Initiated by Provost Bruce McPheron and organized by the Graduate School, the Campus Conversation on Graduate Education: The Decade Ahead is engaging key stakeholders in conversations and workshops about graduate education at Ohio State. Phase 1 of this initiative included surveys and focus groups of graduate faculty and graduate students from 12 Ohio State colleges. That work identified three top areas of concern: diversity and inclusion, funding environment, and professional development.

Our goal is to engage the graduate community in a conversation about the funding environment using the following four questions.

**BACKGROUND**
Today’s fiscal environment presents significant challenges for graduate education. Declining subsidy for state institutions has resulted in fiscal challenges for faculty, staff, and graduate students that have been exacerbated by the continued decline in federal support for research. Graduate programs must make difficult decisions that affect admission and student support. Best practice strategies and student-centric approaches are needed in today’s fiscal environment.

**QUESTION 1**
WHAT DO WE MEAN BY THE FUNDING ENVIRONMENT?
Over half of all university research is supported by federal funds. Graduate students, particularly GTAs, are supported by funds from tuition and State Supported Instruction. The challenges graduate programs are facing due to declining fiscal support can affect recruitment and admission decisions, program size, stipend support, student loan debt, support for student research/scholarship, and professional development. A sustainable funding environment is essential to advance research and development. At Research I institutions, the role of graduate students in the advancement of research and scholarship is central. Research funds used for graduate student training and development is a core value at Ohio State and peer institutions.

**QUESTION 2**
WHAT IS GOING ON NATIONALLY?
To better understand and facilitate the conversation, some national trends are noted.

Federal support of research and state support of universities have been consistently declining over the last several years. At the same time, student loan debt has been steadily increasing and graduate tuition continues to rise.

While overall enrollment in graduate programs has remained relatively constant over the last decade, some shifts have occurred. For example, there have been increases in STEM disciplines with decreases in some social sciences, arts, and humanities disciplines. Additionally, there is a trend for increased master’s enrollment.

**QUESTION 3**
WHAT IS GOING ON AT OHIO STATE?
- The goal of this question is to determine how graduate education is funded within represented departments and colleges.
Campus Conversation on Graduate Education

FUNDING ENVIRONMENT

Examples of questions to explore this theme include:

• How are graduate students funded in your department?

• How does the funding environment influence the way your department conducts graduate education?

• Does funding influence enrollment across master’s, doctoral, and post-doc programs?

• Is funding affecting time-to-degree or attrition within your department?

• What expectations does the administration within your department have of their faculty with respect to supporting graduate education? Are there expectations of the number of graduate students each faculty is expected to mentor?

QUESTION 4

WHERE DOES OHIO STATE WISH TO MOVE ON THIS ISSUE?
The goal of this question is to determine how graduate education funding should evolve in the next decade. Examples of questions to explore this theme include:

• What events, developments, trends and patterns are occurring in your discipline or program that may affect funding of graduate education over the next 5–10 years?

• What models have other universities (domestic and international universities) adopted to deal with the changing environment related to funding research and graduate education?

• Given our fiscal climate, what strategies can we employ for successful graduate education at Ohio State over the next 5–10 years?

NEXT STEPS

Conversations will take place in multiple venues and formats such as one-on-one discussions, small group meetings, panel discussions, town hall meetings, focus groups, and a survey. The conversations will be transcribed and trends will be identified across our campus, colleges and disciplines. Data gathered from stakeholders during spring 2017 on all three topics will be compiled and analyzed. The findings of the conversations will be shared and discussed at the Campus Conversation on Graduate Education: The Decade Ahead Summit on May 3, 2017. A report will be published summarizing the outcomes of this process. The report will help to inform the graduate community of the direction the campus has identified for the future.

4 http://cgsnet.org/ckfinder/userfiles/files/Graduate%20Enrollment%20%20Degrees%20Fall%202015%20Final.pdf