

April 23, 2015

Dear Colleagues:

I write to invite your thoughts and comments on a proposed realignment of administrative support for postbaccalaureate education at the University. This realignment is in response to feedback from numerous faculty, staff, and students, and the details of the proposed model are informed by conversations and analyses over the last two years, as well as by the work of the Special Committee on Graduate Education, which was convened in Fall 2013 by the Faculty Consultative Committee (FCC) and me.

At present, there is confusion and wasted energy connected with the unclear distinction between programs that are aligned with the Graduate School and those that are, or want to be, considered separate. I am proposing a model that more clearly aligns postbaccalaureate academic programs with one of two communities: The first includes traditional, graduate education, where a major portion of the degree program involves research or creative activity. The second includes professional degree programs—programs whose graduates most often seek applied professional or practice-based employment, where there is often a requirement of licensure to practice, and where outside accreditation bodies play important roles in determining program requirements. I know that the division isn't entirely crisp—that many professional programs involve some research activity and that many research-based degree programs are paying attention to preparing their students for occupations outside of academia or research settings. Still, there is a general distinction that begins with the difference between the Ph.D. and what used to be called “first professional degrees”—M.D., D.D.S., J.D., D.V.M., Pharm. D., etc.—and I think we can work coherently from that distinction to better organize our support for all programs.

I invite you to consider the details of this proposed model outlined on the pages that follow. Two additional points: 1) The schools, colleges, and departments will be the best judges of whether a degree program should be assigned to the graduate or the professional side of this model, and final determinations would be made on the basis of appropriate consultation. 2) This realignment is not expected to increase administrative costs connected with postbaccalaureate education.

I've already discussed this model with many groups on campus, including the collegiate deans and various associate deans, the FCC and other senate committees, the Council of Graduate Students, the Graduate and Professional Student Assembly, and others. The aim is to 1) recognize these two broadly distinct educational missions, 2) refocus the Graduate School to serve the research-based, graduate education mission, and 3) provide flexibility, clearer communication, and support for the professional education community.

Thank you in advance for taking the time to review the proposed model and for sending me your candid feedback at provost@umn.edu.

Sincerely,



Karen Hanson
Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost