
Welcome to the Graduate School

Welcome from the Dean

As the dean of the Graduate School, it is indeed my pleasure to welcome you to Duke University and to the Graduate School. You are joining us at a time of exciting changes, as our community of scholars embarks upon the fulfillment of a new strategic plan with several components geared toward the improvement of graduate education. For example, plans to establish more competitive financial packages for students have been implemented, and an expansion of interdisciplinary programs seeks to capitalize and build on Duke's many strengths while providing exciting new opportunities for graduate students.

Our primary goal in this handbook is to provide you with information that will help you get started on your graduate career, but I would also like to take this opportunity to describe the mission and functions of the Graduate School. We are a group of individuals who help oversee all aspects of your graduate education and who are totally dedicated to your well-being and education. Many of our activities are described in detail in this handbook; I encourage you to visit the Graduate School and our Web site, <http://gradschool.duke.edu/>, to get to know us better.

The overall mission of the Graduate School is to provide a research-based graduate training that will help you learn the analytical skills that will enable you to be future leaders in a wide variety of professions. Although many of our graduates enter academia, the education you will obtain here is intended to be applicable to any job that involves the discovery, creative application, and teaching of new knowledge. The Graduate School exists in large measure to support the research and educational missions of a faculty interested in the frontiers of knowledge, and in so doing, to advocate for the primacy of scholarship throughout the University.

The Graduate School serves several other roles as well:

(1) The Graduate School is charged with providing quality control for all aspects of graduate education at Duke and establishes policies and standards that define good practice in all graduate programs, high quality in curriculum, and excellence in student selection.

(2) We strive to improve the quality of our programs through a variety of mechanisms, including provision of funds to recruit the best and most diverse students, regular reviews of programs, and special attention given to the promotion of diversity and intellectual collegiality in each of our programs. The special needs and issues that pertain but are not limited to international students, students from underrepresented groups, and women in certain disciplines receive our regular

attention. The Graduate School also assumes an important role in promoting integrity in research and scholarship through courses in ethical conduct of research.

(3) The Graduate School serves as the primary advocate for the need of graduate students to be students, so that any service roles they may serve in the University in order to obtain financial support will be treated as secondary to their need to have time and adequate resources to engage in graduate study. The Graduate School works hard to find the financial and intellectual resources that enable students to successfully complete their degree programs in a timely fashion.

(4) The Graduate School is committed to playing an active role in supporting all aspects of graduate student life, including those that are not precisely “academic” in nature. We recognize that the quality of a student’s overall life experience while in graduate school is critical to successful completion of graduate training and to a lifetime of work that can make good use of that training. The Graduate School works with appropriate student groups and support offices to promote the interests of graduate students in such areas as financial aid, health care, counseling, housing, and child care. The Graduate School also provides professional development opportunities to explore academic and nonacademic career prospects for recipients of graduate degrees.

Again, I extend my sincere welcome and encourage you to take advantage of Duke’s many social and educational opportunities. Take some time to explore this marvelously diverse place; it will broaden your horizons and provide some balance to your life. All of you, no matter what your major or discipline, will be asked to think in new ways, to be creative, and to participate in a community of scholars that will inevitably open your mind to new ideas. The opportunities, challenges, and fun times that you will find here will lead you through a unique and defining time in your life. We at the Graduate School are here to help you and to provide you with the highest quality education. Don’t hesitate to let us know how we can help.

Jo Rae Wright, Ph.D.

Dean of the Graduate School and Vice Provost