Graduate Student Association
Strategic Plan Draft
04 February 2014

Mission: The Graduate Student Association shall act as a financial, informational, and social liaison for Cullowhee, Biltmore Park, and online graduate students in pursuit of their academic success at Western Carolina University.

Core Values (these align with the Graduate School Core Values):

● Collaboration
● Innovation
● Integrity
● Reliability
● Respect
● Responsiveness
● Service
● Teamwork

Vision Statement: To be a model student organization of support, service, and advocacy to meet the academic, social, and professional goals of graduate students at Western Carolina University.

Strategic Direction #1: Fulfill the educational needs of our state and region.

Goal 1.1 Increase and encourage research opportunities

● Initiative 1.1.1: Help connect students who desire research opportunities with faculty members who can provide research mentoring
● Initiative 1.1.2: Partner with WCU Graduate School in Undergraduate Student Success / Graduate Student Career Mentoring Program
● Initiative 1.1.3: Providing research travel support through the Graduate Student Association

Goal 1.2 Increase information access to the thesis process and thesis formatting

Goal 1.3 Provide easier access to Institutional Review Board (IRB) training for students with human research subjects

● Initiative 1.3.1: Invite IRB Leaders to a monthly GSA Meeting each semester
Strategic Direction #2: Enrich the total student experience

Goal 2.1 Increase the sense of community between Cullowhee and Biltmore Park graduate students

- Initiative 2.1.1: Increase Graduate Student Association presence at Biltmore Park
- Initiative 2.1.2: Create better notification about classes being held at Biltmore Park for WCU prospective graduate students
- Initiative 2.1.3: Identify and invite a GSA Senator and alternate from each graduate program at Biltmore Park to all GSA meetings
- Initiative 2.1.4: Establish shuttle to and from Cullowhee and Biltmore Park
- Initiative 2.1.5: Supplement parking passes for carpoolers that come from Biltmore to Cullowhee

Goal 2.2 Increase sense of community for graduate students at Cullowhee campus

- Initiative 2.2.1: Establish location on Cullowhee campus just for graduate students with study space and area for group projects
- Initiative 2.2.2: Increase marketing of current space and trainings available to Graduate Students (Sandbox Area at Coulter Faculty Center at Hunter Library in Cullowhee)
- Initiative 2.2.3: Establish One Stop for graduate students (Graduate Student Office or JAZ)
- Initiative 2.2.4: Offer weekend stays at Madison Hall in Cullowhee for incoming, distance, or Biltmore Park graduate students

Goal 2.3 Increase distance learning involvement

- Initiative 2.3.1: Establish a Senator and alternate on GSA for each Distance Program
- Initiative 2.3.2: Provide virtual tours for online, distance, and incoming students

Goal 2.4 Provide more student support

- Initiative 2.4.1: Provide more counseling access and opportunities for students in Cullowhee, Biltmore Park, and for distance students
- Initiative 2.4.2: Provide more academic and career advising opportunities for students in Cullowhee, Biltmore Park, and for distance students
- Initiative 2.4.3: Host guest speakers including Deans
- Initiative 2.4.4.: Develop internship opportunities and job shadowing programs

Goal 2.5 Create additional opportunities for growth

- Initiative 2.5.1: Create mentorship program for incoming graduate students
- Initiative 2.5.2: Establish consistent GSA presence in the Student Government Association at WCU
- Initiative 2.5.3: Re-evaluate Graduate School Orientation process and encourage development of program specific Orientations
- Initiative 2.5.4: Further develop information packet for first-year students
- Initiative 2.5.5: Establish and fund online journal
Strategic Direction #3: Enhance our external partnerships

Goal 3.1 Establish graduate student alumni association

- Initiative 3.1.1 Increase linkages to WCU Alumni Association (Marty Ramsey at WCU Alumni Office)
- Initiative 3.1.2 Build ties with alumni that we met in Spring 2013 alumni meeting at Biltmore Park

Strategic Direction #4: Invest in our people

Goal 4.1 Increase and Improve Assistantships

- Initiative 4.1.1: Increase benefits for Graduate Assistants (GA) by doubling assistantship pay and increasing insurances, parking, and meal plan benefits for all GAs
- Initiative 4.1.2: Create GA and Teaching Assistant (TA) opportunities for distance learners and students at Biltmore Park
- Initiative 4.1.3: Develop training for GA/TA Supervisors so that positions are consistent

Goal 4.2 Increase financial assistance

- Initiative 4.2.1: Assist in promotion of and/or provide scholarships for graduate students
- Initiative 4.2.2: Support an increase in the number of tuition waivers
- Initiative 4.2.3: Increase size and number of travel grants
- Initiative 4.2.4: Create job search loans

Goal 4.4 Expand Graduate Students opportunities for learning outside the classroom

- Initiative 4.4.2: Expand Graduating Student Workshop from Fall 2013 to future semesters
Strategic Direction #5: Invest in our core resources

Goal 5.1 Increase presence of Graduate Student Association

- Initiative 5.1.1 Appoint a Senator and an alternate from each graduate program
- Initiative 5.1.2 Increase graduate student involvement on all committees

Goal 5.2 Increase web presence of Graduate Student Association

- Initiative 5.2.1 Create GSA website
- Initiative 5.2.2 Assist Graduate School in updating website and making it easier for students to understand
- Initiative 5.2.3 Assist in promotion and explanation of graduate school application process

Goal 5.3 Develop long-term strategic planning for Graduate Student Association

- Initiative 5.3.1 Create documents to pass to subsequent GSA administrations
- Initiative 5.3.2 Develop suggestions for better graduate housing options in Cullowhee

Strategic Direction #6: Garner support for the vision

Goal 6.1 Revisit strategic plan each semester at the GSA, Graduate School, and WCU levels