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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Formed in fall 2008, the Task Force on Graduate Education was charged with developing recommendations to strengthen the graduate enterprise at Minnesota State University, Mankato—both by enhancing the quality of graduate education and by increasing graduate enrollment.

By the spring of 2009, it was apparent that national economic conditions, state budget projections, and the University’s resultant financial position were about to dramatically alter the conditions under which the Task Force had begun its work. As the Task Force brings its work to a close in fall 2009, the University faces almost certain retrenchment and it is difficult to envision a future that permits program expansion and the investment of resources. Nonetheless, the Task Force has taken its charge seriously—perhaps even more so given the gravity of the current budget climate and the clear need to be strategic about both budget reductions and resource reallocation.

As a result, the following recommendations are presented after careful consideration of the delicate balance between preservation (What is realistic, given our present budget challenges?) and visioning (What is possible that will strengthen graduate education?). The recommendations have emerged from a 15-month process of data collection, analysis, dialogue, debate, and consensus building that included a core group of graduate faculty and administrators, including faculty from every College (see list on page 7 of this document).

Although clearly informed by the Task Force members’ own experiences with graduate teaching, advising, and program coordination, the recommendations presented below were also informed by conversations with graduate deans at aspirant peer institutions (see Appendix A); comparisons of relevant institutional data from comparable and aspirant peers (see Appendix B); consideration of state and regional demographic trends and projections for graduate enrollment (see Appendix C); and analyses of data collected from our own graduate faculty, students and alumni (see Appendix D). Taken together, the data in the appendices to these recommendations suggest that Minnesota State Mankato confronts an unquestionably challenging future from a position of strength. Data from student and alumni surveys, for example, indicate a high degree of satisfaction with the quality of instruction, relevance of coursework, accessibility of faculty, and overall graduate experience at Minnesota State Mankato. Moreover, state and national demographic projections—as well as our own, institutional enrollment trends—suggest that graduate enrollment will play an increasingly important role in the institution’s viability and sustainability.

At the same time, it is important to acknowledge that Minnesota State Mankato is an institution in transition. The recent addition of doctoral programs, as well as recent and projected increases in graduate enrollment, will necessarily change our institutional identity. Perhaps more important, given President Davenport’s recently announced strategic priorities, both graduate education and research will be critical to becoming the kind of institution we aspire to be. The recommendations below are therefore presented not only as a vision for the future of graduate education at Minnesota State Mankato, but also as a vision for the University itself. They reflect a conviction that institutional transformation will require a sustained investment in graduate education and research, strategic development and
ongoing support of niche graduate and research programs, and creative approaches to eliminating systemic barriers to innovation and quality in graduate education and research.

**Key Recommendations:**

1. **Develop an optimal mix of graduate programs that acknowledges multiple models of viability and recognizes the value of both high-demand, high-enrollment programs and high-demand, limited-enrollment programs.**

   Such a mix would seek to optimize the combination of programs that would
   - Enhance the university’s national reputation for high-quality graduate education
   - Bring in substantial external support for research
   - Attract large numbers of full-pay students and generate substantial credit hours
   - Provide important service to the state and regional communities, including meeting critical employment demands

2. **Encourage and support the development of “niche” programs, recognizing that what makes a given program distinctive is dependent on a variety of discipline- and market-specific factors and might include any of the following:**
   - Applied research
   - Online delivery (or other accessible format(s))
   - Unique focus or innovative curricular design
   - Quality and reputation
   - Responsiveness to changing employment needs or market demands

3. **Identify and nurture a select number of research centers that are focused on interdisciplinary research and, when appropriate, offer related graduate degree or certificate programs.**

   The identification and cultivation of a select number of research centers should be driven by
   - Opportunities to secure external funding for research
   - The potential to enhance the university’s reputation and, therefore, attract high quality students and faculty
   - Opportunities to create and capitalize on niches in both graduate education and research
   - The centers’ capacity for providing high quality teaching and research experiences for students
   - The potential to contribute to economic development, improve social, cultural, or economic conditions, or otherwise provide important service to the state and regional community
4. **Identify and eliminate barriers to high quality graduate education and research, including barriers to interdisciplinary research.**

This recommendation is key to the success of the strategies listed above and acknowledges the critical role of interdisciplinary collaboration in creating niche programs as well as sustainable research centers. This is true both because cutting-edge research increasingly occurs across or between disciplines and because, at smaller institutions such as ours, it is difficult to establish a critical mass of researchers in any one discipline or department. Nonetheless, administrative practices and organizational structures conspire to discourage collaboration across department or College boundaries.

Additional barriers to increasing graduate enrollment, the quality of our graduate programs, and research productivity include heavy teaching loads, workload models that do not account for thesis or dissertation advisement, and credit generation standards that evaluate graduate programs using undergraduate models.

In order to realize the potential of graduate education at Minnesota State Mankato and accomplish the recommendations identified in this report, it is imperative that creative and flexible approaches to defining, compensating, and evaluating faculty productivity be developed and implemented. These approaches will not only appropriately value graduate education and its contributions to the campus and community, but they will also enable the University to develop programs that will be key to its short-term viability and long-term transformation.
The Task Force on Graduate Education was formed in fall 2008 on the recommendation of the Graduate Sub Meet and Confer (GSMC), which recognized the importance of preparing for several opportunities and challenges facing graduate education at Minnesota State Mankato. Chief among the opportunities was the imminent launch of a new strategic planning cycle and the identification of new strategic priorities to guide the University’s planning during the next five to seven years. In creating the Task Force, the GSMC hoped to initiate a pre-planning process that would provide a vision for the graduate enterprise and situate graduate education to feature prominently in the University’s new strategic plan.

At the same time, the GSMC noted a number of challenges that, if not addressed, threatened the future of graduate education. Listed in the initial charge to the Task Force, which is on page 6 of this report, these challenges included the potential loss of graduate market share to St. Cloud State University and private institutions in the state (including for-profit institutions), the need for strategic enrollment management and planning in order to ensure that graduate enrollment did not shrink in size and prominence relative to undergraduate enrollment, and the need for increased support of graduate education and research in light of the University’s new status as a doctoral institution.

At its initial meeting on September 30, 2008, the Task Force agreed upon a three-phase process that would guide its work throughout the next 15 months. Phase 1 consisted of collecting data about the current status of graduate education at Minnesota State Mankato, including both institutional data and data from key stakeholders. This phase was intended to identify areas in need of improvement, as well as provide a baseline from which to gauge progress. The central task of Phase 2 was identifying benchmark institutions, against which Minnesota State Mankato might measure both its current and future performance. Key to this phase of the process was not only selecting appropriate institutions to serve as benchmarks, but also identifying appropriate variables on which to make comparisons. Finally, Phase 3 consisted of analyzing and synthesizing the data collected in the first two phases in order to formulate recommendations for enhancing graduate education at Minnesota State Mankato.

In order to facilitate the task of identifying essential data to be collected during Phase 1, the Task Force divided into four subcommittees, each with a distinct focus: (a) program resources; (b) program outcomes; (c) program quality and accountability; and (d) external threats and opportunities. The members of each subcommittee are listed on page 7 of this report. Ultimately, the data collection needs identified by the subcommittees were aggregated and served as the basis for surveys of graduate alumni, current graduate students, and graduate faculty. The work of the subcommittees also guided the collection of data from peer institutions, our own Institutional Research Office, and sources of key demographic and employment data.

The surveys of alumni, students and faculty were distributed in spring 2009 and the data were compiled and analyzed in summer 2009. Key findings are summarized in Appendix D of this report. Important enrollment and demographic data are summarized in Appendix C.
Having developed the primary mechanisms for assessing the current status of graduate education at Minnesota State Mankato, the Task Force turned its attention to identifying benchmark institutions against which to gauge current and future performance. During this phase of the process, a new subcommittee was formed and charged with revisiting a list of 33 comparable public universities compiled in 1999 by then-Graduate Dean Tony Filipovitch. Through a process described in Appendix A of this report, the subcommittee identified 8 of the original 33 institutions that, while still similar to Minnesota State University in important ways, have undergone an apparent transformation in quality and reputation during the past 10 years. While these institutions were considered comparable peers 10 years ago, today they would be considered “aspirant” peers.

Comparing Minnesota State Mankato to these aspirant institutions on key quantitative measures was both interesting and instructive—and, at times, revealed counter-intuitive results. Appendix B contains a summary of these comparisons.

In addition to benchmarking Minnesota State Mankato against its aspirant peers on key quantitative variables, the Task Force was interested in collecting qualitative data about the process by which these institutions had initiated and sustained transformative change. Thus, the Task Force charged Anne Blackhurst, Dean of Graduate Studies and Research, with interviewing the Graduate Deans (or appropriate counterparts) at each of the benchmark institutions (with the exception of one, whose dean declined to be interviewed). The results of these interviews, which are summarized in Appendix A of this report, provided some of the most valuable and instructive information collected by the Task Force.

Finally, in fall 2009, the Task Force began to synthesize the data described above and presented in the appendices to this report in order to formulate recommendations. The central questions guiding this phase of the process were (a) “What is our vision for graduate education?” and (b) “How can we move from where we are now to where we desire to be?” A guiding principle behind these discussions was that the recommendations should focus on a few, key “big ideas” rather than a detailed list of objectives.

The Task Force met regularly throughout the fall semester to identify, refine, and reach consensus about the four recommendations outlined in the Executive Summary of this report. As its final act, the Task Force developed a plan by which the recommendations and this report would be disseminated to the campus community—including the newly formed University-wide strategic planning task forces—in January 2010.
Graduate education at Minnesota State University, Mankato has come a long way since 1953, when the Minnesota State Legislature authorized the institution to offer a post-baccalaureate program in teacher education. By the turn of the century, as one of the primary providers of graduate education in the state, Minnesota State Mankato offered more than 50 graduate degree and certificate programs—including the first terminal degree programs in the MnSCU system.

In 2005, state legislation once again broadened the University’s mission by authorizing MnSCU universities to offer doctoral degrees. In fall 2007, Minnesota State Mankato received final approval from the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) to offer the Ed.D. in counselor education and supervision and the Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) as part of a consortium of MnSCU universities. This fall, the University will add a doctoral program in school psychology.

Over the past 55 years, enhancing graduate education has frequently been articulated as a campus priority—most recently in 2002, when the University formally set forth seven strategic priorities to guide institutional planning and goal setting. One of these priorities calls for strengthening the University’s role as a major provider of graduate education and expanding graduate programs as necessary to meet the needs of the surrounding region.

At the same time, the institution’s identity is rooted in its history as a teacher’s college and its long-standing mission as an undergraduate institution. Despite its 55-year history of offering graduate programs, the university’s support for graduate education has not evolved at the same rate as its programs and vision. In fact, there is considerable evidence that the university’s structures and systems are not commensurate with its status as a major provider of graduate education in the region. At the very least, the University faces a number of challenges as it seeks to achieve its strategic goals related to graduate education:

- Recent enrollment data indicate that Minnesota State Mankato may be relinquishing its position as the second largest provider of graduate education in the state.
- Given the President’s long-term goal of increasing total enrollment to between 17,000 and 20,000 students, there is a serious risk that—without a concerted effort to adequately support graduate education—the graduate enterprise will shrink both in size and prominence relative to undergraduate education.
- The advent of doctoral programs has intensified campus concern about the adequacy of support for master’s programs and raised questions about the University’s research infrastructure and the criteria for teaching doctoral courses.
- Graduate Assistant stipends are not competitive with those at comparable institutions, and the number of University Graduate Assistantships has not been increased for many years.

Given the challenges identified above, the Task Force on Graduate Education is charged with stepping back from the day-to-day issues of graduate education and taking a “big picture” look at the direction graduate education should take in the foreseeable future. The
Task Force will examine the current status of graduate education at Minnesota State Mankato, identify strategic priorities for graduate education, and identify benchmarks against which to measure goal attainment. The Task Force will not be responsible for individual program evaluation. Rather, the group is charged to look broadly at the entire graduate education enterprise. This will require seeking input from all of the major stakeholders involved in graduate education, including the Graduate Committee, deans, department chairs, graduate program coordinators, graduate faculty, on- and off-campus graduate students, and graduate alumni. It will also require identifying “better practices” at peer institutions and establishing benchmarks against which to gauge our progress. Finally, it will entail making recommendations to improve the overall quality of graduate education at Minnesota State Mankato. It is anticipated that this process will require at least a full academic year, with the expectation that recommendations will be presented to the campus community in 2009.

Members of the 2008-2010 Task Force on Graduate Education:

**Program Resources Subcommittee**
- Steve Bohnenblust, Center for Excellence in Scholarship and Research
- Diane Coursol, Counseling and Student Personnel
- John Knox, College of Science, Engineering, and Technology
- Steve Stoynoff, English
- Robin Wingo, Social Work

**Program Outcomes Subcommittee**
- Rick Auger, Counseling and Student Personnel
- Kevin Elliott, Marketing and International Business
- Rick Robbins, English
- Gary Rushing, Human Performance

**Program Quality and Accountability Subcommittee**
- Daria Paul Dona, K-12 and Secondary Programs
- Amy Hedman, Health Science
- Gregg Marg, Biological Sciences

**External Opportunities and Threats Subcommittee**
- Tony Filipovitch, Urban and Regional Studies
- Amy Roisum Foley, Music
- Patrick Tebbe, Mechanical Engineering

**Graduate College Representatives**
- Anne Blackhurst, College of Graduate Studies and Research
- Chris Mickle, Graduate Studies
- Amin Abdul Mohomed, Student (MBA)
- Kevin Clement, Student (Biological Sciences)
APPENDIX A

SUMMARY OF CONVERSATIONS WITH GRADUATE DEANS AT SEVEN ASPIRANT PEER INSTITUTIONS
Background and Introduction

In 1999, Tony Filipovitch, then-Dean of Graduate Studies and Research at Minnesota State University, Mankato, initiated a study of 33 roughly comparable public universities, collecting data on key variables related to graduate education—including enrollment, admissions standards, tuition rates, and financial support for graduate students. Ten years later, this list served as a useful starting point for the current Task Force on Graduate Education (TFGE), which had been wrestling with how to identify institutions against which Minnesota State Mankato might benchmark its support for graduate education, as well as other key indicators of quality.

Working from the original list of 33 institutions, a subcommittee of the TFGE determined that roughly half of the institutions on the list differed from Minnesota State Mankato in ways that made true comparisons difficult. The most common differences were in size and mission, which ultimately resulted in research institutions, such as the University of North Dakota, and much larger or much smaller universities, such as Central Michigan University and the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, being eliminated from the list.

Further analysis of the list revealed that, of the remaining 17 institutions, about half (including Minnesota State Mankato) are in roughly the same position today as they were 10 years ago, while the other half have experienced what appears to be significant transformation: substantial growth in graduate enrollment, considerable increases in external funding, and/or externally validated increases in reputation and quality. The eight institutions that have experienced this kind of transformation might now be considered “aspirant peers” or benchmark institutions, while the remaining eight might still be considered comparable peers. The benchmark institutions are listed below.

Benchmark Institutions:

- Ball State University
- California State University-San Bernardino
- Eastern Kentucky University
- Missouri State University
- University of Nebraska/Omaha
- University of Northern Colorado
- University of Northern Iowa
- Western Kentucky University
It is important to acknowledge that the above list is neither scientifically constructed nor exhaustive. Given sufficient time and resources, the TFGE might identify any number of institutions that have experienced notable growth or increases in reputation and perceived quality over the past decade. By starting with a list developed 10 years ago, the TFGE was able to quickly identify a manageable number of institutions, compare their current positions relative to their positions 10 years ago, and distinguish between those institutions that have succeeded at differentiating themselves and those that have not. At some point, as we refine our strategic goals for graduate education and research at Minnesota State Mankato, we may want to identify additional (or other) aspirant peers.

It also is important to acknowledge that, at the level of individual graduate programs, academic reputation and quality can vary widely within a given institution. Thus, few graduate programs on our campus would identify their counterparts at the above institutions as aspirant peer programs. However, the TFGE was concerned with institutional reputation and performance—and how they are related to the success of the graduate enterprise more generally—rather than the quality of individual programs. The TFGE assumes that each graduate program on our campus has its own list of benchmark programs and quality indicators, against which it measures its performance and improvement.

Despite these caveats, the above list is instructive because it includes institutions that are similar to Minnesota State Mankato in fundamental ways. All are mid-size, public, predominantly undergraduate universities. Several have identities strongly influenced by their histories as Teachers Colleges. Most also identify primarily as master’s granting institutions, though all offer doctoral degrees. Only one offers the Ph.D., while the others offer exclusively applied doctorates. Most have offered doctoral degrees for fewer than 10 years. Many are situated 60-90 minutes from their states’ largest metropolitan areas and/or “flagship” or major research institutions. These and other key similarities are summarized in Table 1 on page 20 of this document.

In short, the Benchmark Institutions are similar enough to Minnesota State Mankato that we can reasonably aspire to attain their levels of quality and success. Equally important, given our relatively comparable positions 10 years ago, it may be possible to identify the key decisions, events, investments, and strategies that, despite our apparent similarities, have resulted in divergent outcomes.

In addition to benchmarking Minnesota State Mankato against its aspirant peers on key quantitative variables, the Task Force was interested in collecting qualitative data about the process by which these institutions had initiated and sustained transformative change. Thus, the Task Force charged Anne Blackhurst, Dean of Graduate Studies and Research, with interviewing the Graduate Deans (or appropriate counterparts) at each of the Benchmark Institutions. All but one of the Deans readily agreed to be interviewed after receiving the following introductory questions:

- What were the primary contributors to your institution’s overall success during the past 10 years? (Please consider external as well as internal variables, and planned as well as serendipitous events.)
- How have these factors contributed to growth in graduate enrollment and external research funding?
Aside from growth in graduate enrollment and research productivity, are there other important indications of your success over the past 10 years?

What else is important for us to understand about your institution’s success story over the past 10 years?

Telephone interviews were conducted during April 2009. The notes from nearly 12 hours of interviews are summarized below, followed by an Executive Summary of the findings.

Enhancing Graduate Education

Despite variability in the institutions’ missions, identities, and characteristics, there was considerable consistency in the strategies identified by their Graduate Deans as key to enhancing graduate education. These included (a) strong leadership from the President and Provost; (b) a small number of clearly articulated strategic priorities, with resource allocation tied to strategic goals; (c) the addition of doctoral programs; (d) a clear “niche” in the state system of graduate education; (e) an emphasis on “signature” graduate programs; (f) graduate offerings that are responsive to regional employment needs; (f) an aggressive and strategic effort to increase online and off-campus offerings; (g) a commitment to using every hiring opportunity to increase the scholarly productivity of the faculty; and (h) adequate financial support for graduate students.

Leadership, Vision, and Strategic Priorities:

As noted above, the 10-year period between 1999 and 2009 was a fairly arbitrary demarcation. Nonetheless, several Deans agreed that the past decade was, in fact, a period of transformation for their universities. These Deans noted that the 10-year mark roughly coincided with the hiring of a new President (who, in several cases was still at the institution after 8-12 years) and, subsequently, the development of a new institutional vision. These visions were clearly articulated (e.g., “To be a leading American university with international reach” and “To be a student-centered, metropolitan university of distinction”) and, while they were not always explicitly related to graduate education, they nonetheless transformed the institutions in ways that ultimately benefited graduate education by increasing institutional quality and reputation.

Having a strategic plan with a fairly small number (3-4) of clearly articulated strategic priorities was also identified as key to institutional transformation. In several cases, enhancing graduate education was explicitly articulated as a strategic goal; in others, graduate enrollment benefited from the increase in quality and reputation that resulted from achieving other goals (academic excellence, for example) or successfully branding the institution as a quality undergraduate institution. One Dean also stressed the importance of developing a strategic plan for each graduate program based on current enrollment, capacity, and projected demand.

Most Deans emphasized the importance of having a President who kept the strategic priorities in the forefront of conversations about mission, resource allocation, planning, and assessment. At the institutions that did not undergo strategic planning efforts or where graduate education was not a strategic priority, the Deans emphasized that they nonetheless felt the strong support of both the President and the Provost. One Dean in particular
emphasized that the President must be a “champion” of graduate education. At that institution, the number of graduate programs had increased from 20 to 48 during the President’s 10-year tenure. Another Dean stressed that his President had a clear interest in growing graduate education because of its connection to research and quality. As a result, graduate education is one of four institutional priorities at the institution and growing graduate enrollment is an explicitly stated goal.

In addition to strong support from the President and Provost, one Dean emphasized the importance of support from other top-level administrators—citing the recent restructuring of the President’s Cabinet to add a Vice President for Marketing. The same institution has just hired its first-ever graduate recruiter to focus on recruiting for the “top 10” graduate programs at the University.

**Becoming a Doctoral Institution:**

At several of the institutions, the strategic planning and visioning processes that had ultimately led to important institutional transformation had roughly coincided with the addition of the institutions’ first doctoral programs. Deans at these institutions stressed that the addition of doctoral programs gave graduate education more visibility and focus—though one Dean also emphasized the challenges of redefining institutional identity and making the “cultural shift” to becoming a doctoral institution. It is noteworthy that one of the most important benefits of doctoral programs, according to several Deans, was that they strengthened the institutions’ master’s programs by elevating their reputations and serving as an impetus for allocating resources to both graduate education and research. This was most effectively accomplished at the institutions that thought strategically about how to make the “cultural shift” described above.

**Developing a Niche and Identifying Signature Programs:**

Virtually all of the Deans emphasized the importance of having excellent programs and focusing on those programs that are key to the institution’s reputation. The designations given to such programs were varied— including “Programs of Distinction,” “Signature Programs,” “Niche Programs,” “Premiere Programs” and “Marquis Programs”—but all communicated that some programs were targeted for increased visibility and resources due to their high quality and centrality to the institutional mission. In some cases, these programs were identified primarily because of their ability to meet an important economic need in service to the institution’s state or region.

One Dean outlined the process used on her campus for identifying signature programs. The process began with a thorough assessment of every program on campus. Based on that assessment, programs were asked to submit rationale and supporting evidence for their placement in one of four tiers. Tier 1 included those programs designated as signature programs, which were targeted for increased resources and visibility. Tier 2 consisted of maintenance programs, which were strong programs with healthy enrollments and were targeted for sustained support. Programs in Tier 3 were candidates for reorganization (typically by combining with another small program in an innovative way) due to low current and projected enrollment. Finally, programs in Tier 4 were candidates for elimination due to poor quality and/or low enrollment. A campus-wide task force reviewed the reports and
made recommendations to the Provost in spring 2009. From this process, 5-6 graduate programs will be identified as signature programs and targeted for growth and visibility while others may be eliminated. Ultimately, the institution hopes to become “known” for its signature programs.

At several of the institutions, efforts to market signature programs had been so successful that applications to the programs far exceeded capacity. The Deans at these institutions—as well as others—emphasized the difficulty of adding or moving faculty lines to respond to demand at the graduate level. However, they also emphasized that, even when institutions cannot increase graduate enrollment because of staffing constraints, increasing the number of applications can be a useful strategy for increasing perceptions of quality by becoming increasingly selective. Several Deans pointed out that increasing selectivity and developing a reputation for being “hard to get in” had resulted in even more graduate applications.

Along with identifying signature programs, the Deans also emphasized the importance of meeting local employment needs. This was often cited in conjunction with the importance of establishing an institutional “niche” that allowed the institution to both serve regional needs and be distinctive. Often, this niche also fulfilled a historical or state-mandated purpose. One Dean described this as being strategic while “remaining true to the institution’s DNA.” In several cases, institutional identity was still closely tied to the institution’s history as a Teachers College. At these institutions, graduate enrollment was greatly affected by state-level requirements for K-12 and Community College Teachers and the Deans mentioned the importance of serving this market.

Several Deans also stressed that establishing their niche in the state was closely tied to acknowledging that they were not “the ‘U’” (i.e., the major research institution in the state). Rather than trying to establish themselves as research institutions and compete with their states’ flagship universities, these institutions attempted to differentiate themselves—typically by emphasizing applied research and career-focused graduate programs.

**Increasing Online and Off-campus Offerings:**

Online courses were also mentioned repeatedly as being key to increasing or maintaining graduate enrollment. Several Deans indicated that increasing online enrollment was the single biggest contributor to increases in total graduate enrollment. Only one Dean noted that her institution had not emphasized online education at the graduate level (and only one program, the MPA, has had success with online offerings at that institution). More than one Dean commented that on-campus enrollments were down but online enrollments were up significantly (“exponentially,” according to one Dean, who indicated that two doctoral programs—an Ed.D. and the DNP—were entirely online, as were 4-5 master’s programs, mostly in education). On one campus, 10-15 graduate programs, mostly in education, are entirely online.

One Dean stated her belief that online graduate programs would be the institution’s “future” and noted that the Provost had promised a new faculty line to departments that took their programs online, rather than expecting online programs to be an “add-on” to the workload of existing faculty. This same Dean commented that other, alternative models of course scheduling would also be critical, noting that enrollment in the university’s rehabilitation
counseling program skyrocketed when the department instituted a weekend program. Another Dean emphasized the importance of evening classes and other means of “increasing access” to graduate education. Several mentioned the development of off-campus centers near the borders of nearby metropolitan areas. On these campuses, Extended Education units were “aggressively” marketing both online and off-campus classes.

Responding to Regional Economic and Employment Needs:

Most Deans emphasized that, to the extent they are developing new graduate programs, their institutions are attempting to respond to local (and, in some cases, national) employment needs. At one institution, this strategy led to an explicit commitment to serve the local health care industry by producing employees. As a result, the institution introduced graduate programs in physical therapy and physician assistance—despite the fact that no undergraduate programs existed in those areas.

All the Deans stressed the importance of being strategic about the array of programs offered, especially new programs. One Dean stated that new programs are not encouraged unless they are creative and/or interdisciplinary. As an example, she pointed to the development of five new Professional Science Master’s (PSM) programs: Applied Physics, Industrial Mathematics (Quality Control), Applied Biochemistry, Biotechnology, and Ecosystem Management. Another Dean described an online master’s program in Homeland Security, which has had extremely strong enrollment since September 11, 2001. Success with this “niche” program has prompted the Dean to conduct a campus audit to determine which graduate programs are best suited for online delivery. The university plans to target a few appropriate programs rather than simply offering more courses online. Another institution (located in the south) has found a niche offering an online master’s program in speech pathology to New York City schoolteachers.

Those Deans whose institutions have capitalized on their ability to respond to local or regional employment demands stated that, whenever possible, they seek funding from their state legislatures in support of graduate programs that clearly address an economic development need. These Deans stressed the importance of selling legislators on the value of employment-focused programs to the state and regional economies.

Another Dean emphasized the importance of “connecting” undergraduate and graduate programs in ways that benefit students, programs, and the regional economy. Because most students are career focused, and because most undergraduate majors do not prepare students for a specific occupation, undergraduates can be “sold” on a particular career, with a graduate degree as the end point. Biology majors, for example, can be recruited by the possibility of entering the Physician Assistant program after graduation. This helps “sell” the biology major to undergraduates and helps sell the Physician Assistant program to undergraduate faculty and departments who seek more undergraduate majors.

Finally, certificate programs were mentioned repeatedly as one effective way to accomplish the goal of meeting regional employment needs. Such programs also serve as a “gateway” to master’s programs.
Increasing Hiring Aspirations:

The importance of using every hiring opportunity to improve the quality of the faculty was mentioned repeatedly as being key to enhancing both graduate education and research productivity. One Dean anticipates that 120-150 tenured faculty will be replaced at his institution due to retirements during the next several years. Generally, the Deans characterized retirement-age faculty members as less involved in both graduate education and research than newer faculty. Hiring new faculty who are productive researchers (and more willing to teach online) is key, according to the Deans—though several acknowledged it is difficult to reallocate faculty lines based on graduate program goals, given that most hiring decisions are undergraduate driven rather than graduate driven. Virtually all of the Deans stressed the importance of telling candidates during their on-campus interviews that expectations for faculty are changing and that the university aspires to be a different kind of institution. One Dean stated that he meets with all finalists for tenure-track faculty positions to discuss the institution’s aspirations for graduate education and research.

Enhancing Financial Support for Graduate Students:

The importance of financial support for graduate students was mentioned frequently—though, interestingly, few of the institutions had GA stipends significantly higher than Minnesota State Mankato’s. Stipends at the Benchmark Institutions range from $8,000 to $14,000 for university-funded assistantships, whereas those assistantships funded with grant dollars range from $18,000 to $30,000. While most Deans mentioned channeling resources toward high-performing, high profile programs (which were typically at capacity), one Dean mentioned the establishment of a “Graduate Dean’s Scholarship” of $750.00 per semester to support students in low enrollment programs with capacity. This same Dean commented on the need for graduate education to become more like undergraduate education in terms of thinking about how much to “discount” tuition through institutional aid in order to achieve the desired number and mix of students.

Increasing External Funding

As with strategies for enhancing graduate education, the strategies for increasing external funding were remarkably consistent across institutions: (a) explicitly identifying external funding as a strategic priority; (b) making external funding aspirations public; (c) strong leadership from the President and Provost; (d) using every hiring opportunity to increase the number of faculty who are productive researchers; (e) providing start-up packages for new faculty; (f) explicitly rewarding external research support in the tenure and promotion process; (g) developing incentive programs to encourage proposal development, submission, and resubmission; (h) cultivating “signature” or “niche” research centers, which are often tied to signature graduate programs; (i) increasing the research “infrastructure,” including faculty, facilities, resources, and staff; and (j) making the “cultural and identity shifts” commensurate with becoming a doctoral institution.
Identifying and Articulating External Funding as a Strategic Priority:

As with graduate education, most Deans began the conversation about external funding by emphasizing the importance of being strategic. At one institution, for example, the strategic plan explicitly calls for achieving $45 million annually by the year 2012. Last year, the institution brought in $20 million; this year, they are on pace for $27 million. Another Dean noted that external funding is identified as a key indicator of success in the university’s strategic plan.

Increasing Hiring Aspirations and Providing Start-Up Packages:

As noted above, virtually every Dean emphasized the importance of using hiring decisions to enhance the research productivity of the faculty. As one Dean stated, “Who you hire is a reflection of who you want to be.” Several Deans attributed increases in external funding to the turnover of faculty hired in the 1960s and the opportunity to replace them with highly productive researchers. Several Deans also stated that their institutions hire faculty with the explicit expectation they will bring in external funds and give them the start-up packages to make this possible. Most have programs in place to support new faculty as they develop their research agendas. Examples include the following:

- Fellowships of $20,000/year to support new faculty as they initiate their research agendas and work to position themselves to obtain external funding. In addition to the financial support, fellows are provided with professional development and training related to identifying potential funding sources, proposal development, and other grant-seeking skills.
- Internal “seed” grants intentionally designed to support projects with a high likelihood of receiving external funding.
- Start-up packages of $20,000-$30,000 for new faculty members
- Professional development programs in which pre-tenure faculty members apply to participate in a semester-long series of workshops about establishing a research agenda and seeking external support for that agenda. In the semester following the workshops, participants receive a research reassignment in order to focus on proposal writing.
- Summer fellowships offered through the Graduate College, in which faculty conduct research and write grant proposals.

Explicitly Rewarding External Research Support:

Several Deans also stressed that, in addition to hiring faculty members who have the desire and potential to bring in external funding, the institution must clearly state its expectations about seeking external funding and provide tangible rewards for meeting those expectations. In other words, seeking external research support must be explicitly valued by College Deans and tied to promotion and tenure decisions. Efforts to increase external funding will fail, according to these Deans, as long as external research support is in the “nice but not necessary” category.
Developing Incentive Programs:

In addition to programs for new faculty, several Deans described incentive programs designed to provide ongoing encouragement to seek external funding. Examples included the following:

- The Submit Program: Based on the premise that increasing the number of funded proposals requires increasing the number of submissions, this program is funded by Facilities and Administration costs. Every faculty member who submits a proposal receives a monetary award to use for research-related expenditures. The amount of the award scales (from $100 to $1,000) with the size of the grant.
- The Resubmit Program: This program is designed to turn large (> $100,000), favorably reviewed but rejected grant proposals into successful resubmissions by giving the PI “whatever it will take” (e.g., reassigned time, student research assistants) to revise and resubmit the proposal.
- The Cardinal Fellows Program: Designed to support faculty who write large (> $200,000) grant proposals, this program awards up to 15 fellowships annually, each of which provides one course reassignment during the proposal writing stage. Upon submission, the PI receives a monetary award for research-related expenses.

Heavy teaching loads were mentioned frequently as potential disincentives to conduct research and seek external funding. However, teaching loads varied considerably from institution to institution and more than one Dean remarked that there did not seem to be an obvious connection between research release and research productivity at his/her institution. At one institution, faculty workloads include as few as 6 units of teaching (2 courses) per semester, while faculty at several other universities have 4-4 course loads. At most of the institutions, no credit in load is given for graduate teaching or advising.

Developing and Sustaining Signature Research Centers:

Several Deans mentioned the importance of Research Centers to increasing external funding and attracting highly productive faculty. Often, post docs who devote 100% of their time to research are hired to staff the Centers. In several cases, Research Centers are afforded a higher return of Facilities and Administration costs (e.g., 90% instead of the standard 30%) to ensure their sustainability. In some cases, these Centers are tied to the university’s graduate “programs of distinction.” For example, the online Homeland Security program mentioned above is offered through the Justice and Safety Center, which received $20 million in federal funding last year and, in addition to focusing on homeland security, offers first responder training. In several instances, one or two centers are responsible for the vast majority of external dollars—often in state contracts ($25-$30 million at one university Center alone) or earmarks.

Increasing the Research Infrastructure:

As one Dean stated, “You can’t out-fund your infrastructure.” Other Deans agreed: Faculty, programs, equipment, and reputation must all be improved before external funding will increase. The number and quality of staff in the sponsored programs office were frequently mentioned as important parts of the infrastructure. One Dean explicitly
attributed his institution’s success, in part, to the increase in RASP staff during his four years as Dean. During his tenure, staffing has increased from 2 pre-award staff and 1.5 post-award staff to 4 pre-award and 5 post-award staff (with efforts underway to hire 2 more).

Interestingly, various (and opposing) administrative models were touted as conducive to enhancing research productivity and funding. One institution, for example, has recently combined graduate education and research under a newly created Associate Provost position, while another has separated graduate education and research so that research has more prominence and focused attention.

*Thinking and Acting Like a Doctoral Institution:*

Finally, becoming a doctoral institution was frequently mentioned as key to enhancing institutional capacity for externally funded research. This is not surprising, given the connection between doctoral education and many of the variables cited above. In particular, the advent of doctoral programs was associated with increased institutional support for graduate education and research, reduced teaching loads, increased expectations for faculty research, an increase in the quality of faculty attracted to the institution, an increase in institutional reputation, and an increase in the number of “advanced learners and scholars” on campus.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

KEY FINDINGS FROM CONVERSATIONS WITH GRADUATE DEANS AT
SEVEN ASPIRANT PEER INSTITUTIONS

Keys to Enhancing Graduate Education and Increasing Graduate Enrollment:

- A small number of clearly articulated strategic priorities
- Strong leadership from the President and Provost
- Resource allocation tied to strategic goals
- Offering doctoral programs
- Identifying and cultivating a “niche” in the state system of graduate education
- Identifying and emphasizing “signature” graduate programs
- Developing graduate offerings in response to regional employment needs
- Strategically increasing online and off-campus offerings
- Using every hiring opportunity to increase the number of faculty who are productive researchers

Keys to Increasing External Funding:

- Explicitly identifying external funding as a strategic priority
- Making external funding aspirations public
- Strong leadership from the President and Provost
- Using every hiring opportunity to increase the number of faculty who are productive researchers
- Providing start-up packages for new faculty
- Explicitly rewarding external research support in the tenure and promotion process
- Developing incentive programs to encourage proposal development, submission, and resubmission
- Cultivating “signature” or “niche” research centers, which are often tied to signature graduate programs
- Increasing the research “infrastructure,” including faculty, facilities, resources, and staff
- Adding doctoral programs and making the “cultural and identity shift” necessary to become a doctoral institution
### Table 1: Key Institutional Characteristics of Aspirant Peer Institutions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Graduate Enrollment (% of Total)</th>
<th>Doctoral Programs</th>
<th>Annual External Funding</th>
<th>Indicators of Success, Quality, and/or Reputation</th>
<th>Key Similarities to Minnesota State Mankato</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ball State University</td>
<td>3411 (17%)</td>
<td>15 doctoral programs Some applied programs (Ed.D, AuD, DNP) and some Ph.D. programs</td>
<td>$27 million</td>
<td>Named one of the best universities in the Midwest by the Princeton Review Recognized by U.S. News &amp; World Report for innovative programming (ranked the 14th best “School to Watch”) Graduate enrollment grew 67% from 2,040 in 1999 (11% of total enrollment) to 3,411 in 2009 (17% of total enrollment)</td>
<td>Located approximately 1 hour from the state’s major metropolitan area (Indianapolis) Attempting to recruit students from Indianapolis by establishing sites at the outer edges of the metro area Strong history and identity as a Teacher’s College; graduate enrollment tied to education programs Teaching load of 12 credits per semester with no adjustment for graduate teaching or advising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Kentucky University</td>
<td>2192 (14%)</td>
<td>1 Ed.D. in Educational Policy Studies</td>
<td>$69 million</td>
<td>Approximately $70 million in external support for research every year for the past four years</td>
<td>Recently launched first doctoral degree—an Ed.D. in Educational Policy Studies Teaching load of 12 credits per semester with no adjustment for graduate teaching or advising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missouri State University</td>
<td>3216 (17%)</td>
<td>3 applied doctoral programs: Ed.D, AuD, and DPT</td>
<td>$22 million</td>
<td>Ranked in the top tier (45th) of Midwestern master’s universities by U.S. News and World Report</td>
<td>Underwent a name change 10 years ago (formerly Southwest Missouri State) Similar portfolio of graduate programs; 48 master’s programs; 3 applied doctoral programs Part of a state system of regional universities; attempting to distinguish itself from other institutions in the system as well as from the state’s major research institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Kentucky University</td>
<td>2850 (15%)</td>
<td>Ed.D. in Educational Leadership</td>
<td>$32 million</td>
<td>Ranked in the top tier of Southern master’s universities by U.S. News and World Report</td>
<td>Emphasizes applied research as its niche in the state; focused on solving “real world problems”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institution</td>
<td>Graduate Enrollment (% of Total)</td>
<td>Doctoral Programs</td>
<td>Annual External Funding</td>
<td>Indicators of Success, Quality, and/or Reputation</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| University of Nebraska, Omaha   | 2886 (19%)                      | 3 stand-alone doctoral programs                                                    | $23 million             | Eight graduate programs recognized in *U.S. News and World Report’s* Best Graduate Schools  
|                                 |                                 | 3 programs in collaboration with other institutions                                 |                         | Named one of the best universities in the Midwest by the Princeton Review  
|                                 |                                 |                                                                                |                         | Graduate enrollment nearly 20% of total enrollment                                                                                       | Began first stand-alone doctoral programs within the last 10 years  
|                                 |                                 |                                                                                |                         |                                                                                                                                     | Total enrollment of approximately 15,000 students |
| University of Northern Colorado | 2074 (17%)                      | 19 doctoral programs                                                              | $14 million             | Graduate enrollment grew 33% from 1,500 in 1999 (14% of total enrollment) to 2,074 in 2009 (17% of total enrollment) | Located approximately 1 hour from the state’s major metropolitan area (Denver) and the state’s major research university (University of Colorado, Boulder)  
|                                 |                                 | Only the Ed.D until 5 years ago                                                    |                         |                                                                                                                                     | Strong history and identity as a Teacher’s College |
|                                 |                                 | Added a doctorate in Nursing Education 5 years ago (“Huge”)                      |                         |                                                                                                                                     | Similar graduate “portfolio” (55 master’s programs; primary programs are (a) education master’s and doctoral programs, (b) applied master’s programs with a career focus, and (c) a small number of “bench science” programs that enroll students en route to Ph.D.s) |
| University of Northern Iowa     | 1861 (14%)                      | 5 applied doctoral programs (4 Ed.D programs and a Doctor of Industrial Technology) | $26 million             | Named one of the best universities in the Midwest by the Princeton Review  
|                                 |                                 |                                                                                |                         | Ranked in the top tier (2nd) of Midwestern public master’s universities by *U.S. News and World Report* (one of 3 public institutions on the list of top 20 Midwestern universities) | Located in a city of 40,000 approximately 90 minutes from the state’s major research/land grant universities (University of Iowa and Iowa State University)  
|                                 |                                 |                                                                                |                         |                                                                                                                                     | Strong identity as an undergraduate institution; small number of doctoral programs |
APPENDIX B

COMPARISONS OF RELEVANT INSTITUTIONAL DATA:
MINNESOTA STATE MANKATO AND ASPIRANT PEER INSTITUTIONS
COMPARISONS OF RELEVANT INSTITUTIONAL DATA: MINNESOTA STATE MANKATO AND ASPIRANT PEER INSTITUTIONS

As indicated above, one purpose of identifying aspirant peer institutions was to establish benchmarks against which to gauge Minnesota State Mankato’s current position, establish goals for improvement, and measure progress toward goal attainment. Identifying the variables on which to base comparisons between Minnesota State Mankato and its aspirant peers was one of the first tasks undertaken by the original subcommittees of the Task Force. These variables included graduate enrollment, number of graduate degrees awarded, the annual dollar amount of external funding (grants and contracts), student-to-faculty ratio, the number of institutionally funded graduate assistantships, the stipend and tuition benefits for institutionally funded assistantships, per-credit tuition rates, and the number of online graduate programs. Comparisons between Minnesota State Mankato and its aspirant peers are summarized below.¹

Based on its review of the comparisons, the Task Force made several observations. First and foremost, the Task Force concluded that—given Minnesota State Mankato’s position relative to the other universities—it is clear that the eight institutions identified as benchmark institutions are, in fact, “aspirant” peers. As indicated in the graphs below, on all but a few variables Minnesota State Mankato occupies the least favorable position relative to the other institutions. (The exceptions are particularly interesting to consider and are highlighted below.)

Figure 1

¹ The most current data available from each institution is presented in the bar graphs on pages 23-29. In cases where data were not available, the institution(s) with missing data are excluded from the graphs.
As noted in Figure 1, only the University of Northern Iowa has a smaller graduate enrollment than Minnesota State Mankato. However, when calculated as a percentage of total enrollment (Figure 2), graduate enrollment at Minnesota State Mankato comprises a smaller share than at any of its aspirant peer institutions. Previous enrollment management and graduate task forces have recommended that Minnesota State Mankato strive to increase its graduate enrollment to 15% of total enrollment, which would place the university near the middle of the aspirant peer group.

![Figure 2](image)

Graduate Enrollment as a Percentage of Total Enrollment

Not surprisingly, given the above enrollment data, Minnesota State Mankato awards fewer master’s degrees per year than any of its aspirant peers (Figure 3). In addition, five of the aspirant institutions award more doctoral degrees annually. The remaining three aspirant

![Figure 3](image)

Number of Master's Degrees Awarded Per Year
institutions have only recently begun offering doctoral degrees and did not award any doctorates during the most recent year for which data were available (Figure 4).

**Figure 4**

![Number of Doctoral Degrees Awarded Per Year](image)

Perhaps the most marked difference between Minnesota State Mankato and its aspirant peers is in the annual dollar amounts of externally funded grants and contracts (Figure 5). Our closest competitor, the University of Northern Colorado, brought in nearly twice the amount in FY 09, while Eastern Kentucky University brought in nearly 10 times more than Minnesota State Mankato. As noted in Appendix A, these disparities have important implications for graduate education, both because external grants and contracts provide funding (and valuable research experiences) for graduate students, and because they result in indirect cost recovery that allows for reinvestment in the graduate and research enterprises.

**Figure 5**

![Annual Dollar Amount of External Funding (Grants and Contracts)](image)
A final variable on which Minnesota State Mankato compares unfavorably with its aspirant peers is student-to-faculty ratio. As noted in Figure 6, only California State University at San Bernardino has a higher ratio.

Figure 6

An interesting and unexpected finding was that Minnesota State Mankato compares quite favorably with its aspirant peers in terms of the number of institutionally funded graduate assistantships (Figure 7). Of the institutions from which data were available, only Ball State University surpassed Minnesota State Mankato on this variable. However, it is important to note that many assistantships are funded by external grants and contracts, a variable on which Minnesota State Mankato severely underperforms relative to its aspirant peers.

Figure 7
Equally surprising given conventional wisdom about the competitiveness of Minnesota State Mankato’s graduate assistantship stipends was the finding that only three aspirant peers provide higher stipends to their institutionally funded graduate assistants (Figure 8). Again, it is important to note that externally funded assistantships are funded at much higher rates (as high as $30,000 at one of the aspirant institutions) and that, at several of the aspirant peer institutions, externally funded assistantships constitute the majority.

In contrast, Minnesota State Mankato waives fewer graduate credits per semester for graduate assistants than any of the aspirant peers for which data were available (Figure 9). This obviously reduces the overall value of the Minnesota State Mankato graduate assistantship package relative to the packages provided by its aspirant peers. Even institutions with slightly lower stipends may provide greater financial assistance when the value of the tuition waiver is included in the cost-benefit analysis.
Also surprising were the data regarding tuition-per-credit for both master’s (Figure 10) and doctoral (Figure 11) credits. Although Minnesota State Mankato has generally promoted itself as a high-quality, affordable option for graduate school (which is likely accurate compared to private and for-profit alternatives in the state), its graduate tuition is higher than most of its aspirant peers at both the master’s and doctoral levels.

**Figure 10**

![Tuition Per Credit for Masters-Level Credits](image)

**Figure 11**

![Tuition Per Credit for Doctoral Credits](image)
Finally, Minnesota State Mankato’s position vis-à-vis its aspirant peers in terms of online graduate program offerings was unexpected—particularly in light of the emphasis placed on online and distance education by the graduate deans interviewed. As indicated in Figure 12, Minnesota State Mankato offers more online programs than four of its aspirant peers and only Ball State University offers significantly more online programs. The Task Force surmised that, more than the sheer number of programs, the strategic development and promotion of online programs with high enrollment potential and/or the potential to capture untapped market share is key to the success of the graduate enterprise.

**Figure 12**

In addition to data collected from each institution, the Task Force took advantage of the National Center for Education Statistics’ Executive Peer Tool, which allows an institution to compare itself to a custom comparison group on any of the variables reported annually to the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). Using a custom comparison group consisting of the eight aspirant institutions identified above, the Task Force was able to compare Minnesota State Mankato to the aspirant peer median on several variables of note, which are highlighted in Figures 13-20.

As Figure 13 indicates, Minnesota State Mankato is thinly staffed compared to its aspirant peers—particularly in administrative and managerial positions, where the median for our aspirant peers is 106 positions compared to Minnesota State Mankato’s 39 positions. While some of the differences in staffing levels can be explained by differences in enrollment, size alone cannot account for the disparity: The difference between Minnesota State Mankato’s FTE enrollment and the median for its aspirant peers is fewer than 700 students (13,421 vs. 14,071). As noted in Figure 6 above, Minnesota State Mankato has fewer faculty members per FTE enrollment than its aspirant peers, and similar patterns are likely evident in other staffing categories.
Figure 13: Full-Time Equivalent Staff, by Assigned Position

Despite having fewer staff in every category, Minnesota State Mankato spends a proportionately greater amount on salaries and benefits than its aspirant peers—no doubt because its salaries are higher than the aspirant peer median. Figure 14 demonstrates that salaries for full-time instructional staff are indeed higher at Minnesota Mankato than at its aspirant peer institutions and that this difference is evident at all faculty ranks.

Figure 14: Average Salaries of Full-Time Instructional Staff (Adjusted to 9-mo. Contracts)

Although Minnesota State Mankato spends more on salaries and benefits as a percentage of total expenses than its aspirant peers, this pattern does not hold true in every functional category (Figure 15). Notable exceptions include institutional support, research, and academic support, in which our aspirant peer institutions spend proportionally more on salaries and benefits than Minnesota State Mankato.
Overall, compared to its aspirant peers, Minnesota State Mankato spends a greater percentage of its budget on academic support and student services and a smaller percentage on research and public service than its aspirant peers (Figure 16). When broken down by FTE enrollment, it is clear that our aspirant peers spend more on instruction, research, public service, and institutional support per FTE student, while Minnesota State Mankato spends more per student on academic support and student services (Figure 17).
Figure 17: Core Expenses per FTE Enrollment, by Function

Not surprisingly, given the data in Figure 5 above, a greater share of total revenue comes from grants and contracts at our aspirant peer institutions than at Minnesota State Mankato (a difference that is equivalent to $1,500 per FTE enrollment annually), while a smaller share of our aspirant peers’ revenues comes from tuition and state allocations (Figure 18).

Figure 18: Percent Distribution of Core Revenues by Source
Compared to its aspirant peers, however, Minnesota State Mankato receives approximately $1,000 less per FTE enrollment in state appropriations than the aspirant peer median (Figure 19). Endowment assets per FTE enrollment are comparable (Figure 20).

**Figure 19:** Core Revenues per FTE Enrollment, by Source

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Revenue source</th>
<th>Your institution</th>
<th>Comparison Group Median (N=8)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tuition and fees</td>
<td>$5,006</td>
<td>$4,871</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State appropriations</td>
<td>$4,429</td>
<td>$4,088</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government grants and contracts</td>
<td>$1,494</td>
<td>$1,416</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other core revenues</td>
<td>$1,430</td>
<td>$1,418</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 20:** Endowment per FTE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Endowment per FTE</th>
<th>Your institution</th>
<th>Comparison Group Median (N=8)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$2,166</td>
<td>$2,324</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX C

DEMOGRAPHIC, ENROLLMENT, AND EMPLOYMENT TRENDS
Enrollment Trends

In addition to focusing on internal factors such as program quality and resources, the Task Force considered external factors that are likely to affect the viability of graduate education at Minnesota State Mankato—including enrollment trends, demographic projections, employment predictions, and the market for graduate education in the state.

As evident in the graph below (Figure 21), graduate enrollment at Minnesota State Mankato has steadily increased each year for the past four years. In fact, Spring 2009 enrollment was higher than in any term during the past decade and represented an 11% increase over spring 2008 and a 17% increase since spring 2006. Summer enrollment has increased even more substantially, with summer 2009 graduate enrollment representing a 38% increase since summer 2005 and 25% of the total summer 2009 enrollment. For the first time in recent memory, Minnesota State Mankato has both a greater number and a higher percentage of graduate students than St. Cloud State University, which has a considerably larger total enrollment.

Figure 21: Graduate Enrollment by Term, 2005-2009

Applications to Graduate School have increased even more dramatically than enrollment over the past four years. Approximately 2,400 graduate applications were processed in 2008-2009, a 42% increase since 2004-2005. Given that many of our most popular graduate programs are already at capacity, the increase in applications does not translate directly into an increase in admissions or enrollment. Nonetheless, it is an indication that Minnesota State Mankato has enhanced its profile as a graduate institution. In addition, increasing the number of applicants allows our graduate programs to be more selective in their admissions, which in turn enhances the perceived quality of our graduate programs.
In total, staff in the Office of Graduate Studies communicated with 3,112 prospects during the 2008-2009 academic year—of which 2,441 indicated interest in a specific graduate program. The top 10 programs of interest to prospective students in 2008-2009 and the top 10 producers of graduate credit hours in 2007-2008 (the most recent year for which data are available) are listed below (Table 2). While the lists overlap considerably, they also suggest that there are several programs (such as the MBA program and engineering programs) that have the potential to increase their enrollments.

**Table 2: Top 10 Graduate Programs in Terms of Inquiries and Credit Hour Generation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top 10 Graduate Programs of Interest to Prospective Students</th>
<th>Top 10 Producers of Graduate Credits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Business Administration (MBA)</td>
<td>1. Educational Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. English</td>
<td>2. Human Performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Nursing</td>
<td>3. English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Counseling and Student Personnel</td>
<td>4. K-12 and Secondary Programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Psychology</td>
<td>5. Counseling and Student Personnel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Human Performance</td>
<td>6. Special Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Health Science</td>
<td>7. Nursing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Engineering</td>
<td>8. Psychology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Special Education</td>
<td>9. Speech, Hearing, and Rehabilitation Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Communication Disorders</td>
<td>10. Political Science</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The number of graduate degrees awarded has also increased steadily over the past five years (Figure 22), with graduate certificates gradually but consistently comprising a greater share of the total. This trend corresponds with the growing popularity of graduate certificate programs nationwide. Minnesota State Mankato has responded by adding certificate programs in nonprofit leadership, forensic vocational rehabilitation, school health education, communication education, professional communication, geographic information systems, and classroom strategies for special needs learners.

**Figure 22: Graduate Degrees Awarded, 2003-2008**
Demographic Projections

While important in its own right, the recent increase in graduate enrollment has been particularly fortuitous given state demographic projections, which portend a steady decline in undergraduate enrollment over the next five years. Statewide, the number of new high school graduates peaked in 2009 and will steadily decline through 2015. In every region of the state except region 7, which includes St. Cloud and where the number of high school graduates is expected to increase by 7%, the number of new high school graduates will decline—in some cases by as much as 28%. In region 9, which includes Mankato, the projected decrease is between 2% and 9% over the next five years. In the surrounding states of Iowa, South Dakota, North Dakota, and Wisconsin, the population of high school seniors is also projected to decrease over the next 10 years.2

Even during the relative growth period of 2005-2009 when the number of high school graduates increased slightly in Minnesota and undergraduate enrollment increased at Minnesota State Mankato, graduate enrollment has gradually increased as a share of total enrollment. As indicated in Table 3, graduate credit hours as a percentage of total credit hours have increased from 5.6% to 6.3% during the past four years, even while the number of undergraduate credits generated at the university was also increasing.

Table 3: Graduate Credit Hours as a Percentage of Total Credit Hours, 2005-2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fall 2005</th>
<th>Fall 2006</th>
<th>Fall 2007</th>
<th>Fall 2008</th>
<th>Fall 2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate Credits</td>
<td>177,897</td>
<td>175,943</td>
<td>180,995</td>
<td>181,404</td>
<td>182,197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Credits</td>
<td>10,807</td>
<td>10,433</td>
<td>10,779</td>
<td>11,383</td>
<td>12,317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Total</td>
<td>188,704</td>
<td>186,376</td>
<td>191,798</td>
<td>192,787</td>
<td>194,514</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Credits as a % of Total</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Similarly, as indicated in Table 4, graduate headcount as a percentage of total enrollment at the university has increased from 11.5% to 12.8% since 2005. As noted above, the university’s stated goal, articulated by the Enrollment Management Task Force formed in 2002, is to increase graduate enrollment to 15% of total enrollment. State and national employment projections and projections for graduate enrollment suggest this goal is well within reach.

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2 Demographic data retrieved from the Minnesota Office of Higher Education at http://ohe.state.mn.us
Table 4: Graduate Enrollment as a Percentage of Total Enrollment, 2005-2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fall 2005</th>
<th>Fall 2006</th>
<th>Fall 2007</th>
<th>Fall 2008</th>
<th>Fall 2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate Head Count</td>
<td>12,683</td>
<td>12,535</td>
<td>12,816</td>
<td>12,825</td>
<td>13,032</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Head Count</td>
<td>1,650</td>
<td>1,614</td>
<td>1,699</td>
<td>1,796</td>
<td>1,907</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Total</td>
<td>14,333</td>
<td>14,149</td>
<td>14,515</td>
<td>14,621</td>
<td>14,939</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Head Count as a % of Total</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

State and National Employment and Education Projections

As growth in Minnesota’s pool of traditional-age high school graduates slows to approximately 0% by 2018, identifying and serving new groups of students will be key to the success of Minnesota State Mankato. As noted above, a substantial opportunity for growth exists at the graduate level where, nationally, the number of students seeking advanced degrees is anticipated to increase by 49% between 2007 and 2019.5

Minnesota has the third-highest rate of high school completion among all states and ranks 11th in college completion compared to other states. However, only 9.7% of Minnesotans complete advanced degrees (despite a 41% increase in master’s degree attainment between 2000 and 2004), placing Minnesota 20th on the list of all states. This disparity puts Minnesota at a competitive disadvantage compared to states that produce a more highly educated workforce and represents a failure to capitalize on growing national enrollments at the graduate level. It also suggests there is an opportunity to expand both the market for graduate education and Minnesota State Mankato’s share of that market.

Moreover, employment trends suggest the demand for graduate education will continue to increase. Forty-three of the occupations on the list of high-pay, high-demand jobs in Minnesota over the next 10 years require more than a bachelor’s degree.4 Twenty-two require at least a master’s degree and, of these, many require a doctorate in order to advance to positions of leadership. Several (e.g., microbiologist, computer and information scientist) require doctoral degrees at the entry level. Nationally, the number of occupations that typically require an advanced degree will increase by 20% between 2006 and 2016, which is more than twice the rate of growth expected for all occupations.5

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3 National Center for Education Statistics
4 Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development
5 Bureau of Labor Statistics
APPENDIX D

STAKEHOLDERS’ PERCEPTION OF GRADUATE EDUCATION AT MINNESOTA STATE MANKATO
STAKEHOLDERS’ PERCEPTION OF GRADUATE EDUCATION AT MINNESOTA STATE MANKATO

As mentioned above, one of the primary tasks of the original Task Force subcommittees was to identify the categories of data that would inform Task Force deliberations and decision-making. Based on the initial work of the subcommittees, it was clear that gathering satisfaction data from graduate alumni, current graduate students, and graduate faculty would be essential to the work of the Task Force. As a result, satisfaction surveys were developed for each constituent group and were administered electronically during spring 2009. Copies of the survey questions and descriptive data are available at grad.mnsu.edu.

Completed surveys were received from 422 current students (23% of students enrolled in spring 2009), 178 graduate faculty members (approximately 40% of the graduate faculty), and 159 alumni (12% of those with current email addresses on file with Alumni Relations). Detailed analysis of the survey results is ongoing; preliminary findings are highlighted in the charts below.

Preliminary analyses reveal a relatively high level of student and alumni satisfaction with their graduate school experience—including the quality of instruction, their relationships with faculty, the relevance of their coursework, and the overall quality of their graduate programs. Moreover, these items were also rated as among the most important by large majorities of current students and alumni.

As noted in Figure 23, both current students and alumni expressed a high level of satisfaction with faculty-student relationships in their graduate programs. Approximately 67% of current students and 83% of alumni indicated that they were satisfied or extremely satisfied with this aspect of their graduate experience.

**Figure 23:** Student and Alumni Satisfaction with Faculty-Student Relationships
Similarly, a large majority of current students and alumni indicated satisfaction or extreme satisfaction with the relevance of their graduate coursework. Approximately 73% of current students and 77% of alumni indicated that they were satisfied or extremely satisfied with this aspect of their graduate experience (Figure 24).

**Figure 24:** Student and Alumni Satisfaction with Relevance of Courses

Both students and alumni are also highly satisfied with the quality of instruction in their graduate programs, with 79% of alumni and 70% of current students indicating satisfaction or extreme satisfaction with this aspect of their graduate experience (Figure 25).

**Figure 25:** Student and Alumni Satisfaction with Quality of Instruction
Finally and not surprisingly, given the results summarized above, students and alumni expressed high levels of satisfaction with the overall quality of their graduate programs. Alumni in particular expressed strong satisfaction, with 82% expressing satisfaction or extreme satisfaction with overall program quality (Figure 26).

**Figure 26: Student and Alumni Satisfaction with Overall Program Quality**

Two areas in which there appears to be a significant opportunity to impact students’ satisfaction with their graduate experience are course scheduling and the academic reputation of Minnesota State Mankato’s graduate programs. As the charts below indicate, large numbers of students and alumni rate these factors as important or extremely important, while overall satisfaction with these items is relatively low.

In terms of course scheduling, for example, only 54% of students indicated that they were satisfied or extremely satisfied, while 86% rated course scheduling as important or extremely important to their overall satisfaction with their graduate experience (Figure 27).

Related to course scheduling, students expressed a clear desire for more online and off-campus offerings, with only 45% expressing satisfaction with the current availability of online and off-campus courses and programs. In contrast, many faculty members expressed the opinion that Minnesota State Mankato should provide fewer online (42% of faculty) and off-campus (28% of faculty) offerings. Approximately 36% of faculty agreed or strongly agreed that Minnesota State Mankato should offer more online courses, while 50% agreed or strongly agreed that the university should offer more off-campus courses.
Interestingly, given their high levels of overall satisfaction, students expressed relative dissatisfaction with the academic reputations of their graduate programs (Figure 28). Nearly 90% of students rated program reputation as important or extremely important, for example, while just over half were satisfied or extremely satisfied with this aspect of their graduate programs. This suggests that while students rate the quality of their Minnesota State Mankato graduate education quite high, they believe their perceptions of quality are not shared outside the University community. Renewed effort to publicize the quality of Minnesota State Mankato’s faculty, students, and programs—and their value to the surrounding region—will be key to changing such perceptions.
While student and alumni satisfaction with their graduate experiences appears to be fairly high, survey results indicate that faculty satisfaction with support for graduate studies and research is fairly low. In particular, faculty expressed fairly low levels of satisfaction with the University’s commitment to graduate education (Figure 29), support for graduate education (Figure 30), the University’s reputation as a graduate institution (Figure 31), and overall support for research (Figure 32).

Figure 29

![Figure 29: Satisfaction with University’s Commitment to Graduate Education](image)

Figure 30

![Figure 30: Satisfaction with Support for Graduate Education](image)
Approximately 30% of faculty responded that they are not at all satisfied with support for graduate education and support for research, for example, while 62% are dissatisfied or only somewhat satisfied with the University’s commitment to graduate education. Not surprisingly, then, faculty suggestions for improving the quality of graduate education emphasized increasing resources and establishing a clear mission and strategic goals (Figure 33).

**Figure 31**

*Figure 31: Satisfaction with the University's Reputation as a Graduate Institution*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Satisfaction Level</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Don't know/ No opinion</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all Satisfied</td>
<td>23.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Satisfied</td>
<td>47.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>16.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely Satisfied</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 32**

*Figure 32: Satisfaction with Overall Support for Research*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Support Level</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Don't know/ No opinion</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all Satisfied</td>
<td>30.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Satisfied</td>
<td>45.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely Satisfied</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 33: What Does Minnesota State Mankato Need To Do Better or Differently to Improve Graduate Education? (Faculty Responses)