



Enhancing Graduate Student Engagement: Building Connections with Faculty and Departments

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Education

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Work Experience

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My Background

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Presentation Outline

- Part I: Challenges of working with graduate students
- Part II: Graduate student needs
- Part III: Theoretical frameworks
- Part IV: Strategies to increase collaboration and enhance student engagement

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Presentation Objectives

- I. Understand some of the challenges and needs associated with working with graduate students
- II. Identify theoretical approaches that can be applied to graduate student advising
- III. Acquire advising strategies that may be applied to enhance graduate student engagement and build connections with other professionals within the institution

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Part I:Challenges of Working with Graduate Students

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Take a Moment to Consider

- 1. What are some challenges that you face working with graduate students?
- 2. What characteristics distinguish graduate students from undergraduates?
- 3. Who do you commonly collaborate with to provide services to your students?



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Who is Responsible for Advising?

- Faculty Advisor
- Program Director
- Graduate Student Affairs
- Departmental Advisor

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Graduate Programs Function Independently

- Graduate programs often function independently
- Graduate faculty not aware of resources within other departments
- Policies constantly changing
- No standard communication method across departments

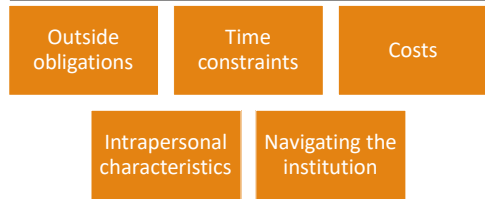
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Misconceptions About Grad Students

1. School is their primary focus
2. They will use loan or fellowship to pay for their tuition
3. Time management has been mastered
4. They understand institutional policies and procedures
5. They do not need as much guidance
6. They understand academic culture
7. Do not need as much career development support

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Education Barriers



(Powers & Wartalski, 2021; Rabourn, BrckaLorenz, & Shoup, 2018)

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Online and Cohort Program Barriers

- Online
 - Students are located a distance away from the institution
 - May not have access to all on-campus resources
 - Do not meet with their advisor in person
- Cohort Based
 - Small set of students may feel more comfortable relying on each other throughout degree program
 - Miscommunication can often occur

(Schroeder & Terras, 2015)

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How Things Have Always Been Done

- What you want:
 - Offer professional development opportunities at a variety of times and days
 - Provide virtual and face to face programming
 - Create diverse opportunities for student interaction

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Finding Mutual Relevance



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Part II: Theoretical Framework

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Student Engagement

• Student engagement can be perceived in two ways:

1. Amount of time spent on educationally purposeful activities
2. Institutional resources and activities that facilitate participation in meaningful activities



• Collaborative learning, interactions with faculty, students and the campus

(Rabourn, BrckiaLorenz, & Shoup, 2018)

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Social Integration

- Tinto (1993) asserts social integration and peer relationships influence graduate student success
- Socializing new students with knowledge, skills, and values of the professional field
- Engaging students on a holistic level



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Chickering and Gamson's 7 Principles

1. Encourage student and faculty interaction
2. Increase opportunities for interchange and cooperation between students
3. Create opportunities for active learning
4. Provide prompt feedback
5. Emphasize time on task
6. Communicate high expectations
7. Respect diverse talents and ways of learning

(Rabourn, BrckaLorenz, & Shoup, 2018)

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Adult Learner Characteristics

- Age 25 or older
- Working full-time or part-time
- Financially independent
- Contains professional or personal obligations
- Delayed enrollment after high school (nontraditional)
- Did not complete high school (nontraditional)



(Powers & Wartalski, 2021; Rabourn, BrckaLorenz, & Shoup, 2018)

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Adult Learning Theory

- Knowles five key assumptions:
 1. Self-concept
 2. Experience
 3. Readiness to learn
 4. Orientation to learning
 5. Motivation to learn

(Rabourn, BrckaLorenz, & Shoup, 2018)

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Part III: Graduate Student Needs

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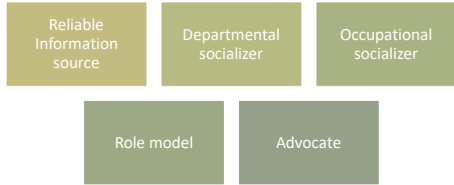


Let's Take a Pause

What are your graduate students' greatest needs?

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Important Functions of Graduate Advisor



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Effective Academic Advising

- Developing a program of study
- Selecting relevant courses
- Navigating policies and procedures
- Offering resources



(Sogunro, 2015)

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Advising Needs

- Addressing graduate student needs are essential to support academic retention and engagement
- Needs may vary by program
- Qualitative study with 13 adult learners enrolled in graduate programs examined advising experiences with junior faculty advisors



(Powers & Wartalski, 2021)

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Advising Needs (Online, Cohort, & Traditional)

- Interrelated Themes
- (1. Value is attributed to advising
 - (2. Trust is key
 - (3. Individualized and Flexible

(Schroeder & Terras, 2015)

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Mentoring

- "A process in which one person, usually of superior rank, achievement and prestige, guides the development of or sponsors another person, who is the protégé."
- Process may take form of counseling, confirming, sponsoring, protecting, role modeling, networking or informing
- Primary and secondary advising
- Disciplinary differences

(Noy & Ray, 2021)

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Part IV: Increasing Collaboration and Enhancing Student Engagement

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Take a Moment to Consider

1. How do adult learners engage with traditional age students on campus?
2. What initiatives does your program have in place to engage graduate students?
3. What strategies have you found successful towards increasing graduate student engagement?

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Orientation Programming

Holistic programming and intervention

Orientation programming should have explicit goals:

- Familiarize students with staff and faculty
- Introduce students to the program requirements and curriculum
- Provide students with a variety of resources
- Connect students with the university community

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Departmental Advisor

- Connect students to opportunities within the campus community
- On campus resources
- Connect students to faculty within the program
- Liaison between faculty and other departments to offer students information
- Develop programming (workshops, webinars....etc.)

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Faculty

- Instrumental in facilitating major curriculum-based opportunities
- Inter-professional experiences
- Career development
- Mentoring
- Professional networking



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Students

- Student led organization or groups
- Monthly seminars
- Student participation on committees
- Celebrations
- Graduate research symposium

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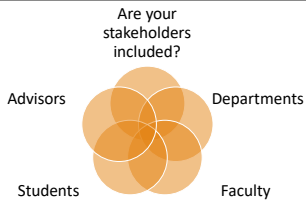
Needs Assessment

- Offers students a voice in the program
- Each cohort is different
- Focused targeted programing
- Meaningful resources and programing
- Identify areas of issue
- Comprehensive student feedback is collected over time



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Communication is Key



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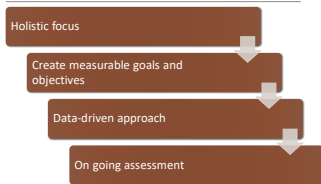


Approach for Sharing Information

Target	Target your audience
Include	Include stakeholders in the process
Reach	Reach students on their time and terms
Engage	Engage students in the process

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Create a Retention and Engagement Plan



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Increase program accountability

Assessment of the extent orientation goals have been achieved

Effectiveness of programming

Identify what works and doesn't

Documentation of outcomes

Program Evaluation

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Questions



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