

# **Graduate Studies Plan: 2011-2015**

**Approved by Senate: June 2011**

## **Mission**

The mission of the Faculty of Graduate Studies at Brandon University is to coordinate and offer a range of distinctive, high quality graduate programs, important to the social, economic, cultural, and intellectual life in Manitoba, Canada, and internationally.

## **Vision**

BU will fulfill its role as a public university in southwestern Manitoba through a strategic vision and accountability for graduate education services. Through collaborations with other universities, colleges and organizations BU will assess and respond to the graduate education needs of vital social, economic, cultural, and intellectual institutions and communities throughout the region, Canada, and internationally.

Our graduate programs will be of demonstrated quality and recognized internationally for the blending of practical and liberal education; based upon cultivation of the skills of discovery, performance, and synthesis that support creativity, problem-solving, and innovation. To achieve this status, graduate programs at BU will be known for 1) challenging, student-centered curricula which are based in research and field experience, 2) a community of creative, motivated students and faculty, 3) student and faculty involvement in research supported by external grants and contracts, 4) and rigorous external program evaluation.

Graduates will be prepared to fulfill individual and collective responsibilities and goals and will model advancements in production, research, service, and professional practice in the industrial, administrative, social service, civic, educational, artistic, and other sectors of society.

A number of strategies will need to be realized in order to achieve this vision.

## **Strategy 1: Establish an enrolment management plan**

Graduate students are a key part of the academic life of a university. Their training and engagement in the daily life of the university are vital to the success and retention of undergraduate students as well as the attraction and retention of highly qualified faculty. In many cases, graduate students are the faculty of the future. A focused and funded enrolment management plan needs to be launched to attract a critical number of highly qualified full time graduate students. The strength and reputation of graduate programs at BU is directly related to the quality of our graduate students. A progressive and forward looking enrolment management plan is needed to attain communities of creative, intelligent, and motivated students in such numbers that the graduate programs at BU will be dynamic and sustainable.

## **Strategy 2: Establish regular graduate program reviews**

In order to achieve the highest standards of graduate education at BU, regular program reviews are needed. Policies, criteria, and procedures specific to the evaluation of all graduate programs need to be established. The main purpose of these reviews is twofold: 1) to identify areas of excellence and those areas needing improvement; and 2) to demonstrate accountability. Program reviews shall be coordinated through the Office of the Associate Vice-President Research and Graduate Studies. Until this position is established, this responsibility lies jointly with the Vice-President (Academic and Research) and the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies.

## **Strategy 3: Identify a plan for new graduate programs at Brandon University**

The Strategic Plan for the University (BUILD 2010) recommends the establishment of new graduate programs at Brandon University. There remain several areas in which new graduate programs would be appropriate in terms of mission, resources, and community needs. The presence of graduate students brings a new dimension to the life of our academic community, enriching our research culture, creating opportunities for undergraduate students, and offering faculty and staff who are engaged with these graduate students new opportunities as well. The assessment of need for new graduate programming needs to reflect the priorities of the provincial government, Tri-Council funding agencies, and the community. In order to fulfill this goal, the University should engage in planned consultation and needs assessment processes with University and community stakeholders. This consultation will ensure the University is meeting the needs of key constituents in the BU catchment area as well as citizens in the broader Manitoba community.

## **Strategy 4: Establish an Office of the Associate Vice President Research and Graduate Studies**

As the number of graduate programs and students increases, attention will need to be given to centralizing the core services needed to provide quality graduate education. For example, the processing of admissions, graduate student scholarships and bursaries, dealing with academic matters, faculty appointments, and initiating quality assurance measures like program reviews. The establishment of an Office of the Associate Vice President (AVP) Research and Graduate Studies is a high priority in the University. The AVP will also serve as the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies. The infrastructure to support the position includes support staff, office space, and a dedicated operating budget. A position description for the AVP Research and Graduate Studies needs to clearly identify accountability and authority for graduate education vis-à-vis the academic Deans.

## **Strategy 5: Establish alternative models for graduate program delivery**

BUILD 2010 states: "... the residents in our communities require continuing education at the graduate level in order to continue to succeed in their careers and cannot and should not be forced to quit their jobs and leave their homes in order to acquire such education". This statement highlights the need for graduate programs at BU to address the diverse needs of our graduate student population. This will require a commitment to exploring flexible, alternative

methods of course delivery such as web-based (online) instruction, video conference delivery, weekend/evening offerings, and hybrid approaches.

### **Strategy 6: Review and revise the graduate program fee structure**

As the needs of graduate students change and program models evolve, student fee structures also need to be reconsidered. The current funding model, based on a percentage of undergraduate student fees, does not adequately address the ongoing infrastructure and graduate programming costs at BU. There are many other options for students interested in graduate studies. In order for BU to continue to attract quality students in sufficient numbers, alternative approaches to program delivery and funding are essential. According to BUILD 2010, this may include “Full cost-recovery programming where students or sponsoring agencies pay all of the costs of a program”.

### **Strategy 7: Scholarships and student employment opportunities**

In order to attract and retain graduate students, BU needs to increase the number and amount of funding available for graduate scholarships and student assistantships. Scholarships and employment opportunities such as Research Assistant, Teaching Assistant, and Marker positions provide much needed employment and support for students. These positions allow students the opportunity to more fully engage in the life of academia by working alongside faculty; not only in a supervisor/employee relationship, but in a mentor/mentee relationship as well. Furthermore, this initiative has the potential to build capacity and contribute to retention of our graduate students.