

9 March 2012

Program Prioritization Committee
Dr. Ron Mitchelson, Chair
East Carolina University

Re: **Recommendation Menu "A-1", Moving the Graduate School to Academic Affairs and/or Health Sciences**

Dear Committee,

Among the recommendations from the "White Paper" on ECU Structural Change Analysis from the Program Prioritization Committee was that in Menu "A-1", to "move the Graduate School to Academic Affairs and/or Health Sciences." We oppose this recommendation on several grounds outlined below. We propose that Research and Graduate Studies remain a separate Division in the academic structure at ECU, reflecting the importance of research in defining a university and distinguishing it from a college.

1. The functional priorities for Research and Graduate Studies do not correlate well with those that predominate for undergraduate education as represented in Academic Affairs. For instance, the recruiting of students for both biomedical/life science PhD and MS programs is done quite differently, involving more direct appeal of research directions and specific expertise represented by individual faculty members. Likewise, the funding of students from various sources, ultimately from competitive extramural research grants is a priority for graduate programs. In addition, degree requirements for most of these graduate programs involve research, thesis writing, presentation and defense. These also do not generally have correlates in undergraduate education. Finally, these PhD and MS programs tend to have far fewer students than undergraduate programs, but are quite intensive in student hours and faculty/department investment. By sheer student volume, the priorities for graduate programs would become underrepresented in Academic Affairs.
2. The functional priorities for Research and Graduate Studies would not be fully represented in the Health Sciences Division. The success of graduate research requires the focus given by having autonomy within the Division of Research and Graduate Studies. Professionals trained in our programs impact national economy, health and security, and their performance depends on highly specialized skills that are honed in graduate research. We must attract the best students into our graduate programs to drive research that will produce new drugs, therapies, manage resources, provide new sources of clean energy, and new developments in countless other areas. Graduate Studies should not compete with medical/clinical education and other non-thesis programs in Health Sciences. This would be detrimental to the funding of research labs and to the prestige of the University nationally. Moreover, the PhD and MS programs in research-intensive departments on the East Campus would have to adapt to the administrative and business "modes" of the medical/clinical departments.
3. The "Research" arm of Research and Graduate Studies must be an independent entity to respond flexibly and rapidly to the dynamic needs of research faculty who submit grant applications to various federal, state and non-governmental funding agencies. Only this Division that can represent the research enterprise of the collective elements of ECU to the external funding agencies. And for reasons of student stipend and resource funding, as stated above, the "Research" and "Graduate Studies" arms must remain closely integrated. Research and Graduate Studies has made significant strides in recent years to adapt and expedite grant applications from both the East Campus and the Medical Campus in a streamlined process that now suits both. As a side benefit, this cooperation has spawned numerous East-West scientific collaborations, joint research forums (formal and informal) and mentoring/service on thesis committees by many faculty across the two campuses.
4. In these challenging fiscal times, there needs to be an independent office committed to promote increased financial support from external granting agencies. The independent Division of Research and Graduate Studies, which is fueled in large part by grant F&A funds, maintains that commitment as its primary focus. This focus may be lost or underserved if there is not an office dedicated to the task.

In canvassing the medical school faculty, we believe that the concerns expressed in this letter broadly reflect the views of most of our colleagues. Based on our common research and educational goals, we suspect that our colleagues on the East Campus will be similarly inclined.

Sincerely,

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