

COUNCIL OF GRADUATE SCHOOLS

MANAGING OPERATIONS: TIME, STAFF, & PARTNERSHIPS

2025 New Deans Institute



Graduate School
BROWN UNIVERSITY



UNIVERSITY of
LOUISIANA
L A F A Y E T T E

Graduate
School

Managing Operations

TOPICS FOR TODAY

Learning the Landscape

Delegating and Coordinating Effectively

Clarifying the Mission

Challenging Conversations



Very High Research Activity
Research Doctoral: STEM Dominant
R1 designation achieved in 2021
CARNEGIE CLASSIFICATION

15,665 | 2,233 (14%)

TOTAL ENROLLMENT | TOTAL GRADUATE ENROLLMENT FALL 2024

7 academic colleges, 12 doctoral programs, 40+ master's programs

GRADUATE DEGREE DISTRIBUTION AND OFFERINGS

Recruitment | Admissions | Progression | Graduation
Initial and Transfer I-20s for International Graduate Students
GTA/GRA/GA & Fellowship Budgets and Appointments

CENTRALIZED ADMINISTRATION OF GRADUATE EDUCATION



Brown Graduate School by the Numbers

51
PhD and MFA
programs

15
PhD certificate
programs

30,000+ (or 53%)
undergraduate course enrollments
every year with **teaching** contributed
or led by PhD & MFA students



1790
PhD & MFA students

490+
PhD research
assistants



900+ graduate students participate
in conferences and research trips
each year



21 full-time staff
members for
support

70 countries and **40** U.S states
visited for research each year

Learning the Landscape

INTERNAL OPERATIONS: LEARNING & LEADING

Audit Mission-Critical Functions: What are we doing? Why? How?

Lead by Learning: Roll up your sleeves—gain firsthand understanding of workflows, technology gaps, and internal logic.

Build Trust Through Action: Change what doesn't work; show you're invested and responsive.

Advocate Decisively: Benchmark salaries and org charts, transition roles (classified → unclassified), hire intentionally, and protect the operation.

Learning the Landscape

EXTERNAL RELATIONSHIPS: STRATEGIC OUTREACH

Start with Trusted Stakeholders: Graduate coordinators understand the pain points—make them feel seen and heard.

Strengthen Shared Governance: Transform grad council into a respected, productive model of campus collaboration.

Meet People Where They Are: One-on-ones with deans, align with provost visions, build credibility through listening and action.

Learning the Landscape

SUSTAINING THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS

Get Out of the Office: Develop cross-campus partnerships—admissions, HR, student affairs, housing, etc.

Extend the Voice of Grad Education: Engage grad student leaders, grad council chairs, grad coordinators, and other grad stakeholders in institutional initiatives.

You may not always have someone to delegate to within your operation, but you always have partners—find them, empower them, and align them with your mission.

Managing Operations

ON DELEGATION AND COLLABORATION

Recognizing Your Own Habits

Finding and Preparing the Right Person

Flexibility About Process

Clarity About Expected Outcomes

Find a Worksheet

Translating these Principles to Collaboration with Partners

Clarifying the Mission

INTERNALLY: KNOW WHAT YOU DO AND WHY

Reassess Continuously: Don't stop with the initial audit.

Connect Functions to Institutional Goals: Make a direct line between what your team does and what the institution says it values (e.g., student success, research growth).

Use Data to Drive Decisions: If you're saying no to something, show why—it's about capacity, mission alignment, or ROI.

Empower Staff with the Why: When your team understands the why, they can make better decisions independently.

Clarifying the Mission

COMMUNICATE FUNCTION AND ROLE

Be Explicit: Don't assume others know what the graduate school does. Spell it out—clearly, consistently, and often.

Tailor the Message to the Audience:

- For deans: “We help you recruit and retain top talent.”
- For grad coordinators: “We make sure your applicants and students don't fall through the cracks.”
- For provosts: “We operationalize the institution's grad education strategy.”

Communicate Up and Out: Use routine meetings (deans council, leadership retreats) to reinforce your value. Don't be afraid to say what graduate education needs—even if it's not being asked.

Being clear about *who we are* and *what we do* makes it easier to decide *why* we do what we do—and to communicate that with confidence.

Managing Operations

CHALLENGING CONVERSATIONS WITH YOURSELF

Priorities

The Challenge of Saying No and the Liberation of Saying No

When everything is a priority,
go back to what is mission-critical and
aligned with strategic goals.

You've Just Arrived— What's Mission Critical?

PROMPT 1

You're the new graduate dean. You inherit a small, demoralized staff and programs that question the value of a centralized grad school. There are 3 immediate fires: (1) A stalled staff hire, (2) Deans angry about a denied graduate faculty appointment, and (3) Angry program directors citing slow admissions processing.

Discussion Questions:

What's your first move?

What would you ask your staff?

Who do you meet with first from outside your office?

Culture Clash in Your Inbox

PROMPT 2

A grad coordinator emails a scathing message about a staff member mishandling a fellowship disbursement. The staff member is new and doing her best but clearly made a mistake. The grad coordinator cc'd several others.

Discussion Questions:

How do you respond to the faculty member?

What do you say to your staff member?

How does this moment shape your office culture?

Delegation Dilemma— *You Could* Just Do It

PROMPT 3

A high-stakes report is behind schedule. You've done it before—back when you were associate dean, you built the process. You know how to get it done quickly and correctly. The new associate dean and staff responsible are capable but still learning, slower, and asking lots of questions. Program directors are getting anxious. The deadline is tight. You could jump in, finish it, and avoid complaints—but you know your role has changed. You're the dean now, and this moment is about more than just the task.

Discussion Questions:

What factors do you weigh in deciding whether to step in?

How do you meet expectations from faculty while still developing your staff?

What are the long-term risks of stepping in—or of not stepping in?

The “What Does the Grad School Even Do?” Moment?

PROMPT 4

At a campus-wide leadership meeting, a senior administrator openly questions whether the graduate school [or a grad education administrator if no grad school] adds any value, suggesting everything could be managed within academic colleges. Several colleagues nod.

Discussion Questions:

How do you respond—in the moment or afterward?

What core functions or outcomes would you highlight to demonstrate the grad school’s value?

How would you use this moment to reframe and reinforce

Thank you.

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This role is unique—and so is your path forward. Over the days ahead, reflect on one or more of these questions.

- What parts of the role feel clear to you right now? What feels uncertain?
- What values or strengths do you want to stay grounded in as you grow in this role?
- Who are the people or communities you'll need to lean on?
- What is the challenging question that you need to have with yourself?
- What are some important and valuable things that you are not going to do?