

**Illinois State University  
Academic Affairs  
FY21 Planning Document  
Graduate School**

**I. Major Objectives for FY21**

The Graduate School's strategic plan, as well as all four goals within *Educate Connect Elevate Illinois State* will drive the FY 21 Planning document:

Below are the 10 strategies and associated tactics that will guide the Graduate School.

1. Continue to improve the role of the Graduate School in problem-solving, customer service and leadership
  - a. Continue to look for ways to serve our constituents. (ongoing)
  - b. Seek to enhance customer service to faculty, staff, and students. (ongoing)
  - c. Investigate graduate student payment options to understand the feasibility of graduate students having a different payment schedule, with a first payment due after they receive their first GA stipend payment. (FY 21)
2. Advocate for graduate students, student services, and student scholarship and creative activity.
  - a. Work closely with the graduate student senator to communicate issues relevant to graduate students. (ongoing)
  - b. Investigate low retention rates for doctoral students and determine why students drop out of the program, what point they drop out, and if underrepresented students drop out at a higher rate than others. (FY 21)
3. Maintain standards across campus
  - a. Re-implement the first year graduate student survey to assess processes and why they chose ISU. (ongoing)
4. Review and improve the thesis/dissertation process including deadlines and formatting.
  - a. Create an internal research tools certificate for graduate students. (FY 21)
5. Provide recruitment assistance to programs.
  - a. Enhance recruitment efforts for underrepresented students. (FY 21)
6. Integrate across campus the concept that graduate programs add value to the university in terms of prestige and scholarship.
  - a. Enhance promotion of graduate students and their work at ISU including recognizing awards, publications, and presentations (eg #ShareMyThesis). (FY 21)

- b. Implement a post-doctoral fellowship program that provides recruitment support for department, funding opportunities, professional development growth, and a standardized hiring process.
- 7. Build on the value faculty members have for graduate education to expand program offerings
  - a. Create a plan to integrate badges, micro degrees (interdisciplinary studies), and stackable certificates. (FY 21)
- 8. Reposition graduate programs so they get more institutional recognition than they currently receive.
  - a. Create a university wide 3 Minute Project/Issue Competition to encompass non-thesis projects. (FY 21)
- 9. Advocate that graduate assistants are valuable resources.
  - a. Develop new external practicum graduate assistantships to fund additional positions. (FY 21)
  - b. Establish teaching resources for graduate teaching assistants through CTLT. (FY 21)
- 10. Recognize that graduate students are different than undergraduate students and that different services are required to support them.
  - a. Develop webinars of the professional development series so that part-time students may benefit from the workshops without being on campus. (ongoing)

## II. Permanent Funding requests

**Writing Support Specialist, \$21,000.** The demand for graduate student writing help is at an all time high. Utilizing a graduate student in this capacity is not meeting the demand or providing adequate support, particularly for doctoral dissertations. The graduate school may be able to cost share the expense of an NTT as a joint hire with another department, such as English or Communications (half time instructor, half time writing support). As more international graduate students are attending ISU and not able to utilize the support services through INTO, as well as domestic students needed help at hours that are outside the typical 8-4:30, we need a more permanent person to show ISU is dedicated to the writing needs to graduate students.

**Degree audit/registrar position housed within the graduate school to address graduate student needs, \$46,000.** This person would help with providing data and tracking degree completion and retention rates. In addition, this person would help with graduate curriculum needs as we transition to an online catalog, see new graduate program and certificate growth, and be a liaison between the graduate school and registrar. Historically, the graduate school had a person with these responsibilities housed within the graduate school.

**III. Strategic Budgeted Carryover**

**Item 1. Merit Fellowships, \$17,000.** These are awarded to graduate students as sign-on bonuses for recruitment and retention. We request that the unused funds from FY20 be carried forward to FY21 for the same purpose.

**IV. Provost Enhancement Requests**

\$10,000 for graduate student professional development opportunities to support the costs of travel to conferences. These funds would help supplement department and college support. The Graduate School is seeing an increase in travel support request, but there are no funds. These temporary funds will give us time to find other permanent funding sources to support professional travel for students.

**V. Personnel Requests – New TT - No request from Graduate School****VI. Personnel Requests – Other TT- No Request from the Graduate School****VII. Facilities Requests**

Continue progress on renovations of the graduate school