

2021

## Annual Report, 2020-2021

University of Arkansas, Fayetteville. Graduate School and International Education

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# GSIE Annual Report AY 2020 - 2021

## Executive Summary

The 2020-2021 was a year of change in higher education across the nation and especially in the Graduate School and International Education. In Fall 2020, our time was dominated by our continued response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the reopening of our campus. By August, the majority of our unit returned to face-to-face operations with masks and social distancing. With international travel suspended, our study abroad staff began offering virtual internships and study abroad experiences to students on our campus and Rome Center faculty began teaching UAF courses and collaborating with UAF faculty on a variety of different projects. Testing Services reopened its in-person center with social distancing restrictions and continued to offer many tests online.

The All-University Commencement ceremonies held in December and May returned to in-person/socially distanced events and our graduation processing team continued to support students and faculty by handling all documents both in digital and paper formats throughout the year. International Students and Scholars worked tirelessly to support incoming international students who faced uphill battles securing visas and navigating international travel restrictions. Our student and program support offices continued to offer their services through a digital format and our student orientations in August and January were fully virtual.

2020 also saw leadership change in the Graduate School and International Education as Provost Charles Robinson appointed Dean Kim Needy to become Dean of the College of Engineering in November. He likewise appointed Associate Dean Patricia Koski to become the Dean of the Graduate School and International Education. James Gigantino, the chair of the department of history, joined the unit in January 2021 as the Associate Dean of the Graduate School.

## Significant Achievements and Changes

### Notable achievements and changes

- Several staff left the unit including Hannah Franklin (Communications), Viviana Sabbatini and Emilio Del Gesso (Rome Center), Shanendra Barnes (Graduate Recruiting and Admissions), Catherine Cunningham (Sponsored Students and Special Programs), and Carol Wade (Financial Affairs). Several staff joined the unit including Dakota Kalkstein (Registration, graduation, and development), Sara Giacani and Matteo Cittandini (Rome Center), and Daisy Juarez (Graduate Recruiting and Admissions).
- Veronica Mobley (Study Abroad) was named Employee of the Quarter and awarded the Outstanding International Educator Award from Bumpers College for Spring 2021.
- Karl Anderson (Graduate Recruitment) was named the Employee of the Quarter and Employee of the Year for 2020.
- Cynthia Smith (ISS) was awarded the Arkansas State Outstanding International Educator award by NAFSA: Association of International Educators.
- Laura Moix (Graduate Student Support) won the Graduate and Professional Student Congress' Staff Ally Award.

- Yassaman Mirdamadi (Testing Services) received the Lifetime Achievement for Testing in Arkansas College Testing Association (ACTA) and the Advisor of the Month award from the Registered Student Association for advising the ISA.
- Kim Needy served as the immediate past president of the Conference of Southern Graduate Schools and participated on the executive committee of that organization for the virtual conference held in February, 2021. Several members of our staff participated virtually in this conference that included much information on the transformative nature of the COVID pandemic.
- In March, Amy Unruh's position was changed to a 100% appointment as GSIE director of Communications while the Office of Registration and Graduation (Leigh Marshall and Julie Rogers) was moved into the Fellowship Office to create the Office of Graduate Fellowships, Enrollment, and Graduation with Vicky Hartwell as director.
- We hosted the 12th annual Collis R. Geren awards ceremony virtually this year. Greg Salamo, Renee Hearon, and Brenda Foster, received awards for faculty, GSIE staff, and University staff, respectively. Dr. Geren was also in "virtual" attendance.
- GSIE concluded a very successful year in fundraising and alumni engagement and outreach during 2020-21, despite the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. GSIE, in partnership with Research and Innovation, conducted a very successful Campaign Arkansas fundraising campaign which concluded in July 2020. Our unit far exceeded our campaign goal of \$5 million, raising \$3,437,207.19 for GSIE and \$208,081,274.52 for Research and Innovation.
- GSIE also continued its efforts to raise critical emergency support for graduate and international students during 2020-21, raising an additional \$8,743 for the Needy Family Graduate Student Emergency Fund and \$3,985 for the International Education Catastrophic Fund. Thirty-two awards totaling \$9,556 were made to graduate students and one hundred five awards totaling \$31,209 to international students during the academic year. Julie Olsen deserves a special note of thanks for her tireless efforts on behalf of faculty, students and staff at the U of A.
- Our PhD Program in Materials Science and Engineering hired a new director, Dr. Matthew Leftwich, who will replace Dr. Rick Wise, who will retire on August 15, 2021.
- As a result of her past work, Yassaman Mirdamadi was recognized by the University as a "Portrait of Progress" in the expansion of diversity and inclusion. Mirdamadi was appointed to serve as a member of the Chancellor's inaugural Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Council.
- Sarah Malloy was appointed to the ISA National Advisory Board.
- Laura Moix organized and directed our third annual Razorback Institute for Success and Engagement in August 2020 with virtual and face-to-face components for 15 participants. Three students from a past cohort served as peer mentors in the third year.
- The Office of Sponsored Students Programs held the annual Welcome Reception with the Chancellor in September for new and continuing SSP students along with their faculty advisors and international educators virtually via Zoom; and also hosted the SSSP Recognition Program for graduates and visiting students in fall 2020 (virtually) and in spring 2021 (hybrid at the Verizon Ballroom) with the Chancellor. Dr. Adnan Alrubaye was awarded the outstanding faculty award and Dr. Carlos Acosta was awarded outstanding staff for SSSP.

- Amy Unruh, Director of GSIE Communications, continued to collaborate with other campus communicators in a University Relations “Student Communications” working group to help develop university-wide signage, email campaigns, welcome videos, and other messaging for students. A new monthly communication from the dean to all graduate students was initiated. The communications office also coordinated more than 35 media interviews with GSIE staff, providing important coverage of international student mobility, Study Abroad, graduate student stipends, social justice concerns, and COVID-19. Unruh also continued to participate on the university’s Communicable Disease Outbreak Committee and the Covid-19 Task Force (Communications subcommittee) to address university issues related to the pandemic.
- Francesco Bedeschi, Director of the Rome Center, has become a member of the steering committee of the Association of American College and University Programs in Italy.
- IT Services tirelessly supported staff in the transition to working remote and adjusting to new technologies. This has included the new phone systems moving to Teams, MFA implementation, Zoom and Teams conferencing, moving away from UITS document storage, new VPN, and implementing new system-wide security policies for the campus.
- The GSIE Finance Office worked hard to support the transition from BASIS to Workday and spent many 16+hour days ensuring that GAs and GSIE staff were properly paid.

## Graduate School

- Fall 2020 graduate enrollment was 4,354, a 4.4% increase from the year before and an all-time record. As a percentage of the total University enrollment, graduate student enrollment increased from 15.1% in Fall 2019 to 15.8% in Fall 2020.
- Graduate enrollment of under-represented minorities was 22.1% of total domestic graduate enrollment in Fall 2020 compared to 20.9% in Fall 2019; enrollment of under-represented minorities in doctoral programs increased from 164 (17.1% of doctoral students) in Fall 2019 to 186 (19.06% of doctoral students)
- In the most recent graduation year (2019-20), we awarded master’s degrees to 1,120 students (18 more than the year before) and doctoral degrees to 204 students (five less than in the previous graduation year).
- The Graduate Admissions and Recruitment Office continued to develop new strategies to work towards engaging students in the remote environment. GIRAO implemented Live Chat, developed virtual 360-degree campus tours via Google Tours, and completed the RFP process for the StudentBridge, a digital video contract.
- Julie Rogers collaborated with the Office of Graduate Student Support to organize and present virtual and in-person training programs for students about thesis and dissertation formatting in collaboration with academic departments. The presentations provide students with tools to be successful with fewer delays in their thesis/dissertation submissions.
- We hosted the doctoral fellows’ reception in March 2021 in a virtual format with 108 attendees.
- Laura Moix continued to offer several virtual graduate student support initiatives with strong attendance. They include an extended new student orientation (2,105 participants); Writing Week (931 participants); TA Teaching Camp (852 participants); Research Days (523 participants); Thursday Wellness Series (344 participants); Career Success (215 Participants); Social Justice Series (210 participants); Navigating Life as a Female Graduate Student (67 Students); and a weekly email to graduate students on “5 Things You Need to Know.”

- In AY2020-2021, there were 130 Distinguished Doctoral Fellows, 243 Doctoral Academy Fellows, 63 Benjamin Franklin Lever Tuition Fellows, 71 Master of Fine Arts Graduate Fellows, seven Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) Doctoral Scholars, and 102 students received the Chancellor's Graduate Nonresident Tuition Scholarship.

## International Education

- The academic year 2020-21 showed continued disruption of our international education landscape. International Students and Scholars met the challenges presented by COVID quarantines, social distancing, racial protests, implementation of Workday, loss of key staff members and remote work environments to provide outstanding programs and services to international students, the campus and the community. Visa office closures and COVID travel restrictions led to decreased number of international students and scholars at the University of Arkansas. Fall 2020 orientation was all virtual. The office monitored remote courses and out of country enrollment for all F and J students. Workshops and sessions by advising staff as well as programs offered by the outreach and retention staff were all virtual. ISS also launched a new podcast series "International in NWA" to support students in the remote environment.
- Study Abroad registered a total of 1,557 applications (down 46% from last year). Only the Rome Center was able to run in-person programs, beginning in the summer 2021 term. Total enrollment in study abroad and global learning programs this year was 202, a decrease of 39% from last year. This represents a decrease in SSCH of 82% from pre-COVID numbers. However, there is much focus and energy in restarting study abroad opportunities in the coming academic year.
- In Fall 2020, international students comprised 4.4% of the University's on-schedule enrollment; international graduate students accounted for 16.4% of the total on-schedule graduate population. The enrollment of international graduate students decreased from Fall 2019 to Fall 2020 by 45 students, from 745 in Fall 2019 to 700 in Fall 2020. The population of international undergraduate students decreased by 153 students between Fall 2019 and Fall 2020, 662 in Fall 2019 and 509 in Fall 2020, continuing a downward trend largely exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The University of Arkansas was selected for IIE's American Passport Project. U of A was one of 40 chosen among 200+ peer institutions to receive a grant in the amount of \$3,625. The grant enables us to nominate 25 eligible students and give them each \$145 toward their U.S. passport application. Specifically, these awards must go to Pell-eligible students thereby ameliorating an early barrier to study abroad. Additionally, several campus colleagues joined this effort to enhance and expand the Passport Project, including Enrollment Services/Office of Nationally Competitive Awards (\$10,000), eCAP program in Engineering (\$5,000), and potentially more. Katie Sabo and Megan Hull were instrumental to this success
- Study Abroad transformed itself, transcending bounded country borders virtually. Remote global learning experiences like virtual international internships and virtual "study abroad" programs emerged timidly in summer 2020 with five Honors students participating in a pilot program. But, by the following summer nearly as many students studied abroad in-person (109) as engaged in a virtual global learning experience (93).
- Study Abroad won a competitive grant from the Forum for Education Abroad for complementary crisis management consulting, valued at nearly \$6,000. This complementary consulting was offered to a limited number of Forum member institutions, based on demonstrated need and the urgency of current challenges. The consultancy lasted about 4-6 weeks beginning in early November through early January.

- The study abroad participation of graduating seniors in FY20 was 16.4% versus 17.9% for FY19 and 16.7% in FY18.
- The Rome Center worked towards reducing fixed costs this year by 48% by reducing spaces rented inside the Palazzo Taverna. Retirements of faculty have also reduced costs. Rome Center core faculty taught remotely for the Fay Jones School in Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 while the Rome Center hosted no students. Rome Center began face-to-face operations in Summer 2021 with 29 students and one faculty member from Fayetteville in residence in Rome.
- A total of 49 students/scholars/spouses actively participated in the International Culture Team (ICT) presenting their culture in at least two events. An additional 21 students/scholars/spouses presented at least in one event totaling 108 presenters for the year. These students represented 35 different countries.
- 39 international students and scholars were matched to 33 Friendship Families and individuals from the NW Arkansas region in the Friendship Family Program. 17 international students were matched with 13 domestic students for a campus friendship in our Campus Cousin program.
- We hosted a total of 83 sponsored students from Panama in the fall semester 2020; this was down from 99 in fall 2019. There were a total of 115 sponsored students from all organizations in fall 2020, down from 153 in Fall 2019.
- A “Short Takes” video on the Rome Center reopening was featured on the university homepage for the month of April 2021. This generated new interest in Study Abroad as pandemic restrictions began to ease, allowing U of A students to study at the Rome Center after a year of remote-only experiences.

## Interdisciplinary Studies

- Fall 2020 enrollment in interdisciplinary graduate programs was 255, a decrease of twelve students compared to Fall 2019.
- In the 2019-20 graduation year, the Graduate School awarded 32 interdisciplinary master's degrees and 24 interdisciplinary doctoral degrees; accounting for 2.86% of the University's master's degrees and 11.76% of the University's doctoral degrees.
- The Ph.D. program in Cell and Molecular Biology was the second largest doctoral program on campus in Fall 2020 enrollments, with 79 students.
- Environmental Dynamics increased enrollment by 33% from 33 to 44 students. This includes the formal addition of the masters program in Fall 2020 with three additional paths from a BS.
- ENDY continued its partnership in the American Geophysical Union – Bridge Program (one of only 14 universities in the U.S.) which has the goal of advancing the representation of underserved populations in earth sciences.
- Three students in Environmental Dynamics received Sturgis fellowships for 2020-21.
- During the 2020-21 year, Environmental Dynamics students were awarded over \$295,000 in funding from sources external to the University.
- Students in Environmental Dynamics published 21 papers in peer-reviewed journals, gave 22 presentations, and contributed three technical manuscripts.
- Space and Planetary Sciences student Jill McDonald was selected for a 2021 NASA Future Investigators in NASA Earth and Space Science and Technology (FINESST) fellowship; one of only 32 awarded nationwide.

Current PhD student Katherine Dzurilla was elected as President of the Graduate-Professional Student Congress, replacing another PhD student, JD DiLoretto-Hill.

- Space and Planetary Sciences faculty submitted 14 research proposals; faculty and students had 14 journal articles published and 23 conference papers/posters accepted for presentation.
- Cell and Molecular Biology students and faculty generated nearly \$33.7 million in continuing grant support; \$4.8 million in new grant support; prepared 54 peer-reviewed publications, and gave 63 invited lectures/presentations/seminars.
- The Public Policy program remained the most diverse doctoral program on campus. During 2020-21, 70 percent of students were female, with 40% racial/ethnic/international diversity (out of total enrollment) with 31.5% racial/ethnic diversity of domestic enrollment. All other degree programs above 30% racial/ethnic diversity were master's programs.
- The Public Policy program began a new Social Justice specialization with Dr. Anna Zajicek as the specialization coordinator. Likewise, nine new faculty members joined the Public Policy Program during the academic year.
- Professor Geoboo Song of the Public Policy program continues to serve as Associate Editor of Policy Studies Journal. The presence of the journal significantly increases the visibility and reputation of PUBP. Policy Studies Journal has a two-year JIF of 5.141, and ranked 17/182 in Political Science and 7/41 in Public Administration. The JCI indicates that PSJ got a 2.79 (179% more citation impact than the average journal in the requisite category). According to the JCI, PSJ ranked 10/293 in Political Science and 3/78 in Public Administration.
- In 2020-21, students in Public Policy published or had accepted for publication 15 peer-reviewed journals and presented 14 conference papers. Faculty published or had accepted for publication 63 peer-reviewed journal articles, three books, and were PI or Co-PI on over \$4 million in grant funding.
- The Microelectronics-photonics program was reconfigured and renamed (beginning fall 2020) to Materials Science and Engineering. The program now offers two MS degrees (Materials Science and Materials Engineering) and one PhD Degree in Materials Science and Engineering.
- MSEN students authored/co-authored 59 papers/presentations and had five provisional patents and one non-provisional patent filed in the 2020-21 academic year.
- The MSEN program concluded its seven year review with positive accolades from external evaluators.
- 72 faculty from 20 departments participated in the Statistics and Analytics (STAN) program.
- 17 students graduated from the STAN program in 2020-2021

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