Cornell College of Business Graduate Student Synergy Committee

The committee identified key issues of importance and concern for graduate/professional students in the various degree programs within the three Schools (Dyson, Hotel and Johnson) in the College of Business (CCB) and in the four closely related Graduate Fields (Applied Economics and Management, Hotel Administration, Management, and Real Estate). These discussions led to seven recommendations (and multiple sub-recommendations) to the Steering Committee regarding how to address each of these key issues. Most of the recommendations will necessarily take time to address, especially those that involve structural changes or extensive consultation with units outside of CCB, or that require increased faculty or staff capacity to deliver expanded programming.

It is, however, crucial to ensure that continuing and new graduate and professional students enjoy almost immediate payoffs from the creation of the College of Business. Toward that end, accompanying each of the seven recommendations the committee identified ‘quick wins’ that seem achievable for CCB before the close of AY2016-2017. Cumulatively, we identified 19 such opportunities to enhance the value of graduate and professional students’ CCB programs.

Many of the recommendations suggest the need for focused Task Forces comprising memberships of appropriate faculty, staff, and graduate/professional students to address the identified issues and make specific policy/program recommendations to CCB leadership and faculty. CCB leadership will then need to assign the appropriate resources to implement necessary actions. We do not presume to be able to identify the specific individuals who should be involved in each of these task forces, but encourage the CCB leadership to appoint effective groups of faculty, staff, and graduate/professional students to each.

The central recommendations relate to the following issues:

1. Graduate and professional students need a means of exercising voice in academic matters and in community building. A number of School- and Field-level graduate and professional student groups already exist and play a valuable role at those levels. CCB needs to develop a means to scale this up to College level as well, presumably drawing and expanding upon the existing bodies.

2. Although some graduate and professional degree programs – such as the two-year residential MBA – enjoy excellent career services support, others – such as MMH (in SHA) and MPS students (in Real Estate and Applied Economics and Management) – need enhanced career services support. CCB needs to develop a coordinated long-term approach, addressing both student-facing career readiness programming and employer-facing recruitment efforts, and including the range of career paths of CCB students – private sector business, public sector/government, and academia. Career services programming must coordinate effectively among the services provided by the University, CCB, and the three Schools. Networking and training opportunities should be expanded to include all CCB graduate/professional students.

3. If CCB is to solidify its reputation as one of the world’s leading centers for business research, it needs to enhance graduate and professional student (and faculty) access to best-in-class computing resources, data, and library resources. Many cutting-edge resources already exist within CCB or on campus and just require increased visibility and accessibility to students, staff and faculty.
4. Strategic discussion is needed to examine all existing graduate field (research and professional) degree and professional degree programs, as well as courses/curricula, within CCB to identify similarities and disparities, and determine the appropriate future CCB degree portfolio. Particular attention needs to be paid to improving student recruitment and enhancing academic opportunities and outcomes for research graduate and professional students.

5. CCB should be able to improve the cross-School coordination of courses. This can achieve multiple goals: (i) expand course offerings in topics exhibiting unmet demand by students, (ii) eliminate redundant offerings that cover similar material, (iii) ensure that high demand courses are not offered the same day/time, (iv) encourage cross-listing of selected courses and creation of new sections to serve the needs of all degree programs’ students, (v) develop enrollment management mechanisms to hold spaces in courses for particular groups of students, and (vi) create additional opportunities for graduate-level courses, leveraging lectures in advanced undergraduate courses when appropriate.

6. Each of the three Schools has developed exciting international opportunities. Enhanced coordination of those opportunities and of program partnerships abroad can enhance opportunities for graduate and professional students to develop an essential global perspective in their studies.

7. Like most leading business schools, CCB needs to devote serious attention to student recruitment with particular attention to attracting a diverse student body for each degree program.

8. Enhanced communication and coordination of seminars, alumni networking events, and other opportunities across the Schools can improve opportunities for graduate and professional students in each of the degree programs.

9. A vibrant research community requires ample funding to competitively support graduate students on assistantships, fellowships, and scholarships. CCB needs to examine how best to financially support the four primary graduate fields most closely associated with CCB with regard to amount, distribution, and equity of resources necessary to attract a high-quality student body, with particular focus on doctoral programs.

The committee also recommends that the CCB leadership hold an open forum discussion before the end of spring semester 2016 to communicate the Steering Committee’s decisions and specific recommendations from the various CCB committees. Clear, frequent and interactive communication with the extended campus community around the progress being made is essential.