Ohio State has a vision and mission to prepare a diverse student body to be leaders and engaged citizens and a commitment to diversity and inclusion of both people and ideas. To advance these goals, the Provost initiated the Campus Conversation on Graduate Education: The Decade Ahead. 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 diversity and inclusion using the following four questions.

Question 1
WHAT DO WE MEAN BY DIVERSITY?
Diversity comes in many forms, including race and ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomics, rural/urban, ideas, etc. Among our campus units, the underrepresentation of minority students in graduate education emerged as one common thread on which to initially focus our discussion. This is a problem of national concern but is particularly acute at Ohio State (Figure).

Question 2
WHAT IS GOING ON NATIONALLY?
The Council of Graduate Schools reports varying changes in enrollment of graduate students from underrepresented minority (URM) groups across fields from 2005–2015, with most fields reporting small single-digit increases or decreases.¹

U.S. demographics show that by 2033, non-Hispanic whites will be the minority of college-age students. URM currently earn just over 20 percent of all bachelor’s degrees, but they earn only 8 percent of graduate degrees. Studies document that URMs currently have lower completion and higher attrition rates than majority students. These trends affect the pipeline for diversification of the faculty and the national workforce, which is fundamental for bringing a diversity of experiences and perspectives to the development of innovative solutions to the world’s problems. Recommendations include providing enhanced academic support,
monitoring and evaluating programs and interventions, and cultivating and nurturing a culture of diversity and inclusion.²

Studies have documented that GRE scores are not predictors of success in a PhD program³ and that URM and female students on average score lower than Asian American and white students.⁴ Holistic review of graduate program applicants is widely viewed as a useful strategy for improving diverse recruitment, but limited staff and faculty time constitutes a significant barrier to this approach. Unclear understandings of what a “holistic” admissions process may also be a barrier.⁵

QUESTION 3
WHAT IS GOING ON AT OHIO STATE?
We seek a greater understanding of the challenges, opportunities, successes, and best practices across the university to achieve Ohio State’s mission and vision. This will be achieved through guided conversations with graduate studies chairs, graduate student focus groups, staff, and faculty.

• What data do we need?
• What are current barriers to diversity and inclusion?
• What are we doing well?

QUESTION 4
WHERE DOES OHIO STATE WISH TO MOVE ON THIS ISSUE?
What future direction does Ohio State wish to take in our efforts to diversify the graduate student population?

• How do we identify, recruit, and retain diverse students?
• How do we recruit, support, and retain diverse faculty?
• How do we change our culture to value diversity and create inclusion?

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.

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3 e.g., Moneta-Koehler, et al. The Limitations of the GRE in Predicting Success in Biomedical Graduate School, 2017
4 Miller and Stassun, A Test That Fails, 2014