PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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 professional development using the following four questions.

BACKGROUND
Professional development of graduate students was the most frequently mentioned of the three top areas of concern. Successful professional development is needed to support students moving into a broad range of careers. Academic positions are only one segment of the professions that graduate students enter. Many PhDs and graduate programs still regard research faculty positions as their primary goal, but this view varies across disciplines and is less than in past generations.1, 2

QUESTION 1
WHAT IS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT?
What kind of development is necessary for which professions? Ohio State graduate programs successfully develop students for the core element of an academic profession: scholarship and research. These students master the associated skills: content expertise, practice/clinical skills, research techniques, and strategies for keeping current. Those who take faculty positions also need the skills of the meta-profession: teaching/pedagogy, course and curriculum design, mentoring, technology, program assessment, budget/personnel management, planning, teamwork, and leadership.3

PhD and master’s program graduates are increasingly building careers in industry, public institutions, government, and the non-profit sector. They require even broader skills. Opportunities to develop them are not regularly available in graduate programs. We must understand and enumerate those skills.

QUESTION 2
WHAT IS GOING ON NATIONALLY?
Over the last 20 years, more professional development opportunities have been offered to graduate students for the broader range of duties in academic positions, especially teaching. On the whole, they are better prepared to teach. However, the majority of graduate students do not follow the traditionally envisioned pathway to tenured faculty positions at research universities. The trend, as shown by the few available large scale studies such as the Council of Graduate Schools’ Pathways through Graduate School and Into Careers,4 is for fewer graduate students to move into academic faculty positions. Conversation about this situation, however, “is more anecdotal than data-driven, and there is often resistance to accepting this reality...”5

Many institutions and academic units have not tracked the career outcomes of graduate...
program alumni. Filling this data gap could help develop graduate curricular models to support career outcomes and aspirations of the majority of graduate students who will not become university faculty.

Newer services like the Versatile PhD offer some professional development for non-academic careers. These services tend to be provided by graduate schools and support units, not by the disciplinary academic units. Such services indicate that a market exists for support informed by the actual range of career outcomes.

QUESTION 3
WHAT IS GOING ON LOCALLY?
• What is the current reality at Ohio State?
• What types of employment do your graduate students enter?
  • How has this changed over the last decade?
  • What range of skills and dispositions are needed for these jobs?
• What events, developments, trends, and patterns are occurring in your discipline or program that may affect graduate education over the next 5–10 years?

QUESTION 4
WHAT WILL SUCCESSFUL GRADUATE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT LOOK LIKE 5–10 YEARS FROM NOW?
• What will graduate students need to know, be able to do and care about beyond their disciplinary curriculum when they finish their degrees?
• How might these differ for students aiming for academic and non-academic careers?
• What essential professional development might be needed?
• What opportunities and challenges face the Ohio State regarding graduate professional development?

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 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.