

# Graduate Education Strategic Plan, 2015-2017

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# Graduate Education Strategic Plan

## Vision

Graduate education is the hallmark of a research university. In defining the technological university of the 21st century, the Georgia Institute of Technology will demonstrate the value of advanced degrees in the global knowledge economy.

- Our master's students will move industry, government, and social enterprise forward through their depth of knowledge and professional skills.
- Our doctoral students will become world leaders in research, innovation, and public service.

The campus will come alive with the creative energy of the best new minds exploring the frontiers of science and technology, and improving the human condition through progress and service.

## Mission

The mission of graduate education at Georgia Tech is to provide the content, stimulus, and environment for graduate students to become leaders in the global knowledge economy.

## Guiding Principles

The following principles guide the graduate curriculum:

1. **Improve the human condition.** Problem relevance and engagement with global challenges is at the heart of Georgia Tech graduate education.
2. **Foster student ownership of the educational experience.** Without active engagement in their own graduate education, students will not become the global leaders Georgia Tech wants to produce.
3. **Nourish interdisciplinary thinking and skills.** Our students must be accustomed to addressing problems that flow across disciplinary boundaries and working with teams that combine concepts, expertise, and methods to resolve them.
4. **Educate for flexibility and lifelong learning.** The graduate education community is committed to preparing our students to anticipate, embrace, and lead during periods of change.

The following principles build the graduate education community.

5. **Emphasize mutual respect and inclusion among all participants.** Disrespect for students, faculty, or staff undermines the experience of everyone.
6. **Provide mentoring and development opportunities.** Everyone on campus must be devoted to developing the capacities and knowledge that graduate students should possess by the time they graduate.

- 7. Support work/life balance.** The graduate community at Georgia Tech must provide students with a supportive environment, leaving room for them to be healthy, mentally and physically, with strong social relationships and family lives.

## Graduate Education at Georgia Tech

Graduate students are the fastest-growing group in the Georgia Tech community. As of Fall 2015, they made up 40 percent of the student body. Nearly 6,500 graduate students are studying on the Atlanta campus, while another 3,400 are studying in online or in international programs. Two thirds are earning master's degrees, and one third are earning doctoral degrees.

Graduate students play key roles in Georgia Tech's workforce, with 3,500 of them serving as research or teaching assistants across campus. They co-author thousands of publications with their mentors and contribute to educating virtually every Georgia Tech undergraduate student. After graduation, Georgia Tech graduate students move into jobs in academe, industry, government and nonprofits, where master's graduates earn median salaries of nearly \$80,000. Georgia Tech's graduate students are making significant contributions to the economy of the state of Georgia and beyond. Many graduate students stay to work in Georgia, and over the past five years, Tech's graduate students have been listed as inventors on more than 140 U.S. patents.

Without graduate students, life would change for every faculty member at Georgia Tech. Professors would no longer have the opportunity to teach in their specialties and to mentor and collaborate with the next generation of scholars in their fields, sharing both teaching and research. Georgia Tech's partners in industry and government would not come here to find future employees. The Institute's research connections around the world would be weakened, since former students are often present collaborators. In short, Tech would no longer be positioned to define the technological university of the 21st century. The intellectual vitality of the campus depends critically on attracting the best and brightest graduate students, sharing knowledge and learning with them, and sending them into the world to be leaders.

## Strategic Goals

The goals of graduate education are derived from Georgia Tech's strategic plan and vision, but they have been revised to focus on graduate students and programs.

### **Goal 1: Deliver an educational experience that is among the best in the world.**

For Georgia Tech to define the technological university of the 21st century, we must be leaders in graduate education. We compete for the best students with other institutions, and we must have something special to offer those who come here. Based on our guiding principles, we want to provide a

campus that is welcoming and that offers fertile ground for students to grow through their graduate educational experiences.

## **Goal 2: Sustain and enhance the Institute's excellence in scholarship and research with innovative programs and exemplary students.**

For Georgia Tech to push the frontiers of knowledge forward, bright, creative students must be engaged in the effort. Graduate education should focus on forefront topics and drive learning with global challenges. Innovation in graduate education is crucial to achieving this goal.

## **Goal 3: Ensure that innovation, entrepreneurship, and public service are fundamental characteristics of our graduates.**

Georgia Tech graduates, both master's and doctoral, should have the ability to think and act strategically when it comes to challenges in their fields and be able to identify problems they can contribute to solving. They should be able to assemble, and actively participate in, the interdisciplinary teams that are needed to address the social, environmental, ethical, political, and technical aspects of global challenges.

## **Goal 4: Expand our global footprint and influence to ensure that we are graduating good global citizens.**

Graduate education at Georgia Tech is already expanding our global footprint through international joint programs and through the large number of international students enrolled in courses at the Atlanta campus. The Institute needs to attract students from a wider variety of countries beyond the United States and do more to prepare all students — domestic and international — for global careers. Graduates need to leave campus with awareness of the diversity of business and policy environments in different countries; with an appreciation and respect for profound differences among cultures; and with appropriate levels of humility in the face of growing economic capability across the globe. U.S. students should have the opportunity and support to do research abroad.

## **Goal 5: Relentlessly pursue institutional effectiveness.**

Quality of life for faculty and graduate students alike depends on simple, effective administration of graduate programs. Whether the matter at hand is admissions, registration, fellowship administration, thesis/dissertation support, or graduation, processes should be electronically accessible, easy to understand, and simple to use. Well-analyzed administrative and survey data should support continual improvement in graduate student achievement and success.

## **Goal 6: Maximize the accessibility and affordability of graduate education at Georgia Tech.**

In graduate education, Georgia Tech is creating the future leadership teams for global industry, government, and academe. It is essential that our graduates are as diverse as the environments with which they will engage. Our graduate programs should be open to talent regardless of economic background or other barriers that can interfere with access to education. Financial support should be stable and match the expected length of programs of study.

### **Key Strategies**

The graduate education community has identified seven action areas for priority attention over the next few years. Each strategy contributes to several of the goals just described.

#### **Strategy 1: Mentor graduate students effectively.**

The faculty mentor is the central figure in graduate education, but the entire graduate community needs to be invested in providing effective mentoring for each student. Master's students must receive direct attention from Georgia Tech's world-class faculty, with enough interaction inside and outside their coursework so that they catch the essence of scholarship and its importance in their fields. Doctoral students need productive, collegial relationships with their advisors. Over time, faculty mentors should ensure that doctoral students have the opportunities to pursue professional development and experience the scholarly interaction they need to become independent, creative scholars.

#### **Strategy 2: Develop professional skills.**

Georgia Tech graduate program alumni should possess excellent communications skills in written, verbal, electronic, and nonverbal forms. They should be prepared to teach, mentor, and train, whether that is in a classroom, in the workplace, or in their home communities. Every graduate student should have the opportunity to build his or her skills in writing grant applications and have the chance to learn the skills that entrepreneurs and community leaders need. Graduate students at Georgia Tech should understand the ethical context of their present and future work and be able to thoughtfully carry out their responsibilities to others in the workplace — and to society as a whole. The Institute should offer well-organized professional development tracks and invest in facilities and spaces where graduate students can gather and access information and services.

#### **Strategy 3: Recruit and support a diverse graduate student population.**

Georgia Tech's graduate programs should all be inclusive, providing a welcoming environment for both women and men, respecting diverse cultural and economic backgrounds. The Georgia Tech experience should help all students develop the habit of dismantling their prejudices and meeting others as equals in team efforts and work environments. A growing base of applications from the best and brightest

students requires active recruitment efforts, which reach out to a wide range of U.S. college students and to those from Latin America, Africa, and other parts of the world that are underrepresented in our graduate student population.

#### **Strategy 4: Provide enabling levels of financial support.**

Graduate research and teaching assistants count on their stipends to be able to cover the cost of living throughout their degree program. Stipend amounts need to support this goal and allow students to avoid undue financial burdens after graduating. Long-term funding commitments and subsidized health insurance are also critical. Doctoral students generally need five years of stipend and tuition support to complete their degrees. To consolidate completion rates and to successfully recruit the best students, Georgia Tech needs to make a concerted effort to increase the number of full fellowships, that is, those that provide tuition, fees, and competitive stipends for a significant portion of a doctoral student's educational career.

#### **Strategy 5: Expand awareness and preparation for broader careers.**

Historically, doctoral students were primarily trained for academic careers. However, more than half of Georgia Tech's doctoral students do not enter jobs in universities. On the one hand, the graduate education community must ensure that doctoral students are well informed and well supported in their search for academic positions. On the other, this community needs to be sure that students also understand the pros and cons of careers in industry, academe, government, and nonprofits. Students need to be prepared for the specific challenges of finding and accepting positions in a variety of institutions.

#### **Strategy 6: Build professionally-oriented master's programs.**

Master's programs help the campus maintain its focus on relevance and connection to use. A professionally-oriented master's program is designed to train students for a specific career pathway in industry, government, or nonprofits. The program maintains a close relationship with the potential employers of its graduates and focuses the curriculum on the knowledge, skills, and experience students need to be effective in the workplace. These programs, which may be offered on campus or online, are windows into the practical side of the global challenges the Institute wants students to address.

#### **Strategy 7: Build loyalty by connecting alumni to current students.**

Connections to graduate program alumni start with creating a sense of identity and loyalty while graduate students are on campus. Current graduate students need career advice and job connections from Georgia Tech alumni in Atlanta, the United States, and around the world. Connections that begin with graduate students can expand into research and public service opportunities for the Institute.

**The office of the Vice Provost for Graduate Education and Faculty Development is committed to focusing on these priorities over the coming three years.**

*The Graduate Education strategic planning process identified a number of specific actions that would support these goals, and its six working groups made many specific recommendations. The strategies*

*identified here have been distilled through input on priorities gathered in town halls and an online form. A longer list of potential actions and initiatives appears at [grad.gatech.edu/strategic-plan](http://grad.gatech.edu/strategic-plan).*