engagement with alumni.

Administration, Resources & Infrastructure

Budget and Financial Administration

Information Technology and Systems

Bringing together existing staffing resources, a team of technology, data and communications specialists has recently been formed to work more cohesively and strategically in guiding and developing the use of technologies to meet the Faculty's overall objectives. This team includes the IT Manager, Business & Systems Analyst, Manager of Web Strategy & Recruitment Initiatives, and Manager of Data Systems & Analysis. FoGS has also recently invested in a new systems development and production environment, using two new servers to support several important Faculty initiatives.

Key Accomplishments

- ◆ **Website redesign.** Prior to 2010, deficiencies in the FoGS website, which has over 5000 pages and averages 1000 views per day, included an increasingly obsolete programming language requiring a single-point editor. A major accomplishment was the complete redesign to increase security and functionality, and to make it a more flexible and powerful content management system through which responsibility for updating the considerable content can be distributed to several managers.
- ◆ **"Admin Centre".** This is a new, secure web-based portal through which computer applications and systems tools can be accessed. This framework was created on the Linux platform and uses the university's Campus wide Log-in module for user authentication, which will allow for access to administrative systems by individuals outside of the Faculty, thereby distributing and streamlining processes. We use the Admin Centre presently as the foundation for our new doctoral exams management system, and it provides capacity to develop further web-based applications through which students and programs will be able to conduct administrative transactions with the Faculty.
- ◆ **Doctoral exams management system.** This new management system will replace an inefficient Access database system. The first phase of development has made doctoral exams processing more efficient within the Faculty, and a planned second phase for external use by graduate programs will create seamless coordination and paperless communication between FoGS and programs.
- ◆ **Rising Stars of Research (RSR) management system.** A new web-based system for managing applications, selection, and registration for RSR (see the Recruitment section for a description of this major event), was needed to make the RSR process easier for applicants, adjudicators, and FoGS administrators. The system includes an evaluation component whereby raters and committees can enter their ratings and comments on event applications online.
- ◆ **Online registration system for GPS.** With over 2400 students wishing to register for GPS events annually, an online system of registration was deemed essential, and was incorporated in 2009. The system is somewhat rudimentary, however, and we anticipate developing an enhanced system within our "Admin Centre" framework.

Administration, Resources & Infrastructure

Budget and Financial Administration

Information Technology and Systems cont'd

Key Accomplishments cont'd

- ◆ **Online application system enhancement.** SynApps, owned and developed by the UBC Faculty of Dentistry, is the system currently used for online application for admission to FoGS. Our Faculty contracts with Dentistry for its use, and manages enhancements and training for the system. Significant enhancements have been made to the system over the years which have benefitted applicants, graduate program staff and FoGS. Nonetheless, there are major limitations, and we are planning for a replacement system in the coming 1-2 years.
- ◆ **Web content management system (CMS) user group.** FoGS initiated this group that now has more than 70 members from across campus. The group benefits our Faculty through knowledge exchange, peer training and troubleshooting through the relationships to other web professionals, collaborative developments and code sharing and expedited responses to our needs as voiced through the group. Our lead role in this group fostered valuable relationships to the major units that provide web support at UBC, namely Public Affairs, IT Services and the Centre for Teaching, Learning, and Technology, and allows us to be informed about major developments and initiatives early on.
- ◆ **University Exchange Server.** In response to university directives, we also completed a full migration to the University Exchange Server for email and calendaring in 2011. This provides a more uniform, secure and networked platform to manage these functions.

Challenges

- ◆ **Need for new systems development and implementation.** As indicated elsewhere in this study (see Student Academic Services), the University's need for major new systems development to manage the graduate student lifecycle is significant and well beyond the Faculty's resources to deliver. Therefore, FoGS is partnering with UBC Central IT in a larger effort of the University to improve student administration systems (the Student Interaction Transformation Program). The graduate student administration component of this program is still in the initial planning stages and will require significant funding commitments from the University, as well as staff commitment in FoGS to ensure systems are developed to meet the needs of graduate applicants, students, program staff and faculty. Training and change management to support the adoption of new systems will also be a major challenge. These developments will command substantial FoGS staff time over the next several years.
- ◆ **Equipment budget constraints.** Our computer hardware (desktop) systems are no longer on a three-year refresh due to increases in staffing and reductions in budget. We are however exploring other avenues to most cost effectively return to a three-year refresh.

Student Academic Services

Student Academic Services

Student Academic Services Overview

The Student Academic Services (SAS) team is responsible for providing outstanding service in the core registrarial functions of the Faculty—graduate student admissions, records and registration transactions, academic progress tracking, final doctoral exams, thesis formatting and receipt, and graduation approvals—for our nearly 10,000 graduate students. This is accomplished in partnership with staff and faculty in graduate programs and the students themselves. The SAS clerical team is also responsible for providing information and services to visitors to the Faculty’s main office and handling email and web inquiries about graduate study at UBC. As a whole, the team manages the administrative elements of effective movement of students into, through and out of their graduate programs.

In addition to overseeing core operations and the clerical team, SAS management staff handles a wide range of issues and initiatives related to student administration. They investigate and coordinate responses to complex student issues (such as plagiarism, copyright, student-supervisor conflicts, policy exceptions); provide training and resources to graduate programs; liaise with other campus units to manage student

progression (e.g. Enrolment Services, IT Services, UBC Library); conduct policy review and analysis; and generally serve as University experts in UBC graduate education policy and procedures, as well as international higher education systems.

Since the time of the last review, staffing has increased by 25% (16 vs. 12 FTE) whereas the graduate student population has increased by 43%, with 73% more doctoral students (who have more complex and longer programs, and require additional administrative oversight in areas such as registration management, doctoral exams and conflict resolution). A conscientious attention to workflow efficiency has allowed us to maintain staffing at this level, although we do experience some overload at peak times (see challenge, below) and will need to expand should the graduate population continue to increase.

	Last Review: 2001-02	2010-11
Applications Received	Master’s: 5,983 Doctoral: 1,788 Total: 7,771	Master’s: 10,162 Doctoral: 3,040 Total: 13,202
Admission Offers	Master’s: 2,607 Doctoral: 546 Total: 3,153	Master’s: 3,757 Doctoral: 860 Total: 4,617
New Registrations	Master’s: 1,651 Doctoral: 337 Total: 1,988	Master’s: 2,551 Doctoral: 583 Total: 3,134
Total Enrolment	Master’s: 4,693 Doctoral: 2,145 Total: 6,838	Master’s: 6,198 Doctoral: 3,603 Total: 9,801
Theses Received	Not responsible for thesis receipt	1,200
Degrees Conferred	(Calendar year 2001) Master’s: 1,267 Doctoral: 329 Total: 1,596	(Calendar year 2010) Master’s: 1,999 Doctoral: 516 Total: 2,515

Student Academic Services

Student Academic Services

Key Accomplishments

The SAS team has re-engineered processes and gained efficiencies in response to ever-increasing demands placed by growing graduate student enrolment. The team manages a very significant volume of detailed admission and registration services and provides high-quality support and consultation to students, graduate program staff and faculty members. Of the graduate administrative staff participating in the graduate advisor/staff survey, 99% (93%*) positively rated their overall satisfaction with SAS team services. (*The SAS team ROCKS!! / Wonderful! / Keep up the great work, guys! / Awesome job everyone!!*) Particular accomplishments include:

- ◆ **Significant improvement in admissions processing times.** One of the concerns raised in the 2002 review was delayed processing of admissions offers, which at times took up to three weeks. Since then, workflow processes have been re-engineered for much greater efficiency and speed, especially for applicants rated as “high priority” by graduate programs. “Priority” admissions now routinely take between 1.5 to 2.5 days from arrival at FoGS to generation of admission offer, while “standard” admissions take 2 to 3 days, despite a 46% increase in numbers of admission offers processed since 2002 and only a 25% increase in staff.
- ◆ **Transition to fully electronic thesis receipt and instant online library archiving.** In 2003, responsibility for receiving master’s and doctoral theses was transferred from the UBC Library to the Faculty. To support this responsibility, we’ve developed expertise in electronic submission, copyright, and archiving. We’ve successfully transitioned from receipt of paper theses to a fully electronic submission and approval system, in coordination with the UBC Library’s digital, open-access information repository (“cIRcle”). This makes thesis review and receipt more efficient, enables the integration of electronic media into theses, and provides worldwide open access to UBC student research.
- ◆ **Improved student progress tracking processes.** In the past two years, we’ve worked with the reporting unit in Student Systems to generate new Crystal reports to track student registration status and progress towards academic milestones in relation to established University time requirements. Each summer, graduate programs are provided with a full roster of their registered students with detailed information on their registration status and academic progress. Programs are required to report back to FoGS whether student research progress has met expectations over the previous year. This has improved management of student progress between programs and FoGS.

** Although the category of “not applicable” was available, the category of “neither agree nor disagree”, was unfortunately often interpreted by the respondents as meaning a lack of opinion on the matter - because they did not use the service or were new in the role, for example. It presumably was also sometimes interpreted as meaning an informed neutral opinion. For the former scenario, the category should be discounted in the calculation of informed responses; for the latter, it should be counted. We have therefore calculated and indicated both values (the latter in parentheses) when referring to the percent agreeing to a statement.*

Student Academic Services

Student Academic Services

- ◆ **Enhanced program management training for graduate students, faculty and program staff.** We have upgraded our outreach to graduate students, program administrators and faculty through multiple modalities (with face-to-face sessions delivered either at FoGS or at program sites). 1. New graduate advisor and staff orientations are held two to four times per year, covering all aspects of administration and awards, and an overview of GPS. 2. Three to five refresher sessions on admission are held each winter in preparation for the spring admissions season. 3. Specific-focus meetings for graduate administrative staff are held 2-3 times annually; and 4. Seminars on the doctoral exam process and final thesis submission are offered to students (staff are also invited) through the GPS program. We have also developed online administrative training tutorials and handbooks, and a quarterly newsletter (GradInsider—see Appendix 5).
- ◆ **Doctoral examination management improvements.** Final doctoral oral examinations are coordinated centrally at FoGS in collaboration with graduate programs. As raised in the graduate advisor/staff survey, the current procedures are complex and can be very time-consuming. A comprehensive review of processes has recently been completed, which has resulted in the first phase of development of a new, database-driven workflow system to manage exam coordination, and the revision of procedures and communications to create more clarity, efficiency, flexibility and faculty participation in the exam process. The development of an external-facing dimension to our new doctoral exam management system will hopefully further streamline the process and communications for program staff, faculty and students. A fund to subsidize external examiner travel to UBC to participate in final exams has also been established.

Current and Future Priorities

The SAS unit's most significant strategic goals over the next three years are:

- ◆ **Graduate student/program management improvement.** Systems technology developed by Student Systems (now integrated into Central IT) has long been inadequate to meet the needs of graduate student administration. As described above (Information Technology and Systems), we are partnering with central IT to invent and implement a fully integrated, web-based, database-driven graduate student enterprise management system. Please see Appendix 6 for an Executive Summary of the progress to date. If developed and implemented as conceived, numerous efficiencies in our administration processes will be realized by drastically reducing paper-based and other inefficient manual processes for the management of student admissions and registration. Students' experiences will be improved and streamlined in their administrative interactions with the Faculty.

Plans for the new management system will also include enhanced capacity for identification of research supervisors and for tracking student progress. For these and other reasons, this development will have a profound impact on the student academic experience and on administration of graduate education.

The Faculty is also reviewing its internal workflow processes in light of the development of new systems, to evaluate whether we are managing our responsibilities most efficiently.

Student Academic Services

Student Academic Services

- ◆ **Improved staff and faculty training.** Although much is done to ensure graduate program staff and faculty have needed training support, our offerings are not coordinated into a cohesive training program, nor are we always able to quickly respond on demand to questions that arise in real-time, due to sheer volume of work. As we are able to gain efficiencies in our work processing responsibilities, we will have more time to send our staff out to programs to work with new staff, and develop more helpful resources online, such as video tutorials. We can also improve usefulness and awareness of and easy access to our existing resources, such as the Graduate Program Staff and Advisors manual. These resources are not well enough known to the graduate education community.
- ◆ **Doctoral exam administration improvement.** We will complete phase 2 of the doctoral exams management system, “going live” external to FoGS with process management tools for graduate programs

Challenges

The SAS unit’s most significant challenges in carrying out its responsibilities and meeting its strategic goals are:

- ◆ **Funding and implementing new graduate student/program management systems.** Although we are well on our way in the planning stages of this project, funding for its development and implementation is still uncertain. If new systems are developed, implementation, training and change management with staff across 200+ graduate programs will also be a major challenge ahead.
- ◆ **Large number, diversity and distribution of graduate programs with differing needs/preferences regarding program administration.** The SAS team strives very diligently to accommodate the unique needs of various graduate programs, but it is certainly a challenge to maintain efficiency and equity in doing so. An example is from the Faculty of Education, which offers several completely unique master’s cohort programs each year, each of which need to be set up on short notice in the online application and student database systems as a separate degree program. This requires a great deal of manual work to accomplish. Although an argument could be made that program diversity calls for the responsibility for such tasks to be devolved to the individual graduate program, this would likely create other inefficiencies, systems security issues and major training burdens.
- ◆ **Suboptimal turnaround time for student records and registration requests** This was a criticism raised by some in the graduate advisor/staff survey. We recognize that during time-sensitive peak periods for admissions processing (January-April), and graduation eligibility checking (November and April) we fall behind in processing student records and registration requests, as the same staff members are responsible for all of these areas. We attempt to address this problem by assigning a clerk to respond to records and registration requests that are clearly urgent. Still, our overall work volume does impact even urgent requests. A potential solution may be found in our efforts to develop new systems and associated workflow, which would provide efficiency gains across all SAS operations, creating more staff capacity to manage work volume throughout the year. Increased staff is probably not a necessity at this time, but continued enrolment growth would eventually require it.

Graduate Student Recruitment

Graduate Student Recruitment

Graduate Student Recruitment

The Faculty of Graduate Studies makes significant contributions to the recruitment efforts of the university through a combination of centralized marketing and outreach to prospective students, and distributed support and consultation to the university community and graduate programs. A dedicated recruitment and web specialist carries out most of these functions.

Key Accomplishments

Over the last few years FoGS has undertaken several initiatives to enhance graduate student recruitment worldwide:

- ◆ **Redesigned website to better engage and inform prospective students.** The redesign of our website in 2010 included a search engine optimization and a substantial increase in the amount of information relevant to prospective and incoming students, including that related to living in Vancouver. Each graduate program page contains detailed academic and financial information, and many include individual student profiles compiled by FoGS. (Program home websites may access these profiles through RSS feeds).
- ◆ **Established recruitment roundtable.** We have brought together a group of personnel across campus involved in recruitment to discuss relevant, related activities and best practices, and to coordinate recruitment efforts. This group meets approximately quarterly.
- ◆ **Introduced virtual “Open Houses”.** Approximately 5 online Wimba sessions are now offered per term, each attended by 10-30 (primarily international) participants. These interactive sessions provide basic information about graduate studies at UBC and allow participants to ask questions about any aspect of the graduate student experience.
- ◆ **Produced promotional information sheets.** The sheets highlight UBC’s and individual Faculties’ graduate education opportunities and are used by Faculties and recruitment personnel (see Appendix 7). The sheets have been largely well-received by Faculties, which were provided with 500 free copies and a digital file for their own use.
- ◆ **Attended recruitment fairs and events.** An annual circuit of Alberta and Ontario events is made by our office, and through the UBC Asia-Pacific Regional Office, events are attended in China, Saudi Arabia, Vietnam and Sri Lanka.



Graduate Student Recruitment

Graduate Student Recruitment

- ◆ **Provided in-depth recruitment consultations.** More than 30 UBC graduate programs have made use of individualized consulting by FoGS on recruitment issues, including how to institute their own virtual open houses, improve their websites, or tap into particular international markets.
- ◆ **Created and hosted the annual “Rising Stars of Research” event.** This national undergraduate research conference, the only one of its kind in Canada, was initiated by FoGS in 2008. Over 300 of the best young Canadian researchers attended the conferences over the following three years, with more than two-thirds coming from outside of BC. Participants developed valuable competencies in poster and oral presentation, interacted with researchers and potential supervisors from various disciplinary areas, and received career and academic advice from faculty members and graduate students. UBC benefited from the promotional opportunities to showcase its strong research position within Canada, and successfully recruited some of the top students as a direct result of their participation in the event. Unfortunately, coordinating and hosting this event was extremely taxing for FoGS staff, and it was deemed unsustainable as currently structured. The event was cancelled in 2011, and we are awaiting word on whether UBC can provide another administrative home or funding commitments to continue the initiative.

Rising Stars of Research 2010



- ◆ **Promoted and coordinated the German DAAD RISE Worldwide program at UBC.** Starting in 2010, FoGS took responsibility for this program, which provides funding for short-term international internships for German undergraduate students. Like the RSR event, this initiative increases awareness about UBC and hopefully student interest in graduate school here, either directly or indirectly through word of mouth. Enhanced research connections between UBC and German institutions are also a significant benefit. The year FoGS committed to promoting and coordinating the program, UBC became the largest participant in the initiative in North American (25.6% of projects), with 11 students placed here.

We have had great success with the RISE program - we hosted a very enthusiastic and highly qualified German student who contributed significantly to our research program. This interaction has solidified our connection to German science institutes and we look forward to hosting future students in our lab. - Kurt Haas, Assistant Professor, Brain Research Centre

Graduate Student Recruitment

Graduate Student Recruitment

- ◆ **Developed an online graduate student community approach.** To welcome all newly admitted students to UBC, to support interaction and engagement between students, and to increase conversion rates from offer status to registration status, FoGS initiated an online student forum for admitted students. We do not have data yet on conversion rates, but FoGS already considers the initiative a success. We gained tremendous insight through interacting with the students online; we were able to identify points of confusion for students, which allowed us to improve our processes and better connect students to available resources on campus such as Student Housing and International Student Development. Anecdotal feedback from participants in the online community has been overwhelmingly positive. Students organized meetings abroad (e.g. 25 Iranian students met several times in Tehran and some of them booked flights to Vancouver together), formed communities of interest, (e.g. a women's book club or a cycling group), or looked for accommodation together.

Graduate Student Recruitment

Graduate Student Recruitment

Graduate Student Recruitment cont'd

Current and Future Priorities

The strategic priorities for the recruitment area for the next 3 years are:

- ◆ **Expand the online community and increase use of other social media.** The newly admitted online community will be rebuilt technically to reduce manual maintenance and integrate it with other systems. The biggest challenge for this development is the integration component, as it requires collaboration with Central IT, which has a long 'wait time' for handling requests. Once the new platform becomes available FoGS plans to roll the community out to all graduate students.
- ◆ **Extend recruitment consultation and resources to programs** We will be more proactive in communicating the availability of these services and resources to programs, within the limits of our available human resource capacity.
- ◆ **Enhance presence in UBC's strategic markets, China, India, and the EU.** Through such mechanisms as local international student focus groups, open houses, and improvements in the services to visiting students, we are aiming for a 10% increase in applications and enrolments from these countries.



UBC's Strategic Markets

Communications

Communications

FoGS is a communications hub and the definitive source for all graduate education information at UBC. Communicating effectively with students, PDFs, faculty, administrative staff, potential recruits, and the public is a high priority. Although almost all FoGS staff members communicate regularly with the graduate community, two individuals (Communications Manager and Senior Graphic Designer) are devoted to communications and responsible for creating and managing website content, publications, internal UBC and external communications, collateral materials, marketing and social media. They are part of the larger Communications and Strategic Initiatives Team (CASI) and report to the Assistant Dean, Student Administration and Strategic Initiatives.

Externally, this team participates in Communications Cardinals (a multi-faculty group of UBC communicators) and advises the Individual Interdisciplinary Graduate Studies Program and UBC's two resident graduate colleges upon request.

Key Accomplishments

- ◆ **Website redesign, Faculty graduate information sheets**, as described previously.
 - <http://www.grad.ubc.ca/prospective-students/faculties>
- ◆ **4 Year Fellowship (4YF) video** posted on YouTube. This promotional video was produced entirely in-house and received over 10,000 views since launch - an average of 20 views per day. It highlights our premier doctoral scholarship while visually introducing viewers to images of UBC, Vancouver, and our graduate students.
 - <http://www.grad.ubc.ca/campus-community/multimedia-social-networking/videos-youtube>
- ◆ **Grad Guide and Annual Reports**. These and most of our informational material are posted on the website for paperless access.
 - <http://www.grad.ubc.ca/current-students/newly-admitted/grad-guide>
 - <http://www.grad.ubc.ca/about-us/annual-reports>

Current and Future Priorities

- ◆ **Website improvement**. Although the site overall provides a more interactive and compelling web 'face' for the Faculty since its redesign, a frequent concern raised in the graduate advisor and secretary survey was difficulty navigating and finding information on the site. The site is extremely content-heavy, and navigation is not always intuitive for individuals external to FoGS, especially in a few key areas (policy, forms, training resources). We will conduct a review of the website, soliciting specific feedback from external users (students, faculty and staff). It seems likely that a few significant changes to problematic sections will address most concerns. We are already responding to a common complaint about forms accessibility by adding features to the 'forms centre' on the site which will make the relevant section more prominent, and allow for more effective searches. The review will also address any inconsistencies in information presented in separate sections of the site.

Communications

Communications

A further feature of an improved and more engaging website, and allowing communication of graduate student success stories to a worldwide audience, will be the expanded use of video. This will require strategizing and applying the most efficient and effective uses of the medium.

- ◆ **Faculty graduate information sheets.** As the information sheets proved valuable to those Faculties making use of them, we will update and reprint current sheets, as well as prepare new material for ISGP and the PDFO. We will need to assess feasibility and the process for potential broader rollout to individual programs.
- ◆ **Digitization of resources.** For the purposes of sustainability and accessibility, we will review and strategize moving our remaining print publications to solely digital formats.
- ◆ **Expansion of video, social media and virtual social space.** With the dramatic success of the pilot online forum for newly admitted students, we will explore expanding the virtual social space to extend the same community-building benefits to all graduate students. The GPS program is also aspiring to extend its reach and accessibility through online technology, and a key aspect will be the use of video. As the 3-Minute Thesis competition (see the GPS section for a description) expands its scope, assistance will also be offered the program in terms of strategy, media, development and publicity. More broadly, constructive engagement and communication with students increasingly requires the effective use of social media, and we will continuously monitor and update our use of this mode of communication.

Challenges

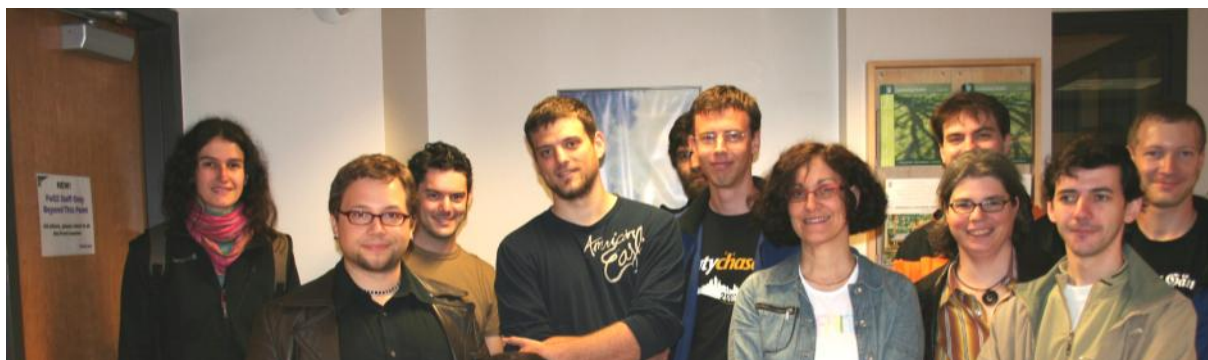
- ◆ **Email communication with students and staff.** There is always a difficult balance to manage between sending too much or too little relevant information out electronically. Concerns were raised by some in the graduate advisor/secretary survey that they receive too many emails in general from FoGS, or irrelevant emails, or emails that should have been sent directly to students. On the other hand, we also heard that some staff are unaware of information that had been sent electronically.

With regards to the request to forward correspondence to students, we do frequently send messages intended for graduate students through the graduate program staff, requesting that the information be distributed at the program's discretion. Our main rationale for doing so is that programs may be more aware than FoGS is about whether information is relevant to their students or not, and that students may pay more attention to messages coming from their department than from FoGS.

The three FoGS units that commonly send messages to students are SAS, Awards and GPS. We will have an internal discussion about how we can improve our direct communication to students, possibly by creating direct-to-student listservs or mailing lists. We might also compile messages between our units and send out "digests" rather than individual messages. As mentioned, we also need to extend our messaging to students to other platforms, including social media and text messaging.

Governance and Quality Assurance of Education

Graduate Program Reviews



Graduate Program Reviews

External reviews of graduate programs normally occur as part of the periodic review processes of departments or colleges, generally once every five years. Up until fairly recently, the role of FoGS was rather loosely defined; a representative of the dean usually participated in one of the interview sessions, and we generally received the graduate portions of the self-study and review summary. This process was deemed insufficiently rigorous, and in 2009, in consultation with the Provost, we instituted a more formalized process and introduced requirements for the provision of certain data and information (outlined in Appendix 8). Much of this information is provided by our office, and is generally very gratefully received by the programs. The following is the current procedure:

- ◆ The Provost or disciplinary Dean will notify the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies (FoGS) when a review is initially planned for an academic unit.
- ◆ FoGS will work with the unit and provide the required information about its graduate program(s) for its self-study report.
- ◆ FoGS will receive a copy of the unit's self-study report well before meeting with the external review committee.
- ◆ The Dean or an Associate Dean of FoGS will meet with the external review committee for an adequate amount of time to review the unit's graduate program(s).
- ◆ The Provost or disciplinary Dean will provide FoGS with a copy of the review committee's final report and the unit's responses to those portions of the report relevant to FoGS.
- ◆ Graduate programs are encouraged to continuously gather data not readily available to FoGS such as post-graduate positions and awards for each student so that the material is readily available for unit reviews.

Governance and Quality Assurance of Education

Graduate Program Reviews

Challenges

- ◆ These changes have improved the process tremendously, however some challenges remain. We are occasionally only contacted at the last minute, we are sometimes not invited to the review interviews, and programs (and therefore presumably Departments and Faculties) seem sometimes to be unaware of the graduate student data requirements. At the other end, we do not always receive the review report, and there is currently no formal internal (FoGS) process for careful review of the reports and follow-up with the programs.

Current and Future Priorities

- ◆ **Ensure better compliance on procedures and program data provision.** Although most Faculties are compliant, and we have communicated this process widely and frequently, we will work more diligently to discern and remedy the communication breaks.
- ◆ **Review reports.** These are not routinely sent to us, and when they are, are not necessarily formally reviewed by us. We will work to close this loop by tracking more closely the receipt of the reports, and ensuring that the reports are reviewed carefully, with follow-up as necessary.
- ◆ **Institute course-based program data templates.** Our current templates are appropriate for research programs, but do not necessarily reflect the important factors relevant to course-based programs. We have draft versions of such templates, and will need to approve and incorporate these into reviews of course-based programs.



Governance and Quality Assurance of Education

Student and Faculty Problems/Students At-Risk

Student and Faculty Problems/Students At-Risk

FoGS serves as a resource for students with problems around academic, interpersonal, or funding issues, and which are perceived as either not easily resolved or actively exacerbated within the graduate program. Faculty members may also seek guidance on dealing with student issues within the program or a supervisory relationship.

FoGS does not currently have a formal procedure for responding to requests for assistance. Instead, individuals typically contact the Dean's Office with a concern, and the case is either followed up by the original contact or assigned to an Associate or Assistant Dean or Senior Manager. After meeting with the student or faculty, the response by FoGS may take several forms:

- ◆ Providing guidance on approaches students or faculty themselves can take to try to resolve the issue
- ◆ Making referrals to support services such as Counselling, Access & Diversity, or the Graduate Student Society Advocacy Officer
- ◆ Liaising with a program's Graduate Advisor to help articulate and resolve concerns at the program level
- ◆ Negotiating direct action from graduate programs or supervisor to address issues, sometimes in consultation with the disciplinary Dean and, if necessary, Faculty Relations

Students are always counseled to try to resolve their concerns as close to the source as possible, but FoGS often has a more proactive role to play in negotiating a way forward for students in difficulty.

FoGS manages approximately 40 to 50 such cases each year, in collaboration with stakeholders, usually with a mutually acceptable outcome to the student, faculty member and graduate program. Issues that are most frequently brought to FoGS by students are supervisory conflicts (which include academic, personal and funding concerns) and concerns about fairness in admissions or grading/evaluation. Faculty members' concerns relate most frequently to problems with the student-supervisor relationship or to academic or personal problems students are experiencing. FoGS strives in these situations to balance the human needs of the individuals involved with maintaining the academic integrity of our degrees.

A group of students at particular risk of non-completion are those on extension. They need support beyond administrative records management, and we approach this in several ways.

- ◆ We request periodic progress reports to the SAS Director: once a term for those on their first year of extension, once monthly for those on their second year, and every two weeks for those past two years. Students on extension often report a sense that they have lost priority status with their supervisors, and the ability to point to FoGS's request for regular supervisory meetings and agreed upon timelines to completion can help students initiate a pragmatic conversation with the appropriate faculty members.

Governance and Quality Assurance of Education

Student and Faculty Problems/Students At-Risk

Student and Faculty Problems/Students At-Risk cont'd

- ◆ The GPS program offers a day-long workshop once or twice a year on “Getting Back on Track with Your Thesis” facilitated by an industrial psychologist, and we have extended personal invitations to students on extension to attend it. We have had many comments from students (not necessarily on extension) that it was extraordinarily helpful, and at least one said that it was the one thing that allowed him to complete.
- ◆ Recently, we have begun a more interactive, personal approach. The SAS Director contacted every student on extension to express general support, ask a set of basic questions, and offer students a point of contact for questions or concerns. The response rate was nearly 70%. From there we were able to address specifically the needs of students who were running out of time on extension, those whose programs had already expired, and those who were in serious need of referral to other resources at the university (Counseling Services, Access & Diversity, and Student Financial Aid). Overall, students have expressed comfort that we take an interest in their success.

Respondents in the graduate advisor/staff survey expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the services FoGS provides in this area, with 91% (79%) agreeing that FoGS assistance is fair and effective (*Great support and advice handling difficult situations! /... the support has been fantastic / FoGS support has been excellent – timely, positive, informed and helpful. / the team conveys a strong commitment to student concerns...I think this is a real area of strength in UBC's graduate admin structure*).

Current and Future Priorities

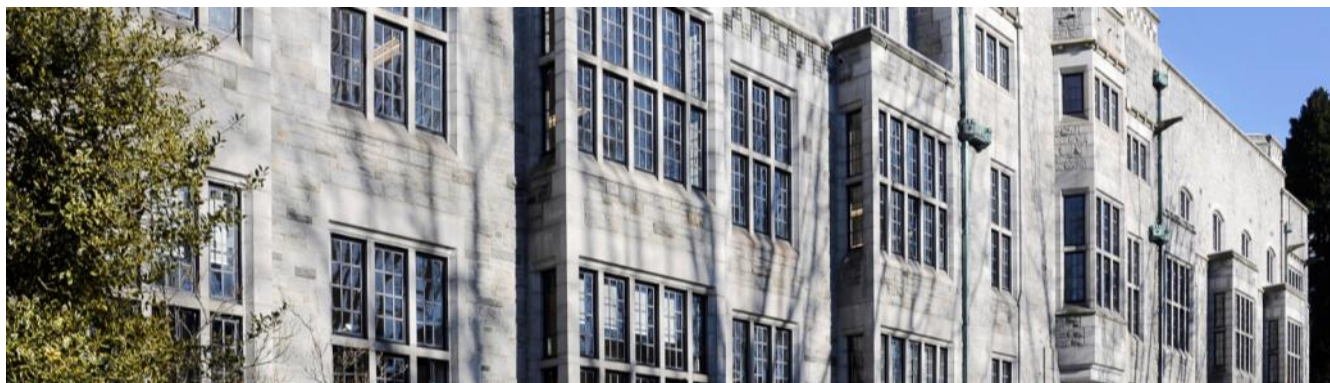
Students are not always sure how to go about lodging or responding to a grievance or other issue, or what procedures are followed once a problem is brought to the attention of FoGS. FoGS and the graduate education community would benefit from a more explicit graduate student grievance procedure, communicated broadly. Developing and promoting this important information is a priority for 2011-12.

Student Academic Appeals

Student appeals on academic decisions are heard by the Senate Committee on Appeals of Academic Standing, and FoGS has the responsibility to respond in such proceedings. In the past five years, there have been seven formal appeals of FoGS decisions. Six of these were appeals of a FoGS decision to require the student to withdraw from the graduate program for failure to make adequate academic progress. The question at the heart of our deliberations about these cases is always “*Has the student met minimum academic progress requirements as defined by university policy, under conditions of adequate supervision and fair administrative processes?*” In these six cases, our conclusion was “no”. Each of these decisions was ultimately upheld by the Senate Committee, and the appeal dismissed. A seventh case was an appeal of a grade in a clinical placement course. While FoGS supported the decision of the graduate program to assign a failing grade, the Senate Committee upheld the student appeal and the program was directed to revise the grade.

Governance and Quality Assurance of Education

Data Analysis and Reporting



Data Analysis and Reporting

Accurate, comprehensive, timely, and accessible data are key to ensuring effective oversight, assessment and planning in graduate education. We believe the provision of such data is an important responsibility of FoGS, and a key value during Dr. Evans's tenure, in particular, was the use of data for quality improvement.

Major areas of analysis and reporting are student admissions, registration, time in program/time to outcome, completion rates, graduation, funding, and student experience/satisfaction with their programs and supervision.

Three specific time points in the year—November 1, March 1, and August 1—are anchors for continuous snapshot data of graduate student enrolment so that trends and/or issues can be benchmarked from year to year. These snapshots are made available to the campus community via the Graduate Education Analysis and Research (GEAR) website and are also customized and provided to Faculties and Programs for their internal and external reviews. A new “self-serve” data dashboard, which allows for more customized reporting, is in development.

Specific issue-based quantitative studies, such as time in program/time to outcome, Aboriginal enrolment, and graduate financial support, use these same enrolment datasets as well as data drawn from the University Student Information Systems (SISC) and Financial Management System (FMS) to produce annual or bi-annual reports in support of strategic priorities of the Faculty and University. Several reports are also provided to the Canadian Association of Graduate Schools and the G13 university consortium to enable national benchmarking and comparative analysis.

FoGS has also conducted mixed-methods studies aimed at better understanding the graduate student experience.

Governance and Quality Assurance of Education

Data Analysis & Reporting

Data Analysis & Reporting cont'd

Key Accomplishments

- ◆ **Graduate Student Climate and Culture Study** (Appendix 9). This comprehensive study completed in 2009 used the 2007 G13 Graduate and Professional Student Survey (GPSS) as a starting point, and integrated interviews with students and student service units to further explore the state of the graduate student experience at UBC. The report includes separate modules for individual Faculties as well as overarching modules for senior administrative use. The report has been disseminated widely across campus.
- ◆ **Graduate Student Completion Rates & Times Report.** (Appendix 10). Data on completion rates and times are provided to every program as part of their periodic review or as requested, however to assist with higher level analysis including intra-University and cross-Canada comparisons, a comprehensive university-wide analysis and report was completed in 2010. The report incorporated data generated by FoGS from the UBC Student Information System (SISC) and that from the national G13DE reports on Academic Progression (1998 and 2002 cohorts). Comprehensive survival curves and tabulated summaries were prepared for master's and doctoral cohorts by Faculty and CIP discipline, and narrative comparisons were made to Canadian values. The report was distributed broadly.
- ◆ **Exit Survey** An important measure of educational quality is student satisfaction, and to assess this on a campus-wide level, FoGS developed an online exit survey for all students graduating as well as those leaving without graduating. Starting in 2008, we have been inviting all exiting students to complete the survey, and are pleased with a current 43% response rate from both groups. The survey asks students for information and opinions on their opportunities, resources and academic experience at UBC, their future plans, and, for "leavers", what factors influenced their decision to withdraw. This on-going survey has had a first, preliminary review of quantitative data completed in summer 2011 with a review of qualitative data being scheduled for fall 2011. The results to date (some of which are shown in the section on *Enhancing the Student Experience*) have been communicated to the University executive and have informed recent discussions on strategies for reducing attrition and times to completion.

Current and Future Priorities

- ◆ **Extend data collection and analysis.** In addition to regular updates and the provision of program-specific review data, data collection and analysis will be extended to support specific strategic and operational goals of the university, for example studies with specific populations such as international graduate students, students with families, etc. Additional information (e.g., candidacy data) will also be incorporated into regular program review datasets and the GEAR database.
- ◆ **Analysis of the 2010 GPSS national survey.** Although much student satisfaction and related data is obtained through our own exit surveys, the GPSS survey enables meaningful cross-institutional comparison in key areas. It will be important to prepare and disseminate a summary and analysis of the results for distribution to all stakeholders in graduate education, and this is underway (see Appendix 11 for a preliminary overview). Presentations have been made to two Faculties on their own data, and this will be expanded once analyses have been completed.

Governance and Quality Assurance of Education

Data Analysis & Reporting

Data Analysis & Reporting cont'd

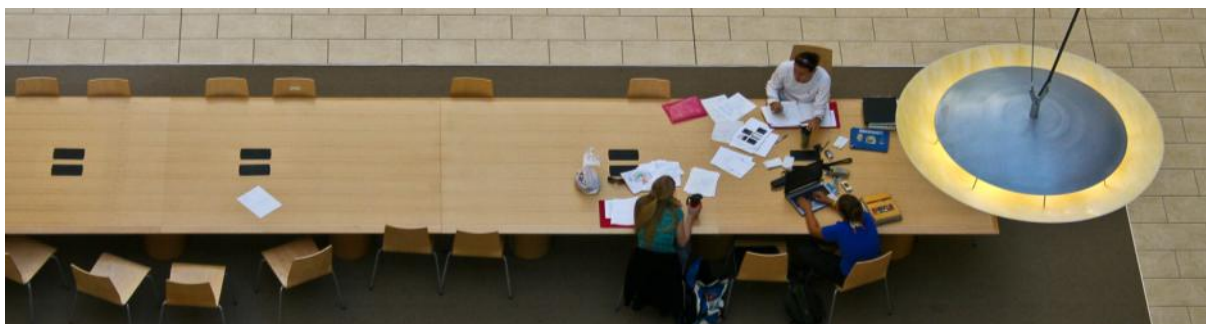
- ◆ **Exit survey.** A complete report of the survey to date will be developed and distributed, with planned repeat analysis every three years. Depending on the numbers and nature of qualitative responses (in terms of ensuring confidentiality), the reports will be made available to individual programs and Faculties.
- ◆ **Accessibility and outreach.** Data generation is pointless unless the parties who can make use of them can adequately access and understand them. Although the reports mentioned above have been widely disseminated and appreciated by those who have accessed them, we have discovered through the graduate advisor/secretary survey that many in the graduate community are unaware of them. It is likely that this is in part due to the often fairly high turnover of graduate advisors (a problem highlighted in the previous review) and their overextension with competing research and teaching responsibilities.

To foster data-driven improvements at the program level, we recognize that the most useful data are those derived from the programs themselves. In addition to our current practice of providing individualized data for periodic reviews, we will also ensure to the extent we are able, given privacy concerns, that the CGPSS and exit survey results are provided at the individual program level. We are also exploring the development of tools to allow programs to access and manage data on their own.

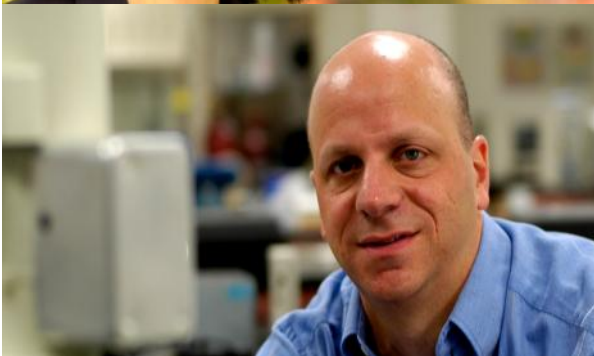
Lastly, ongoing dialogue between FoGS and disciplinary Faculties and programs can be extremely useful for meaningful, contextual understanding of data and strategizing around improvements in the graduate student experience. We intend to maintain the important and regular outreach Dr. Evans made to disciplinary Deans, and to work towards an expansion of our outreach, consultation, and follow-up to individual programs.

Challenges

- ◆ **Personnel and budget.** Due to the completion of the contract term of our research analyst (on a one-year contract), and the inability to post the position due to budget restrictions, we have fallen behind on several of our projects. We anticipate the core of our priorities to be realized; however the depth of analysis and timeliness may be compromised.



Governance and Quality Assurance of Education



Governance and Quality Assurance of Education

Program and Faculty Development

Program and Faculty Development

An important aspect of our responsibility in supporting and ensuring high quality graduate education at UBC is the provision of support to individual programs and faculty members to encourage excellence in the areas of graduate supervision and administration. Despite the obvious and fundamental importance of effective supervision in the success and experience of graduate students, UBC has had until recently no formal mechanism for assisting faculty members to be effective in this role. At a FoGS forum held in 2008, graduate advisors from 34 graduate programs identified development of faculty in graduate supervision as one of their key needs, and requested that FoGS provide this.

Key Accomplishments

- ◆ **Graduate supervision workshops.** To address the need for professional development in supervision, Associate Dean Cindy Prescott, in partnership with the Centre for Teaching and Learning Technologies and the Graduate Student Society, developed a series of professional development opportunities on supervision, primarily for new faculty members. Initially (2008) developed as a series of four workshops covering the fundamentals of graduate supervision (*Getting Started, Building an Effective Student-Supervisor Relationship, Maintaining Momentum, Preparing for the Future*) offered each at least twice a year, the program evolved into a single 5-hour offering. This re-tooling was in response to participant suggestions and an understanding of the intense demands on professors' time. The workshops consist of presentations, an experienced mentors panel, and group discussion. Feedback on these courses is generally very positive; however participation is relatively low, at 15-25 per session.
- ◆ **Faculty workshop on intercultural supervision of graduate students.** International students often experience greater difficulty in receiving the level of supervision that they expect, and faculty members have identified challenges that arise when supervising graduate students from different cultures as a key area in which they would appreciate advice and support. In acknowledgment of this, and of UBC's strategic objective of improving intercultural understanding, Dr. Prescott developed a half-day workshop on the subject, in partnership with the UBC Continuing Studies Centre for Intercultural Communication, the Office of the Ombudsperson for Students and the Graduate Student Society. This was offered once each in 2010 and 2011.
- ◆ **Resources on graduate supervision.** In addition to the workshop series, FoGS has compiled the best publications on the topic of graduate supervision and posted them on the FoGS website. We have contributed a section on graduate student supervision to the Guide for Teaching for New Faculty at UBC, including highlights from the workshops and a partial reading list. We have also recently distributed a two-page "tips" document on writing letters of reference (appreciated by many), and may consider similar distribution of other 'bite-sized' mentorship-related material.
- ◆ **Graduate advisor workshop on handling difficult situations.** A pilot workshop for graduate advisors, in collaboration with the UBC Ombudsperson and FoGS's Jenny Phelps, was offered in 2010 to review principles of fairness and discuss approaches to resolving difficult situations. An assessment and redevelopment of this approach to graduate advisor support is underway.

Governance and Quality Assurance of Education

Program and Faculty Development

Program and Faculty Development cont'd

Current and Future Priorities

- ◆ **Continued offering and redevelopment of graduate supervisor and graduate advisor workshops.** The provision of professional development opportunities to faculty members in their supervisory or administrative roles continues to be a high priority, and under the leadership of the current Associate Dean for Faculty and Program Development, Dr. Wendy Hall, we will build on the experience of past workshops to continuously improve the offerings. As part of the redevelopment, we are creating a series of case studies to incorporate into workshops and web resources. We have also started working with graduate advisors to understand their programs' specific needs in this area, with the intent to include this content more deliberately.
- ◆ **Supervision assessment and acknowledgment of excellence.** Although the challenges of meaningfully assessing quality of research supervision are daunting, we feel there are opportunities for doing more than we are currently, and for better acknowledging the responsibilities and successes of supervision in processes such as tenure and promotion decisions. A short-term priority will be simply to document what is being done currently.
- ◆ **Clarity of student-supervisor expectations.** The quality of the graduate research experience is highly dependent on the quality of interaction with the supervisor, and it is too often the case that mismatched expectations (e.g., frequency of contact) or inaccurate understanding of responsibilities lead to an underwhelming, or worse, experience for either the student or supervisor. A key priority over the next year will be the development of an improved standard template of mutual expectations, and a concerted outreach to programs to encourage a better understanding and communication of these important mutual responsibilities.

Challenges

- ◆ **Faculty time constraints.** The busyness and overextension of faculty members is one of the most challenging limitations with respect to providing meaningful opportunities for improving either supervisory or administrative skills through professional development. We will need to be creative to ensure the time spent on these endeavours is valuable and efficient.
- ◆ **Lack of uptake of these offerings by those who would benefit the most.** As alluded to in the graduate advisor/secretary survey, it is perhaps not surprising that experienced faculty who are in most need of improvement with regards to graduate supervision are typically not those who sign up for workshops. Advocacy at the level of department heads may help in this regard, and as the workshops become increasingly known and accepted as helpful, we anticipate improved buy-in to the process.

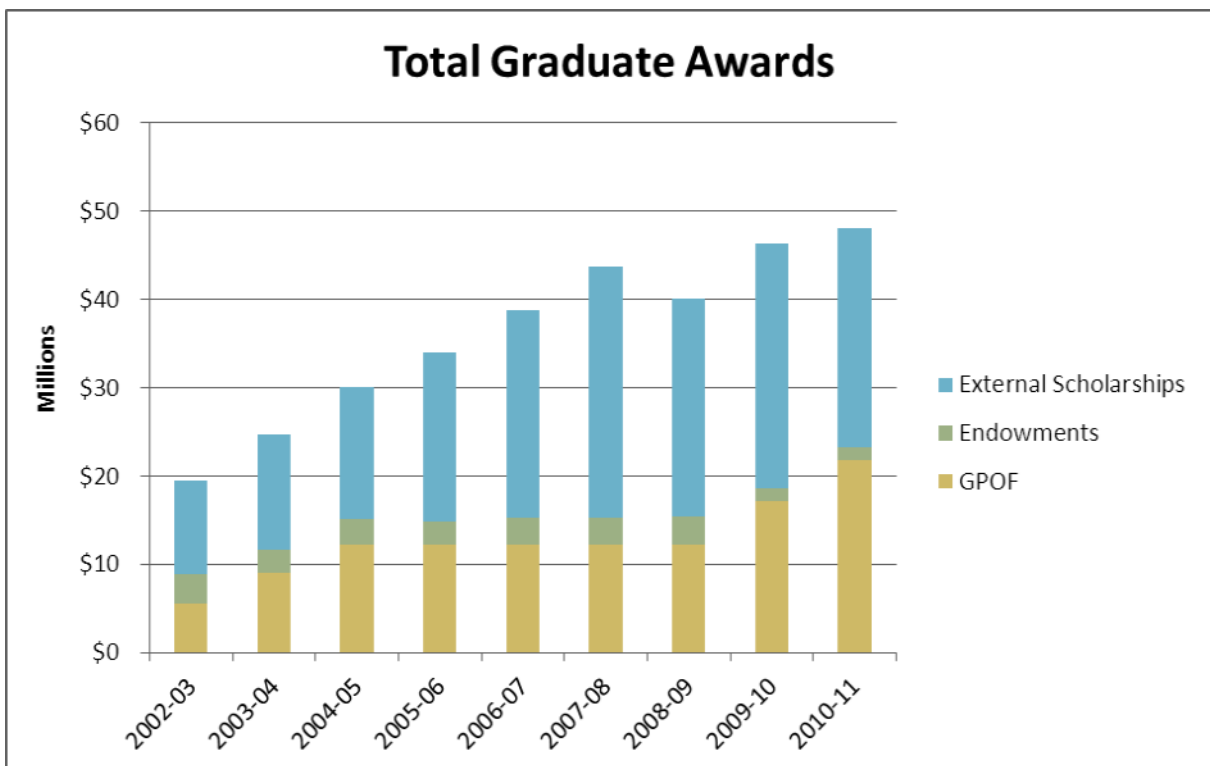
Governance and Quality Assurance of Education

Awards and Scholarships

Awards and Scholarships

Funding to support students is crucial to the success of graduate education, and key responsibilities of FoGS are to coordinate, communicate, administer, develop and advocate for such funding. The total value of the approximately 450 different awards administered by FoGS (which represents the vast majority of merit-based graduate funding at the university) is \$53M in the current year.

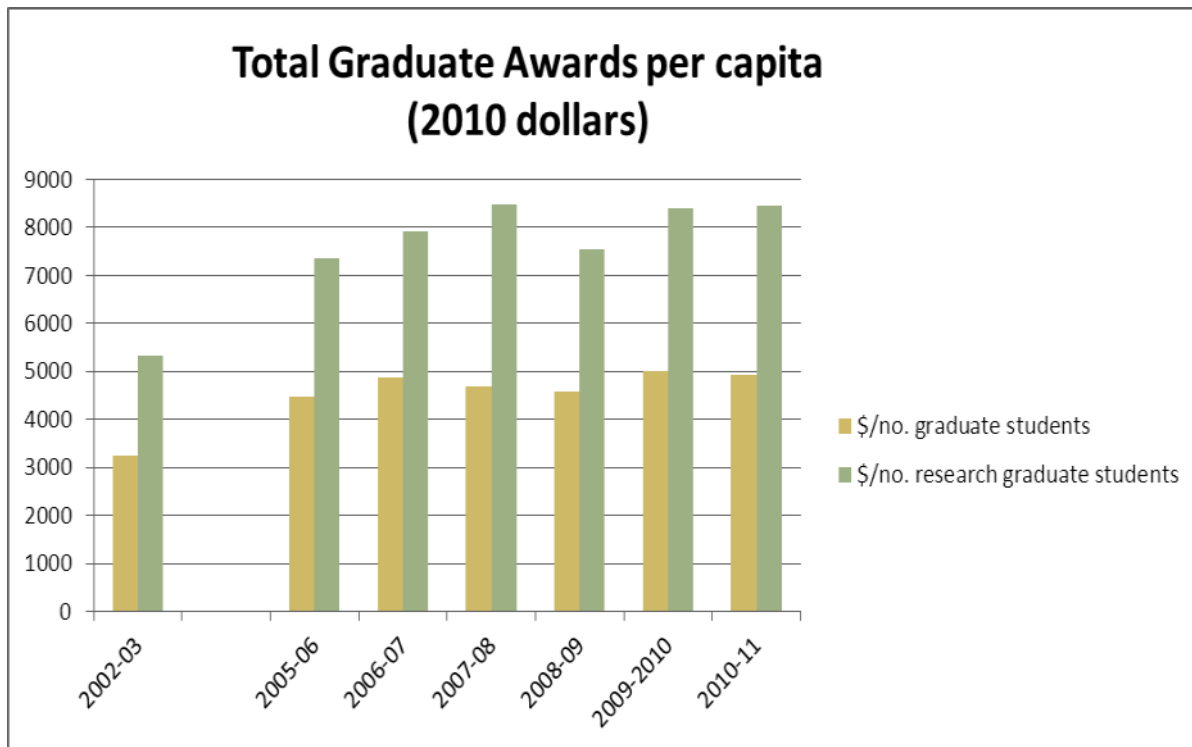
As shown in the figure below, apart from a dip in 2008-09, awards funding has increased steadily since 2002. The significant increase in GPOF funding since 2008 is largely a result of an initiative of the provincial government to fund 2500 new graduate seats in the province over a four year period (2007-11). UBC received funding for almost half of these seats, totaling approximately \$25M. A portion of these funds went to disciplinary Faculties for their discretionary use, and most of the remaining funds went directly to student support administered by FoGS. Even with increasing funds going into awards, however, an analysis of per capita, inflation-adjusted funding shows that real levels per student have remained relatively stable since 2007.



Governance and Quality Assurance of Education

Awards and Scholarships

Awards and Scholarships cont'd



A major overhaul of the awards system structure occurred with the arrival of Dr. Evans in 2008, and the following are the current major internal awards offered to UBC graduate students. (Please see Appendix 12 for further details.)

Four-Year Doctoral Fellowships (4YF) – approximately 1150 awardees, \$14 M in 2011-12.

This is a merit-based award valued at \$16,000 per year plus tuition (total value, approximately \$20,000) for a maximum of four years of PhD studies (either years 1-4 or 2-5). Annual 4YF allocations are made to graduate programs in December, using a formula based on success in national scholarship competitions, doctoral enrolment, and Faculty doctoral completion rates at 7 years (10% of weighting). The programs determine the recipients and submit the information to FoGS. Students are required to apply for major external or affiliated awards as they are eligible, and must accept the external/affiliated funding if offered. If the value of these other awards is greater than the 4YF stipend, they must decline the 4YF stipend over the period they are receiving the other scholarship; however, if the value of the award is less than \$35,000, they will receive the 4YF tuition funding. If the value of the external/affiliated award is less than that of the 4YF, they will receive the difference in stipend levels. Once their external funding ends, 4YF holders receive the 4YF stipend and tuition funding.

Governance and Quality Assurance of Education

Awards and Scholarships

Awards and Scholarships cont'd

Aboriginal Graduate Fellowships (AGF) – 24 awardees, \$406,000 in 2011-12.

These are also merit-based, available to both master's and doctoral students, and valued the same as 4YFs (\$16,000 plus tuition). The competition (adjudicated in consultation with the First Nations House of Learning) is open to Aboriginal graduate students whose traditional territory falls, at least in part, within Canada.

Graduate Support Initiative (GSI) - \$5.8 M in 2011-12.

Introduced in 2007 the GSI is a flexible program to provide graduate student support through entrance scholarships, multi-year funding packages, tuition awards and/or scholarship top-ups. GSI funds are allocated to graduate programs on a pro rata basis (4:2:1:0 weighting of students in PhDs, research master's, course-based master's, and professional master's respectively) and although they are administered by FoGS, their distribution is at the discretion of the program. Both domestic and international students are eligible for this funding.

Killam Doctoral Scholarships – 50 awardees, \$322,000 in 2011-12.

UBC is a beneficiary of the Killam Trusts, and offers approximately 25 doctoral scholarships or top-ups each year through the Affiliated Fellowships competition. The current value of the full scholarship is \$27,500 per annum for two years plus a \$2,000 allowance for research-related travel.

The **PhD Tuition Fee Award**, an amount equal to tuition provided to every PhD student in their first 4 years, was introduced in 2003, but for a variety of reasons was phased out starting in 2007. The funds for this award were transferred to the GSI pool; some programs continue to use these funds as a tuition award. The **International Partial Tuition Scholarship (IPTS)** is an award provided to all eligible international research students roughly equal to the difference between international and domestic tuition.



Governance and Quality Assurance of Education

Awards and Scholarships

Administration

The FoGS Scholarships and Awards team oversees competitions for most graduate awards at UBC and administers payment for merit-based graduate scholarships and a few combined merit/need-based graduate awards. They are also responsible for preparing reports to the Board of Governors, the provincial government and the major granting agencies, and they liaise widely with professional bodies and funding bodies. A considerable portion of time is also spent advising both faculty and students within the university.

Oversight of awards competitions involves advertising competitions, working with graduate programs that may submit nominations to the Faculty, reviewing applications for eligibility and completeness, convening and supporting faculty adjudication committees, forwarding applications to external funding agencies, and announcing competition results. Some competitions are quite small, accepting only a handful of applications, while our joint Tri-Agency / Affiliated Fellowships competition accepts nearly one thousand applications each fall. In total, we accept approximately 1,500 applications in more than 25 separate competitions each year. Working closely with us are approximately 50 faculty members who review and rank applications for various competitions. Over the years we have given considerable attention to developing best practices for both our administrative review procedure and for our adjudication committees (see Appendix 13).

The Faculty administers about 300 endowed scholarships, among the largest of which are the Killam, Paetzold, and Li Tze Fong Scholarships. Some of these are adjudicated with our national competitions, but most are Department-recommended awards which FoGS administers on behalf of the graduate programs.

There are approximately 130 external funding agencies and donors for graduate awards, including the federal government (Tri-Agency awards, the Trudeau Scholarships), the provincial government (Pacific Century Graduate Scholarships), research granting agencies (Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research and Canadian Diabetes Association etc.), and a large number of corporate and individual donors.

The higher level oversight of awards, including policy development, is the responsibility of the Graduate Council Standing Committee on Awards and Scholarships. This Committee meets at least four times per year and is chaired by the Associate Dean, Scholarships & Awards. The Committee Chair takes recommendations from the Scholarship Committee to Graduate Council for discussion and approval as required. Several members of this Committee also sit on the University Senate Student Awards Committee.

The Faculty of Graduate Studies also administers the Advanced Studies portion of the Isaac Walton Killam Memorial endowment on behalf of the University, including oversight of the committees, the Fellowship programs, and adjudication of the Killam Mentoring Prizes and the Killam Teaching Prize for Graduate Instruction as well as reporting to the Killam Trustees.

Governance and Quality Assurance of Education

Awards and Scholarships

Administration cont'd

Current and Future Priorities

In the graduate advisor/staff survey, 94% (86%) of staff and 89% (68%) of advisors were satisfied with the level of service provided by the Awards team (*always sooooo helpful, greatly appreciated. / awesome / happy and satisfied / always receive prompt and helpful assistance / a great job in an often hectic environment / awesomely helpful and patient / handle what appears to be an impossibly heavy work load with grace and kindness*). Some areas were fairly consistently cited as concerns, however: 1. The timing and extent of communication regarding award allocations; 2. Information and communication about award availability, adjudication criteria, and procedures; 3. Insufficient training for new staff; and 4. Promptness of responses, particularly at peak times. Several also suggested that there was insufficient funding, particularly for course-based programs.

With the results of this survey in hand, several strategies to address the legitimate concerns were devised, and are priorities for the coming year:

- ◆ **Communication.** Up to now, we have relied upon disciplinary Faculty Associate Deans (who make the sub-Faculty allocation decisions) to inform programs of their GSI and 4YF allocations. To address the first issue, of apparently broken communication, we will now advise individual programs directly of their award allocations and will provide reports listing all awardees. We will also provide GSI allocation amounts to Faculties earlier, in mid-December, and will distribute reports on GSI balances to programs after they are reconciled in March.
- ◆ **Award information.** We were puzzled by some of the comments regarding the 'searchability' of the online awards database, however, we appreciate that there is room for improvement on our website. We will improve accessibility to procedures and other information by improving links and increasing information content; we will provide more information about allocation formulae, adjudication criteria and weighting; and we will work to improve the usability of the awards search engine to expand the categories and provide full text search capabilities.
- ◆ **Program staff training.** We acknowledge that the diversity and complexity of award competitions can make their administration at the program level a formidable task. For that reason, we currently provide 6 information sessions on the fall competition, which are attended by approximately 85 staff and faculty. We will offer additional sessions to cover Department awards, and will improve the training resources for new staff (e.g., provide a tutorial on the website and schedule training sessions in April and August).
- ◆ **Streamlining payment.** Depending on the award, multiple ways of processing payments are currently required. To streamline this process, and make the information more readily available to programs, we have requested UBC IT to enable electronic fund transfer from the Student Information System, making it possible to move all our award payment processes to a single system.
- ◆ **Advocacy.** The many concerns about Tri-Agency award deadlines are regularly relayed to the relevant funding bodies, and will continue to be so.

Governance and Quality Assurance of Education

Awards and Scholarships

Challenges

- ◆ **Insufficient funding.** There is likely no university that feels it has sufficient graduate student funding. Although our student funding has improved over the years, we suffer relative to the rest of the country from an almost complete lack of provincial graduate student scholarships and an extremely high cost of living in Vancouver. Lack of funding is frequently cited as a barrier to academic progress in our exit surveys, and the proportion of doctoral students working off-campus is 15% higher than the national average (2010 GPSS). This very likely contributes to our longer than average times to completion. Funding for Aboriginal students and for conference travel is also insufficient, in our view, and we have included these priorities in our fundraising appeals.
- ◆ **Staffing.** Although FoGS awards staffing levels have increased in recent years, the number and complexity of awards is also rising, and timely responses during peak processing seasons are sometimes a challenge. This was cited as problematic by some survey respondents. We have been under-staffed at times this past year because of medical or other leaves, and we anticipate fewer problems with a more stable workforce. We are also considering the possibility of a joint, dually-trained position with the SAS team, to allow support of each team at their own (thankfully, separate) peak times. It is not clear at this time, though, that we have the resources for this additional person.
- ◆ **Adjudicators.** There is a constant challenge in finding faculty willing to participate in the critical, yet time-consuming task of adjudicating awards. We understand that this is largely a consequence of the intense research and teaching demands of all faculty, but also believe that a culture of service across the university is not as universal as either necessary or desirable.



Governance and Quality Assurance of Education

Policy

Policy

FoGS policies are developed first by the Policy Committee (a sub-committee of the Graduate Council), which has broad representation from each of the disciplinary Faculties at UBC. These representatives are usually the Associate Deans most closely involved with graduate education. The Committee considers general questions of academic policy affecting all graduate students, with occasional advisory conversations about funding. Significant changes are brought from the Policy Committee to the Graduate Council in the form of motions for discussion and possible ratification. The Committee also works with the Senate and the President to help shape the treatment of graduate students in the University at large.

New or altered policies or procedures successfully instituted in the previous 3-4 years include the following:

- ◆ **Electronic submission for all theses and dissertations.** With special advance permission, submission on paper is still allowed, but since electro-submission was deemed mandatory in January 2010, there have been no requests for such permission.
- ◆ **Graduate student vacation policy.** Until recently, no set period of vacation from academic obligations was suggested or mandated by the University. This policy is intended to prevent abuse on the part of either supervisors or students, and entitles students to three weeks vacation annually.
- ◆ **Conditional Admission Program (CAP).** This innovation makes it possible to provisionally accept students with excellent academic credentials who fall slightly short of the Faculty's English Language requirements. Such students can earn full admission by succeeding in an English Language program offered through UBC.
- ◆ **Rolling graduation.** This allows students who have completed their degree requirements to have their degrees officially conferred in the same calendar quarter. Holding the actual degree, rather than a promise of the degree, is an advantage in some immigration and employment applications. In collaboration with Enrolment Services, FoGS has nearly completed the implementation of this change.

The Committee also spent time **updating Board of Governors' policies affecting graduate students**, and establishing guidelines for **dealing with cases of suspected plagiarism**. An initiative to create a special category for **doctoral students with disabilities**, so they could extend their programs and pay lower fees in total, was replaced by an agreement with the Senate Policy Committee that a discretionary arrangement between the Registrar and the Dean of Graduate Studies could be made on a case-by-case basis.

The committee's top current projects concern managing **visiting graduate students** (not on exchange), **establishing a parental leave policy**, and refreshing the policies and procedures for **final doctoral oral examinations** to ensure a process that is both administratively efficient and academically rigorous.

Governance and Quality Assurance of Education

Curriculum Approval

Curriculum Approval

Innovations in courses and programs at UBC are officially enacted by the University's Senate, which usually endorses detailed recommendations from the Senate Curriculum Committee (SCC) without too much debate: the real work of scrutinizing proposals and negotiating any essential modifications is done by the SCC itself and/or one of its standing subcommittees.

For a faculty member who wants to create a new course, the first step is to secure the endorsement of the disciplinary Faculty or School, which generally requires prior departmental approval. The disciplinary Faculty sends its approved proposals forward to the appropriate subcommittee of the SCC for vetting. Once the subcommittee is satisfied, the proposal goes to a full meeting of the SCC, and then to Senate. New programs follow the same process, but require additional approval from the Degree Quality Assessment Board of the Provincial Government.

The steps outlined above apply to curricular changes at every level. For graduate-level courses and programs, the SCC has a dedicated subcommittee, and for efficiency's sake this committee acts also as the New Programs and Curriculum Committee (NPCC) of the Graduate Council. New programs must be approved by the Graduate Council (before being brought to the Senate), but new courses or course changes are brought to Graduate Council only for information. The SCC has delegated final editorial responsibility for graduate courses and programs to its graduate subcommittee, so that text approved by this group bypasses the SCC Editorial Committee.

The NPCC meets approximately every two weeks throughout the winter session.

Curriculum changes come in three levels of significance. At the lowest level, "Category 2", are minor editorial changes to course titles or descriptions. Significant changes to courses, including the introduction of new courses, are put into "Category 1". New degree programs, or significant modifications to existing programs, have a category of their own. The next table shows recent times between a proposal's first presentation to the NPCC and its final disposition, in calendar days. Quartiles Q1, Q2, and Q3 show the boundaries where 25%, 50%, and 75% of the waiting times lie. So, for example, the fastest quarter of Category 1 proposals were dispatched within 7 days of their first appearance at the committee table. The slowest quarter took 73 days or more; the median wait was 28 days. Most of the long waits are associated with proposals submitted in late spring, just before the committee rises for the summer.

Proposal Type	Total (approx.)	Q1 (days)	Q2 (days)	Q3 (days)
Category 2	900	0	8	38
Category 1	500	7	28	73
Program-level	24	14	42	77

Governance and Quality Assurance of Education

Curriculum Approval



The NPCC maintains an extensive collection of online resources to help colleagues prepare proposals:

<http://www.grad.ubc.ca/faculty-staff/graduate-council/preparing-curriculum-proposals>

The curriculum approval process was addressed in the recent graduate advisor/staff survey. Of graduate advisor respondents, 83% (67%) agreed that finding instructions was easy, 80% (64%) agreed that the communication and assistance from FoGS was helpful, and 73% (56%) agreed that the times to approval were acceptable. These are lower than one might hope, and a degree of frustration was expressed over the process and the length of time it took to approve curricular changes. Proposals are often sent back for not adhering to Senate requirements, either with respect to content (e.g., learning objectives, assessment) or format, and this seems to be the major cause of discontent. A lack of clarity in what was expected was also cited. It is our observation that proposals from Faculties with rigorous approval processes fared significantly better, and we welcome a University-wide initiative to improve curriculum approval processes at all levels (see below).

This renewal initiative, led by Vice-Provost Anna Kindler, stemmed from a broad recognition that curriculum approval processes at the University often lacked cohesion, budgetary accountability, and administrative effectiveness. We have been working with Dr. Kindler to design a Graduate Studies approval process that would streamline the process and hopefully avoid the particular frustrations described above. It would also allow FoGS to assess budgetary impacts of new initiatives, not something we've attended to in the past. We expect approval of the changes this fall.



Enhancing the Student Experience

Overview

As determined through various surveys (2007 & 2010 CGPSS, Climate and Culture Report, 2007 GSS surveys, and our own exit surveys), the majority of graduate students at UBC are having, or have had, a positive experience throughout their programs. Particular strengths identified were the intellectual quality of faculty and fellow students, library and research facilities, and availability of scholarships (relative to the Canadian average). Some needs, however (most of which are not unique to UBC) come up repeatedly:

- ◆ Support for dealing with problematic supervisor relationships; accountability at the level of the university for supervision
- ◆ Career advice and support, particularly for non-academic careers
- ◆ Support groups for mental health/wellbeing and writing/thesis
- ◆ English language assistance
- ◆ Assistance with financial aid
- ◆ Support for UBC students abroad
- ◆ Childcare
- ◆ More opportunities for interdisciplinary research/social activities across campus
- ◆ University-wide guaranteed funding packages
- ◆ Better access to bursaries
- ◆ >4 years funding
- ◆ More outreach to off-campus students through online interactive space
- ◆ Access to graduate student dedicated space
- ◆ Legal and immigration advice
- ◆ Academic skill workshops (thesis-writing, paper-writing)



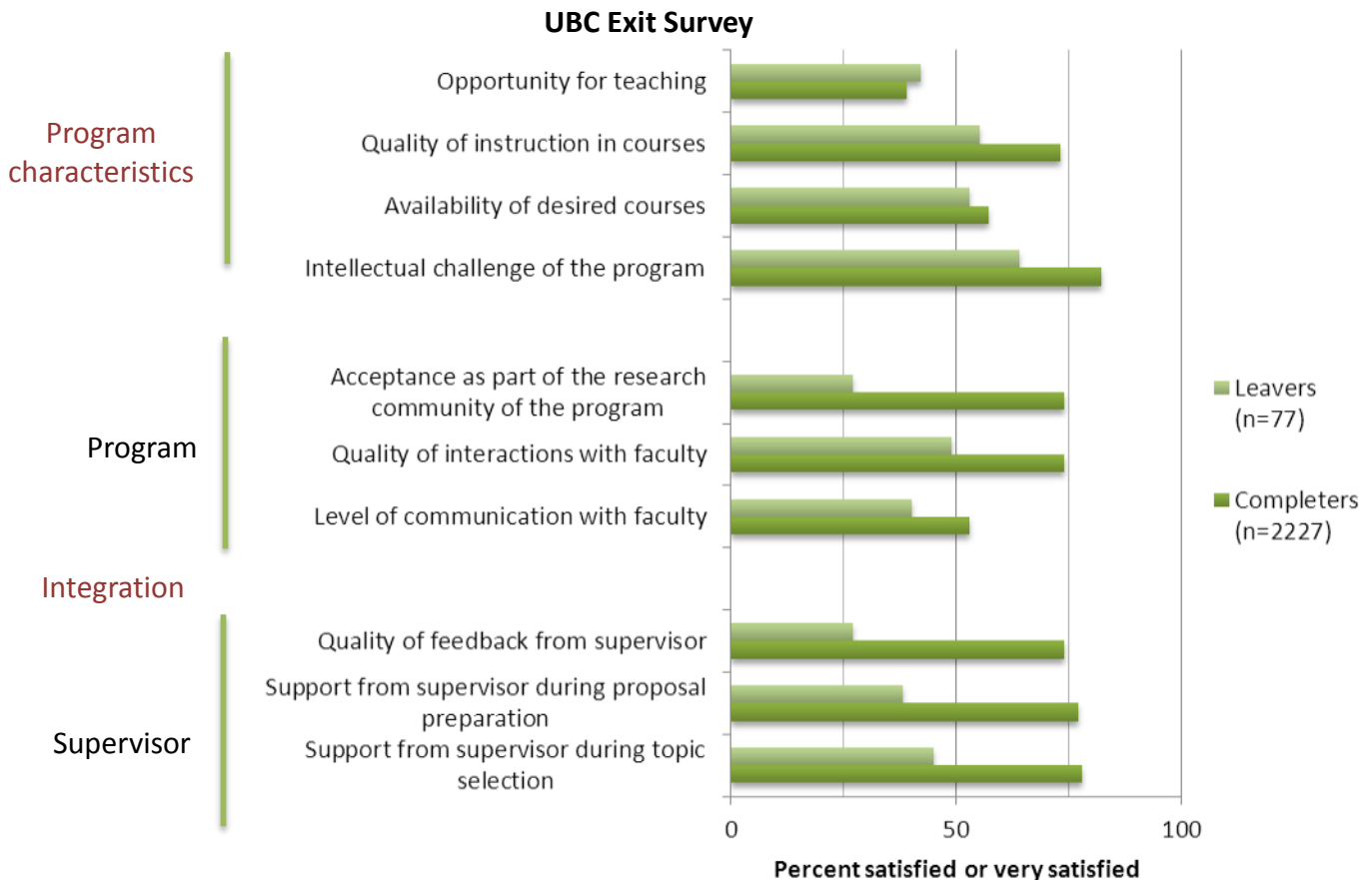
We have taken these concerns seriously, and they have continually been on our radar. Many of the issues are already being addressed (some initiatives are described elsewhere in the document), but more can always be done.

Enhancing the Student Experience

Overview

We have been particularly interested in the reasons for attrition, and a comparison was made of our exit surveys of “leavers” (before graduation) relative to “completers” (see following figures). Most of our data and conclusions to date are consistent with the numerous studies and reflections on the subject in the literature. There was a strong association of attrition with a lack of “integration” in the research or program community, and leavers were more likely to have received little or no funding. (Differences in the remaining characteristics in the figure “Comparative Characteristics” did not reach statistical significance.)

These are clearly complex issues, and it is not possible to go at length into their analysis here. It is fair to say, though, that improvements in the areas of concern for attrition are also key areas that would improve the experience of all graduate students – as expressed by students and identified by faculty and administrators. Many of these are listed above, with critical ones including better supervision, more accountability for supervision, improved intellectual and social community, better tracking of student progress, better accommodation for those with families and work commitments, stronger English language support resources, and better support for career-building and academic skills. All of these areas are addressed in recent, current and planned initiatives, most of which are described in this document.

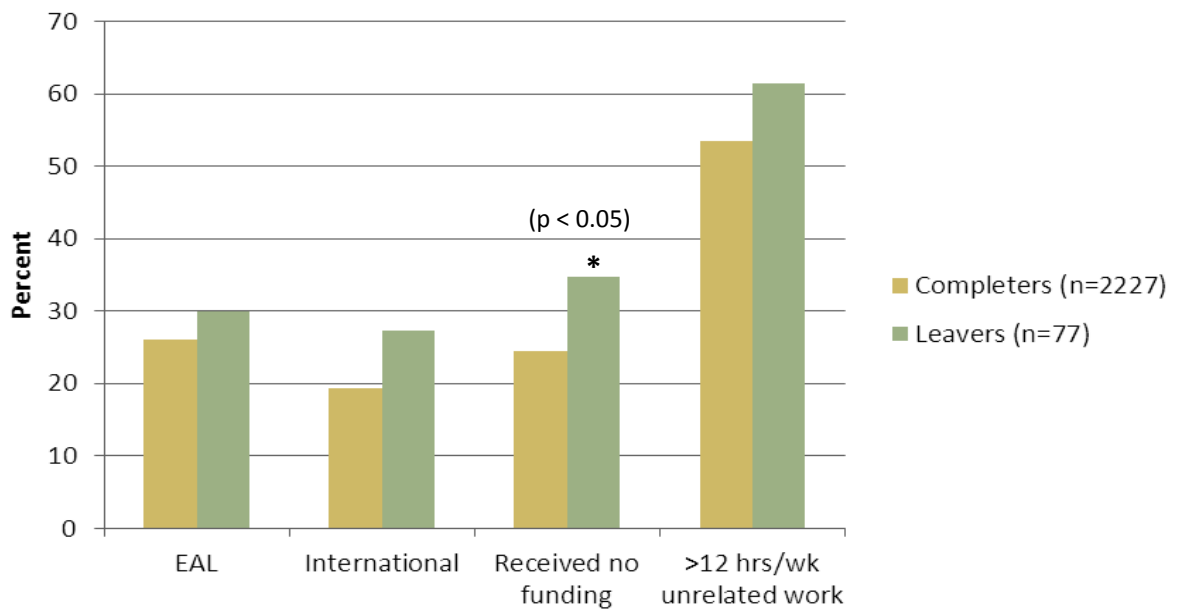


Enhancing the Student Experience

Overview



Comparative characteristics, completers vs. leavers



Enhancing the Student Experience

Professional Development

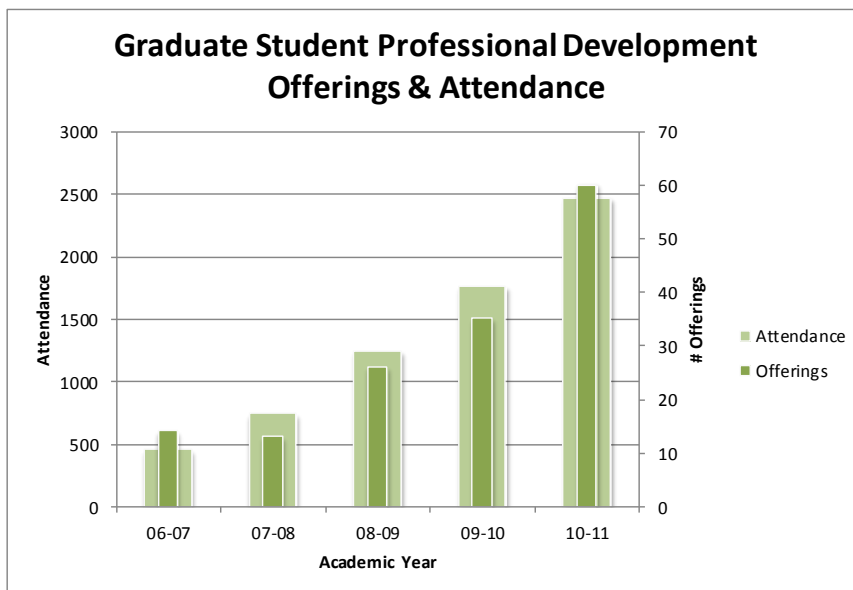
Professional Development

It has been acknowledged for a number of years that, particularly for research students, coursework and a single mentor or disciplinary intellectual community are insufficient to prepare students fully for the careers ahead of them. Graduate career outcomes have increasingly diversified, requiring competencies not addressed in the academic curriculum, and even within academe, successful navigation of the increasing competitiveness and complexity of the research enterprise has required skills not always attained through coursework or experience.

As many of these professional development needs are relevant across the disciplines, Faculties/Schools of Graduate Studies have increasingly taken on the responsibility of providing this programming. In 2003, under the leadership of Dean Granot, FoGS implemented the *Professional Development Initiative*, a small program focused on opportunities to develop the transferable skills necessary to succeed in graduate school and in students' future careers.

After her arrival in 2007, Dean Evans obtained stable funding for the program and recruited dedicated leadership (Associate Dean and Manager) to considerably expand its breadth and magnitude. It grew significantly every year, became *Graduate Pathways to Success* (GPS) in 2009, and in 2010/11 provided 61 offerings, reaching over 2400 graduate student participants and some postdoctoral fellows. See Appendix 14 for a listing of recent offerings. The expansion was made possible in part because of a high degree of

collaboration within and outside UBC. A significant partner is MITACS (a national not-for-profit organization that offers a suite of programs to encourage research translation through internships and professional skills development) with whom we signed formal agreements in 2010 and 2011 to collaborate in offering 10 workshops annually with an emphasis on knowledge translation and business skills.



Note: These numbers do not include the September and January orientation sessions, offered by GPS in collaboration with the GSS and attended by more than 800 students annually.

Enhancing the Student Experience

Professional Development



Most offerings are single workshops, however we value the building of intellectual community and the deeper learning that can take place through longitudinal programming, and we are working towards increasing our use of longer-term cohort-based programs. Core elements of GPS continue to include the opportunities for students to develop:

- ◆ Transferable skills critical to the variety of careers they will enter: written and oral communication, management, entrepreneurship, self-management, interpersonal skills, and others;
- ◆ Competencies and knowledge important in a successful graduate school experience and outcome: developing a productive relationship with one's supervisor, preparing for the doctoral exam, applying for funding, etc.;
- ◆ An understanding of the careers available to them and the competencies needed to achieve their career goals.

The scope of the program was enlarged starting in 2008 to contribute more fully to what we envision to be the goal of graduate education: nurturing scholars who will make a positive difference in the world. The program considers, for example, the broader attributes and attitudes of global and societal responsibility, integrity, and creativity. Enhancement of these attributes is approached through offerings on topics such as responsible research and writing, inclusivity in leadership, dialogues with leaders who have made a positive difference, and community service learning. Importantly, these values are also deliberately embedded and embodied as much as possible in all programming and in interaction with the students.



Enhancing the Student Experience

Professional Development



This diagram illustrates what we believe to be student competency and attribute outcomes of effective graduate education. GPS focuses on all those aspects outside of the core component of disciplinary knowledge and research competency.

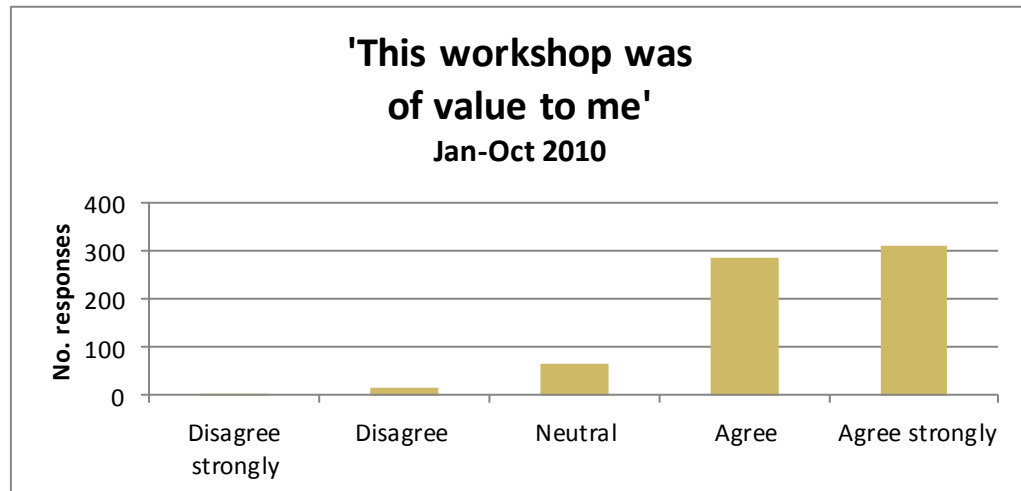
There is broad uptake by Faculties and disciplines across the university, and the overall ratings are very high (with an average rating of the value of events over a recent 10-month period of 4.3 on a 5-point scale). Students frequently comment on how useful the program has been to them in completing their degree and in their personal development.



GPS receives 2010 Helen McRae Award

Enhancing the Student Experience

Professional Development



Student Comments-GPS

- ◆ *The many programs your office offers speak to me of the great human spirit and regard for the person at UBC*
- ◆ *The [Getting Back on Track with Your Thesis] workshop was, bar none, the best six hours I've spent during my PhD program to help myself*
- ◆ *[Preparing to Succeed as a Job Seeker] This is the kind of thing we need more of!! It is so helpful to get such practical tips and feel supported in the scary step of "leaving the nest".*
- ◆ *[Leader's Dialogue: Jo-ann Archibald] - rarely does an academic demonstrate such wisdom; this is a topic that is surely lacking in regular curricula at all levels (being a leader as well as Aboriginal knowledge)*
- ◆ *Every GPS workshop I've attended has clarified content beyond expectation, I'm very grateful for this service!*

Key accomplishments 2011

- ◆ **3-Minute Thesis (3MT) competition.** Launched in the spring of this year, this fun and engaging competition, modelled after the University of Queensland's highly successful event, encouraged students across campus to present their research succinctly and compellingly in 3 minutes. It helped to foster interdisciplinary community across campus and allowed students to develop important communicative competencies. A video of this year's winner from a pool of 65 contestants is posted at: <http://www.grad.ubc.ca/current-students/gps-graduate-pathways-success/three-minute-thesis>
- ◆ **Helen McRae Award.** GPS was this year's recipient of this UBC award for service to students.

Enhancing the Student Experience

Professional Development

Current and Future Priorities

- ◆ **Weekend and summer courses on The Graduate Game Plan.** In response to conversations with students, and to the literature on graduate student completion rates and times, we are developing intensive weekend and multi-day programs on success in graduate school. The Graduate Game Plan, a comprehensive online resource developed several years ago by FoGS, will be the basis for the curriculum.
- ◆ **Cohort-based longitudinal programs.** In addition to the above programs (and the Responsible Conduct of Research course, below) and because we appreciate the value of cohorts and of sequential learning and practice, we will increase our use of longitudinal, or ‘packaged’ programming. One such planned program is on Research Management. In 2009-10, we delivered, in conjunction with other units at UBC, a pilot program on “Leadership in Community Service Learning”, and if funding were to become available to allow this to be financially sustainable, this would be a high priority.
- ◆ **Increased accessibility.** As a number of students have difficulty accessing GPS programming because of geography or time, we are aiming over the next few years to expand delivery of technology-enabled distributed learning (e.g., podcasting, Wimba)
- ◆ **Outcomes data.** Although students complete evaluations of offerings immediately after the session(s), we have no formal assessment of the impact the program has had on students, or whether the learning objectives were met over the longer term. To begin to approach an assessment of this sort, we will survey and/or interview past GPS participants.
- ◆ **Career Development Office.** Although we offer several career-related events every term, and the Career Services office is used by graduate students, it is clear that students need much more – including contacts with potential employers and discipline-specific advice. Neither we nor the Career Services have the capacity to deliver this, and we have thus jointly prepared a proposal for funding to establish a Career Development Office at FoGS (a 1.0 FTE position) to meet this urgent need. It has not yet been funded by UBC central as hoped, and we are exploring alternative funding models, including gaining support from Faculties and the Graduate Student Society.

Challenges

- ◆ **More ideas and needs than funds.** In addition to the Career Development Office and the Leadership in Community Service Learning program, we have envisioned several ambitious programs that would greatly enhance the experience of UBC graduate students, but which are beyond our financial means to provide. These include a Preparing Future Faculty – like program and a community-oriented intellectual entrepreneurship program.
- ◆ **Lack of supervisor buy-in.** Unfortunately, we not infrequently hear from students that their research supervisors do not approve of them taking the time to attend GPS events, and often expressly forbid them to do so. It may occasionally be the case that a student’s degree of participation is indeed detrimental to their research progress; however we view this attitude to be more often one of a limited vision of graduate education. We hope that as the program matures and the benefits become more widely known, this will lessen.

Enhancing the Student Experience

Education in Research Integrity

Education in Research Integrity

This component of professional development is singled out here as it was a key priority for Dr. Evans (also for Dr. Porter, recruited in part for her initiatives in ethics education within the Faculty of Medicine), and a major focus since 2009. With the ultimate goal of ensuring every research graduate student has some exposure to ethics and education in the responsible conduct of research (RCR), we have spent considerable effort to develop a blended online/face-to-face course in RCR, aided by a UBC teaching and learning fund grant. After investigation of several existing courses and models, we decided to adapt the highly regarded US CITI course for the Canadian context. In addition to major edits throughout the 9 modules and cases for the life and physical sciences, we added content on research with Aboriginal peoples and research in a global context, and created an entirely new module on ethics and ethical decision-making. We were asked, and have agreed, to house the adapted course on the newly developed, CIHR-funded, CITI-Canada website administered by the N2 research network, and the adaptation will shortly be available across the country. We have completed the edits, are developing the curriculum for the face-to-face portion, and expect to launch the program in early 2012.

We appreciate that enhancing students' understanding and practice of ethical research practices requires more than a single course, and more than isolated didactic teaching. As mentioned previously, integrity is a key value in the GPS program, and in addition to several workshops on integrity-related matters (including a "traveling roadshow" on "Writing with Integrity"), we deliberately embed the value and subject matter in virtually all programming. For example, we discuss responsible authorship in "So, You're Ready to Publish", honesty in data presentation in "Preparing an Effective Conference Poster", and honesty in self-representation in "Applying for Graduate Scholarships". As important as coursework, however, is the encouragement of a culture of integrity through visibility of role models, through awareness and practice on the part of faculty members, PDFs and staff, through discourse and narrative, and through ensuring an institutional culture of transparency and justice. Dialogue with role models are key elements of "Leaders' Dialogue" series and many GPS workshops, faculty responsibilities in RCR mentoring are highlighted in the workshops for supervisors, and faculty and PDFs play (and will play) important roles in the research integrity courses. We know from experience that faculty and PDF involvement in the case discussion component of these courses increases awareness of the issues on their part, and often results in secondary or tertiary initiatives (e.g., faculty incorporating relevant material in their own courses or research group meetings, PDFs starting their own case discussion groups).



Enhancing the Student Experience

Education in Research Integrity

Current and Future Priorities

- ◆ **Implementing the blended RCR course** and expanding the CITI edits to all disciplines.
- ◆ **Conducting a survey** to determine the current state of RCR educational opportunities in programs. As mentioned, we hope to ultimately ensure every research student has some grounding in RCR, and this will help to assess need as well as assist with dissemination of best practices.
- ◆ **Completing a responsible conduct of research handbook for the university.** Work on this has begun in collaboration with the office of the VP Research and others, however has been put on hold until time for those involved (J. Brinkman, S. Porter) has been freed up.
- ◆ **Encouraging more public and academic conversation** about the ethics of research through forums and the dissemination of best practices in RCR education.

Challenges

- ◆ We know from many anecdotal comments, unfortunately, that the best intentions of students sometimes come to nought because of conflicting values within their immediate environment. If a culture of integrity is not experienced more broadly, teaching in RCR can lead students to discouragement, cynicism and the acceptance of hypocrisy as normative. By encouraging the participation of faculty and PDFs in the courses, and by opening the discourse on ethics and research integrity more fully, we hope by some small measure to enhance the current culture.



International Engagement

A priority in the UBC strategic plan is to “Increase the capacity of UBC students, faculty, staff, and alumni to engage internationally.” FoGS supports this goal through funding student and postdoctoral travel, incorporating global relevance in many GPS events, supporting visiting students, implementing joint PhD programs with international partners, and engaging and recruiting prospective international students.

Enhancing the Student Experience

International Engagement

International Engagement cont'd

Support for Conferences

Every graduate student at UBC is eligible (once) to receive \$400 from FoGS for travel to a scholarly conference at which they are presenting (or in the case of musicians, for an invited performance). We provide approximately 500 such awards (\$200,000) annually, and although this is better than nothing, it falls far short of the support we would ideally wish to give students in their quest for international (and national) engagement. Mobility funding is a key priority in our fundraising efforts.

In addition to universal travel funding, FoGS has in recent years also provided partial funding for selected student delegates to attend APRU and U21 conferences in partnership with Go Global and the VP Research/International. We have also supported student-led initiatives that have had international scholarly or service components

Internationally-Focused GPS Events

Examples of GPS events with an international focus include:

- ◆ **Fall 2009: Working with Governments – International Opportunities.** Representatives from CIDA, the Canadian Embassy in Japan, Foreign Affairs and International Trade, and the Public Service Commission provided information and led a discussion about international careers.
- ◆ **Fall 2010 ongoing: Research Abroad Through Go Global.** This informational session by the GoGlobal office (which facilitates international learning opportunities) attracted a significant audience.
- ◆ **Fall 2010: Inclusive Leadership.** The workshop was designed to help graduate students increase their ability to lead people from a variety of backgrounds, including those from different cultures.
- ◆ **Upcoming: CITI blended course.** This has a significant focus on research across national boundaries.

Joint PhD Programs

In 2009, the UBC Senate approved the FoGS proposal to establish a mechanism for Joint PhD enrolment, allowing UBC to offer the very best students a PhD program that is jointly designed, supervised and examined in collaboration with an international partner university. Interest in Joint PhDs, from both students and faculty members has been high. To date, there have been five fully approved Joint PhD agreements formed with the following universities:

- ◆ University of Edinburgh (Political Science)
- ◆ Universite Libre de Bruxelles (Civil Engineering)
- ◆ Bauhaus University-Weimar (Interdisciplinary Studies)
- ◆ University of Melbourne (English)
- ◆ University of Technology, Sydney (Law)

Enhancing the Student Experience

Key Collaborations

Joint PhD Program cont'd

There are several more in the development phase, with universities in the U.S., China and France. We expect this dimension of our PhD offerings will continue to grow substantially in the coming years. There are innumerable benefits to joint PhD agreements, however they are also associated with significant challenges in that they are very time-intensive to negotiate, and developing individualized, mutually acceptable registration, tuition and graduation processes can be difficult. As numbers of Joint PhDs increase, so will the time and resources necessary to manage them effectively.

Key Collaborations

Supporting and enhancing the broader graduate student experience relies upon effective collaborative relationships between campus units (beyond academic departments) which serve graduate students. The following are among our key collaborators.

Vice-President, Students Portfolio

The VPS portfolio includes several units that provide crucial services to graduate students and that interact frequently with FoGS.

VPS Office. In recent years, the relationship between FoGS and the executive management of the VPS portfolio has not always been optimized for strategically integrated effort on behalf of graduate student success. Although there is a good level of collaboration between many of the individual VPS service units (see below) and FoGS staff to serve individual students, the sum benefit to students overall may be less than its parts, so to speak, due to a tendency towards “separate worlds” planning at the executive and management levels. There has been a more recent recognition that better communication and collaboration between the VPS executive, FoGS executive, and the GSS is necessary, and a joint Strategic Working Group for Graduate Student Support has been established, with regular meetings to review and move forward a coherent agenda for enhancing the graduate student experience. One of the first initiatives of this group has been to document the graduate student-relevant support the various services within the VPS portfolio provide, and the uptake of the services by graduate students. These summaries are provided in Appendix 15.

International Student Development (ISD). FoGS and the ISD unit collaborate closely on issues related to international graduate students, especially on managing study permit issues, health insurance and general adjustment concerns. We’ve worked together on developing policy around managing visiting international graduate students, and ISD contributes to the annual Graduate Student Orientation program and hosts information sessions for international undergraduate students on applying to graduate school. Overall, this is a solid collaborative relationship for managing individual student situations and efforts to collaborate on more systemic, strategic goals are underway.

Enhancing the Student Experience

Key Collaborations

Student Health & Well-Being Units. (Student Health Services, Counseling, Access & Diversity (Disability Resource Centre), Student Crisis Case Manager). Usage data from these units show that graduate students are disproportionate users of health-related services at UBC, perhaps reflecting more complex lives and demands for graduate students than for undergrads. FoGS had a representative on a long-standing “student crisis intervention team” (CIT) which existed to offer integrated responses to complex student health crises, and this has solidified productive relationships between these service units and FoGS. Recently, the CIT has been disbanded with the hiring of a “case manager” who liaises between service and academic units to support students in crisis. We are working effectively with this individual to assist such students. Overall, while collaboration with these units is working well for managing individual student cases, systemic strategic collaborations to better promote the health and well-being of graduate students have not been well established yet.

Career Services. Sufficient career development services for graduate students is an outstanding need at UBC. Although graduate students may access any career counselor at Career Services, only a .2 FTE counselor is dedicated to graduate students. While FoGS has collaborated successfully with this unit on several Graduate Pathways to Success workshops, and Career Services has worked with some disciplinary Faculties to provide customized offerings, there continue to be substantial unmet needs. A joint proposal to improve services to graduate students has been described previously.

Enrolment Services

Enrolment Services (ES) is responsible for a wide range of student management transactions, including all registrarial functions for undergraduate students and some specific functions that include graduate students, such as tuition assessments, managing the online Student Service Centre through which student register for courses, make payments, etc., and graduation/degree conferral/transcript services. Student Financial Aid and Awards (SFA&A) has responsibility for managing needs-based funding for graduate students.

This is another situation where the collaboration between FoGS and ES sub-unit staff is largely effective in managing individual student situations, but larger scale initiatives, policies and communications emerging from Enrolment Services/SFA&A often seem to lack recognition of graduate student needs. While we believe it is crucial that FoGS retain responsibility for managing most registrarial functions for graduate students, developing a more systemic, high-level collaboration between FoGS and ES would provide better service and communication to graduate students and between the units. This extends also to strategic enrolment management of graduate students, which has never truly been addressed by the university. Now that ES is located within the VP Academic portfolio, there should be improved opportunity for a more robust graduate enrolment management strategy with collaboration between Enrolment Services, PAIR (Planning & Institutional Research) and FoGS.

Office of the Ombudsperson for Students

This office, established in 2009, has become a key collaborator and resource for the Faculty. Students are increasingly making the Ombuds Office their first point of contact with concerns about unfair treatment; FoGS receives referrals from this office and consults with them on issues of procedural fairness. We have also collaborated with Ombudsperson Shirley Nakata to develop training workshops for graduate supervisors. FoGS has a representative on the Ombuds Office Advisory Committee, and Ms. Nakata has been proactive in offering to work with us more closely.

Enhancing the Student Experience

Key Collaborations

Graduate Student Society

The GSS represents and advocates on behalf of all UBC Graduate Students and provides academic, professional, social and recreational services for graduate students. The GSS advocacy office also provides excellent assistance to graduate students who are experiencing difficulties with the university and helps students to understand policies, procedures and decisions that affect them. We commend the value they bring to dealing with these issues.

FoGS and GSS collaborate on key events such as Graduate Student Orientation, and GSS is represented on important governance committees such as the Graduate Policy Committee, the Graduate Scholarships Committee, Graduate Council, and the newly developed Strategic Working Group for Graduate Student Support. The GSS executive is periodically invited to FoGS Executive committee meetings. The President (with or without other executives) has met on an ad hoc basis over the years with the Dean, and there has been a recent interest on both sides to meet more regularly.

To help with this review, and as a basis for ongoing discussion, the GSS were asked if they were willing to prepare a statement addressing their relationship with FoGS and their views on FoGS's effectiveness. (They were assured that they would also meet privately with the reviewers.) Their responses to a guiding set of questions are included in Appendix 16. As stated by Mr. Paris, an overarching concern of the GSS this year is that of completion times, and we have started to discuss elements of the issue. As he notes, a difficulty with the ongoing relationship with FoGS (and experienced presumably by many student organizations) is the turnover in leadership and lack of institutional memory. This manifests at times as a lack of knowledge of our data or initiatives, and we appreciate that more regular meetings will help reduce this. Regular dialogue will also help us to have the most current understanding of the student voice.

In addition to meetings and collaboration with the GSS (and, of course, the regular interactions with individual students for academic and administrative purposes), we interact regularly with students through GPS and through a focus group that informs GPS, and plan to hold open dialogue sessions with students from different disciplines and program types to better understand their particular needs.

Aboriginal Recruitment and Engagement

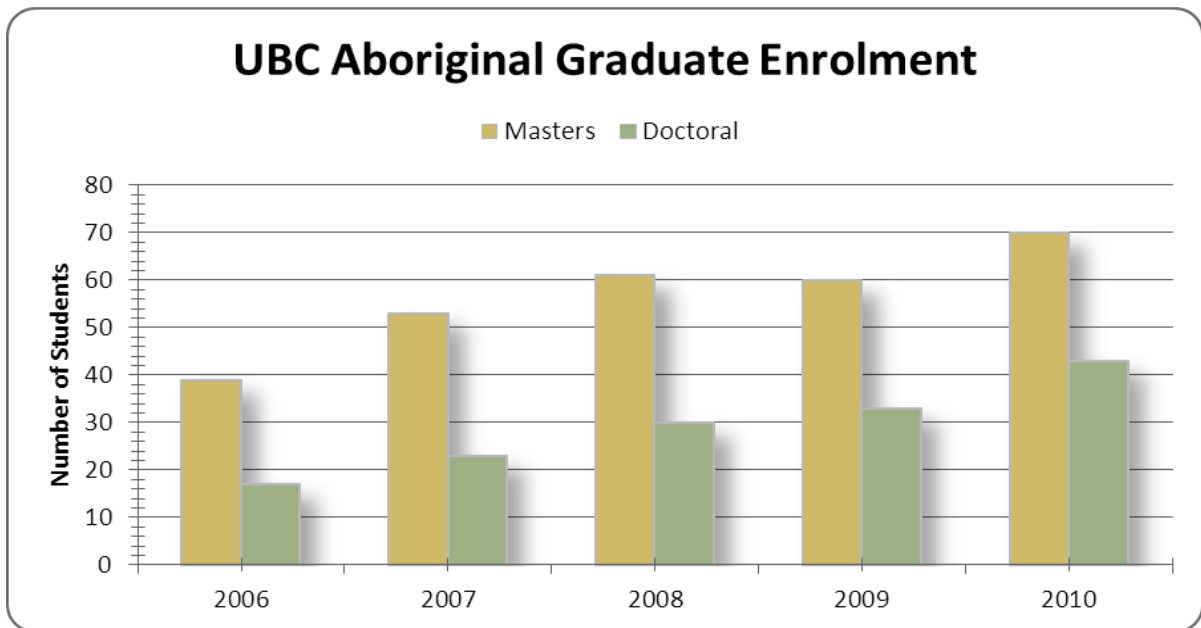
Expanding the educational opportunities for Aboriginal students is a key commitment of the University's Place and Promise strategic plan and the basis of the Aboriginal Strategic Plan. Improved recruitment, retention and overall support of Aboriginal graduate students is a significant theme in the Plan. The Faculty of Graduate Studies supports this goal by advising prospective and current Aboriginal graduate students, conducting outreach, and managing scholarship funding specifically targeted for Aboriginal students.

Enhancing the Student Experience

Aboriginal Recruitment and Engagement

Aboriginal Recruitment and Engagement cont'd

UBC has seen a steady enrolment growth in Aboriginal graduate students over the past five years. This chart includes both Canadian and U.S. citizens who identified as Aboriginal/First Nations:



The distribution of students registered in 2010 across disciplinary areas and degree levels shows a fair level of diversity in academic fields, although further growth in science, engineering and doctoral study overall is particularly desired.

CIP Division	Master's	Doctoral	Total
Social Sciences	2	5	7
Sciences	6	5	11
Professional (Non-Health)	12	0	14
Humanities/Creative Arts	12	5	17
Health Sciences	18	2	20
Engineering	3	0	3
Education	16	25	41
Business & Management	1	0	1
Total	70	42	112

Enhancing the Student Experience

Aboriginal Recruitment and Engagement

Aboriginal Recruitment and Engagement cont'd

Key Activities

- ◆ **Revision of Graduate Admissions Criteria Statement.** The UBC policy statement on admission eligibility for graduate programs has been revised to reflect a broad-based admissions approach for Aboriginal and other applicants and to directly encourage Aboriginal students to apply.
- ◆ **Aboriginal Coordinator in FoGS.** An existing staff- person (Assistant Dean, Jenny Phelps) was assigned duties as “Aboriginal Coordinator” (AC) for FoGS in October 2008. Having an identified key contact point for prospective and current Aboriginal graduate students has provided a crucial information and support link between these students and the University. The AC fields inquiries from several dozen individuals each year, assisting them with identifying grad programs and research supervisors, navigating the application process, finding funding sources, and resolving problems in their programs. The AC also serves on committees that work at a University-wide level to support Aboriginal student success. Lastly, the AC in FoGS has also provided workshops on applying to graduate school, and developed a section on the FoGS website dedicated to Aboriginal applicants.
- ◆ **Funding for Aboriginal Graduate Students.** Merit-based scholarship funding is a crucial element of attracting and supporting Aboriginal graduate students, and increasing this funding is a key priority in the Aboriginal Strategic Plan. Despite the downturn in endowment funds, scholarship funding administered by FoGS for Aboriginal graduate students has more than doubled since 2008-09, from \$192K that year, to \$322K in 2009-10 to \$471K in 2010-11. Starting in 2009-10, multi-year funding packages have been offered to top Aboriginal master’s and doctoral students through the Aboriginal Graduate Fellowship competition. Our goal is to increase available funding to ensure all meritorious Aboriginal applicants offered admission are able to access entrance funding.

Current and Future Priorities

- ◆ **Increasing both merit-based and need-based funding** specific to Aboriginal students
- ◆ **Increasing proactive outreach to prospective Aboriginal students** and to Aboriginal applicants with information on accessing financial and academic support at UBC
- ◆ **Developing improved academic support resources** for Aboriginal students who are returning to graduate study after many years
- ◆ **Continuing to work with graduate programs** to adopt a proactive and supportive stance towards Aboriginal students.
- ◆ **Showcasing** Aboriginal graduate student scholarship and research

Enhancing the Student Experience

Aboriginal Recruitment and Engagement



Challenges

Strong Aboriginal graduate student enrolment and completion is part of a larger academic 'ecosystem' at UBC and beyond. It requires increased numbers of Aboriginal students accessing high-quality undergraduate education, and increased numbers of Aboriginal faculty members. These are challenges being addressed by UBC as a whole through the strategic plan. At the graduate level, our primary challenges are:

- ◆ **Establishing the right balance** between offering designated funding for Aboriginal students and encouraging their competitiveness in overall merit-based funding.
- ◆ **Identifying new funding sources** for Aboriginal scholarships—fundraising and persuading the University community to commit further funds
- ◆ **Difficulty identifying and reaching out** to pools of prospective Aboriginal graduate students
- ◆ **Raising consciousness** among faculty members about the importance of 'going the extra mile' to support Aboriginal student success—not all feel qualified or inclined to supervise Aboriginal students.





Postdoctoral Fellows

Postdoctoral Fellows



UBC has recently committed significant resources and expertise to supporting the lives and career aspirations of its postdoctoral fellows (PDFs), with the goal of enriching their experience at UBC and preparing them for their future career. Through these recent actions, the University has clearly demonstrated that it recognizes the critical role played by PDFs in advancing the University's research and scholarship, and its responsibility in providing an outstanding training environment.

Until recently, PDFs lacked a proper identity and consistent support within the University administration, and had few opportunities for career development outside of their research. A common complaint was that they "fell between the cracks", not unlike PDFs at many other universities. Over the last several years, UBC explored the plight of PDFs through a series of task forces, culminating in the decision in 2009 to establish a Postdoctoral Fellows Office (PDFO) within the Faculty of Graduate Studies, and to work towards the provision of benefits to all PDFs at UBC. With the establishment of the PDFO, PDFs now have a central office to provide support, development opportunities, and advocacy; the University has also just recently established a policy and mechanism to ensure all PDFs on salary or fellowship receive extended health and parental leave benefits. The lot for UBC's PDFs has indeed improved very quickly and significantly.

According to Dr. Nirupa Goel, UBC Postdoc Association President, the experience of UBC postdocs has improved significantly because of the support of the PDFO: "It's one of the things that can make UBC more attractive to (potential) Postdocs" (UBC Focus on People 2010 – see Appendix 17).

PDFO Activities

With a 0.5 FTE manager and a 0.5 FTE assistant, the PDFO provides general advice to prospective, incoming and current PDFs and their supervisors, and delivers orientation sessions and professional development events and workshops. The PDFO is overseen by the Associate Dean for PDFs, who acts as an advocate for PDFs at all levels of administration. We are not aware of such a senior administrator solely dedicated to the representation of PDFs at any other Canadian university.

The full range of PDFO activities is listed in a one-page flyer (see Appendix 18), which is available to all prospective and current PDFs. Further communication about the office occurs through a promotional information sheet accompanying the package used by the Faculty of Graduate Studies for recruitment purposes (see Appendix 19), and the office has a strong web presence on the FoGS website (www.grad.ubc.ca/postdocs).

Postdoctoral Fellows

PDFO Activities

PDF Demographics

One of the first activities of the PDFO was to better understand some of the demographics of UBC's over 800-strong PDF community. The results of a 4-year trend analysis for 2007-2010 (see Appendix 20) revealed a number of important points that have helped better structure our activities. These are:

- ◆ There has been a significant - 40% - growth in the PDF community at UBC since 2007.
- ◆ The Faculty of Science and the Faculty of Medicine each account for about one third of UBC's PDFs. The Faculties of Applied Science, Arts and Forestry collectively account for another 20% of the PDF community.
- ◆ 75% or more of UBC's PDFs are given 1-year or 2-year appointments.
- ◆ The start date for PDFs is spread rather evenly throughout the year, with the exception of two peaks in September and January.

Advice and Information

A major function of the PDFO is to serve as an easily accessible point of contact for all PDF-related inquiries. In our first year of operation, we have provided advice, information and referrals to prospective, incoming and current PDFs, supervising faculty members, department administrators and the Faculty PDF Coordinators. Contact is generally established via email, either by direct contact to PDFO staff or through our general email address, by telephone, and through in-person meetings. Our workshops and events also allow for attending PDFs to be introduced to our staff, often leading to inquiries via informal conversation.

Orientation

To ensure that PDFs are provided with necessary information when they commence their appointments, the PDFO conducts a semi-annual orientation session, which is open to all incoming PDFs and to current PDFs who have not yet attended. Through speaker presentations and an information fair, attendees are introduced to various on-campus groups and resources. Faculty and PDF perspectives on how to succeed as a PDF are also conveyed through speaker sessions and panel discussions.

PDFO Website

The PDFO website has been established to efficiently present pertinent and important information to PDFs, catering to prospective, new, current and departing PDFs. Resources for securing funding, listings of both internal and external career opportunities, professional development event notices, interesting reading, sign-up for PDF Orientation, Postdoc News and our contact information are all housed online in an easy-to-navigate structure. Our website continues to evolve and grow to further meet the needs of our PDFs.

Also contained within the website is the new PDF Handbook, which provides a central point of information for PDFs. The handbook was one of our first initiatives and was created with support from Faculty Relations, the VP Research Office, and the Office of Research Services (and the generosity of the University of Calgary in sharing their PDF handbook material). It provides crucial information on topics such as the appointment process, research policies and procedures, payroll & benefits, campus resources and life at UBC and in Vancouver (see Appendix 21). We review and update this annually, and on an as-needed basis. Information is linked to its primary source to ensure it is in its most current form.

Postdoctoral Fellows

Enhancement of the PDF Experience

Enhancement of the PDF Experience

In collaboration with the PDA, the PDFO identified the professional and career development topics of most importance and interest to the PDF community. Our programs have been structured to meet those needs, and we have benefited from the experience of the GPS program leaders in their design, with several events offered collaboratively. There is a wide range of offerings, fostering both personal and professional growth while engaging our international and culturally diverse group of PDFs. Open and free of cost to all interested PDFs, most sessions are offered semi-annually, with some sessions grouped as topic-specific series.

We experienced strong participation during our inaugural 2010-2011 year, with approximately 30 to 45 PDFs attending each of the 14 programs we offered. Some programs, such as Grant Writing, fill within one hour of opening the registration. Based on positive feedback and substantial demand, our offerings have increased to 34 sessions for 2011-2012 (see Appendix 22). As most of the workshops involve speakers who have volunteered their time, the primary costs are those associated with renting the venue and modest catering.

Because we rely so heavily on the generous donation of time by dedicated UBC faculty members, however, an ongoing challenge has been finding faculty volunteers for these workshops.

PDFO Workshop Comments

Another great session! Thank you PDFO

Doing a great job for PDFs. Such a huge improvement since when I started (2007) so that is terrific to see.

I learned about myself and others around me.

Knowledgeable and interactive workshops like this will benefit all PDFs

Fantastic - great workshop + great opportunity to network with other PDFs

We all need this type of training

Asked good questions which prompted me to have insightful look at myself and realize what I should not be doing

Very targeted toward postdocs, which is more effective and provides relevant information

Your office is developing a great reputation. Great for UBC.

To ensure we are meeting the needs of the PDFs, each workshop has a participant evaluation, which measures the effectiveness of the content covered and the delivery from the speaker. The responses have been very positive (overall evaluation scores are now consistently 4.1 to 4.7 out of 5). Yet, we are continually refining our offerings in a firm commitment to optimally meet the evolving needs of UBC's PDFs. Our regular meetings with the PDA include discussions of the various programs, providing further opportunity for feedback and change.

Postdoctoral Fellows

Enhancement of the PDF Experience

Assistance With Conflicts or Concerns

In addition to departmental administrators and Faculty postdoctoral coordinators, the PDFO is a resource for assistance with conflicts and concerns. We include advice on conflict resolution and prevention in our orientation session and in the PDF Handbook, we offer several workshops on the subject, and we have assisted personally to date with one PDF conflict.

Recruitment Assistance

While recruitment of PDFs is handled primarily at the faculty/department level, the PDFO realizes its opportunity to provide assistance to prospective PDFs in finding a position at UBC. The PDFO website contains information dedicated to UBC recruitment, including a listing of Faculty contacts, an outline of UBC's PDF recruitment process and a listing of open positions when they are forwarded to us. The PDF Handbook mirrors this information.

Through our general email address, we were contacted by 27 prospective PDFs in our inaugural year. They were provided with information on UBC's appointment process and were referred to a listing of potential supervisors. The PDFO as an easily identifiable central body for PDFs and potentially a first point of contact helped these applicants feel welcomed and served by UBC.

Networking Opportunities

The UBC Postdoc Association (PDA), which is open to all PDFs, was formed as a coalition of volunteer PDFs in 2006. The PDA fulfills an important function in promoting sense of community within UBC's widely dispersed body of PDFs by offering networking and social events several times annually. Recognizing the PDA's importance, the PDFO strongly encourages PDFs to join this group and become connected. The PDA is promoted on the main page of the PDFO website, in the PDF Handbook, and at all events hosted by the PDFO. The PDA introduces themselves to new PDFs during the Orientation event with a short oral presentation.

We have discovered that PDFO events and workshops, which are open to all PDFs, are an excellent opportunity for PDFs from campus-wide to meet, mingle and network. An annual PDFO BBQ event is held with the sole purpose of providing the chance to network. PDF Orientation allows for new PDFs from similar countries, from a similar Faculty and from varied backgrounds to become acquainted. The PDFO also organizes and sponsors a PDF speaker series during Celebrate Research Week, allowing for interdisciplinary sharing, and hosts a monthly research/networking event. Additionally, the Professional Development Workshop series serves a social function.

Administrative Structure and Communications

The PDFO facilitates liaison with the following stakeholders:

- ◆ **UBC's PDFs and the Postdoc Association (PDA)** Serving as the primary voice for UBC's PDF body, the PDA meets with the PDFO monthly to discuss any and all PDF-related issues and to ensure that our programs continually meet current needs. PDFs can and do directly contact the PDFO and Associate Dean through email and telephone. The PDFO also uses an email list for wide distribution of important information and notices.

Postdoctoral Fellows

Administrative Structure and Communications

- ◆ **PDF Faculty Coordinators** The PDF Faculty Coordinators are the primary liaison between the PDFO and their home Faculty. Meetings are held twice a year and important communications are relayed immediately via email to the PDF Faculty Coordinators for distribution at the Faculty level.
- ◆ **FoGS.** As the PDFO is housed within FoGS, it is provided access to indispensable resources such as support with communications, web design and finance. The Associate Dean for PDFs reports directly to the Dean and is invited to all Dean's meetings, the Graduate Council and Faculty retreats. The specific concerns of PDFs are already well integrated into the running of FoGS.
- ◆ **Faculty Relations and the VP Research Office** These two administrative bodies have a great deal of relevance to PDFs. Faculty Relations centrally manages all employment-related matters including benefits, payroll and human resources, and the VP Research Office governs research functions such as policies and procedures and research services. As advocates for PDFs, the PDFO has worked and will continue to work very closely with these two groups to ensure that the needs of PDFs are met and current concerns are relayed. The PDFO in turn broadcasts information to all PDFs on behalf of Faculty Relations and the VP Research Office.
- ◆ **Work-Life & Relocation Services Centre** The PDFO and Work-Life & Relocation Services Centre have worked and will continue to work hand-in-hand to ensure that PDFs new to UBC are well-integrated and have access to the resources needed to succeed in their new surroundings. While the PDFO's role is more general and central to PDFs, the Work-Life & Relocation Services Centre is there to handle the details of an individual's relocation such as housing and neighbourhood information, and assistance with specific immigration issues. The PDFO refers PDFs to the Work-Life & Relocation Services Centre as appropriate, and works with them to tackle relocation-related issues as needed.

Current and Future Priorities

- ◆ **Killam postdoctoral prize.** To acknowledge publicly the important work of PDFs, a prize funded by the Killam trusts has been developed and recently approved by the University Senate. We will run the first competition in 2011-12.
- ◆ **Travel awards.** As travel to support conference attendance is a critical aspect of career development for PDFs, we have developed a very modest fund to provide PDF travel awards. We have requested and received start-up funding from the VP Research office, and Faculties are providing matching funds for any award. The travel award will be announced fall 2011.
- ◆ **Exit survey.** To assess the PDF experience and strategize around future programming and activities, an exit survey is being developed and will be distributed to PDFs on their departure from UBC.
- ◆ **Career office.** The proposed Career Development Office described previously is as relevant to PDFs as it is to graduate students. PDF needs will be also be at the forefront of career development planning.



ISGP & the Graduate Residential Colleges

Interdisciplinary Studies Graduate Program (ISGP)

The following are brief descriptions of the activities and structure of ISGP and the residential colleges. As these all undergo separate periodic external reviews, detailed self-assessments are not included here. The most recent reviews of these units were in 2009 (St. John's College), 2003 (Green College), and 2002 (ISGP); review summaries and responses are available upon request. The next reviews of Green College and ISGP are tentatively planned for 2012.

ISGP Graduate Students



Laura Lee



Devon Grayson

Interdisciplinary Studies Graduate Program (ISGP)

Graduate advisor: Dr. Hillel Goelman, Professor, Human Development Learning and Culture

The main purpose of the Interdisciplinary Studies Graduate Program (ISGP) is to enable qualified graduate students to pursue advanced interdisciplinary research that cannot be pursued adequately in traditional university departments. The program is designed for highly motivated students with well-defined goals who can steer an independent course. Most students enter ISGP with specific real-world problems in mind that they have already spent some time addressing, and that they have come to realize cannot be solved within the confines of any one disciplinary perspective. While there are no restrictions regarding the research topic, students are required to draw upon expertise from at least three different disciplines. ISGP is home to over 100 students, most of whom are pursuing PhDs who are supported by supervisors in 40 departments in 10 different Faculties. Graduates take positions in all sectors of society.

Beyond individual students' programs of research, ISGP offers other forms of academic activity and inquiry that reach across disciplinary boundaries. These include lecture series (co-sponsored with Green College), an interdisciplinary student-run journal, and courses in interdisciplinary theory and practice.

Examples of just some of the research that ISGP students are working on include: curatorial ethics and social justice; deliberative democracy and biobanks; genetic testing and discrimination; art and aging; child-headed families in African refugee camps; HIV prevention in Thai prisons. Students enrolled in ISGP study in various departments across campus come together for colloquia and lectures on topics of broad, interdisciplinary interest. This past year, ISGP hosted a lecture series culminating in a keynote address from Nobel Laureate Dr. Amartya Sen in celebration of the 40th anniversary of ISGP. Dr. Sen was also awarded an honorary degree from UBC during his visit with us.



Dr. Goelman and Dr. Sen

ISGP is a highly attractive and competitive program: this past year there were 50 official applicants, of whom 14 were offered admission. Students are very successful in obtaining awards from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, the Canadian Institute for Health Research, UBC, the Vanier Foundation and many other governmental, private, and not-for profit organizations.

ISGP & the Graduate Residential Colleges

St. John's College

St. John's College

Principal: Dr. Henry Yu, Associate Professor, History

St. John's College (SJC) is a residential international college with 175 graduate students and postdoctoral fellows from more than 45 different countries. Two-thirds of the students are from outside Canada, creating a unique community dedicated to intercultural understanding and engagement. Founded in 1997 with the support of the alumni of St. John's University in Shanghai -- the leading university in China devoted to bridging Chinese and Western knowledge until its closure in 1952 -- SJC has inherited its proud traditions of cross-cultural learning. The (residential) Junior Fellows practise these ideals of international and intercultural engagement in their intellectual pursuits as well as their daily lives at the College. Fellows regularly organize talks and forums on current events around the globe, building upon the College's international diversity as well as UBC's global scholarly expertise. Drawing upon the strong bonds of trust and communication developed within the SJC community, Fellows and guests of the College are able to discuss difficult, and often contentious, issues in an atmosphere of mutual respect in which everyone can listen to and learn from each other.

The Junior Fellows are supported by a dedicated group of (faculty) Senior Fellows drawn from across the University, all of whom contribute in different ways to the life and administration of the College. The SJC staff and administration play a key role in facilitating lectures, workshops, and larger academic conferences/ events that build upon the College's commitment to international learning. One of the signal features of St. John's College is its Dining Society. Led by Chef Clarence Tay and his staff, the Dining Society provides high level cuisine drawn from culinary traditions around the globe, with particular focus on Asian cuisines that reflect the College's and Vancouver's rich trans-Pacific ties. Lively discussion and intellectual engagement over shared meals is central to the College's community life. Junior Fellows eat breakfast and dinner together five times a week while shared communal kitchens throughout the College allow Junior Fellows to organize smaller group meals to share culinary traditions and favourite home-cooked dishes. The entire College comes together several times throughout the year for Formal Dinners that showcase the Chef's skill and creativity. By combining daily sustenance with the highest ideals of scholarly learning and global engagement, SJC strives to embody the spirit of the original motto of St. John's University of Shanghai, the pursuit of a better world through "Light and Truth."



ISGP & the Graduate Residential Colleges

St. John's College

After an external review of St. John's College in 2009 identified a number of challenges, in particular in dealing with an escalating mortgage that would quickly make the College insolvent, the University assigned its Strategic Decision Support unit to help create new financial arrangements between St. John's College and Student Housing and Hospitality Services (SHHS). Negotiations began in January 2010 and were concluded in July of 2011, in parallel with discussions between Green College and SHHS. The main accomplishment of the discussions, negotiated on behalf of the College by Acting Principal Olav Slaymaker, was the creation of a new mortgage for St. John's College that ensured a flat amount for annual mortgage payments in the future that allowed for sound financial planning and a sustainable model for costs and revenue. A new partnership with SHHS was created in which the building envelope and the room contracts for residents would be managed by SHHS, achieving economies of scale in terms of both operations and long term maintenance. The cost-savings and efficiencies achieved with this new arrangement—along with the refinancing of the mortgage—put St. John's College on a solid financial foundation, with the prospects for a growing academic budget after the third year of the new arrangement. One of the most important developments was the adoption of 12-month leases for residents, which have helped create a more stable and permanent sense of community among the residents.



Another strong suggestion made in the external review was a better connection with the original Founders of the College, the "Johannean" alumni of St. John's University, Shanghai, as well as the College's own alumni. Towards that end, a new "Living Memory Project" was launched in July 2010 that conducted oral histories of the alumni of SJU-Shanghai (most of whom are in their 80s and 90s) and plans were laid to honour within the spaces of the College the Johannean alumni of SJU-Shanghai and of St. John's College, UBC. A Founders Dinner was created in 2010 to open each academic year to foster ties of memory with the College's past and to help enrich the sense of tradition at the College.

The College is now embarking on its next five years under its Principal Henry Yu, appointed in January of 2010, with an emphasis on creating a stronger identity as one of the main sites on UBC campus for international and intercultural engagement, a place where conversations about difficult and divisive issues can be conducted in a secure and intellectually conducive environment.

ISGP & the Graduate Residential Colleges

Green College

Green College

Principal: Dr. Mark Vessey, Professor, English

Green College was founded in 1993, as UBC's first residential college, on a plan adapted from the models of Oxbridge colleges and of Massey College in the University of Toronto. The College is named for the main donor, Cecil H. Green, a long-time benefactor of UBC who had earlier given funds to found Green College, Oxford (now Green Templeton College), and who wanted UBC to have a graduate college in a similar style, where conversations would take place over meals and between disciplines. Sited next to Cecil Green Park House and based around the other heritage home at the edge of the original UBC campus, the College forms part of a contact-zone between the University and the wider local community. Its west-coast architecture and broken-cloister ground-plan project an ideal of openness and hospitality that is also expressed in its heraldic motto, "Ideas and Friendship," while the tagline "Creating New Horizons," used since 2009 on all publicity, subliminally associates the interdisciplinary mandate of the College with its cliff-edge location.



Essentially extra-curricular in conception (the ISGP, housed in its precincts, is only a partial exception), the College is both a close-knit residential community (accommodating 85 graduate students, plus some 15 postdoctoral and visiting scholars, and partners, who dine together five nights a week) and an open venue for interdisciplinary programming of all kinds. Resident members are selected from across disciplines, with an eye to overall diversity; there is a separate and quite rigorous application process. They are expected to play a role in animating intellectual and social life at the College, and to give freely of their talents. A combination of academic excellence and leadership qualities defines the "ideal type" of Green College resident member. In 2011, 5 of UBC's Vanier Scholarship winners (an impressive 20% of the total) were resident members or immediate past residents of the College.

ISGP & the Graduate Residential Colleges

Green College



UBC faculty members become non-resident faculty members of the College by serving on College committees, joining regularly in College activities, and convening interdisciplinary events and series. In the winter session of 2010-11, the College hosted nearly 200 separate academic and artistic events, all open to the University and to the wider local community without charge. As part of its academic programming for the University, the College stewards the Cecil H. and Ida Green Visiting Professorships program.

For those attracted by and responsive to the variety and intensity of its social and intellectual environment, Green College is transformative. From the start, it has inspired deep loyalty on the part of convinced “Greenies.” Because the College lays special demands on its residents, recruitment and retention of suitable students and postdocs in the new era of standard 12-month housing contracts (September 2011 onward) will pose challenges; it is too early to say how that dynamic will play out. Beyond the continuing experiment in academic communal living, particular aims for the next two years are: strengthening contacts with former resident and non-resident members (“Society Members”); setting development goals; expanding community outreach (e.g. through the Community Professorships at Green College); enhancing links with Massey College and Green Templeton College; improving online dissemination of the College’s academic programs. The articulation of the College’s governance with that of the University is also an ongoing experiment in quasi-autonomy, as it is bound to be in a non-collegiate university. In negotiating the new budget model for the College, the Principal was able to rely on the good will and offices of the Provost, VP Finance, Treasury, and SHHS, as well as the constant support of the Dean. A secure common understanding of what Green College contributes to UBC, rather than any particular reporting structure, seems to be the crucial factor.

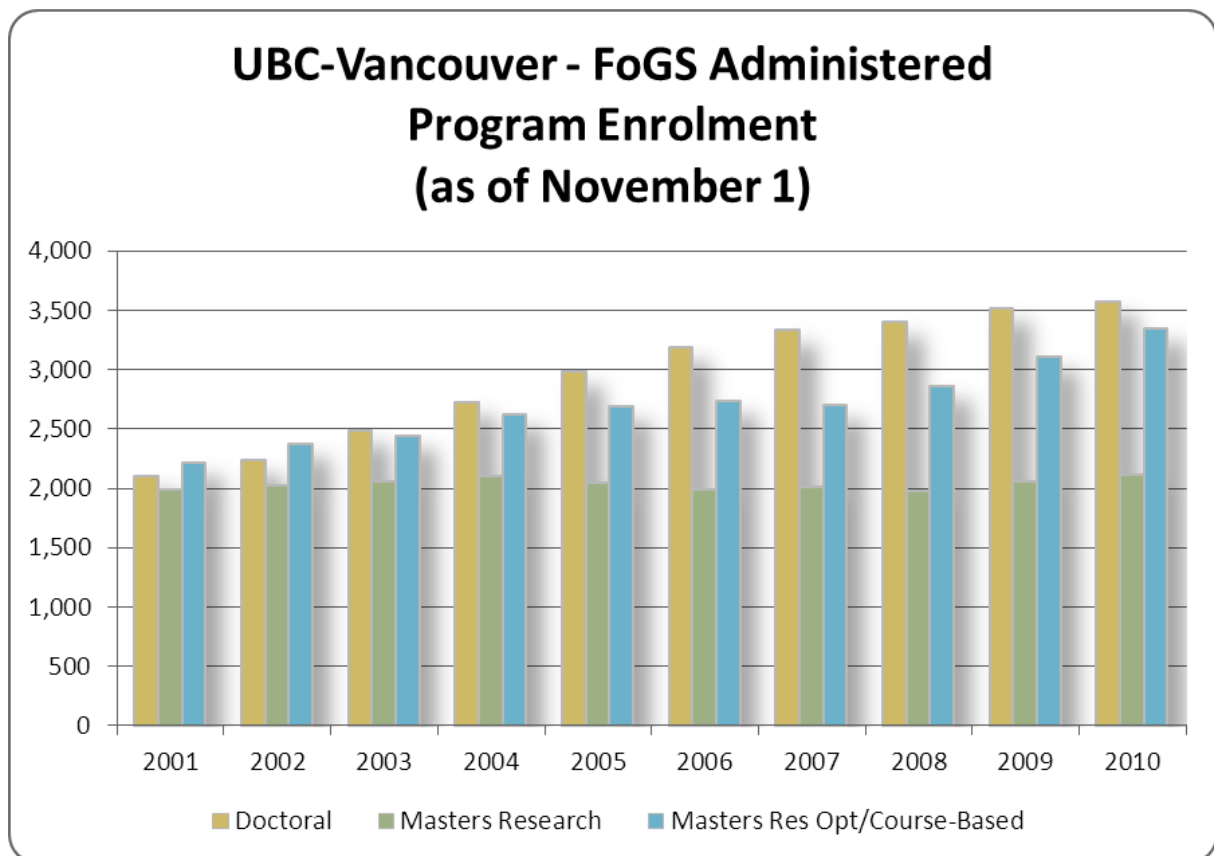


Student Data

Enrolment

Enrolment

The following graphs outline trends in enrolment and current distribution by Faculty/College. In 2010-11, international students comprised 33% of the doctoral student body, 27% of research master's students, and 19% of those in course or research-optional master's programs.



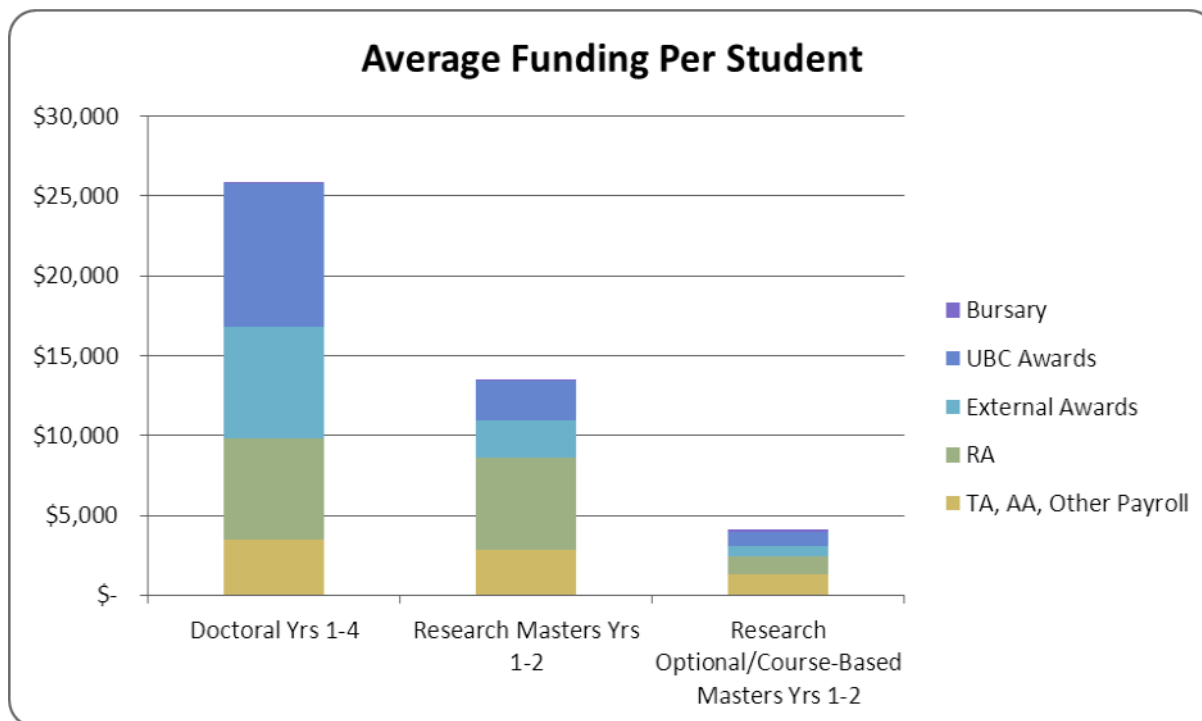
Further data on admissions and international enrolment trends may be found in Appendix 23.

Student Data

Student Funding

Student Funding

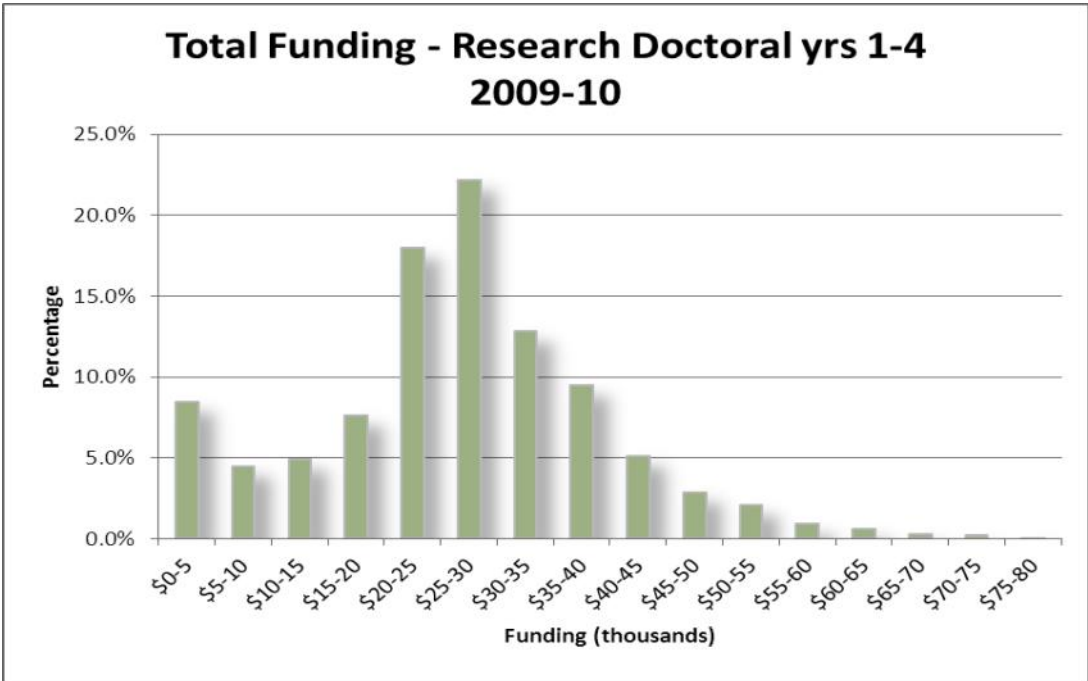
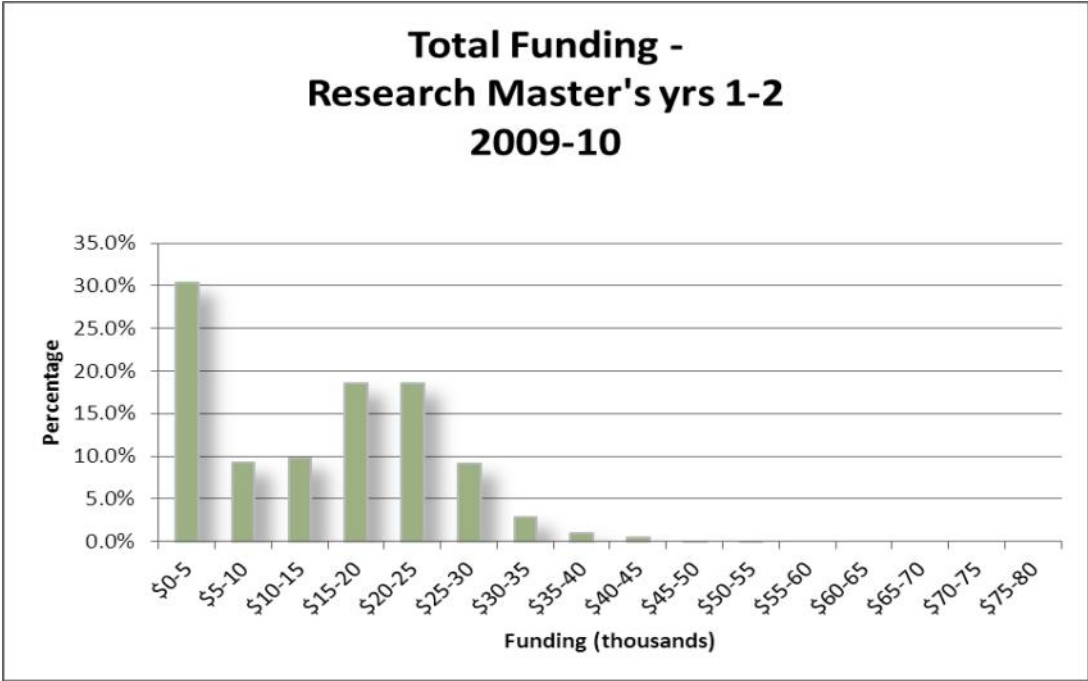
Total current funding for the average doctoral student (yrs 1-4) from all award, UBC payroll and bursary sources exceeds \$25,000 annually, and that for Research master's (yrs 1-2) exceeds \$13,000. Course-based master's students continue, however, to be relatively underfunded, with an average funding level per student of \$4100.



An equally important metric for student funding is the relative distribution of levels, shown opposite. In 2009-10, 51% of research master's (yrs 1-2) and 82% of research doctoral students (yrs 1-4) received more than \$15,000. There are clear disciplinary differences, as expected, with students in the sciences receiving more than those in the arts (not shown). It should be noted that some students, particularly in some disciplines, complete their degrees while actively engaged in a profession. These would comprise some of the group with little university or external support.

Student Data

Student Funding



Student Data

Tri– Agency Success Rates

Tri-Agency Scholarship Success Rates

Over the past 5 years, UBC graduate students have been awarded an average of 8.1% of the total Canadian Tri-Agency scholarships (7.7-8.9%); 8.9% of those awarded by CIHR, 8.7% of NSERC awards, and 7.1% of SSHRC awards (See Appendix 24). To date, UBC students have received 12.9% of the most prestigious of these awards, the Vanier scholarship, introduced in 2008.

This success rate is higher than our proportion of total Canadian graduate students. In 2008 (the last year for which cross-Canada statistics are available), UBC graduate students comprised 6.1% of the total Canadian graduate student population. As master’s programs are extremely diverse, and not all are eligible for Tri-Agency awards, a fairer comparison of relative success rates would be percent doctoral students vs. percent doctoral awards. Here again, UBC in 2008 received substantially more awards (9.1%) than our students numbers would predict (7.8%). A possible co-variable in this comparison is the presence/absence of a medical school (which influences the likelihood of CIHR funding eligibility). An analysis of the 5 largest universities with medical schools for 2008, however, shows that UBC did proportionately better than any in the group.

University	% of Canadian Doctoral Students, 2008	% Tri-Agency Doctoral Awards, 2008	Difference
Toronto	12.87%	13.50%	+5%
Montreal	7.82%	4.26%	-46%
UBC	7.75%	9.10%	+17%
McGill	6.40%	5.48%	-14%
Alberta	6.05%	5.21%	-14%

Completion Rates and Times

The following table shows UBC’s research doctoral (1998 cohort) and Masters (2002 cohort) completion rates and times relative to the largest 11 universities across Canada. In this 2009 survey (see Appendix 25 for the complete report), as well as the previous 1997 survey, UBC ranked near the top in doctoral completion rates, but had longer than average completion times. The Masters completion rates and times were above or at the average level. As the variation in Masters completion rates and times between most universities was very small, the rank was less meaningful.

Student Data

Completion Rates and Times

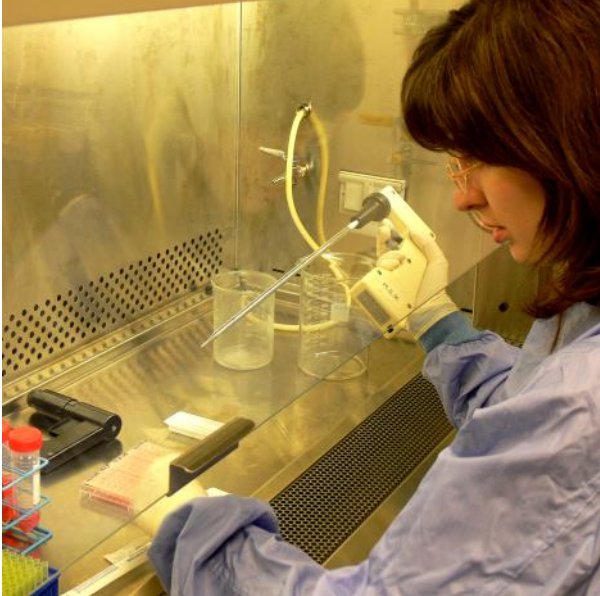
Completion Rates and Times cont'd

G13 Exchange Data, 1998 Doctoral Student Cohort (at 9 years)				
	Completion rate	Rank (from highest)	Average completion time (yrs)	Rank (from shortest)
UBC	76.7%	2/11	5.5	9/11
Canadian Average	66.2%		5.2	
G13 Exchange Data, 2002 Research Master's Cohort (at 5 years)				
	Completion/promotion rate	Rank (from highest)	Average completion time (yrs)	Rank (from shortest)
UBC	85.0%	8/11	2.3	8/11
Canadian Average	82.3%		2.3	

As expected, there are significant disciplinary differences, and our values by discipline reflect trends seen across North America. The following shows approximate average completion rates and times of the above cohorts at UBC, by discipline:

Discipline	PhD		Research Master's	
	Completion rate at 9 yrs	Average completion time (yrs)	Completion rate at 5 yrs	Average completion time (yrs)
Business & Management	84%	5.1	Too small a cohort	Too small a cohort
Education	71%	5.7	60%	2.5
Engineering	86%	5.3	81%	2.5
Health Sciences	89%	5.1	91%	2.6
Humanities	55%	6.3	91%	2.0
Sciences	73%	5.3	88%	2.6
Social Sciences	75%	5.5	87%	1.7

The previous section on 'Student Experience' explores some of our analysis of the factors associated with attrition at UBC. It is highly likely that a significant component of the lengthy doctoral degree completion time is the very high cost of living in Vancouver, and the associated need for students to obtain work during the course of their program.



Dean's Assessment

Strengths

Strengths

Among UBC's significant strengths are the quality of its faculty and students, and its outstanding research infrastructure and environment. We have visionary and value-driven leadership committed to the notion that the university has a pivotal role in society not only in education and the advancement of knowledge, but in fostering global citizenship and a civil and sustainable society. At UBC, the degree to which there is a general awareness of, and a commitment to, practicing the principles and values outlined in an institutional strategic plan is unprecedented in my decades of academic experience.

Dr. Evans was a tireless and effective advocate for graduate education at UBC, attested to by the many recent achievements outlined in this document, and I believe we were extremely fortunate to be the beneficiary of her energy and commitment over the past 3 ½ years. After many years of inadequate student financial support, our levels (though still sub-optimal) have improved, aided by an influx of provincial funding and the commitment of the University to ensure that these funds reach students directly.

The recent incorporation of a Postdoctoral Fellows Office in FoGS has repositioned postdoctoral education as a major educational mandate of the university. The efforts of the office and the positive and effective relationships they have developed with the Postdoctoral Association and university administrative units have contributed to a significant improvement in the postdoctoral experience in a short period of time. Postdoctoral support is becoming a strength and integral component of FoGS.

Students (and faculty) have strongly affirmed the value of the Graduate Pathways to Success program and its positive impact on the graduate student experience at UBC. We believe that the breadth of the programming and the holistic scope of objectives have made it one of the best examples of personal and professional development programming for graduate students in Canada.

ISGP is an exemplary program preparing students for what is an increasingly necessary way of approaching the complex questions of our time. Likewise, the two graduate residential colleges are outstanding examples of intellectual community at its best, and their influence extends well beyond those fortunate enough to reside there.

We are blessed in the Dean's office to have outstanding and committed staff and faculty and an engaging work environment, and enjoy generally excellent relationships with those on campus involved with graduate and postdoctoral education. Our view of the strength of these relationships and the positive impact of FoGS is echoed by the responses to the last two statements in our graduate advisor survey (*FoGS has been responsive and flexible in addressing the unique needs of my graduate program and FoGS contributes to the overall vigor and success of graduate education at UBC.*) These statements were agreed to by 93% (76/78%) of respondents, fairly consistently across all disciplines and degree program types of those who self-identified.

Dean's Assessment

Major Achievements

Major Achievements

Recent achievements are described throughout this document; however, I highlight here the new initiatives in the past 3-4 years that I believe have most positively impacted the graduate and postdoctoral experience:

- ◆ **Graduate fellowships, including Aboriginal support.** The complete restructuring of the major internal graduate award system in 2009 allowed multi-year funding for doctoral students (4YFs), multi-year graduate fellowships for Aboriginal students, and flexible program-distributed funding for all graduate students (GSI). PhD students (yrs 1-4) across UBC now receive an average of \$25,000 annually from all sources.
- ◆ **PDFO.** As mentioned above, the establishment of the PDFO (and with that, the institutional acknowledgement of the importance of this group) and the development of such supportive initiatives as orientation, networking events, and professional development workshops have made a remarkably positive difference in the postdoctoral experience at UBC.
- ◆ **Data provision and analysis.** The synthesis and distribution of key reports such as 'Climate and Culture' and 'Completion Rates and Times', and the comprehensive data packages provided to individual programs for their reviews, have provided a firm basis for evaluation and strategizing around graduate education issues. We will work toward a broader awareness of these resources.
- ◆ **Recruitment.** Although it is difficult to assess the quantitative impact of our numerous recruitment initiatives, we know that those programs that have made use of our services, and the students themselves, are highly appreciative of the efforts. Like most Canadian universities, our enrolment growth has been strong, and our success in attracting international students is shown in their increasing percentage of our overall population. As we consistently 'punch above our weight' in federal scholarship allocations, we also know we are successful in attracting strong candidates.
- ◆ **Graduate Pathways to Success.** This program is one of the more visible contributions FoGS makes to the graduate student community. The dramatic expansion of the program since 2008, and the considered development of its curriculum and pedagogy contributed to it being chosen for the Helen McRae award for student service, and recognized by many students as a highly valuable component of their UBC graduate experience.
- ◆ **Professional development for supervisors.** The workshops on supervision and intercultural understanding have been highly rated, and are an excellent start to meeting a highly significant need in the university community.

Dean's Assessment

Challenges

Challenges

Most of the challenges listed below are not unique to UBC, being experienced to varying degrees among all graduate-level institutions.

- ◆ **Insufficient funding to provide minimum funding packages** for research programs, and little overall for course-based programs. Although funding levels have increased since the last review, 18% of PhD students, and 49% of research master's students continue to receive less than \$15,000 annually from all sources.
- ◆ **Outdated and inefficient student management systems**, as described previously.
- ◆ **Long completion times.** As mentioned, graduate degree completion times at UBC are longer than the Canadian average, and are almost certainly exacerbated by the very high cost of living in Vancouver, necessitating outside work. Approaches to reducing these are integrated throughout the document, and focus on the student experience, supervisor and student development, student monitoring and follow-up, and enrolment management.
- ◆ **Lack of comprehensive career outcomes data.** Programs have the responsibility to track careers, but the extent to which it happens is highly variable, and there is no centralized database on outcomes. This data would be invaluable for assessment, for program development, and for engagement of alumni in mentoring activities.
- ◆ Insufficient funding for enriched programming and services related to careers, leadership, community outreach, etc.



Dean's Assessment

Priorities

Priorities

As Dean *pro tem*, it clearly not possible for me to lay out the long-term plan of the Faculty. I have outlined below, however, some of the major priorities identified in the 2010-15 UBC Graduate Student Strategy and the 2010-13 Dean's Office strategic plan, supplemented by my own views of key areas worthy of special focus over the coming years. These include those related to the student and postdoctoral experience (especially in community-building and career support), assessment (better review and follow-up to review, better student monitoring, better tracking of outcomes), research supervision (assessment, recognition, clarity of expectations), communication within the graduate community, curriculum approval processes, academic and research integrity, and in developing a larger vision of graduate education.

Administration

- ◆ **Improved student management system.** This was referred to several times throughout the document in several contexts. We believe its development should be a priority for the University, and if approved, its implementation will be a major focus of activity over the next few years.
- ◆ **Improved curriculum approval processes.** This University-wide initiative was described previously, and the final approval and implementation of the Graduate Studies component will be a priority over the coming years.

Graduate Student & PDF experience

- ◆ **Improved services relevant to graduate students, including career support.** The recently convened Strategic Working Group on Graduate Student Support is a promising start to identifying and addressing gaps in service provision for graduate students. We already appreciate that career-building support is deficient, and we will continue to work with the VP Students Office to develop a strategy and funding model to address this significant need.
- ◆ **Improved Aboriginal enrolment and funding.** UBC recognizes a special responsibility to better address the needs of Aboriginal people in Canada and beyond, and to ensure qualified Aboriginal students have access to the full range of educational programming it offers. Our enrolment and funding have steadily improved in recent years, but are not at the point where we can say these responsibilities have been met.



Dean's Assessment

Priorities

Priorities cont'd

Graduate Student & PDF experience cont'd

- ◆ **Enriched intellectual community.** We know that social, emotional, and intellectual bonds for students have an enormous impact on the quality of their educational experience, yet many feel isolated. There aren't easy, global fixes to this, but approaches to improving this aspect of their experience include providing opportunities for community building (including the proposed expansion of the online community for newly admitted students to a broader audience), small grants to support student-led community-building initiatives, and facilitating the creation of peer support groups for thesis-writing or other purposes. We also need to be vigilant about and advocate for appropriate study and social space on campus for graduate students, both in current and future buildings.
- ◆ **Explore expansion of funding for course-based programs,** through increased accessibility to merit-based funding, and/or the loosening of restrictions on needs-based funding. With limited availability of scholarships and bursaries, some students are finding this level of education, increasingly required for today's professional workforce, to be inaccessible. This is an untenable situation for a public university.

Faculty and Program Development

- ◆ **Improved uptake of supervisor professional development opportunities.** This is a challenging goal considering the extreme time pressures most faculty face and the perception by many that these would be of minimal benefit to them. One approach we have started, described previously, is to have a discussion with graduate advisors to identify specific needs, with the intent to orient sessions around these. This would also serve the purpose of encouraging discourse among faculty about supervisory practices.
- ◆ **Improved communication of student/supervisor expectations.** This is not likely to succeed by a top-down approach, but I believe we can do a better job in providing programs with resources, and in encouraging them to implement their own processes for communicating expectations early in students' programs.

I do not believe the supervisor's role is well defined, [not] to students nor to supervisors: hearing other students' experiences and comparing [them] to my own, it is obvious that there is a discrepancy as to what role the supervisor plays at various stages. — student respondent, Climate and Culture Report

Dean's Assessment

Priorities

Priorities/cont'd

Faculty and Program Development cont'd

- ◆ **Develop processes for the assessment of supervision.** As discussed previously, a short term priority may be to document what is currently done. (In my home department, for example, we have instituted a formative mutual assessment process of the student and supervisor in the presence of a third party, similar to aspects of a 360 review in business.) No system is perfect, but I believe we can benefit from learning what others do. If we agree that the quality of supervision is a critical element in graduate education, then it is our responsibility to ensure that we have some means of assessing it.

A better system needs to be put in place to evaluate the effectiveness of advisors and their professionalism. It is disheartening to hear about the number of advisors who mistreat their graduate students. There needs to be greater accountability at UBC. —student respondent, Climate and Culture Report

- ◆ **Monitoring research student progress.** Our current ability to ensure research students are making adequate progress in a timely fashion is fairly limited, at the level of FoGS. We rely on the diligence of graduate programs to ensure annual supervisory committee meetings occur and that certain milestones are being met. Most programs are indeed conscientious; when inattention does occur, however, there can be both academic and administrative consequences. The new student management system, if implemented, would be a tremendous asset both for FoGS and the programs in this regard.

An important part of monitoring progress, of course, is being able to articulate what 'progress' is at the program level (apart from completion of major milestones). UBC has not engaged campus-wide in discussing or identifying learning outcomes at the graduate level, and I believe this would be a worthwhile process. At the very least, the provision of resources and discussion of best practices would help to ensure our students are making timely progress, and would improve our times to completion.

Integrity and Social Responsibility

Through the initiatives discussed earlier, we will continue to keep upfront the values of academic and research integrity and social responsibility. This will take the form of expanded GPS programming and other outreach measures, and will need to involve the broader research and academic community.

Dean's Assessment

Priorities

Priorities/cont'd

Postdoctoral Fellows

Tremendous improvements in the PDF experience have been made, however there are opportunities for further enrichment:

- ◆ **Formalized mentoring.** The typically unstructured mentoring environment works well for many PDFs; however, we increasingly see the benefits of individualized development plans and more formal mentoring systems which might include supervisory committees and structured feedback and assessment. This would be difficult and perhaps undesirable to implement across the university, however we could do more to provide related resources and encourage awareness of best practices here and elsewhere.
- ◆ **Assessing the PDF experience in periodic reviews.** We have implemented required documentation for graduate programs in departmental periodic reviews, and we need to ensure that a similar deliberate description and assessment of the PDF experience is included in the review process.

Broader Issues

Centralization/Decentralization

A small minority of graduate advisors in the recent survey voiced the opinion that FoGS's responsibilities should be devolved to programs. This sentiment has existed to a varying degree at the university over many years, but in my experience is raised less vociferously now than in the past. I have no doubt that Dr. Evans's strong advocacy for graduate education, her understanding of the disparate needs of programs, and her energy in bringing visibly value-added components of our work to the graduate community (e.g., supervisor and student professional development, data provision, improved student funding, exit surveys, etc.) has contributed to this.

As expressed elegantly by the last reviewers of the Faculty, there is inevitably some tension between programs and Graduate Studies offices in most universities, and a degree of resentment of the need for oversight that appears to impugn Faculty members' judgment. The pendulum between centralization and some degree of decentralization in the oversight of graduate education in Canadian universities seems to swing with some regularity; while acknowledging our own personal investment in the question, we believe there is a strong case for a centralized body that efficiently and effectively administers, provides valuable services to, advocates for, and is committed to ensuring excellence in all areas of the graduate student experience. That said, we need to listen to those few voices who believe we are a hindrance to the flourishing of their programs, to consider what we might be doing better.

Dean's Assessment

Broader Issues

Broader Issues cont'd

Communication

The diversity and number of graduate programs across campus present challenges to meaningful dialogue, but are equally the reason effective communication must occur. Interchange helps to raise awareness of and contextualize data (such as program or Faculty-specific information) as discussed previously, helps FoGS understand issues and needs, and helps programs better understand what FoGS does. The recent survey accomplished some of the above, and may be a good starting point for further dialogue. We have started to schedule meetings with the diverse communities across campus, starting with the humanities and creative arts, and will aim as well to more routinely meet with student groups. A concern raised in the graduate advisor/staff survey was a disconnect between FoGS and some course-based programs, and it will be particularly important to engage with leaders and learners in these programs.

This information [data, reports] is extremely useful, but should be made more visible to everyone, especially in Arts, and frequently discussed with everyone too.

[T]he Dean should come to Arts and meet the people, especially the Graduate Advisors, the Heads and the students. There are still lingering anxieties in Arts towards FoGS, which a more visible presence from the Dean would help.

In my experience, everyone at FoGS has been a strong support for my own efforts to enhance the strength of Faculty graduate programs. I value the Dean's/Assoc Dean's leadership and support and only wish that my faculty colleagues had a greater awareness of their role and activities. Perhaps we can do more to make FoGS contributions visible to faculty who are not part of Grad Council?

Graduate Advisor/Grad Council Survey respondents

21st Century Career Outcomes

The last few decades have seen an increasing diversification of research graduate and postdoctoral career outcomes, and graduates are making positive contributions in all sectors of society. Universities have a tendency to be slow in recognizing, valuing, and preparing for these types of changes, however. Although many positive initiatives are happening (industry and public sector internships, joint professional/research degrees, professional skills development, etc.), we continue to hear that many faculty still view an academic, tenure-track appointment as the most valued career outcome, and the only goal they are willing and able to provide mentorship for. In some disciplines, of course, a diversity of outcomes has been the norm for a number of years, and students are well-prepared for careers beyond academe. More universally, though, is there more we can do to value and better prepare our student and PDFs for the diversity of ways that they will enrich society?

Dean's Assessment

Broader Issues

Broader Issues cont'd

21st Century Career Outcomes cont'd

It would be helpful to improve the engagement of alumni in diverse fields with the university, both students and faculty, as noted in several contexts in this document. An acknowledgment of the value of diverse career paths could be better emphasized in tenure and promotion and mentorship awards. Although many already exist, there may be more opportunities at the curricular level to bridge the disciplinary/interdisciplinary intellectual development of students with the types of competencies relevant to the many ways that knowledge may be used or translated in the real world. Better tracking of outcomes is essential.

Strategic Enrolment

As in many public universities, the determination of graduate enrolment numbers, with the exception of those for course-based programs, has followed more of a Darwinian than “Intelligent Design” paradigm. Although this has worked in the past, particularly when there was a plentiful supply of academic positions at the end of the pipeline, there are several downsides to the current situation: 1. Unregulated enrolment at the program level does not take into consideration the resource demands that growing numbers of graduate students place on other units, including FoGS, Housing, Health & Counselling, Libraries, etc. 2. We take on many students with little prospect of adequate financial support through what are often long programs (made longer by requiring outside work); and we know these under-funded students are more likely to leave their programs before completing than those who receive adequate funding. 3. It is not clear for all disciplines that the rate at which we continue to increase the enrolment of PhDs (at public expense) is reflective of societal need*, nor is it clear that incoming students fully understand what options are realistically available to them upon graduation. Unfortunately, there does exist a culture sometimes of viewing graduate students as cheap labour (research and/or teaching), and I believe there would be a benefit in taking a more objective, and larger, view of the purpose of graduate education. Such a conversation would be worthwhile, irrespective of any outcome related to enrolment management.

*The most recent Statistics Canada report (Jan, 2011) on expectations and labour market outcomes of Canadian doctoral graduates indicated a 7% unemployment rate (excluding those who were out of the labour force), and substantial rates of over qualification (16%-42%, depending on the definition). Disciplinary differences were large, with humanities graduates being the most under-employed, with a 16% unemployment rate, an 18% part-time employment rate, and an 18-34% rate of over qualification. Assessment of societal need, of course, involves far more than the consideration of current employment figures, but we should be more cognizant of these than we are.



Dean's Assessment

Broader Issues cont'd

Vice-Provost, Graduate Studies

The University is considering the creation of a Vice-Provost, Graduate Studies position, to be held simultaneously by the Dean of Graduate Studies. Partly because of UBC's size and the 10,000-strong graduate student body, we believe this administrative structure, increasingly common in North American universities, has particular merit for us. Graduate students comprise 20% of the student body, and we know their distinct needs are not always recognized in decision-making at the executive level, which understandably is heavily focussed on the undergraduate population. We have seen graduate student needs sometimes go under-acknowledged in areas such as enrolment services, IT, and student services, and there is not a designated champion for a larger graduate student strategy. A Graduate Dean with a "seat at the table" of the university executive would demonstrate the university's commitment to this, and allow a more coordinated approach to ensuring a high quality educational environment relevant to graduate students.

Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies?

PDFs have been described as the 'invisible university'. If the University truly values the overt acknowledgment both of their contributions and educational needs, then their constituency should not be hidden within the designation of "Graduate Studies".



Actions Relevant to Last Review

Actions Relevant to Last Review

The most recent review of the Faculty was held in 2002, at a time when FoGS carried responsibilities for 16 interdisciplinary research centres and institutes and 10 interdisciplinary graduate programs in addition to that more generally for graduate education across campus. The report concluded with 23 recommendations: 8 were relevant to the interdisciplinary research mandate of FoGS, 10 were directed at its graduate education oversight, and 5 were general recommendations. (See Appendices 26 and 27 for the report and the response from FoGS.)

The review team was “extraordinarily impressed” by the then-dean, Dr. Frieda Granot, for her achievements related to the fostering of interdisciplinary research in the research centres and institutes within FoGS’s purview. The Dean’s office staff were also highly commended for their “outstanding commitment” to graduate education. Tensions were noted, however, with regards to both FoGS’s roles, and those within the graduate community were perceived to be above and beyond those experienced in most universities. These included criticisms around “interference” in graduate administration, poor communication, inconsistencies in interpretation of rules, and a deficiency of commitment at the higher institutional level to the cause of graduate education.

The following are the recommendations made by the review team pertinent to the graduate education role of FoGS, and consequent actions or responses.

1. As financial support for UBC graduate students was significantly less per capita than is typical of other Canadian universities, the committee recommended that **“the University seek to increase substantially the funds available for graduate student financial support”**.
FoGS was of course in full agreement with this recommendation, and graduate scholarship funding from UBC sources has thankfully more than doubled since 2002. Current funding levels, however, continue to be insufficient to support the many excellent graduate students who come to UBC.
2. A lack of access to data (for example, completion rates and times) for graduate program quality management and planning was cited, and it was recommended that **“resources be committed by the University and FoGS to rectify this deficiency in data reporting.”**
Funding was obtained for a full-time data analyst position, and regular, comprehensive reports and data (outlined elsewhere in this self-study) have been and continue to be provided to the graduate community. With increasing overall costs and a flat budget however, this position is in jeopardy.
3. It was stated that graduate programs were apparently not being reviewed regularly, and a recommendation was made that **“UBC develop means of regularly and periodically reviewing the quality of its graduate programs.”**
Although graduate programs have always been, and continue to be, evaluated in the context of periodic departmental reviews, there had not been a systematic way of ensuring that all relevant information about the graduate program was included in the self-study. This has since been rectified as described in this self-study. The new procedure has proven effective, however there are problems of occasional non-compliance, and plans for additional improvements have been made.

Actions Relevant to Last Review

Actions Relevant to Last Review

4. It appeared that many in the graduate community were ill-informed about issues relating to FoGS and graduate education, and it was recommended that **“regular meetings should occur between the academic and professional staff of FoGS and groups such as deans, departmental heads, graduate advisors, graduate secretaries and the graduate student society executive.”**

Communication is always a challenge within such a large and diverse community, however we believe some strides have been made with regard to improved exchange. Dr. Evans met annually with disciplinary Deans and Associate Deans (and this will continue), more regular meetings with the Graduate Student Society executive are occurring, and we are beginning a series of conversations with disciplinary groupings in the university, both graduate advisors and students. We have also spent considerable time improving our website to ensure that relevant information is clear and easily accessible, and disseminate a bi-monthly newsletter, GradInsider, to provide updates and practical information to the graduate community.

5. The review committee heard that curriculum approval processes were (or at least had been) cumbersome, and recommended **“that consideration be given to the simplification of the process of approval of minor changes”**.

Two relevant changes to the approval process were instituted, one of which occurred not long prior to the review (and therefore presumably not reflected in the comments). The simplification of approvals for minor changes was approved by Senate in 2000, and after the review, the combining of the Graduate Council New Program and Curriculum Committee and the Senate Curriculum Graduate Sub-committee was accomplished, thereby eliminating two steps in the approval process. We realize there is still some frustration around the curriculum approval process, and as mentioned in the self-study, we are working to streamline the process further.

6. Although details were not specified in this recommendation, the review committee felt that some administrative processes might be more effective, recommending **“that the Dean of FoGS strike a task force to examine best practices at peer institutions and make recommendations for improvement of the academic and business practices relating to graduate education at UBC”**.

We are unaware of whether or not that happened, although we can say that current staff are routinely in communication with peers at other institutions, and often discuss administrative practices. A new Director (J. Phelps) with experience in other institutions was also hired shortly after the review and conducted Business Process Streamlining exercises leading to several efficiency improvements. Overall, assessments of administrative effectiveness and alterations in practice are made regularly, and some are described in the self-study.

Actions Relevant to Last Review

Actions Relevant to Last Review

7. There had been some expressed concerns about the turnaround time for admissions approval, and the committee recommended that **“FoGS be provided with resources to accelerate the admissions process”**.
Improvements in the process are described under *Student Academic Services*. Despite an actual *decrease* in the ratio of staff to admission offers since 2002, the normal turnaround time is improved, and is currently less than 3 days.
8. The committee was “extremely concerned” about the decision to devolve the responsibility for the MBA program to the Faculty of Commerce, and strongly recommended **“that this decision be reconsidered”**.
In the early 2000’s, Faculties responsible for professional graduate degree programs were given the option by the Senate of withdrawing the programs from FoGS and assuming primary responsibility for them. The rationale for this move was that because the curriculum, delivery, and assessment of professional programs relied heavily on professional communities and accreditation bodies, the disciplinary Faculties would be best placed and should be given the freedom to ensure that appropriate standards were being met. Programs currently in this category include: the MBA and MM (Commerce), the MEng (Applied Science), and PharmD (Pharmaceutical Sciences) programs. Most course-based and professional programs chose to remain within FoGS.
9. The committee sensed the perception by the graduate community that FoGS was more an administrative than academic unit, and recommended **“that the role and mandate of FoGS be rewritten to emphasize to the university community that the Faculty’s responsibility is maintaining and improving the quality of graduate education, as well as its administration”**.
The official mandate (stated on the FoGS website and in the calendar) did indeed include the academic role of the Faculty, however it was felt that stronger public support and affirmation of this role needed to come from the central university administration. We are not aware that such a perception exists widely today, although as mentioned in the self-study, there are still a minority who would prefer that FoGS *not* have academic oversight of their programs.
10. Concerns about the inability of programs to use internal scholarships for recruitment led the committee to recommend **“that FoGS work with the deans, department heads and graduate advisors to examine more effective ways of using available student support for recruitment”**.
Substantial changes have since taken place in terms of scholarship amounts and allocation processes, in part to address this real and significant problem. These are described in the self-study. Most internal awards (including GSI and 4YFs) are available to incoming students and can be used as recruitment incentives.
11. The role of graduate advisors was unclear to the review committee, and they recommended

Actions Relevant to Last Review

“that the role of graduate advisors be defined and that efficient mechanisms for regular, two-way communication between the graduate advisors and FoGS be established”.

A comprehensive handbook for graduate advisors is now published on the web, with descriptions of the duties of the position as well as the necessary administrative information. We also host regular graduate advisor meetings with staff members, and are working to improve our professional development resources and workshops for graduate advisors.

12. The committee heard discomfort with the requirement, for students seeking to transfer from the masters to the PhD, of completing 18 course credits within their first year; it recommended **“that this issue be referred to the Policy Committee of FoGS”.**

This 18 credit requirement has since been reduced to 12 credits.

13. There was a perception of FoGS developing policy by a top-down approach, and the committee recommended **“that an advisory committee be struck to examine how new policy and process can be developed with appropriate consultation with stakeholders”.**

It was felt that this perception was inaccurate, as policy development took place (and continues to take place) through a committee with representation from every Faculty. Policies are then brought forward to Graduate Council and the Senate, each with broad representation. Although requested and encouraged to do so for significant issues, it is possible that individual FoGS Policy Committee members sometimes failed to adequately seek feedback from or communicate with their constituents, and thus decisions were seen to have originated from ‘on high’. We are not aware that such a perception is currently widespread.

14. Concerns about ineffective communication were heard frequently, and the committee recommended that **“the professional and academic staff consider amongst themselves a communication strategy for timely, but not overwhelming communication with the graduate programs. We recommend seeking the advice of the graduate secretaries as well as the graduate advisors to learn what types of communication are most needed and most appreciated”.**

Please see the response to recommendation 4, above, that deals with actions related to improved communication.

