Message from the Dean

Reflecting on the May 2014 UA commencement just past, I’m reminded that of the many UA Graduate School ‘brag points’ these days, the one I am most proud of is our record graduation rate. Graduate student enrollment has grown a very robust 30% since the mid-2000s - one of the top figures in the country. But even more impressive, the number of students receiving degrees sets new records virtually every year and has increased more than 50% in the same time period, to ca. 2000 students this past year. And another new record will likely be set this year. The May 2014 commencement exercise saw approximately 970 students receive advanced degrees at UA - a record number for any UA commencement.

It’s great to be able to recruit more graduate students to the Capstone, but the real test of excellence in any academic program is how many students earn their degrees. Nothing is more satisfying to me as Graduate Dean than being able to greet Masters, EDS, and Doctoral degree recipients as they walk across that stage in Coleman Coliseum to receive their diplomas! And the meteoric rise in our graduation numbers has not happened by chance. Rather, we have worked hard - and successfully - as individual faculty and programs and as a University, to reduce attrition and improve retention as well as reduce the time to degree over the past several years. Fewer students dropping out and more students finishing faster translates directly to more graduates!

Some key examples of programs that have worked and have become national models for best practices in graduate education. The Graduate School’s Tide Together mentorship program has, over the past 5 years reduced attrition in a group of 140+ mentees participants from underrepresented groups to less
UA is a national leader in graduate student support programs!

- The UA Graduate School has provided ~$660,000 in research/travel grants to ca. 1000 graduate students in 2013-14 - a 8.5-fold increase in just the last 8 years.
  - Based on anecdotal evidence, this is more than the rest of the SEC universities combined.
- The Graduate School awarded 73 Graduate Council Fellowships, 28 National Alumni Association License Tag Graduate Fellowships, and 7 McNair Graduate Fellowships. Each fellowship included a $15,000 stipend and a full tuition scholarship.
- The Graduate School was the recipient of 2014 American Council on Education (ACE) Women’s Leadership Award.
- The Graduate Parent Support program served >550 students with dependent children in 2013-2014.
- The Graduate Parent Support program was the subject of the cover story for the May 2014 edition of AAC & U News.
- Sitters for Service provided >1300 hours of free babysitting to students (including undergraduates) who have children.
- Over 120 students attended the Fall 2013 WiSE (Women in STEM Experience) symposium.
- The Tide Together minority mentoring program served 39 students in the 2013/14 academic year.
  - UA is a national leader in recruiting and graduating graduate students from diverse backgrounds.
  - For the 11th year in a row, African-American/Black graduate student enrollment set a new record and now stands at over 14% of total graduate enrollment, one of the highest percentages of any Flagship campus.
  - In 2012-13, UA conferred almost as many graduate degrees to African-American students (267) as there were total enrolled African-American students (277) as recently as 2001-02.
- Over 150 graduate students from 24 departments participated in the Three Minute Thesis (3MT) competition.
  - In February 2014, UA’s Will Guin (the winner of the UA 3MT competition) won the "People's Choice" award at the 2014 Council of Southern Graduate