STANDARD TWO

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS AND EFFECTIVENESS
Educational Programs and their Effectiveness:

Boise State’s Story

—A SHIFTING FOCUS AND AN EMERGING PRESENCE

Until recently, Boise State University was the comprehensive state institution of higher education in the region, and we shouldered the bulk of the responsibility for post-secondary education in our community. It was our role and mission to offer an array of programs that spanned from certificates in professional-technical vocations all the way to doctoral programs in education and the sciences. In one sense, we had no choice but to be “all things to all people.”

However, effective July 1, 2009, Boise State transferred its Professional-Technical Educational (PTE) programs to the College of Western Idaho, a new community college in our region, along with responsibilities for non-credit workforce training and adult basic education. The College of Western Idaho will also take on substantial responsibility for offering developmental coursework and lower division general education academic coursework.

This transfer of our PTE function to another institution was a watershed moment for Boise State. We are now better able to focus on our vision to become a metropolitan research university of distinction, substantially increasing the (i) the number and size of our graduate programs and (ii) the capacity and sophistication of our research.

—A CAUTIOUS TRANSITION

Boise State University has a long history of adaptation and transition in response to growth in the University and to growth in and changing needs of the region and community. Our roots as a junior college provide foundational core values of access, responsiveness to the region, and a broad range of offerings.

As we move forward to achieve our vision, we fully understand our transition to increased graduate programs and research must be responsible and well planned. It is important not to lose focus on a key aspect of our mission, our undergraduate programs. Towards that end we have undertaken a major effort to enhance the undergraduate experience at Boise State.

It is also important that our expansion of graduate programs and research is done with deliberate attention to quality. We understand the need to (i) develop the mechanisms by which we ensure quality, (ii) develop and implement programs that are consistent with our goals and aspirations and that meet the needs of our community, and (iii) do so in ways that make the best possible use of the resources available to us.
Educational Programs and Effectiveness

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Graduate Programs:
The Careful Growth of Graduate Education at Boise State

2.A.2 The goals of the institution’s educational programs, whenever and however offered, including instructional policies, methods, and delivery systems, are compatible with the institution’s mission. They are developed, approved, and periodically evaluated under established institutional policies and procedures through a clearly defined process.

2.D.1 The level and nature of graduate-degree programs are consistent with the mission and goals of the institution.

2.E.2. The institution demonstrates a continuing commitment of resources to initiate graduate programs and to ensure that the graduate programs maintain pace with the expansion of knowledge and technology.

Graduate education at Boise State University began slowly with the launching of two master’s programs in 1971. However, despite our relative youth we now offer a rich graduate curriculum, as befits a metropolitan university. With over 80 distinct graduate curricula spanning a wide variety of disciplines and degree levels, we provide a wide range of graduate opportunities that not only meet the needs of the local citizenry, but also attract students from throughout Idaho, the nation, and abroad.

Much of our growth has occurred recently and in response to the University’s strategic plan, Charting the Course. A key component of our vision to become a metropolitan research university of distinction is the development of advanced, graduate-level educational opportunities. Since 2000, we have added more than two dozen new graduate degrees and certificates. Not only has the breadth of opportunities increased at the graduate level, but the depth of those opportunities has grown, as well. For example, since 2000 we have added three of our four doctoral programs, and two additional doctoral programs are planned.

The timing of this growth was not happenstance. The Boise metropolitan area has itself grown markedly in the last decade, not only in terms of its population size but also in terms of its reputation, having received several honors as one of the best places in the country for its quality of life and for its business climate. The University recognized that its response to this favorable environment was critical, not only to its own development as an institution but also to the economic and intellectual development of the region.
"Charting the Course" formalizes the vision and goals of that development. Many of those strategic goals, such as those that address the educational needs of the region or that promote research and the recruitment of highly qualified students, directly pertain to graduate education and have been acted upon with favorable results.

With growth in the number and types of degrees offered has come growth in the sophistication of the institutional processes required to administer those offerings. From revising policies and procedures to hiring additional staff, the Graduate College, in conjunction with other campus units, continues to ensure that the graduate programs at Boise State are administered in a professional and responsible manner, while remaining flexible to the changing needs of the programs and their students.

Recently, we deliberately slowed the rate of programmatic growth at the graduate level to make certain that our established and newly added programs have sufficient resources to guarantee high quality graduate education. This slowdown does not mark the end of expansion of our graduate programming; rather, it reflects the recognition that institutional evolution is not a linear process and that the care and nurturing of programs is just as important as their initial establishment. As we strive to distinguish ourselves as a metropolitan research university, our objective is not simply to offer a hodgepodge of graduate degrees, but to target specific disciplines where there is a documented need for students with post-baccalaureate education and to foster the growth of high quality programs in those areas. To that end we will continue careful, purposeful growth in response to opportunities at the local, regional, and national level, using "Charting the Course" as our strategic guide. Thus, our evolution as an institution is continuing, and the Graduate College will work closely with other campus units to meet our vision for Boise State.

Creation and Elimination of Graduate Programs

—FOCUS OF AND APPROVAL PROCESS FOR PROPOSED PROGRAMS

2.A.2 The goals of the institution’s educational programs, whenever and however offered, including instructional policies, methods, and delivery systems, are compatible with the institution’s mission. They are developed, approved, and periodically evaluated under established institutional policies and procedures through a clearly defined process.

2.A.8 Faculty, in partnership with library and information resources personnel, ensure that the use of library and information resources is integrated into the learning process.
2.D.1 The level and nature of graduate-degree programs are consistent with the mission and goals of the institution.

2.E.1 The institution provides evidence that it makes available for graduate programs the required resources for faculty, facilities, equipment, laboratories, library and information resources wherever the graduate programs are offered and however delivered.

Graduate programs undergo a planning and approval process that is similar to, yet more rigorous than, that for undergraduate programs. Potential future programs are discussed and prioritized by the Deans’ Council and then listed in the Idaho State Board of Education’s (SBOE) 8-year plan. At the point that the Provost consents to bring a program forward for approval, two parallel processes are pursued by the academic unit that will house the program (see Figure 2.7). The first process involves acknowledgement by the dean and approval of the curriculum and coursework by the Graduate Council (see next section p. 34). The second process involves first the submittal of a Notice of Intent (NOI) and subsequently the submittal of a Full Proposal, both of which must be approved by the dean, Graduate Dean, Vice President for Finance and Administration, Provost, and President. The NOI describes the need for the program, the connection of the program with the University’s mission, the degree of overlap with programs from other institutions in the state and region, mechanisms by which quality will be ensured, and the resources needed by the program.  

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**Figure 2.7. Approval Processes for Graduate Programs**

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70 8-year plan

71 NOI format
If approved by the University, the NOI is submitted to the Office of the State Board of Education. It is then considered by the SBOE's Council on Academic Affairs and Programs (CAAP). If the NOI is recommended for approval, the University is invited to submit a Full Proposal, which is a much more comprehensive treatment of the proposed program. The Full Proposal is in many ways a business plan, and includes: (i) a description of the curriculum, (ii) a listing of the faculty members involved in the program, (iii) a description of the students who would be entering the program, (iv) a description of infrastructure support for the program (including library resources), (v) a discussion of potential overlap with other programs in the state and region, (vi) a description of the program's centrality to the University's mission, (vii) an assessment of the need for the program, and (viii) a description of resources required by and available for the program. The Full Proposal must be approved by the same entities and individuals as the NOI, with the addition that the Full Proposal must also be approved by the SBOE.

As part of the internal review process for new graduate programs, the Graduate Dean conducts a thorough review of the NOI and of the Full Proposal to ensure that each adequately addresses the issues of need, faculty qualifications, etc. The Associate VP for Academic Planning then examines the budget to ensure that sources have been identified and agreed upon for all resources required for the program.

The Full Proposal for doctoral programs must be accompanied by a report from an external review team. That team of 2 to 3 reviewers is selected by the Provost and the Chief Academic Officer of the SBOE from a list of experts in the discipline provided by the academic unit that will house the program and by the Graduate Dean. The charge for a Review Team is to assess the Full Proposal document, conduct an on-site review of the facilities, and interview faculty, staff, and administrators who will be involved with the program. Their report and recommendations, along with a response from the academic unit that will house the program, are appended to the Full Proposal prior to its submission to the SBOE for approval.

Because graduate programs typically require a substantial investment of resources, proposals for graduate programs receive more scrutiny than do those for undergraduate programs. At meetings of CAAP and the SBOE, Boise State's Provost describes how the proposed program fits with our mission and vision, how there is not undue overlap with programs at other institutions, and how institutional resources will be brought to bear to sustain a quality program. NOIs, external reviews, and Full Proposals submitted over the last several years are available for examination.
Our recently revised process of Periodic Review of Academic Programs reinforces the need to focus our graduate programs on the vision and mission of the University and on the educational needs of the region. In particular, departments are asked to describe how their graduate programs contribute to those areas.\textsuperscript{75}

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**STRUCTURE AND CONTENT OF PROPOSED GRADUATE PROGRAMS**

2.A.3 Degree and certificate programs demonstrate a coherent design; appropriate breadth, depth, sequencing of courses, synthesis of learning; assessment of learning outcomes; use of library and other information sources.

2.A.4 The institution uses degree designators consistent with program content. In each field of study or technical program, degree objectives are clearly defined: the content to be covered, the intellectual skills, the creative capabilities, and the methods of inquiry to be acquired; and, if applicable, the specific career-preparation competencies to be mastered.

2.A.7 Responsibility for design, approval, and implementation of the curriculum is vested in designated institutional bodies with clearly established channels of communication and control. The faculty has a major role and responsibility in the design, integrity, and implementation of the curriculum.

2.D.2 Programs of study at the graduate level are guided by well-defined and appropriate educational objectives and differ from undergraduate programs in requiring greater depth of study and increased demands on student intellectual or creative capacities.

2.D.3 When offering the doctoral degree, the institution ensures that the level of expectations, curricula, and resources made available are significantly greater than those provided for master’s and baccalaureate level programs.

2.F.4 Graduation requirements for advanced degrees offered by the institution are determined by the faculty teaching in the applicable graduate programs [see NWCCU website for a full listing of the requirements that must be included].

As mentioned above, all new programs must be approved by the Graduate Council.\textsuperscript{76} The Graduate Council is a standing committee of the Faculty Senate. Its voting membership consists of a graduate faculty representative from each academic college (the College of Arts and Sciences has two members, one representing arts and letters, the other mathematics and the natural sciences), the Graduate College student senator in the Associated Students of Boise State University (ASBSU; the University’s student government organization), and a member of the Faculty Senate. Ex-officio members include representatives from the Library (the Associate Dean, Library Collections) and the Graduate College (Graduate Dean). Regularly attending guests include a member of the Registrar’s Office (the Coordinator of Curriculum and Degree Audit), the Associate Graduate Dean, and the Graduate College’s Management Assistant (who sets the agenda and takes minutes). The Graduate Council considers the Request for Curriculum Action (RCA),\textsuperscript{77} which had been prepared by the sponsoring department.\textsuperscript{78}

\textsuperscript{75} Periodic Review guidelines: contribution of graduate programs

\textsuperscript{76} Faculty senate policy re: graduate council

\textsuperscript{77} Example curriculum change requests

\textsuperscript{78} Folder: RCAs for new grad programs for last three years
According to Bylaw 3.10.2.1 of the Faculty Senate,\textsuperscript{79} “(t)he Graduate Council shall supervise all graduate offerings of the University determining that curricular changes be compatible with existing programs, feasible under given circumstances, and consistent with the educational objectives of Boise State University under state and federal law. The Council shall be concerned with all matters of policy and procedures of the Graduate College.”

The Graduate Council examines several factors when reviewing the RCA for the proposed program. For example, it considers whether the request is justified in terms of the goals and mission of the department and the University. It also evaluates the answers to a number of questions, such as: Who is the target audience for the program? What are the application and admission requirements? What new resources will be dedicated to the program? How many new faculty members will be hired? What credentials will they hold? What additional library holdings will be obtained? What new graduate courses will be developed? What type and number of graduate credits will be required? Is there a culminating activity and, if so, what type (e.g., dissertation, thesis, project, comprehensive examination)? Are the curriculum requirements consistent with other graduate programs in the discipline and at Boise State, and do they satisfy the overarching regional accreditation guidelines? Will the addition of the new graduate program affect other graduate programs at the University and, if so, how? The Graduate Council measures the answers to these questions, recommends modifications to the proposed graduate curriculum and program catalog statement, and eventually approves the final versions.

Each graduate degree program differs from the corresponding undergraduate program in that the former presupposes the skills and training an individual would receive in a baccalaureate curriculum. Indeed, we require that an applicant have a bachelor’s degree in a related field before being accepted into a graduate program, along with a minimum GPA requirement for the applicant’s undergraduate credits. Furthermore, depending on the program, an applicant may be required to produce a minimum score on standardized tests (GRE, GMAT), letters of recommendation, a writing sample, a demonstration of artistic or musical ability, and/or professional experience prior to entry into the program.

In addition to coursework that entails greater depth of study than that required at the undergraduate level, almost all of our graduate degrees involve a culminating activity. The types of culminating activities vary among disciplines, but they involve a project, thesis or dissertation, comprehensive exam, portfolio, capstone course, or public recital or exhibition. Regardless of the exact nature of the
endeavor; culminating activities reflect the heightened intellectual or creative demands placed on graduate students.

Another distinguishing characteristic of graduate programs is the existence of a graduate faculty to deliver them. The processes by which graduate faculty are selected are discussed below (p. 45).

All credit applied to meet the total degree credit requirements for graduate degrees must be graduate credit except that master’s degrees may include a limited number of upper division credits in field(s) outside of the major. Graduate courses are designated with the course numbers 5xx and 6xx or with 3xxg and 4xxg. Students enrolled in a G-course or a 5xx-level course that is co-listed as a 4xx course must complete all work required of students completing undergraduate credit plus substantial work at the graduate level.

Our doctoral programs are held to the same high standards, commensurate with degree level, as are our master’s or bachelor’s programs in terms of expectations, curricula, and resources. For example, to ensure adequate library resources, the library produces a report to the Provost when the NOI is submitted that evaluates the library’s ability to support a new doctoral program. Furthermore, in addition to the typical assessment process for new programs, doctoral programs go through additional vetting by an external review team before they are approved, as previously described.

PhD students are expected to produce dissertations that make a significant contribution to the discipline. Each PhD defense committee contains an External Examiner (EE), who is a full a voting member. The EE is an expert in the discipline who is recruited from another University by the Graduate Dean after confirmation that no potential conflicts of interest exist between the EE and the doctoral candidate or any member of the defense committee. The EE receives a copy of the dissertation and either attends the defense or submits comments and questions that are put to the candidate during the defense. Thus far 100% of EEs have been brought to campus to attend the defense. Additionally, the Graduate Dean assigns a Graduate Faculty Representative from outside the host department who chairs the proceedings (i.e., the public presentation and the public and private question and answer sessions) to ensure that the candidate is treated fairly, that all members of the defense committee have an opportunity to ask questions, and that Graduate College policies and procedures are observed. The Graduate Faculty Representative reports on the proceedings directly to the Graduate Dean; he/she does not participate in the questioning of the candidate or vote on the outcome of the defense. Neither an EE nor a Graduate Faculty Representative is used for master’s defenses, although the latter would be provided by the Graduate Dean if requested by the student or the academic unit.
The curriculum for PhD programs is designed to be consistent with comparable programs offered elsewhere. Coursework rigor is ensured by requiring doctoral students to take a minimum number of 600-level academic credits, which are classes that can be taken only by graduate students. Furthermore, all doctoral students must pass comprehensive examinations, which are prepared, administered, and graded by faculty members in the department, prior to becoming candidates for the degree. Equipment and stipend support also exceeds those offered to undergraduate or master’s students.

Boise State also offers an EdD in Curriculum and Instruction through the College of Education. The EdD is a professional doctorate that requires 66 graduate credits. It involves required coursework in curriculum and instruction, school improvement, and research (all at the 600-level), plus 17–20 graduate credits in a cognate area of interest to the student and approved by the student’s supervisory committee. To achieve candidacy in this doctoral program a student must pass a comprehensive evaluation administered by the supervisory committee. The culminating activity is a dissertation worth 9–12 graduate credits that represents original scholarship and makes a significant contribution to the discipline. The dissertation is defended at a public event in front of the student’s dissertation committee and other interested individuals. The Dean of the College of Education and the Dean of the Graduate College must approve the dissertation subsequent to the defense. Additional details of the EdD program can be found in the Doctoral Student Handbook.

—RESOURCES FOR NEW PROGRAMS

2.E.1 The institution provides evidence that it makes available for graduate programs the required resources for faculty, facilities, equipment, laboratories, library and information resources wherever the graduate programs are offered and however delivered.

2.E.2 The institution demonstrates a continuing commitment of resources to initiate graduate programs and to ensure that the graduate programs maintain pace with the expansion of knowledge and technology.

As described in the preceding sections, there are a number of individuals and groups who evaluate the sufficiency of resources before allowing a new program to move forward: initiating department, college dean, external review team, Graduate Dean, VP for Finance and Administration, Provost, President, the Office of the SBOE, CAAP, and SBOE.

There are two other mechanisms that help ensure sufficiency of resources for new programs:

• The primary way in which new resources are acquired for new graduate programs is through the Annual Planning and Budgeting...
Process (described in detail in Standard 7), in which units may request funds for new initiatives. Those initiatives must be tied closely to Charting the Course, and they are where departments and deans make their case for resources for new programs.  

- When new graduate programs hire new faculty members, the Provost requires that sufficient space and startup funding be in place before authorizing new faculty hires, as documented in the college’s Faculty Recruitment Plan.

—PROGRAM ELIMINATION

2.A.12 In the event of program elimination, appropriate arrangements are made for enrolled students.

In most cases, discontinuation of graduate programs has been part of the revamping of one graduate program to another similar program, and the students in the discontinued program are accommodated in the new program. For example, the MS in Management Information Systems and the Master of Management Information Systems were consolidated into a single MBA in Information Technology Management, and the MA in Education, Curriculum & Instruction, Option in Secondary Certification was replaced by a more focused graduate certificate that enables teaching certification without the need to complete a graduate degree.

In two recent cases, programs have been discontinued and not replaced. The MBA in Information Technology Management and the Graduate Certificate in Supply Chain Management both were discontinued because of very low enrollments. In both cases, students were given a number of options to ensure that they were able to complete their programs.

Quality of Existing Graduate Programs

—ASSESSMENT OF GRADUATE PROGRAMS

2.A.3 Degree and certificate programs demonstrate a coherent design; are characterized by appropriate breadth, depth, sequencing of courses, synthesis of learning, and the assessment of learning outcomes; and require the use of library and other information sources.

2.A.5 The institution provides evidence that students enrolled in programs offered in concentrated or abbreviated timeframes demonstrate mastery of program goals and course objectives.

2.A.9 The institution’s curriculum (programs and courses) is planned both for optimal learning and accessible scheduling.

Appropriate structure and design of new programs are ensured during the review by the Graduate Dean and the Graduate Council as described above.
Assessment of graduate programs is addressed at length in our response to Standard 2.B below. A brief overview of two key aspects of that assessment follows:

- All departments have produced, for each of their graduate (and undergraduate) programs, a Department Assessment Report that lists program learning goals, describes the way in which student success in achieving those goals will be assessed, describes assessment results, interprets the meaning of those results, and describes subsequent actions that have been taken in response.85

- Periodic Review of Academic Programs provides substantial reinforcement for the assessment process. Departments are asked to describe the processes by which they review and revise their program learning goals and assessment plans. Likewise, they are asked to describe and evaluate the ways in which they make use of assessment data to improve their academic programs.

Departments that offer programs via alternative methodology or in concentrated or abbreviated time frames are asked in the Periodic Review process to describe how learning in those programs is comparable to those offered face to face. These issues are also evaluated by the Graduate Council at the time the curriculum associated with an alternative methodology is first proposed.

Graduate programs that have a target audience consisting of students who also are employed full- or part-time (e.g., many programs in the College of Education, the MBA and MPA programs) typically offer course sections in the evening, on weekends, or during the summer months to ensure accessible scheduling.

—ADMINISTRATIVE INFRASTRUCTURE

2.F – Graduate Records and Academic Credit: Graduate admission and retention policies ensure that student qualifications and expectations are compatible with institutional mission and goals. Graduate program faculty are involved in specifying admission criteria, transfer of graduate credit, and graduation requirements.

As the number of graduate programs has grown, we have tightened our policies and procedures. This has been done with an eye toward enhancing their quality and transparency so that students can progress through programs in a timely and efficient manner. The Graduate College, Graduate Council, and the graduate programs on campus have worked with other campus units to integrate widely recognized administrative best practices with the specific needs of Boise State, resulting in an array of improvements, some of which are described below. Some of these were born of necessity, in
response to the ever-growing administrative challenge of ensuring the quality of a myriad of graduate offerings. Others were strategic, in response to the goals outlined in *Charting the Course*. Still others resulted from problems we uncovered as we strove to meet the higher expectations associated with maturing graduate traditions.

One obvious change in the Graduate College in response to the growth of graduate opportunities is the creation of two new staff positions. One is that of Associate Graduate Dean. This individual does much of the everyday administrative work as delegated by the Graduate Dean and also is involved in developing and monitoring policies and procedures for the Graduate College, enhancing graduate student recruitment efforts, and working on special projects. The other is the Coordinator of Theses, Dissertations, and Fellowships. In addition to processing culminating activities and fellowships, this individual coordinated with library staff to implement an electronic archiving process for theses and dissertations in Spring 2009, which facilitates much wider access to those documents.

Other changes in the Graduate College have been in response to problems associated with the growth in graduate offerings. As we have grown and have begun to rely more on electronic processing and monitoring systems, what once may have been minor idiosyncrasies in procedures have needed to be cleaned up to prevent them from becoming larger problems. For example, the deadline for master's students to submit a candidacy form, which consists of a listing of the courses they have taken and plan to take to complete their degree, to Graduate Admission and Degree Services (GADS) was during the semester in which they intended to graduate. This presented the problem that if GADS discovered an error, the student had no time to correct it (e.g., by taking a needed course) and therefore needed to delay graduation for a semester. We moved that deadline back to the semester prior to graduation, which gives students a semester to correct any problems uncovered by GADS in auditing the candidacy form.

A related problem deals with how students determine if they have fulfilled the individual requirements for their degree. Until recently, that required a telephone call either to GADS or to the Registrar’s Office. And although those two units work together closely, the data in one unit is not always as up-to-date as the data in the other, and occasionally conflicting information was conveyed to students. Students now have electronic access to their own Degree Progress Report (DPR), produced directly by the PeopleSoft system, which highlights any missing items.
A last example of an improvement resulting from our recent growth has to do with the description of requirements for master’s and PhD degrees. It was not until the 2004-05 Graduate Catalog that the general degree requirements for master’s and PhD students were broken out into distinct sections of the catalog, which greatly improved their clarity and ease of use. However, the description of our one EdD program remains embedded within the narrative of the department offering the degree. There have been preliminary discussions about adding additional EdD programs, so the time will soon be right for us to develop a separate, general EdD section in the Graduate Catalog where the regulations for all such degree programs can be found.

Policies governing academic and financial appeal processes apply equally to graduate and undergraduate students.

—CRITERIA FOR GRANTING OF CREDIT

2.A.6 The institution is able to equate its learning experiences with semester or quarter credit hours using practices common to institutions of higher education, to justify the lengths of its programs in comparison to similar programs found in regionally accredited institutions of higher education, and to justify any program-specific tuition in terms of program costs, program length, and program objectives.

2.A.10 Credit for prior experiential learning is awarded only in accordance with Policy 2.3 Credit for Prior Experiential Learning.

2.F.5 Transfer of graduate credit is evaluated by faculty based on policies established by faculty whose responsibilities include a major commitment to graduate education, or by representative body of such faculty who are responsible for the degree program at the receiving institution. The amount of transfer credit granted may be limited by the age of credit, the institution from which the transfer is made, and the appropriateness of the credit earned to the degree being sought.

2.F.6 Graduate credit may be granted for internships, field experiences, and clinical practices that are an integral part of the graduate degree program. Consistent with Policy 2.3 Credit for Prior Experiential Learning, credit may not be granted for experiential learning which occurred prior to the student’s matriculation into the graduate degree program. Unless the graduate student’s faculty advisor structures the current learning experience and monitors and assesses the learning and its outcomes, no graduate credit is granted for current learning experiences external to the student’s formal graduate program.

Boise State awards credit based on semester credit hours. When evaluating graduate transfer credits (and undergraduate transcripts during the admission process) from institutions that operate on the quarter system, GADS uses a conversion table maintained by Auburn University\(^86\) that facilitates the awarding of credit accurately. This process provides us with a consistent mechanism to compare the lengths and objectives of our programs with those of other regionally accredited colleges and universities.

\(^{86}\) http://www.auburn.edu/semesters/conversion.html
Consistent with SBOE policy III.K., Boise State University does not give credit for prior experiential learning at the graduate level. However, graduate credit for challenge exams is possible (Policy #3040).

The Graduate Council has approved guidelines for the acceptance of credits transferred from other institutions and these are published in the Graduate Catalog. Faculty in the graduate program to which the transfer credits are to be applied are responsible for evaluating the transfer credits based on the course content, the age of the credits, the grade received, and the accreditation status of the institution from which the credits originated. The graduate program, through the graduate program coordinator, makes a recommendation to the Graduate Dean who renders the final decision on the acceptability of transfer credits. The maximum number of transfer credits allowed is one-third of the total required for the degree, although individual programs can implement a more restrictive policy. Boise State has a few formal, Graduate Council-approved cooperative agreements with graduate programs at Idaho State University and the University of Idaho that allow additional credits (i.e., more than one-third of the total) to be transferred from those institutions.

As stated above, none of the graduate programs at Boise State allows credit for prior experiential learning or for current learning experiences that are external to the student’s formal graduate program. However, many programs offer credit for internships or practicums that occur after the student has matriculated into the graduate degree program and that involve supervised activity in a field or clinical setting. Practicums and internships are supervised by graduate faculty members, and those worth more than three graduate credits must be approved by the Graduate Dean. The number of practicum and internship credits that can be applied to a graduate degree is regulated by the aggregate restriction, which limits the total credits generated by such university-wide courses (plus undergraduate and pass/fail courses) to one-third of the total credit requirement (exclusive of culminating activity credit).

—ADMISSIONS AND RECRUITING 2.F.1, 2.F.2, 2.F.3

2.F.1 Graduate program admission policies and regulations are consistent with and supportive of the character of the graduate programs offered by the institution. These policies and regulations are published and made available to prospective and enrolled students.

2.F.2 Admission to all graduate programs is based on information submitted with the formal application such as undergraduate and graduate transcripts, official reports on nationally recognized tests, and evaluations by professionals in the field or other faculty-controlled evaluation procedures.

87 Board policy III.K
88 Policy 3040
2.F.3 Faculty teaching in graduate programs are involved in establishing both general admission criteria for graduate study as well as admission criteria to specific graduate programs.

Application and admission policies and regulations for all graduate programs are published annually in the Graduate Catalog, which is available to prospective and enrolled students in electronic form online. Each member of the graduate faculty also receives a hard copy of the Graduate Catalog, and a limited number of hard copies are available to prospective and enrolled students upon request. Furthermore, GADS has a dedicated computer terminal and printer available to individuals who wish to print out parts of the graduate catalog. Program requirements also are described on individual department websites and in department-created literature (e.g., flyers, brochures, and graduate student handbooks). Prospective students can also generate personalized electronic brochures, which provide short descriptions of individual graduate programs and links to more detailed information.

In addition to the minimum requirements for admission to the Graduate College, individual graduate programs establish and maintain admission policies and regulations that are supportive of their character. For example, admission to the MFA in Fine Arts requires three letters of recommendation from professionals in the field, a minimum of 20 labeled slides of recent work along with an artist’s statement, and a statement of purpose. Others, such as the Master of Education in Educational Leadership, require GRE scores, a letter of recommendation from the applicant’s school district, a writing sample, and an interview with Educational Leadership faculty. Notice of these requirements is available to both prospective and enrolled students on department websites and in the Graduate Catalog.

Graduate degree-seeking applicants must first be accepted by the Graduate College. The minimum requirements for admission to the Graduate College are receipt of a baccalaureate degree from a regionally accredited U.S. college or university (or the international equivalent), submission to GADS of a graduate admission application, official transcripts from all previously attended colleges and universities, and a 3.0 or higher GPA for all undergraduate credits or a 3.0 or higher GPA for the last half of the undergraduate credits. Individual programs may require that additional information, such as standardized test scores, letters of recommendation, writing samples, etc., be sent directly to the graduate program coordinator. International students must also demonstrate that they have an appropriate visa, sufficient financial resources, and English proficiency. Information sent to GADS is synthesized and forwarded to the graduate program coordinators. Departmental faculty members evaluate applications and the graduate program coordinator sends
admission recommendations to the Graduate Dean who makes the final determination regarding admission to graduate programs.

Each graduate program has its own procedures for evaluating applicants. These are developed by department faculty members, including those involved in teaching graduate courses. The general admission criteria are established and maintained by the Graduate Council, which is a subcommittee of the Faculty Senate and whose members all are graduate faculty.

An example of how graduate education has been affected by the University’s strategic plan deals with one of the goals of Charting the Course, which is to “recruit and retain an academically-prepared and diverse student body.” The Graduate College has taken several steps to meet this goal. For example, in 2006 the Graduate College began submitting applications for Muskie Fellowships, which are awards from the U.S. Department of State to bring graduate students from the countries that make up the former Soviet Union to study in the United States. The Graduate College provides the required institutional contribution to the awards and has been successful in bringing one or more fellows to campus annually since 2006 in the colleges of Business and Economics, Education, Health Sciences, and Social Sciences and Public Affairs. These individuals have helped to enhance the diversity of our graduate student population.91

Another recruiting success administered by the Graduate College is the Graduate Residential Scholars Program. The program provides free on-campus housing for up to two years for 20 graduate students. The program attracts highly capable, full-time students representing diverse academic disciplines and personal backgrounds, and houses them on the campus, producing an enriched residential experience. Qualified applicants must have a full graduate assistantship from their home programs plus a minimum 3.0 GPA in their baccalaureate programs. The program is an excellent recruiting tool and has attracted high quality students from Argentina, Germany, France, Viet Nam, India, South Korea, Nepal, Russia, China and elsewhere, as well as students from throughout Idaho and the United States.92 93

A very important factor in the decision of where to attend graduate school is the availability of graduate assistantships. The numbers at Boise State have increased, as shown in Figure 2.8. Some of the new assistantships have been created wholly through new appropriations. For others, the Graduate Dean has used Graduate College funds to leverage partnerships into existence for the support of

![FIGURE 2.8. NUMBER OF GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIPS](image)

91 Award letters are on file in the Graduate Dean’s Office.
92 Listing of GRSP students
93 Link to information webpage for GRSP
graduate assistantships. Initially, each new leveraged assistantship is funded partially by the Graduate College and partially by an external partner (such as a local business or organization). After a defined period, the academic college that houses the assistantship takes over the Graduate College portion, and the external partner maintains (or even increases) its funding level. Current investment of $166K in Graduate College funds has generated a return of over $730K, more than a 4:1 return on investment.\textsuperscript{94} Similarly, a competitive grant proposal submitted by the Graduate Dean in 2008 to the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission was awarded $334K for a graduate fellowship program to be administered by the Graduate College. The program will continue beyond the life of the grant through a commitment to use University funds at the end of the grant cycle.\textsuperscript{95}

Not all recruiting efforts involve financial outlays. For example, in October 2008 the Graduate Council approved the concept of allowing talented seniors to work on a portion of master's degree course requirements while still completing their undergraduate careers. This opportunity is known as an accelerated master's program, and is designed to attract the best and the brightest Boise State undergraduates into our own graduate programs. Students are allowed to take up to 10 graduate credits that will apply towards their master's degree. All such programs must be vetted by the Graduate College, and only high-quality students can participate so that the intellectual rigor of the master's programs is maintained. The Department of Computer Science was the first to develop an accelerated master's program, and other graduate programs are in various stages of following suit.\textsuperscript{96}

Faculty

2.E.3 Institutions offering graduate degrees have appropriate full-time faculty in areas appropriate to the degree offered and whose main activity lies with the institution. Such faculty are related by training and research to the disciplines in which they teach and supervise research.

2.E.4 Faculty are adequate in number and sufficiently diversified within disciplines so as to provide effective teaching, advising, scholarly and/or creative activity, as well as to participate appropriately in curriculum development, policy development, evaluation, institutional planning, and development. Small graduate programs ordinarily require the participation of several full-time faculty whose responsibilities include a major commitment to graduate education.

2.E.5 In the delivery of off-campus programs, full-time faculty whose responsibilities include a major commitment to graduate education provide physical presence and participation in the planning, delivery, and assessment of the programs.

2.E.6 The institution that offers the doctoral degree has a core of full-time faculty active in graduate education at its main campus and at each off-campus location where doctoral programs are offered.

\textsuperscript{94} Spreadsheet of leveraged assistantships

\textsuperscript{95} Proposal

\textsuperscript{96} Policy on accelerated master's programs
—GRADUATE FACULTY STATUS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The instruction and mentoring of graduate students requires faculty members possessing strong professional credentials. To that end, the University recognizes four categories of faculty members who teach and advise graduate students. These vary according to the qualifications of the individual and the type of graduate interactions approved by the department. In all cases, faculty nominations are submitted by department chairs to the Graduate Dean after a selection process appropriate for the department. The nomination form is accompanied by the nominee’s CV, which must include information about the nominee’s highest degree obtained, his/her current employment status, and a summary of professional experience as it relates to graduate education (e.g., courses taught, professional publications and presentations, students mentored, and funding obtained).

Graduate Faculty status is awarded to tenured and tenure-track faculty members at Boise State and to Research or Clinical Faculty members at the University. Graduate Faculty members may teach graduate courses and serve on or chair graduate student supervisory committees for dissertations, theses, or projects. To be permitted to chair a committee, an individual must submit an Endorsement Form, approved by the home department, as part of the Graduate Faculty Nomination.

Adjunct Graduate Faculty status may be granted to non-tenure-track individuals or individuals employed by other universities who have the terminal degree for their discipline and who are qualified to assume the duties and responsibilities of Graduate Faculty status. Individuals may remain in Adjunct Graduate Faculty status for renewable terms of up to seven years. They may teach graduate courses and serve on or chair (if endorsed, as described above) graduate student supervisory committees for dissertations, theses, or projects. If a supervisory committee is chaired by someone with Adjunct Graduate Faculty status, then another committee member must serve as an administrative co-chair. The latter individual is charged with advising the student on procedural and policy matters related to the student’s academic progress through the graduate program.

Affiliate Graduate Faculty status is given to individuals without a terminal degree for their discipline who are qualified to assume limited, narrowly-defined privileges and duties, such as teaching a graduate course in their area of expertise or providing specialized knowledge as a member of a supervisory committee. They serve for a renewable term not to exceed three years. Affiliate Graduate Faculty members may not chair committees.

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97 Policy on graduate faculty
98 Nomination form
99 Endorsement form
Emeritus Graduate Faculty members are individuals who were Graduate Faculty members prior to retirement. They may be retained as Emeritus Graduate Faculty members for a renewable term of up to seven years. Emeritus Graduate Faculty members may chair committees if they have a departmental endorsement, as outlined above.

With one exception (described below), nominations for graduate status are presented to the Graduate Council for discussion and approval. If approved by the Graduate Council, the Graduate Dean then makes the appointment. The exception is that the Graduate Council has delegated the process for granting Graduate Faculty status to newly hired tenure-track or tenured faculty members to the Graduate Dean’s office. The rationale is that departments hire new faculty members with the intention that the latter will engage in graduate student-related activities as a regular part of their employment, and that faculty members of the department have assessed the individual’s qualifications for Graduate Faculty status much more thoroughly than could the Graduate Council. The Associate Dean of the Graduate College reviews the CV of newly hired tenure-track or tenured faculty members to ensure that it is complete and, if so, approves the individual for Graduate Faculty status. Should a department not want a new hire to be given Graduate Faculty status, that decision must be communicated, with justification, to the Graduate Dean.

As can be seen in Figure 2.9, the vast majority of Graduate Faculty (recall that this designation does not include Adjunct Graduate Faculty and Affiliate Graduate Faculty) members have terminal degrees, which includes all doctorates (including JD) and the MFA.

—NUMBERS OF GRADUATE FACULTY MEMBERS

Figure 2.10 indicates the numbers of Graduate Faculty and Adjunct Graduate Faculty members in each of the departments offering graduate programs. In no case does the sum of those two numbers fall below four. And for doctoral programs, in no case does the sum fall below 16 (see listing of number per department in evidence).

One process by which we ensure the adequacy of the number and expertise of faculty members is Periodic Review of Academic Departments. In their self study, departments are asked to “discuss the
sufficiency in numbers and expertise in being able to carry out the delivery of your graduate programs” and, if applicable, to “assess the scholarly activity of your participating faculty members.” External reviewers in the Periodic Review process evaluate departments based on the same criteria.

—GRADUATE FACULTY OF NEW PROGRAMS

As described previously, the Full Proposal for a new program contains a comprehensive listing of the faculty members who will be serving in the graduate faculty for that program (or the subject areas for additional graduate faculty if new hires are required). That listing contains information on the areas of interest, salaries, and FTE committed to the program.

—GRADUATE FACULTY OF OFF-CAMPUS PROGRAMS

No doctoral program components are offered in an off-campus format except for the EdD cognate in educational technology. This cognate is available from the Department of Educational Technology, which is presented entirely online. For those master’s programs that are offered partially or entirely off-campus or online, a core set of full-time faculty members, active at the main Boise State campus, are charged with the planning, delivery, administrative oversight, and assessment of the programs. Any adjunct faculty member involved in off-campus graduate programs must have Adjunct Graduate Faculty status, obtained through the process approved by Graduate Council, as discussed above.

Resources and Infrastructure

2.A.1 The institution demonstrates its commitment to high standards of teaching and learning by providing sufficient human, physical, and financial resources to support its educational programs and to facilitate student achievement of program objectives whenever and however they are offered.

2.A.8 Faculty, in partnership with library and information resources personnel, ensure that the use of library and information resources is integrated into the learning process.

2.E.1 The institution provides evidence that it makes available for graduate programs the required resources for faculty, facilities, equipment, laboratories, library and information resources wherever the graduate programs are offered and however delivered.

2.E.2 The institution demonstrates a continuing commitment of resources to initiate graduate programs and to ensure that the graduate programs maintain pace with the expansion of knowledge and technology.
—LIBRARY

All NOIs for new graduate programs are reviewed by the Associate Dean for Library Collections, who prepares a report that describes current library resources and suggests additional resources, if needed, that should be purchased to support the coursework and research of the faculty, staff, and students in the new program. Consistent with the strategic goal of obtaining the resources to support our vision, the University deems it critical that there be in place appropriate library resources for graduate programs.

—PHYSICAL AND FINANCIAL RESOURCES

As described above, the adequacy of financial and physical resources is important to our strategic goals and is evaluated extensively by a wide variety of individuals and groups at the time that new programs are proposed.

The overall adequacy of financial and physical resources is discussed in detail in our responses to Standards 7 and 8, respectively.

Ensuring the adequacy of continuing resources to graduate programs is the responsibility of the Provost, the academic deans, and the department chairs. Two key processes that provide the information needed to act on apparent inadequacies are the Annual Planning and Budget Process and the Periodic Review of Academic Programs. The Periodic Review self study guidelines require department chairs to “evaluate the extent to which the department’s faculty, staff, space, budget, and other resources enable you to offer high quality graduate programs.” External reviewers provide appraisals along the same lines. It is worthwhile to mention that until the recent revision of the Periodic Review process, graduate programs received scant mention in the guidelines. In the revised guidelines graduate programs are the subject of an entire major section.

The following examples illustrate the commitment to sufficiency of resources for graduate programs and congruence with our strategic plan:

- During the initial conceptual programming phase for what was to become our new research-oriented building, it was decided that the new building should focus on graduate programs farthest along in their development. Therefore, the new building will house the Department of Geosciences (with two PhD programs), the Department of Public Policy and Administration (with a PhD approved and awaiting implementation) as well as the Departments of Civil Engineering and Political Science. The next building will tentatively house faculty members with
a focus on molecular biology, biochemistry, and biophysics, the focus of a PhD program in Biomolecular Sciences, which is presently being planned.

• The deliberate action by the Deans’ Council in August 2008 to concentrate on strengthening existing programs while adding select new doctoral programs represents another example of sound resource planning.

• We have, over the years, invested millions of dollars in the remodeling of space to become research labs in engineering and the sciences (details in response to Standard 8). Those research labs are key to our ability to support graduate faculty members and their students in the programs of those disciplines.

• We have also invested in a number of new research technician positions, having used the commitment of those positions in several successful Major Research Instrumentation grant proposals to the National Science Foundation.

Commendations, Recommendations, and Action Plan

—COMMENDATIONS:

• Expanded graduate student recruitment: The Graduate College is involved in several initiatives that have increased the number, diversity, and quality of Boise State's graduate student population such as: Muskie Fellowship awards; individualized electronic brochures; participation in the National Name Exchange; development of accelerated master's programs; purchase of GRE and GMAT names; an enhanced presence on GradView, a web-based database of graduate programs; a series of underwriting promotions for the Graduate College on the local public radio station; and expanded visits to graduate recruiting fairs.

• Enhanced visibility of graduate student theses and dissertations: The Graduate College and the University Library recently established a mechanism to archive theses and dissertations in a University digital repository known as ScholarWorks. Graduate research at the University is expected to gain much greater global exposure.

• Increased support for graduate students: The Graduate College has created fellowship programs for students interested in nuclear materials and subsurface science, has leveraged the
creation of new graduate assistantships with contributions from external organizations, and has established graduate student travel funds for the MFA programs (creative writing, visual art) and the master’s programs in history.

—RECOMMENDATIONS:

• Update policies and procedures: Graduate education at the University has expanded and matured in recent years. The Graduate College must likewise evolve to meet the administrative needs of the overall graduate effort. Using input from the Graduate Council, faculty members and students, and internal assessments by the Graduate College staff, the Graduate College should continue with their major review and revision of graduate policies and procedures.

• Explanatory notes and listserv: Each year we experience administrative and mentoring questions and mistakes as new program coordinators and new faculty members attempt to familiarize themselves with Graduate College regulations. The Graduate Dean’s Office should explore avenues to educate new graduate program coordinators and to facilitate communication with all coordinators to reduce the number of such problems.

• Improve graduate student culture on campus: The Graduate Residential Scholars Program (GRSP) provides free on-campus housing for up to two years to 20 students with graduate assistantships and representing diverse backgrounds and disciplinary interests. The 20 students interact with each other in a residential setting and engage their non-GRSP colleagues, thereby enriching the graduate experience for all. The Graduate College should investigate ways to expand the GRSP and use it as a more effective recruiting tool.

—ACTION PLAN:

• The Graduate College is updating and clarifying many graduate policies, procedures, and associated forms with an eye toward improving their ease of use and to better ensure accountability. This major undertaking is ongoing, although considerable progress has been made in the last five years.

• The Graduate Dean is compiling a list of issues for which formal explanatory notes (i.e., a clarification series) will be written and posted on a website accessible to program coordinators and graduate faculty members. Similarly, the Graduate College is exploring the idea of developing a listserv for graduate program coordinators so that they may pose questions to
the group and take advantage of the experience accumulated by long-term coordinators.

- The Graduate College would like to expand the GRSP to include additional graduate students and this will be done as new funding becomes available.