



Viterbo University Graduate Student Needs Assessment

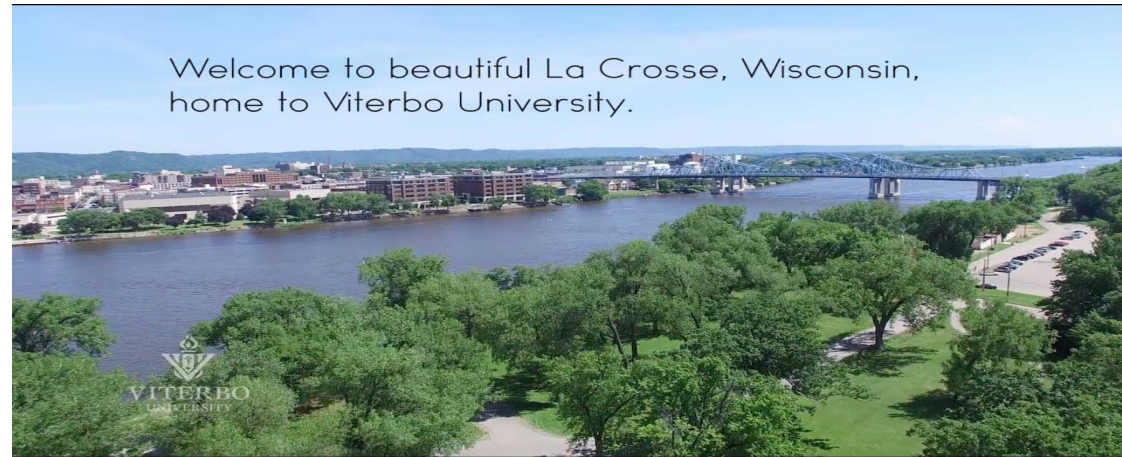
JENNIFER ANDERSON-MEGER, DIRECTOR OF GRADUATE STUDIES

THE GRADUATE STUDENT EXPERIENCE CONFERENCE MARCH, 2024

Objectives

Introduction and Background

- Overview of Graduate Studies at Viterbo University.
- Graduate Student Needs Assessment Development at Viterbo.
- Needs Assessment Findings
- Discussion.
- Recommendations and takeaways.



Viterbo University

- Catholic Franciscan University
- Rural serving institution
- Total enrollment approximately 2400. Graduate Students now almost half student population.
- Rapid growth in graduate programs over past seven years. Declining undergraduate enrollment.
- New position as Director of Graduate Studies (one course release for position, no budget)
- Charge: Build a graduate culture at Viterbo!
- Embarked on Strategic Planning with the Faculty
- Can not do this without STUDENT input



Graduate Studies at Viterbo University

- Programs :
 - Business, Leadership, and Ethics (MBA, MASL, Ed D.)
 - Mental Health Counseling (MSMHC, MSSC, Ed D)
 - Nursing: Direct Entry MSN, DNP, CRNA/DNP
 - Nutrition and Dietetics: MS, Dietetic Internship
 - Communication and Speech Disorders : MS SPLP (starting Fall 2024)
 - Education: Licensure programs at masters level – teaching, directors, reading, special education, superintendent, etc.
- Mixed formats: on campus, weekend, online, hybrid, etc.



Graduate Studies Planning

- Early stages
- Building culture and identity
- Many faculty teach in undergrad and graduate programs.
- Mission development.
- Collaboration across programs.
- Curriculum.
- Student support services.
- Belonging and Engagement.



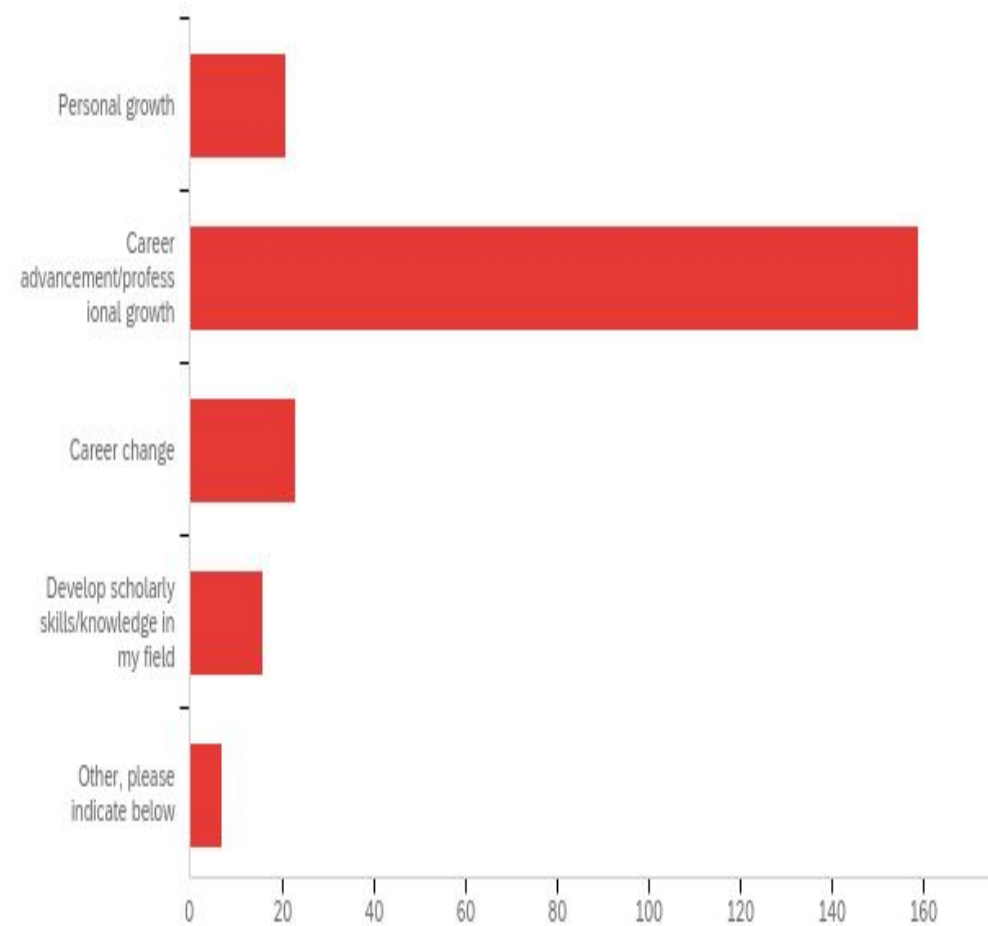
Needed Data

- No systematic data gathering with graduate students.
- Simple course modality survey completed in 2022 by Academics. 19% response rate.
- Graduate directors and faculty never saw results.
- Survey did not go beyond course preferences.

- *Needed:*
- Program level data.
- Data to inform:
 - Services: Academic, Counseling, Financial Aid, etc.
 - Communication
 - Involvement
 - Space needs
 - Orientation

Student Needs Assessment Fall 2023

- Qualtrics: Quantitative and Qualitative
- Descriptive
- Low response rate: 26%
- N = 237
- Top program responders:
 - Various Masters in Education
 - Masters in Nursing
 - Masters of Science in Mental Health Counseling
- Majority in their first 3 semesters (n=102)
- Mix of course modalities
- Main reason for pursuing graduate study: career advancement/professional growth



Service Satisfaction

#	Question	very satisfied		moderately satisfied		not satisfied		Total
1	Initial contact for information about degree	72.94%	159	25.23%	55	1.83%	4	218
2	Program Admission Process	77.52%	169	22.48%	49	0.00%	0	218
3	Financial Aid Information and Process	56.28%	121	33.95%	73	9.77%	21	215
4	Registration for classes	60.55%	132	36.24%	79	3.21%	7	218
5	Accessibility Information	64.81%	140	32.41%	70	2.78%	6	216
6	Academic Support Services (writing, statistics, research)	68.08%	145	27.70%	59	4.23%	9	213
7	Counseling and emotional support	65.70%	136	30.92%	64	3.38%	7	207
8	Bookstore	67.79%	141	28.37%	59	3.85%	8	208
9	Health Services	61.42%	121	35.03%	69	3.55%	7	197

Comments Summary – We have work to do!

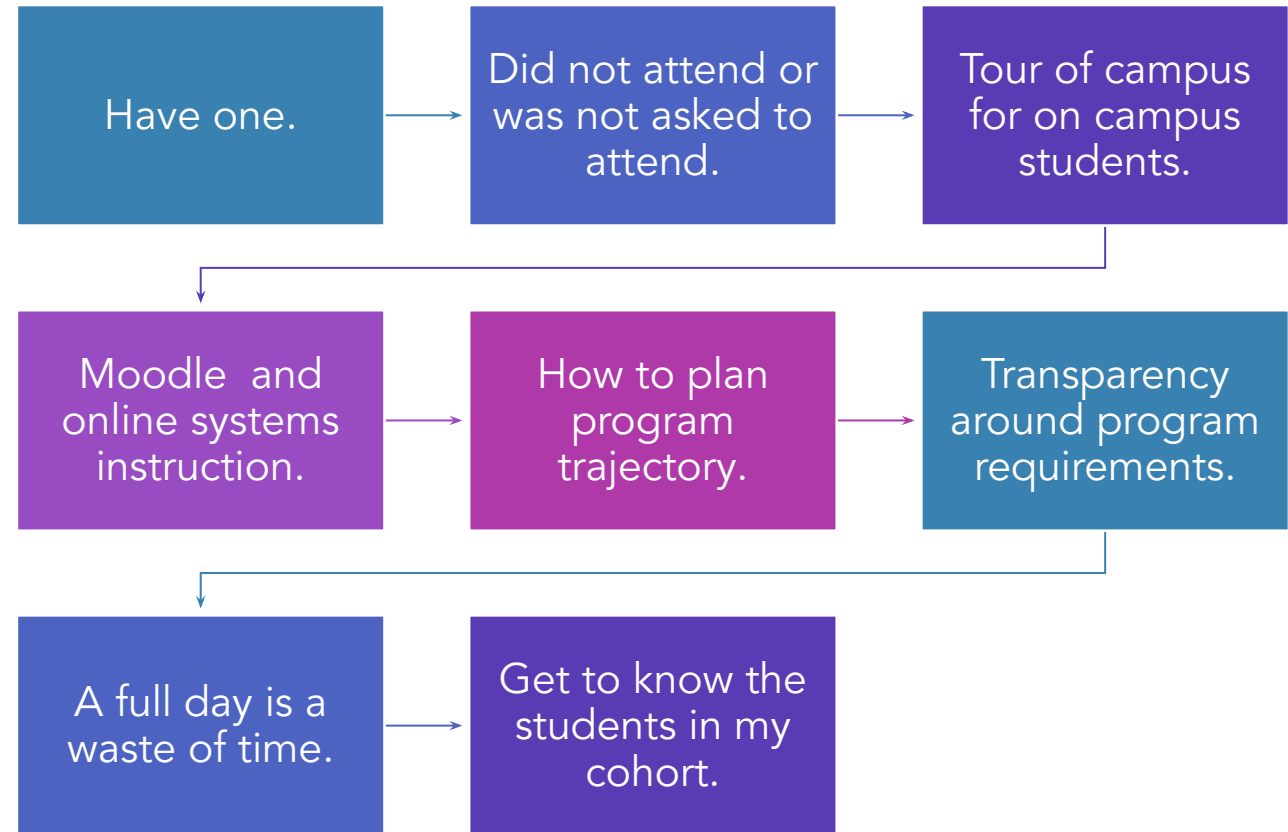
- Don't use the health, counseling, or academic support services.
- Disconnect between what we hear and what we experience.
- Because I am online I don't use any services.
- I live too far away to use services.
- I am not aware of these services.
- Admission processes take too long. Financial aid communication is complicated and incorrect.
- Could not access my advisor.
- Do not know who to contact.

Orientations

- Currently each program operates independently. No consistency between orientations.

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Extremely helpful	27.01%	57
2	Moderately helpful	44.55%	94
3	Neither helpful nor unhelpful	23.70%	50
4	Slightly unhelpful	1.42%	3
5	Unhelpful	3.32%	7
	Total	100%	211

What needs to be done to improve orientation:



Engagement and Belonging

- Strength area. Very positive comments and data. Particularly for F2F.

#	Question	Very engaged		Neutral		Not engaged		Total
1	Online classroom	44.67%	88	47.72%	94	7.61%	15	197
2	Face to face classroom	73.60%	131	20.22%	36	6.18%	11	178
3	Hybrid classroom	49.69%	80	41.61%	67	8.70%	14	161

Engagement Comments

- Professors do a great job with variety of activities to involve students.
- Level of engagement does vary in class (cohort, progressor, etc.)
- Professors put great effort into connecting with us, making us feel seen, and known.
- Amount of discussion posts is insane. Better to do zoom activities. Discussion posts feel like busy work, especially in the replies.
- Long class periods (3+ hours) do NOT lend to engagement.

Preparation for Research Activity

#	Question	Very comfortable		Neutral		Uncomfortable		Total
1	Scholarly article retrieval	66.99%	138	28.16%	58	4.85%	10	206
2	Scholarly article critique, analysis, and synthesis.	60.68%	125	33.01%	68	6.31%	13	206
3	Citation and reference format	62.93%	129	29.27%	60	7.80%	16	205
4	Survey design	37.31%	75	49.25%	99	13.43%	27	201
5	Interview and/or Focus group design	37.13%	75	46.04%	93	16.83%	34	202
6	Quantitative data analysis	41.38%	84	40.89%	83	17.73%	36	203
7	Qualitative data analysis	40.10%	81	46.04%	93	13.86%	28	202

What is Next?

- Focus Groups of students AND faculty.
- Formalize planning – align with Viterbo new Strategic Plan
- Collaborate with existing student services at undergrad – scale to graduate level services.
- Advocate for a Graduate School.
- We are in budget deficit. Will need \$.
- Build on strong relationships across offices and faculty engagement.
- Create reasonable expectations.
- Chip away.
- Collaborate with other Graduate Studies – Thank you for this conference!

Discussion

- What has your institution done to serve graduate students in the following areas:
 - Student services: academic, counseling, financial aid?
- How does your institution manage accessibility for graduate students (online or face to face)?
- What kinds of successes are you seeing with engagement and belonging?
- What kinds of challenges do you have with engagement and belonging?
- How does your institution manage common curriculum areas across programs (e.g. research, leadership, etc.)
- What is your advising model for graduate students?
- What are the initiatives underway at your institution for graduate students?

Thank you!

Contact Information

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