

Strategic Planning for Graduate Studies at Cal Poly Humboldt, 2024-2030

Adopted Fall 2024 by Grad Council

Overview

This strategic plan for graduate studies at Cal Poly Humboldt has been developed by the Graduate Planning Task Force in close collaboration with The Council for Graduate Studies and broad campus input.

This plan incorporates extensive campus input to realize a vision that elevates graduate education at Cal Poly Humboldt. It will serve as a guide for the Dean of Graduate Studies, the Academic Affairs Leadership Team, and the Graduate Studies Council over the next five years in the continuous development of existing graduate programs and the implementation of new ones.

Provost's Charge to Task Force

To develop a five-year strategic plan (2024-2030) for graduate studies at Cal Poly Humboldt. The plan will center students' success and guide the Office of Graduate Studies and campus leadership on investments and decisions for graduate education over the next five years. The strategic plan will outline our goals, objectives, initiatives, and priorities to support graduate education. It will be guided by the unique culture at Cal Poly Humboldt, graduate policies of the CSU, and CSU Chancellor's Office policies, as well as the relevant external changes in the national and international graduate education landscape. The strategic plan should include a review and recommendations in a minimum of the following areas:

- Purpose, vision, and values for graduate studies at Cal Poly Humboldt
- Graduate student cultures
- Alignment of existing graduate programs with student interest and industry/workforce and evaluate demand and opportunities for future graduate programs
- Graduate admission process
- Graduate program enrollment/targets
- Graduate program business plan/resource allocation
- Equity in graduate faculty compensation

Committee Members

- Anthony Baker Ortiz –
- Cindy Bumgarner – Dean of the College of Extended Education & Global Engagement
- Kyle Morgan – Scholarly Communications and Digital Scholarship Librarian
- Terri Fisher – Graduate Student Specialist
- Janet Winston – Professor of English, Graduate Coordinator
- Amy Sprowles – Faculty Associate Dean of Undergraduate, Graduate Programs, Associate Professor of Biological Sciences
- Andrew Stubblefield – Professor of Hydrology and Watershed Management, Graduate Coordinator

- Carmen Works – Associate Vice President of Academic Programs and Dean of Graduate Studies
- Jenn Capps – Provost
- Kaitlin Reed – Assistant Professor of Native American Studies, Graduate Coordinator
- Margaret Lang – Professor of Environmental Resources Engineering
- Tristan Gleason – Associate Professor School of Education
- Pricilla Ceja – Graduate Student Representative
- Rouhollah Aghasaleh – Associate Professor School of Education
- Jenni Robinson Reisinger – Registrar
- Aolany Navas-Griggs – Director of Admissions

In mid-semester of Fall 2023, the Provost issued a call for members to form a task force to dedicate to strategic planning for Graduate Studies. This initiative aims to guide the campus to elevate graduate education at Cal Poly Humboldt, where approximately 70% of the students are undergraduates.

The OAA leadership team selected committee members for the taskforce that represented the campus community. The Provost convened the group in Fall 2023 and gave them the charge. Amy Sprowles and Carmen Bustos-Works co-chaired the committee, with Terri Fisher providing administrative support.

The committee met several times throughout the year and engaged in cross-conversations with the Graduate Council. The committee crafted and administered multiple surveys, hosted open forums, and received feedback from Graduate Council members. This feedback was meticulously examined for common themes and overarching goals to generate this document.

This strategic planning document will guide the work of the Graduate Council, the Dean of Graduate Studies and any new graduate programs over the next five years. Many of the objectives outlined in the Provost’s charge will be accomplished as tasks or strategies to reach our goals within this period.

Cal Poly Humboldt

Cal Poly Humboldt is the third polytechnical university in the California State University (CSU) system, the largest public university system in the United States with 23 campuses. Humboldt is nestled in the heart of Northern California's majestic redwood coast and is the northernmost institution in the CSU system. It seamlessly blends academic rigor with a commitment to sustainability and environmental stewardship.

Known for its intimate class sizes and personalized education, Cal Poly Humboldt offers 13 Graduate programs at the master’s degree level. These programs span across all three academic colleges and include:

- Applied Anthropology (MA)
- Biology (MS)
- MBA in Business Administration
- Education (MA)
- Engineering and Community Practice (MS)
- Environmental Systems (MS)
- Environment and Community (MA)
- English (MA)

- Kinesiology (MS)
- Natural Resources (MS)
- Public Sociology (MA)
- Psychology (MA)
- Social Work (MSW)

These programs represent a range of academic and professional degrees, all underscored by a hands-on, experiential learning approach with culminating experiences.

The university's location in Arcata provides students with a unique opportunity to engage directly with the environment through research projects in the surrounding ecosystems, community-building activities, and recreational activities such as hiking, kayaking, and bird-watching.

The faculty at Cal Poly Humboldt are not only educators but also mentors who are deeply committed to their students' success. They bring a wealth of knowledge and real-world experience to the classroom, research, and projects, fostering a dynamic and interactive learning environment. The university's commitment to sustainability and social justice is evident in its curriculum, where many programs integrate principles of ecological responsibility and environmental ethics.

Cal Poly Humboldt is increasingly recognized as a hub for research excellence in the CSU System. Our faculty, staff, and student researchers are at the forefront of addressing some of the world's most pressing challenges through innovative approaches. These leading scholars collaborate across disciplines and forge partnerships with industry, non-profit organizations, and government agencies to bring their solutions to life. Last year alone, researchers submitted \$152 million in grant proposals and secured over \$52 million in new awards, with the majority directly supporting our students financially and through experiential learning opportunities.

Life for graduate students at Cal Poly Humboldt is vibrant and inclusive, with a growing sense of community. The campus serves as a hub of activity, offering frequent events, performances, and seminars that enrich the student experience.

Moreover, Cal Poly Humboldt's dedication to diversity, equity, and inclusion is woven into the fabric of the university. It strives to create a welcoming environment where all students feel valued and supported. This commitment is reflected in various initiatives and resources aimed at fostering an inclusive campus culture, building bridges of care, and elevating the sense of belonging, success, and well-being for all community members. These efforts are aimed at dismantling structurally oppressive policies and practices while supporting the development of equitable policies and practices.

Graduate Education at Cal Poly Humboldt

Cal Poly Humboldt offers 13 graduate programs focused on innovative research and 21st-century polytechnic education. These programs span a wide array of disciplines, including the sciences, natural resources, arts, humanities, and professional studies. While the required units for each program vary, a minimum of 30 units of graduate work is required.

Each department has a Faculty Graduate Coordinator who is responsible for administering their

departments graduate programs and ensuring they comply with the policies of Graduate Studies.

Graduate programs in each of the three colleges are unique, feature rigorous academics and once-in-a-lifetime experiences, each with a distinct emphasis that makes it truly unique.

A culminating experience is required for the completion of a master's degree program. The university recognizes the following types of culminating experiences: theses, graduate projects and comprehensive examinations. Each graduate program permits one or more of the culminating experiences, as described below. When multiple options are offered, the specific type of culminating experience is determined upon approval of the student's formal program.

Regardless of its form, a graduate culminating experience will test the range of subject matter covered in the student's graduate program.

Cal Poly Humboldt offers several blended pathways, often referred to as 4+1 programs, which provide an accelerated route to a graduate degree by allowing students to obtain their bachelor's and master's degrees concurrently.

Vision

Over the next five years, Cal Poly Humboldt will bolster the Office of Graduate Studies and establish a dedicated graduate school. This initiative aims to empower individual programs to offer relevant and sustainable curricula that align with student interests and produce skilled professionals to meet California's workforce needs. Cal Poly Humboldt is committed to helping our graduate students achieve their professional and academic aspirations.

Purpose (Mission) Statement

“Graduate education at Cal Poly Humboldt fosters an inclusive community where all students can thrive. By providing transformative programs, we equip students with the knowledge of their disciplines to advance research knowledge and professional practices and positively impact our communities, state, and world.”

Values of Graduate Studies

- Fostering innovative and creative scholarly activity through rigorous research in diverse forms and modalities.
- Encouraging free and critical inquiry, problem-posing, and praxis-oriented approaches to learning.
- Promoting local, regional, and global community engagement through collaborative, community/placed-based perspectives.
- Advocating for equity, social, and environmental justice through ethical practices and actions.
- Ensuring graduate education accessibility for a diverse range of students

Goals

The goals and strategies listed below have been developed to guide efforts by the Graduate Studies Office, the Graduate Council, and affiliated departments and programs to support and reach the vision developed through the strategic planning process. Central to this guidance is the development of a clear organizational structure that fosters consistent collaboration among these groups. Ultimately, the Dean of Graduate Studies, in consultation with the Provost, will be responsible for authorizing and implementing all strategies and goals described below to reach our vision for elevating graduate education at Cal Poly Humboldt.

Goal A. Ensure Academic Excellence and Sustainable Graduate Programming

Academic excellence is essential to graduate education. Humboldt is known for its hands-on learning and our goal is to expand educational opportunities to be flexible, accessible and align with workforce and employment trends and create programs that are accessible and flexible for students. This will be done by embracing both specialized and integrated knowledge, and the creation of a scholarly environment. We will continuously evaluate demand and opportunities to develop future graduate programs and business plans that meet student interests and industry needs.

Table 1. Strategies to accomplish Goal A

Recommended Lead	Strategy	Timeline
Academic departments in collaboration with CEEGE	Utilize the College of Extended Education & Global Engagement (CEEGE) to incubate new and innovative graduate degree programs.	Planning
Associate Deans, Office of Graduate Studies	Develop a common formula for compensation for graduate faculty involving associate deans in collaboration with graduate studies.	In progress
Office of Graduate Studies, Graduate Council, CEEGE, Enrollment Management	Enrollment: Collaborate with admissions and marcomms to build an outreach and recruitment plan for the Cal Poly Humboldt Graduate students that builds national visibility for all our graduate programs to ensure a healthy and sustainable enrollment plan (program reviews will determine if graduate programs are meeting their enrollment targets). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Establish Communications & Outreach workgroup within Graduate Council 	In progress
Office of Graduate Studies, Graduate Council, CEEGE,	Recruitment: Collaborate with admissions and advising to build out the Slate platform to build an efficient admissions process that leverages the latest in admissions and enrollment management	In progress

Enrollment Management	strategies in yielding diverse and academically ready new graduate cohorts annually.	
Graduate Council, Office of Graduate Studies	Update the graduate faculty handbook to establish a set of best practices for graduate student mentorship.	Ongoing
Office of Graduate Studies	Develop infrastructure to support program and curriculum development for graduate education at Cal Poly Humboldt that aligns with the vision, values and purpose of graduate education.	Planning
Office of Graduate Studies, Graduate Council	Effectively manage graduate student enrollment by adhering to sustainable, realistic enrollment targets (i.e. cost analysis, fiscally self-sustaining, feasibility of incoming student cohorts, student success metrics, etc.).	Planning
Office of the Registrar, Office of Graduate Studies	Create Degree Audit Report for Students (DARS) plans for graduate students, including degree planning functionality.	Planning

Goal B: Enhance Graduate Student Financial Support

Provide comprehensive financial assistance, including scholarships, fellowships, assistantships, and research funding, to make graduate studies at Cal Poly Humboldt more accessible and affordable for students.

Table 2. Strategies to accomplish Goal B

Recommended Lead	Strategy	Status
Office of Graduate Studies	The Dean of Graduate Studies will apply for relevant external funding opportunities and manage grants that are awarded as needed.	Ongoing
Office of Graduate Studies	Collaborate with SPF, financial aid, and the career center to host semester workshops for graduate professional development.	Planning
Office of Graduate Studies, Residence Life	The Office of Graduate Studies will work with Residence Life to Identify and develop graduate student housing.	Planning

	Office of Graduate Studies staff assist students and faculty in developing successful applications to the Chancellor’s Office Doctoral Incentive Program (CDIP), Sally Casanova Fellowship, and other graduate student opportunities.	Ongoing
Office of Graduate Studies, CEEGE, Advancement	Develop support for international students and undocumented students.	Planning
	Graduate studies supplement 25% of work-study awards in collaboration with the financial aid office.	Ongoing
	Continued participation in the Western Regional Graduate Program (WRGP) to provide affordable pathways for out-of-state, west coast students.	Planning

Goal C. Expand Professional Development, Career Support, & Networking Opportunities for Graduate Students

This goal focuses on creating a comprehensive system to provide professional development, career support, and networking opportunities for graduate students.

Table 3. Strategies to accomplish Goal C

Recommended Lead	Strategy	Status
	Develop a dedicated physical space for graduate students	Planning
Office of Graduate Studies	Enhance Onboarding and Orientation Programs by improving the student onboarding and orientation structures for incoming graduate students, including in-person and online engagement. Explore structure for student experience mentors to bridge gaps in student services during summer months.	Ongoing
	Develop meaningful networking opportunities to foster connections among graduate students, alumni, faculty, and the broader community.	Ongoing

	The Office of Graduate Studies will enhance partnerships and collaborations with key stakeholders including career services, the library to coordinate workshops, seminars, mentorship programs, advising, and other initiatives to equip graduate students with the skills necessary for success in academia and beyond.	

Goal D. Enhance capacity for the Office of Graduate Studies to deliver quality support.

This goal highlights the need for the centralized Office of Graduate Studies to be both more visible and better resourced to meet the growing needs of graduate education on this campus.

Table 4. Strategies to accomplish Goal D

Recommended lead	Strategy	Status
	Staff the Office of Graduate Studies to address the strategies and priorities described in this document.	Planning
	Establish reporting infrastructure with Institutional Research Analytics & Reporting (IRAR) for ongoing assessment of graduate education and equitable student outcomes (e.g., graduate education admissions, enrollment, and completion dashboards).	Planning
	Create and support opportunities for Joint Programs to Offer Ph.D. or Doctorate programs.	

- Planning Documents - Please see the shared drive for this project for all documents. Graduate Studies Task Force.

Acknowledgments

The completion of this Strategic Plan for Graduate Studies at Cal Poly Humboldt represents a significant milestone in shaping the future of our graduate programs. I have complete confidence that with this plan, our collective energy and dedication will propel Cal Poly Humboldt graduate studies to new heights over the next five years.

This achievement would not have been possible without the exceptional leadership of **Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Dr. Jenn Capps**, whose vision and guidance were instrumental in steering this initiative. I also extend my heartfelt gratitude to **Faculty Associate**

Dean of Undergraduate and Graduate Programs Dr. Amy Sprowles, whose commitment and expertise greatly enriched this process.

A special thank you to the **Strategic Planning Committee** and its sub-committees, as well as to the students who served as a guiding force throughout this endeavor. Your insights, dedication, and passion for advancing graduate studies have been truly inspiring.

I also want to acknowledge the invaluable support of **Administrative Support Coordinator Julie Steward**, whose coordination of planning events and open house-style feedback sessions ensured the success of this collaborative effort.

Finally, I wish to recognize and deeply thank **Graduate Studies Specialist Terri Fisher**, whose tireless work and unwavering dedication were essential to bringing this plan to fruition.

It is an honor to work alongside such a talented and committed community. Together, we will continue to advance excellence in graduate education at Cal Poly Humboldt.

Sincerely,
Carmen Bustos-Works
Dean of Graduate Studies