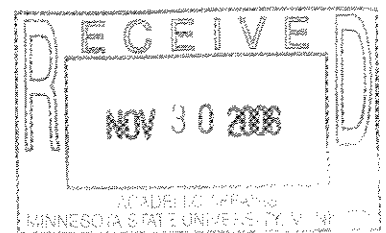


## Strategic Priority Funding Application Form 2007-2008

#4

Project Name <u>Graduate Student Services Coordinator</u>	
Applicant's Name <u>Anne Blackhurst</u>	Mailing Address <u>AF 115</u>
Applicant Signature _____	
Email Address <u>anne.blackhurst@mnsu.edu</u>	Phone Number <u>5203</u>
Dept. Chair Signature _____	Date _____
Dean Signature <u>AG Blackhurst</u>	Date <u>11/30/06</u>
Vice President Signature <u>Seiffers</u>	Date <u>11-30-06</u>
Date Submitted to Office of Institutional Planning: <u>November 30, 2006</u> (Deadline is November 30, 2006)	

Priority Number  _____
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## Minnesota State University, Mankato FY08 Strategic Priority Funding Request

1. Which Strategic Priority and Objective does this funding request support? See link for Strategic Priority definitions. <http://www.mnsu.edu/president/priorities/definitions/>

Strategic Priority: This request supports **Strategic Priority 4, Enhance Graduate Education**, as well as Objective 4 of the **Enrollment Management Plan**: "Review and evaluate the university programs, services, and initiatives that support the recruitment, retention, and graduation of students."

Strategic Priority Objective: Objective 4 (Priority 4: Enhance Graduate Education), "...improve the graduate student experience."

Innovative Idea: Employ a Graduate Student Services Coordinator

2. Provide a brief description of your project. Please attach a one-page project narrative:

The Graduate Student Advisory Group has repeatedly noted the lack of a graduate student community at Minnesota State Mankato. The student service coordinator will provide graduate students with an advocate and liaison to serve in the general capacity of assisting graduate students with "routine" problems and difficulties. This individual will also create a graduate student newsletter, inform graduate students of policies, deadlines, and initiatives, and coordinate on- and off-campus information sessions and professional development workshops. This individual will be in frequent contact with enrolled graduate students, as well as with students who are in a graduate program but not enrolled in a given semester.

3. How will the funding request support the Strategic Priority?

The initiative will:

- a. Improve the quality of the graduate student experience at Minnesota State Mankato;
- b. Increase the retention and timely graduation of graduate students;
- c. Increase student satisfaction by advising students of upcoming campus and College policy changes, as well as upcoming deadlines, regardless of their current enrollment status;
- d. Build a sense of community among graduate students; and
- e. Relieve the Director of Graduate Programs of direct responsibility for the above duties so that he can provide direct assistance to the Dean of the College of Graduate Studies and Research in addressing the issues noted by the **Graduate Education Task Force**.

4. Describe the measurable outcomes:

- a. Graduate newsletter is created and distributed regularly
- b. Information events for current students are implemented, both on and beyond the campus boundaries
- c. Fewer appeals to university policies
- d. Increased graduate student retention
- e. Increased graduation rates within the six-year time limit
- f. Increased student satisfaction with the graduate experience at Minnesota State Mankato

**5. Assessment Measures – Define what methods will be used in assessing the effectiveness of the project.**

- a. Begin to measure graduate student graduation rates and provide campus reports concerning graduate student retention and graduation
- b. Collect data on student satisfaction, number of appeals to graduate policies, service utilization, graduate student needs and perceptions of current services
- c. Conduct focus groups with students to determine existing unnecessary hurdles for students, as well as to discover promising, undeveloped aspects of graduate education at Minnesota State University, Mankato.

**6. Reports Due:**  
**Mid Year Report due** \_\_\_\_\_ January 31, 2008 \_\_\_\_\_

**7. Summary Report due** \_\_\_\_\_ June 30, 2008 \_\_\_\_\_

**8. Budget Request:** From Strategic Initiative Funding

	<u>Request</u>	<u>Match</u>
Salary	<u>\$40,000</u>	_____
Fringe	<u>\$12,000</u>	_____
Grad Assistant	_____	_____
Grad Assistant Stipend	_____	_____
Non Salary (Specify)	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
Equipment	_____	<u>\$2,000</u>
<b>Total Budget Requested *</b>	<u>\$52,000</u>	

**9. Special consideration (e.g. room, building, office or any impact on other divisions):**

There may not be a work station available in AF 115 (Graduate Studies). There may be other useable work space within other units of the College of Graduate Studies and Research.

\* Pending funding.

## **Project Description: Graduate Student Services Coordinator**

The Enrollment Management Committee (Objective 4) suggests that the campus “review and evaluate the university programs, services and initiatives that support the recruitment, retention, and graduation of students.” In addition, one of the objectives stated by the task force charged to Review and Enhance Graduate Education (Objective 4) is to simply “improve the graduate student experience” at Minnesota State University, Mankato. The College of Graduate Studies and Research has a daily need (and desire) to interact with graduate students. However, as the College of Graduate Studies and Research becomes an even more robust campus presence, graduate student concerns must sometimes, regrettably, compete for attention with other vital graduate issues. Over time, the College has become less and less involved with most students and expends a considerable amount of energy dealing with students experiencing difficulties with aspects of their graduate programs. The exceptions to the preceding statement are in the areas of graduate student admissions and graduation, where the College employs two professionals dedicated exclusively to serving students. While the College adequately addresses the needs of students applying to the University and students graduating from the institution, it is in the area of serving currently enrolled students that the College must now pay increased attention.

The Coordinator would serve as an advocate and liaison for the University’s graduate students. Many of the anticipated responsibilities of the proposed position are currently accomplished by the Director of Graduate Programs. However, as the College’s responsibilities expand, the Director finds it difficult to adequately address individual and collective graduate student issues. A dedicated student services coordinator would provide better service to graduate students, as well as permit the Director to devote more attention to enhancing the entire graduate enterprise by being of more direct assistance to the Dean of the College of Graduate Studies and Research and graduate program coordinators.

This Coordinator would assist with the daily “routine” graduate student issues involving campus administrative units and academic departments, including registration, billing, and financial issues. This individual would also answer questions and explain the rationale and processes involved with the University’s often complex policies relating to graduate education. In addition to dealing with the daily issues involving graduate student problems and concerns, the graduate student services professional would perform a variety of other student service duties, including but not limited to:

- creating and regularly distributing graduate student newsletters,
- holding information sessions both on campus and beyond,
- coordinating professional development series for graduate students,
- meeting with the College’s Student Advisory Group,
- conducting focus groups with students at various stages in their graduate program,
- assisting in the administration and maintenance of the records of the wide variety of graduate student appeals, and
- processing Work Authorization Forms for graduate assistants

If graduate education is to contribute to campus efforts to manage enrollment by increasing retention, the College of Graduate Studies and Research must be seen by students as a resource in helping them earn their graduate degrees—beyond the attention paid to them at the time of application and again at graduation. The need for this position will only be increased by the advent of doctoral programs in the fall of 2007. Not only will doctoral students expect a high level of administrative service, but the unknown impact of doctoral education will undoubtedly result in unanticipated issues that must be resolved efficiently and professionally. In addition, the visibility of doctoral programs will be extremely high. If executed with a high degree of efficiency and student satisfaction, the programs have the potential to significantly increase the reputation of Minnesota State Mankato and raise the profile of the institution. This position will ensure that graduate students receive the services they deserve—and increasingly demand—from Minnesota State Mankato.