

# Doctoral Education at KU

## Opportunities and Challenges

January 2011



# National Challenges in Graduate Education

## The Path Forward

*The Future of Graduate Education in the United States* (<http://www.fgereport.org/>)

ETS/CGS 2010

# National Challenges in Graduate Education

Students are less-prepared for college and for graduate programs

*math skills*

*reading skills*

*writing skills*

ETS/CGS 2010

# National Challenges in Graduate Education

International students are going elsewhere

Decrease from 25.1% in 2000 to 20.0% in 2006  
studying in the U.S.

U.S. institutions are competing for students in  
a more global market

ETS/CGS 2010

# Who Completes Graduate Degrees?

- Attrition from doctoral programs 40 – 50% in some programs
- Time to degree lengthy
  - under 25% within 5 years
  - 45% within 7 years
  - 30% longer than 7 years

# Where do doctoral degree recipients work?

- 50% in academia
- 50% in industry, business, government & non-profit realms

Full time (tenure-track) academic positions decreasing

# Where do doctoral degree recipients work?

- Median age of entry into tenure-track positions in humanities:
  - 34 years for those graduating from well-funded programs
- Post-secondary education positions growing, but tenure-track decreasing
- Industry & Government may require specific training

# Recommendations for Universities

- Improve completion rates & time to degree
- Provide clear career pathways
- Prepare future faculty
- Prepare future professionals
- Identify talented undergraduates



# Recommendations for Government

- COMPETES doctoral training program to fund doctoral education
- Federal support for recommended fields of study
- International collaborative programs & changes to visa programs

# Recommendations for Industry

- Business/university partnerships
  - Establish fellowships
  - Promote participation of underrepresented groups
- Better communicate the educational skills needed

# KU Doctoral Program Data: Range of Ave. Time To Degree over 10 years

Humanities	7.9 – 9.4	Business	4.6 – 7.6
Social Sciences	6.0 – 7.5	Music	5.2 – 7.5
Natural Sciences	5.8 – 6.4	Arts	7.4 – 14.5
Engineering	5.4 – 8.8	Pharmacy	4.9 – 5.9
Social Welfare	4.2 – 11.9	Education	6.0 – 7.2

# Graduate Student Satisfaction Survey Results

Students identified issues in:

- Funding
- Teaching loads
- Inconsistent advising and mentoring
- Curricular “bottle-necks”
- Space

How are graduate students Funded at KU?

# KU Funding Model

Funding for doctoral education at KU decentralized

- GTA funding determined by department/school
- GRA funding determined by PI/department
- Fellowship – small amounts and historically spent in non-strategic fashion

# GTA/GRA headcount comparisons

FY2008

- GRA: 10% of KU graduate students
- GTA: 16.2% of KU graduate students

Puts KU at the bottom of “AAU-16” in  
GTA/GRA funding

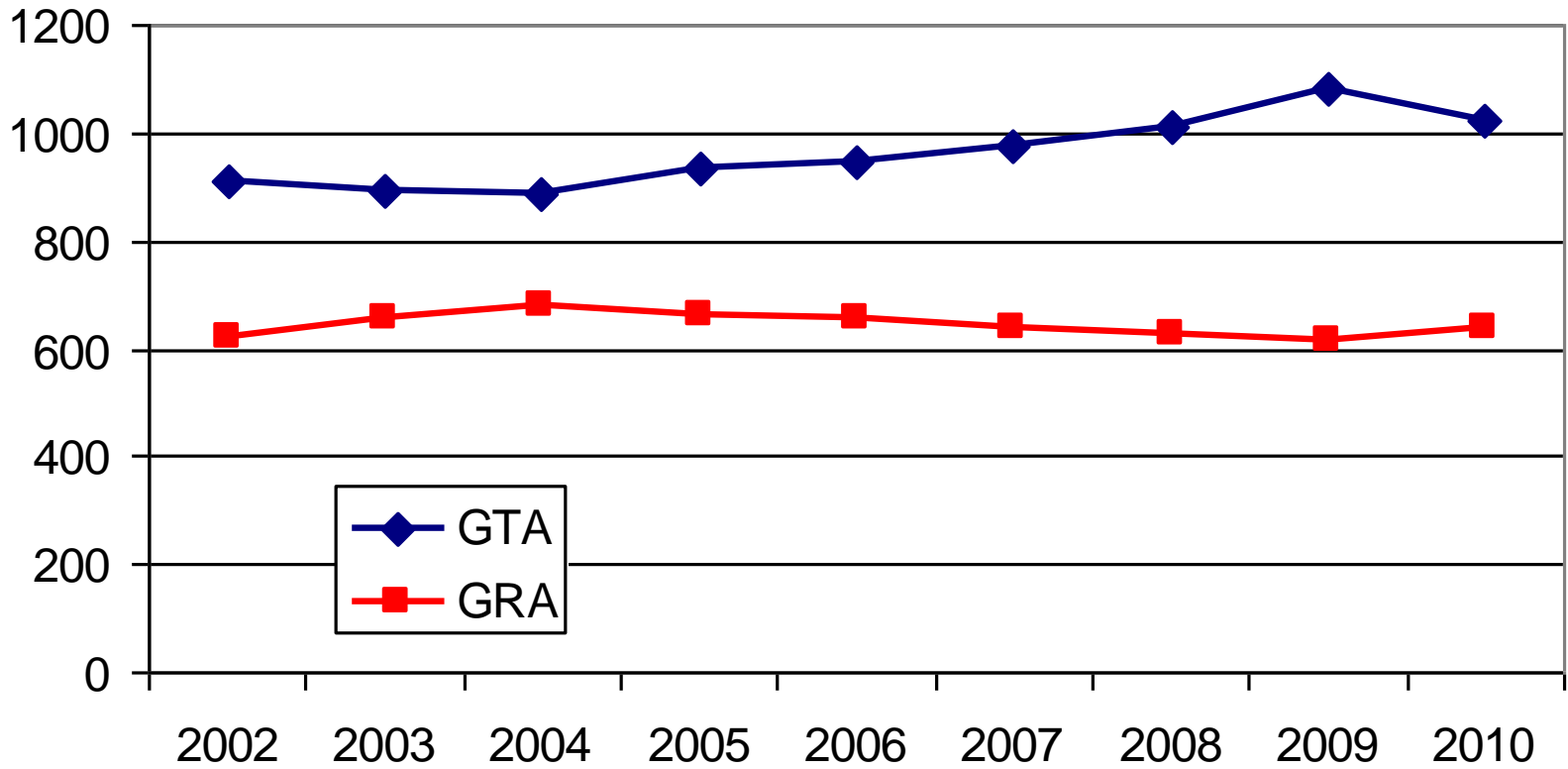
# GRA positions over time

As research portfolio rises, number of GRA positions remains flat



Fig. 16

### Graduate Assistant Head Count



# Problems with KU Funding Model

- Burdened/overrun by needs unrelated to doctoral training (e.g., staffing undergraduate courses)
- Students recruited for purposes other than doctoral training
- GTA workloads heavy and detrimental to completion

# Problems with KU Funding Model

- New flexibility in GTA/GRA funding model just beginning at the department level
- Departments need support to offer comprehensive funding packages to recruit students, including
  - First year/dissertation year fellowships
  - GTA / GRA offers
  - Encourage students to apply for outside fellowship support when possible

# Problems with KU Funding Model

- Peer institutions are providing 5-6 year funding packages for doctoral students
- Competition hampers our recruitment efforts

# Challenges in Curricula and Mentoring

Departments must choose appropriate size of doctoral programs

...based upon what is best for doctoral training rather than other departmental pressures

# Challenges in Curricula and Mentoring

Departments should make good use of their administrative structure

Define the roles of

- Director of Graduate Studies
- Admissions Committee
- Graduate advising Committee
- Graduate Student Organization

# Challenges in Curricula and Mentoring

Departments must choose and agree on the scope of graduate programs

...based on fields/subfields of research specialty

# Challenges in Curricula and Mentoring

Departments must be active in doctoral student recruitment

- targeting prospects through first contact to application, admission and matriculation
- and focusing on agreed-upon areas of specialization



# Challenges in Curricula and Mentoring

Departments must be active in doctoral student advising

- actively mentoring students through the course-work, comprehensive examination and dissertation stages
- annual evaluation of students

# Pilot Projects

## University Graduate Fellowship (UGF) Program

- focusing on recruitment and time to degree

# Pilot Projects

## Graduate Studies Dissertation Fellowship Program

- focusing on completion and curricular reform

# Recommendations

## Measuring success of programs

- Admissions data
- Progress to Degree data
- Satisfaction Surveys
- Completion Surveys

## Use of data at department level

# Recommendations

- Active *recruitment* critical
- All programs need clear *goals* and *missions* for doctoral education – the best programs agree on the training goals

# Recommendations

- Recognizing the curricular “*bottle-necks*” to completion
- Best practices in active *mentoring*

# Recommendations

- Re-think funding for graduate education
- Reduce GTA workload
- Set appropriate size of doctoral programs
- Set completion and outcomes expectations

# Office of Graduate Studies

Sara Rosen, Dean

[rosen@ku.edu](mailto:rosen@ku.edu)

