

# Enhancing Graduate Student Services

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## FLC Summary

In a concerted, multi-prong approach, in the past years Fresno State has implemented to great effect a number of initiatives focused on the improvement of undergraduate student services. Similar efforts are now being developed at the graduate level, fueled in part by the University's receipt of a new U.S. Department of Education Title V-B grant. The grant project, named the Graduate Net Initiative, aims to strengthen the graduate experience at Fresno State through three main initiatives: first is the creation of an online digital hub, a cohesive, centralized digital space from which all Fresno State graduate services will be accessible; second is the expansion of online graduate programs and the delivery of online pedagogy trainings for faculty; third is the campus-wide expansion of mentorship and internship programs for graduate students. An equally important aim of the project is to attract more students to Fresno State, strengthening and expanding current programmatic outreach and recruitment efforts.

A recently-completed survey of graduate student needs, deployed in spring 2015, indicated that the majority of students (69%) are aware of at least some available services, particularly those advertised through their program's website. However, an overwhelming number of students felt that services are neither advertised well nor easily accessible. For example, many students responded that websites are not user friendly, have outdated content, are not welcoming, and do not have useful information. Clearly, more needs to be done at the programmatic level to attract students and to support enrollment growth. In response to this identified need, the proposed Faculty Learning Community, to be facilitated by the Initiative's Graduate Outreach Specialist, will bring together graduate faculty and program coordinators to consider their current outreach efforts and student services. The main objective of the FLC will be to develop improvement plans to strengthen graduate support services and enhance department websites. This aim parallels Fresno State's 2016-2020 Strategic Plan, specifically Priority One, Two, and Three, which call for "the attraction of talented and diverse students, the investment in faculty through professional development, and the modernization of the technology in order to support a sustainable and welcoming campus environment" (Fresno State, 2016).

The impact that this FLC will have on student learning is that students will learn about support services through enhanced graduate program websites. Moreover, students will have a new or improved service. This is important for students because learning does not just happen in the classroom. In order for students to be successful, we need to engage students outside of the classroom as well. The process and delivery of student support services is invaluable to our graduate students.

## Learning Objectives/ Outcomes/ Participant deliverables

There are a total of 47 graduate programs, and each program has a unique faculty graduate coordinator that may benefit from this FLC. Last academic year (2015-2016) was the first year that this FLC was offered. A total of 7 faculty members participated, all were graduate coordinators and all voiced that this type of support is valuable to their roles and they would appreciate continued support in this area.

The learning objectives of this FLC are:

1. Learn about graduate student resources
2. Learn about graduate faculty and coordinator resources
3. Learn about best practices related to student outreach and recruitment including website support

In order to ensure participant deliverables, an Action Plan assignment will be required at the end of the first semester. Participants will have to create an action plan where they outline exactly what they will do for this FLC, how will they do it, and when they will do it. Participants will have to implement the action plan by the end of the FLC.

## Selection criteria for applicants selected to the FLC

FLC participants will be selected if they are Graduate Coordinators, Graduate Pathway Facilitators, or faculty who support Graduate Coordinators and/or Graduate Pathway Facilitators. Applicants will also be asked to complete a Doodle Poll and if their schedule coincides with the larger group they will be invited to participate in the FLC.

## Participant Funds

FLC participants will receive two disbursements. The first half is to be disbursed at the end of the fall 2016, and the second half is to be disbursed at the end of spring 2017 semester. The amount will be split evenly amongst all FLC participants and the facilitator.

## FLC Schedule and modes of meeting

Faculty will participate in monthly meetings and hands-on trainings to perform their work. There will be six meetings throughout the 2015-2016 academic year.

Mid-September Face2face	House cleaning: Introductions, attendance, minutes/emails, MOU. Graduate Student Resources Discussion of what services FLC participants would like to create for students and what sections of their websites they wish to improve. Homework: <i>Is it Time to Redesign Your Website?</i>
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Mid-October Face2face	Graduate Coordinator Resources Outreach Plan Presentation by Imelda S. Dudley Radius Presentation & Communication Plan by Scott Trippel Website Rubrics Homework: <i>The Do's and Don'ts of Marketing to Graduate Students</i>
Mid-November Face2face	Presentation from one of last year's FLC participant Office of Institutional Effectiveness presentation on Data Trends. Homework: Action Plan
Mid-February Face2face or Independently	First OU Campus Web training. Homework: Action Plan Implementation
Mid-March Face2face or Independently	Second OU Campus Web training Homework: Action Plan Implementation
Mid-April Face2face	Evaluation of the work that has been performed and future plans.

### **Assessment Plan**

At the end of the FLC participants performance in the FLC will be assessed to ensure that they completed the work agreed upon. Participant's websites will be assessed and feedback will be given using the Website Rubric by the end of the fall 2016 semester. Changes addressed on the rubric should be made by May 2017.

### **Budget amount and justification**

I am requesting \$4000 total for this FLC. The money will be distributed evenly amongst participants. Some of the money will be used to buy \$5 Starbucks gift cards for presenters.