

Graduate Program Recruiting Tips

Graduate College Fall 2022

Through shared leadership and governance with Graduate Council and the Associated Deans for Research and/or Graduate Studies¹ in the disciplinary colleges, the Graduate College has taken many steps to enhance graduate student recruiting, ensuring OSU's ability to attract and graduate well-prepared, high-talent graduate students.

Please note that one of the most important and cost-effective aspects of recruiting is to convert applications to admissions to enrollments (aka, yield). Prospective students that have started an application, applied and/or been admitted are already interested in earning an OSU graduate degree; therefore, stewarding those individuals is critical to the program's recruiting efforts. Understanding why admitted students are not matriculating is relevant to the recruiting process and the reason that some of the tips below specifically address making graduate program offers more competitive. Program-level reports in Slate can be pulled to look at yield trends and reasons given for declining offers. (Contact: Jay Boyington)

Programs that want well-prepared, high-talent students need to be prepared to invest in and personalize their recruiting efforts. These investments include faculty and staff time.

- Slate Recruiting-Application-Admission Platform (Contact: Jay Boyington and Charmaine Motte)
 - The Slate system was intentionally set-up to ensure graduate programs can easily communicate with prospective students, application completers, and incoming students.
 - The Graduate Coordinator for each graduate program can see *any* application that has been started in Slate, prior to the application submission. As soon as a student includes their name and the program to which they are applying, it is visible to the registered coordinator and staff for that program.
 - The Graduate College has communication campaigns that encourages all students to complete their applications and provides general information about OSU's campuses and communities.
 - **Create program-specific**, automatic communication campaigns to encourage application completion, offer acceptance, etc. that complements direct outreach from program faculty and staff.
 - **Highlight** the unique aspects, accomplishments, etc. of the program, faculty, graduates and students.
 - Contact: Charmaine Motte
 - **Set up** a schedule for graduate faculty and/or program staff to contact prospective students about program opportunities.
 - **Have** a personal touch. Sending prospective students to the program website when they contact the program with questions or wanting information is a recipe for failure. If the individual has made the effort to reach out to the program, they are wanting information they were not able to easily find.

- Graduate programs should take advantage of recruiting lists provided by the Graduate College, professional societies and program outreach at professional conferences, etc. Additional contact information can be uploaded into Slate to become a part of the program's recruiting efforts as many are Slate Preferred Partners.
 - The Graduate College is a member of the Council of Graduate Schools that provides a sortable spreadsheet of McNair Scholars² and the National Name Exchange³ registrants.
 - The databases include prospective student names; undergraduate institutions, majors and research experience; contact information and area(s) of interest.
 - In addition, the Graduate College has created a contact list for numerous, potential “feeder” institutions that may direct prospective students to OSU graduate programs with outreach.
 - **Create program-specific**, automatic communication campaigns to provide program information and encourage application submission, completion, offer acceptance, etc. that complements direct outreach from program faculty and staff.
 - **Consider** making visit to neighboring institutions that have sent successful students to the program.
 - Contact: Charmaine Motte
 - **Set up** a schedule for graduate faculty and/or program staff to contact prospective students about program opportunities.
- Competitive Financial Support Offers (Contact: Jodie Kennedy)
 - **Make** multi-year offers: When possible, multi-year offers are encouraged as they are more competitive than one-semester/single-year offers; template offer letters that are provided in the *Graduate Faculty Canvas Community* include optional wording for multi-year offers.
 - **Employ** over University breaks: If a student is continuing in a GTA/GRA position the following semester, assistantships should continue through breaks whenever possible. Programs that terminate assistantships over breaks, like during the winter break, and restart them the following spring semester should understand this impact. Graduate students, like faculty and staff, continue to have living expenses, and a program's ability to recruit well-prepared, talented students is impacted by such non-competitive financial offers. Prospective students do learn of this practice, and it is viewed negatively and not competitive with their other offers.
- Application deadlines (Contact: Matt Lovern)
 - **Review** application deadlines to determine if they are serving the program. Earlier deadlines or recommended deadlines allow graduate programs to have competitive financial offers in front of students sooner and may result in commitments from top applicants.

- **Consider** a March 1 application deadline and make financial offers on a rolling basis if the program does not already. Have Slate updated with new deadlines.
 - Contact: Jay Boyington
 - **Note** that OSU is no longer a signer of the Council of Graduate Schools *April 15 Resolution*. This means that offers of financial support only are required to provide applicants appropriate time to consider offers, and programs do not have until April to know if additional offers are necessary. A minimum consideration time of two weeks or 14 calendar days post official, written notification (e.g., via the Slate portal) is what is required as of Spring 2023.
 - **Utilize** a waitlist to make new offers for financial support if original offers are declined.
 - Contact: Jay Boyington
- Fees vs. Tuition
 - **Consider** reducing college- and program-level fees. Tuition waivers only cover the non-resident and resident tuition. By OSRHE policy, fees cannot be waived. The average costs of graduate student fees are ~\$5,000 annually for 20 credit hours, and prospective and current students and graduate programs are routinely bringing up the amount of OSU student fees. Reducing fees is one way to ensure more competitive financial packages in addition to advocacy for stipend enhancements. The College of Arts and Sciences made this change in 2019. Reducing fees is more equitable than raising stipends when there is a choice, as stipends are affected by the individual's tax situation.
- Program Marketing
 - **Consider** targeted advertising of graduate programs through the unit or disciplinary college's social media channels, formal contracts with entities like Educational Advisory Board (EAB), LinkedIn or Carnegie.
 - Many companies specialize in consumer analytics and data-driven marketing with proven higher education results, and OSU has experience with several of them.
 - Contact: Charmaine Motte
 - **Create** *program-specific*, automatic communication campaigns in Slate for current OSU undergraduate students in specific majors to enhance the visibility of and applications to your graduate program.
 - Contact: Charmaine Motte
 - **Highlight** 360° *Critical Skills for Career Success* microcredentialing program and the *Graduate Student Success Center* in the General Academic Building (GAB).
 - **Consider** the marketing not only the unique aspects of the graduate program but also the distinctive graduate education culture at OSU, where developing the "*the person, the scholar and the professional*" is a strategic initiative.

- **Include** quotes from current students and graduates about their experiences with the 360° program or program elements like the dissertation and research writing offerings, *Three Minute Thesis* competitions, individual development plans (IDPs) and/or the *Beyond Grad School* and *Beyond the Professoriate* web platforms.
 - With six skill areas (Communication, Instruction, Leadership, Management, Research Services and Wellness) across three different engagement levels (gain, apply and synthesize knowledge) leading to digital badges, there is something for everyone.
 - Contact: Carol Powers
- Websites
 - Program-specific websites and university-level, program landing webpages are vitally important to recruiting efforts. Programs should make sure their webpage information is relevant, current and outward facing. Prospective students frequently search for programs and “shop” the top search engine hits for program information. Making sure your webpages are optimized for search engines is critical to having the program appear when related terms are searched.
 - Contact: Disciplinary College Communicators
 - The Graduate College does not have access to these pages.
- Undergraduate Summer Research Programs
 - **Launch** summer research programs for students and/or faculty from schools that previous students typically have graduated from or with institutions the program would like to develop a relationship with for prospective graduate students. Including faculty from regional institutions in the program’s summer research programs can strengthen the relationships with “feeder” institutions.
 - **Hire** faculty from “feeder” institutions to teach summer courses to strengthen relationships with those schools whenever additional instructional capacity is needed.
- Nonresident Award Program Pilot
 - **Participate** in the Nonresident Award Program pilot if the program is not attracting nonresident students on a regular basis. This Graduate College pilot program provides a tuition award to nonresident students to reduce their tuition to the current nonresident, graduate online rate, which is currently \$364/credit hour or only ~\$100 higher than the resident rate. This is a savings of \$515.75/credit hour.
 - Contact: Matt Lovern
- Online Graduate Programs
 - Offer online versions of degrees to increase enrollments. Nonresident students in online graduate programs receive a nonresident, graduate online rate, which is currently \$364/credit hour or only ~\$100 higher than the resident rate. This is a

savings of \$515.75/credit hour or \$15,472.50 for a 30-credit hour master's degree program.

- Contact: Chris Ormsbee

- Graduate Program Culture
 - How a program treats its graduate students is critical to degree completion, happy and successful alums, and its ability to recruit future students. An annual review of the graduate program is recommended to determine if the curriculum continues to effectively serve students, policies and practices are up to date and follow current best practices, students are completing degrees in a timely manner, student and/or graduate faculty issues are addressed in a fair and equitable manner, program climate supports student success, professional development, career advancement, etc.
 - Current students and alums can be your most effective recruiters; therefore, the graduate program culture is key to attracting and retaining graduate students and graduate faculty mentors.
- **Program Coordinator Incentive**
 - Given the significant time and effort required for Graduate Program Coordinators to oversee the successful recruiting of high-talent, well-prepared graduate students in addition to matriculation responsibilities, it is recommended that course release(s), monthly stipend and/or summer salary is provided, depending on the size of the graduate program, to faculty taking on the coordinator role. For most programs, these responsibilities should not be considered part of a normal service load for faculty with a workload distribution that includes 0-20% service.

While advocacy continues for enhanced, financial support for graduate students, the original work done on the financial packages in 2012 has not been sustained, and OSU competitiveness has stagnated. This makes recruiting efforts that take advantage of these opportunities even more important to program efforts. With the introduction of new University strategic initiatives, all of us in the graduate education enterprise will need to continue to advocate to increase graduate assistantship stipends and reduce fees.

¹Please make sure disciplinary college ADRs are included in discussion that involve resource allocations, etc.

²The McNair Scholars Program is a federal TRIO program funded at 151 institutions across the United States and Puerto Rico by the U.S. Department of Education. It is designed to prepare undergraduate students for doctoral studies through involvement in research and other scholarly activities. McNair participants are either first-generation college students with financial need, or members of a group that is traditionally underrepresented in graduate education and have demonstrated strong academic potential. The goal of the McNair Scholars Program is to increase graduate degree awards for students from underrepresented segments of society.

³The National Name Exchange was established to help match graduate schools with students from historically underrepresented racial and ethnic groups interested in graduate education.

Endorsed by Graduate Council, October 28, 2022