CHAPTER NINE: GRADUATE PROGRAMS

I. Overview

Brooklyn College was authorized to offer Masters level degrees in 1935, five years after it was founded, and graduate programs have been an important part of its offerings since then. Over the past ten years the graduate student body has constituted roughly 20% of the college's student body and 15% of the FTEs, distributed over 25 departments and 45 programs. We participate in post-baccalaureate education in four ways: through faculty who teach in doctoral programs at the Graduate Center, through doctoral level courses offered at Brooklyn College, and through a variety of Masters programs and non-degree bearing certificate programs at the college. Close to 50% of Masters students are enrolled in the School of Education, many of them teachers working toward permanent New York State certification.

The college offers Masters of Arts, Fine Arts, Music, Science, a Master of Science in Education, and advanced certificates. The graduate school's mission is two-fold: to continue its long tradition of academic excellence in the liberal arts and sciences and in teacher education as well as to strengthen and enhance the career options and professional development of its students. Among our more vital programs are the Masters programs in Education, the Master of Science in Speech Pathology, and the Master of Arts in Political Science. The Masters of Fine Arts programs in Theater (with a specialization in Performing Arts Management), Creative Writing, Art, and Television Production attract students nationally and internationally. In the last decade the number of students enrolled in graduate courses has increased by 25%, while the undergraduate population has remained relatively stable in the same period. In 1997 graduate enrollment dropped, but it rebounded significantly in Fall 1998.

The majority of graduate students attend part-time and therefore generate fewer FTEs than do undergraduate students. However, they are a very important component in meeting the enrollment goals set by CUNY. Furthermore, there is an ever-increasing demand nationwide for programs leading to advanced degrees. The growth potential in this area is tremendous, provided that the programs offered match the needs of potential graduate students.

Graduate programs are based within the college's departmental structure, in terms of governance, hiring of faculty, development of curriculum, and scheduling of classes. Each department designates a Deputy Chairperson to oversee the graduate programs, and within the School of Education, in addition to a Graduate Deputy, each program has an elected Program Head.

The Office of the Dean of Graduate Studies and Research is responsible for setting and enforcing policy related to admissions, student standing, and graduation. Additionally it addresses student problems, administers scholarships, coordinates comprehensive examinations, and provides student advisement. Advertisement and recruitment also fall within its jurisdiction. The Graduate Dean's office coordinates and monitors the functions of Admissions and the Registrar's office in regard to graduate students. The Dean of Graduate Studies and Research is also responsible for obtaining institutional external funding for research — a substantial job within itself that is not specifically targeted toward graduate education. The Dean of Undergraduate Studies allocates
resources to departments for part-time staff and for equipment and supplies to serve both undergraduate and graduate programs. The graduate dean has no comparable role.

II. Current Concerns and Achievements

Over the years, the rules and regulations concerning the graduate division were tinkered with in a piecemeal and sometimes chaotic fashion, resulting in conflicts in rules and decision-making authority. As well, many of the rules and notification procedures governing academic standing and non-matriculating students were not consistently enforced. Students and program administrators were often left with addressing a series of problems long after the fact. Responding to this chaotic situation, the Faculty Council Committee on Graduate Admissions and Standards appointed a Joint Administration-Faculty Council Task Force on Rules and Regulations in the Graduate Division to review and revise the entire body of academic rules and administrative procedures governing the graduate division. That committee's recommendations were passed by Faculty Council in 1994, and the Office of the Graduate Dean together with members of the Admissions Office and the Office of Student Records (now the Registrar's Office) and several faculty members were appointed to implement the regulations. Implementation has been an extremely complicated and painstaking process, but indications are that the changes have been a success; the number of petitions to the Committee on Graduate Admissions and Standards has been cut in half.

Graduate programs continue to evolve. In the 1996-97, the School of Education added a Bilingual Extension option to its Advanced Certificate in Guidance and Counseling, and the Bachelor of Science/Master of Professional Studies, jointly sponsored by the Departments of Computer and Information Science and Economics, was restructured. The Department of Health and Nutrition Sciences started a new Master of Public Health program in Community Health in September 1998. Pending approval by the Board of Trustees (Fall 1998), the School of Education will inaugurate two inter-related Master of Science in Education degree programs in Bilingual Multicultural Education and TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages).

The following discussion focuses on graduate programs in three departments — Speech, Education, and English — to illustrate the range and strength of the college's graduate programs as well as the challenges that the college faces in maintaining its integrity in this area.

A. Speech-Language Pathology; Audiology

Among the most selective and successful graduate programs at the college are three programs offered by the Department of Speech Communication Arts and Sciences; in this year alone there were 317 applications for roughly forty places. The programs offer three graduate degrees: Master of Science in Speech-Language Pathology, Master of Science in Audiology, and Master of Science in the Education of the Speech and Hearing Handicapped. Students who complete either of the first two are eligible for both state licensure and clinical certification by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association; those who complete the last are eligible for state certification. The program graduates approximately forty students annually (34 in SLP, 4 in
Audiology, and 2 in TSHH), and virtually all students are successful in gaining employment immediately after graduation in schools, hospitals, home health care agencies, and private practice.

These combined programs are probably the largest of their kind in the City University. They feature a full service speech, language, and hearing clinic on the premises, and have recently established a unique affiliation with Young Adult Institute, providing state of the art training in assistive technology and augmentative communication. A full range of services is provided to the community, including diagnosis and remediation of speech, language, hearing, and learning disabilities, hearing aid dispensing, and assistive technology. The programs emphasize medical Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology, through collaborations with numerous hospitals and a recently developed curriculum in dysphagia which is taught at the Rusk Institute of New York University Hospital. The programs currently rely excessively on part-time and adjunct personnel to provide instruction in critical aspects of clinical diagnosis and remediation; indeed, they could admit half again as many students as they presently do if they were able to hire new faculty in speech and language science, in speech and hearing science, and in clinical instruction.

B. English

The English Department M.F.A. Program in Creative Writing offers a high quality education in the arts to a diverse group of talented students. Graduates in one of three concentrations -- fiction, poetry, playwriting -- take four workshops, tutorials, and literature courses, pass a comprehensive exam, and complete a creative writing thesis (either a book of fiction -- short stories, a novella, a novel; or a volume of poems; or a full-length play). Since its inception over a quarter century ago, the program has been staffed by such prestigious practioners in the arts as Jonathan Baumbach and Peter Spielberg (co-founders of the program and of the Fiction Collective, which was for many years housed at Brooklyn College), Obie-Award winning playwright Jack Gelber, MacArthur Fellowship winning poets John Ashbery, Mark Strand, Anne Lauterbach, Douglas Crase, as well as William Matthews, Susan Fromberg Schaeffer, Joan Larkin, L.S. Asekoff, and until his recent death, the world-famous Beat Generation poet and spokesman, Allen Ginsberg. The faculty has attracted students from all over the United States and graduated many successful young writers, such as, in recent years, playwrights Angelo Parra, Charlotte Meehan, Karen Semones, and Zev Shlasinger; fiction writers Rilla Askew, Laurie Foos, Binnie Kirshenbaum, Cris Mazza, Mae Ng, Sandra Thompson, and Marion Winik; poets Star Black, John Yau, Peter Money, Karen Kelley, Sapphire, and Paul Beatty. Maintenance of a superior faculty is essential to the program's continuing effectiveness, its ability to draw the most talented students, and its competitiveness among similar programs. With college and perhaps outside institutional support, the program is hoping to commemorate Professor Ginsberg's strong presence at Brooklyn College and his passing with a series of Allen Ginsberg Memorial Visiting Professorships in Creative Writing.

The Master of Arts program in English has been the subject of intensive review by members of its faculty. The comprehensive examination is being changed from a test based on a standard reading list to one based on critical concepts, a change which will alter the mode of teaching in the program and will probably lead to thorough curricular revision.
C. School of Education

The School of Education enrolls about 50% of all graduate students at Brooklyn College. It offers a wide variety of options for students interested in graduate study, including Master of Arts degrees, K-12 and 7-12, offered jointly with Liberal Arts and Sciences departments, and Master of Science in Education degrees in Early Childhood Education Teacher, Elementary Education Teacher, Reading Teacher, Teacher of Special Education, School Psychologist, and Guidance and Counseling. It also offers Advanced Certificates for School Psychologist, Guidance and Counseling, and School Administration and Supervision. All New York City teachers are required to earn a Masters degree within five years of their initial employment as a condition for permanent certification in their field of instruction. Pupil personnel service areas require a Masters and/or an advanced certificate. All of the School of Education programs are registered with New York State, and most of them are highly regarded in the field. The magnitude of the School of Education's enterprise, its centrality to the graduate division, and its distinct governance structure warrants an extended discussion. In many ways the School of Education mirrors the strengths and challenges faced by the college as a whole.

The School of Education has its own Dean and functions as a distinct entity that administers a wide array of graduate and undergraduate programs in a college structure where the basic decision-making unit is the department. In many ways, its relatively autonomous programs shadow departmental structures, but lack the decision-making powers normally associated with departments. Its graduate program is also relatively autonomous and one of the few in which faculty members do not undertake significant undergraduate teaching responsibilities.

There is an interdependence between the School of Education's graduate programs and other graduate programs in the liberal arts and sciences. Teachers of secondary and elementary education fulfill a substantial part of their requirements with course work from the Liberal Arts and Sciences. For example, students who are high school teachers of Modern Languages, English, or Biology, must take 18 of the 30 credits required for their degree in those respective disciplines. Elementary education students take up to 12 credits in courses in departments across the campus. This interdisciplinary arrangement serves to deepen teachers' knowledge of their chosen discipline; it also benefits other programs as they secure a number of students that otherwise would not attend their classes. Some programs rely on Education students to maintain course offerings and degree-granting sequences.

The School of Education's graduate faculty has actively developed and modernized its offerings and degree programs. New M.S. in Education programs in Bilingual Multicultural Education and in TESOL have been submitted to the Board of Trustees for approval. The M.S. in Education program for Teachers of Special Education has been dramatically revamped after decades of stagnation. The School Psychologist and Guidance and Counseling programs now offer bilingual extensions. The elementary mathematics and elementary science specializations within the Elementary Education program have emerged as clearly differentiated programs with coherent philosophies and pedagogy. Innovations are being introduced in practically every program. However, programs have remained relatively isolated from one another, and there is little cross-over of faculty and students. The small number of faculty, of course, is a major deterrent to
interdisciplinary experimentation. Yet the concept of sharing faculty and other resources is taking hold; some of the recent searches sought candidates to teach in more than one program. The good news is that the allocation of a number of regular and substitute positions in 1997-98 to the School of Education should ameliorate the staffing needs considerably. These represent a combination of faculty lines freed up through early retirement incentives or allocated specifically for teacher education programs.

In recent years, the School of Education has been very successful in establishing partnerships to provide education courses to target groups. A collaboration with the United Federation of Teachers has expanded rapidly as many teachers in the city require advanced education credits to enhance their skills and credentials. Brooklyn College courses are offered at numerous sites throughout the city (and suburbs). The instruction of these courses relies entirely on the work of adjunct faculty. This entrepreneurial venture has been instrumental in raising enrollments and increasing funds for clerical support and part-time faculty. The increasing dependence of the School of Education on these sources of income may present new challenges should there be a shortfall in revenues.

The graduate programs of the School of Education are in transition. A full time faculty of 30 teach an array of graduate and undergraduate programs. The rapid shift in departmental demographics is made more complicated by the lack of a "middle generation," forcing junior and sometimes untenured faculty members to administer key programs. Currently, five of the School of Education's Masters programs are headed by untenured faculty.

III. Planning for the Future

The Division of Graduate Studies is increasingly important to Brooklyn College, but there is a relative lack of attention paid to it. Part of the reason for this inattention is structural. Graduate programs grow out of the college's various departments, and budgeting, planning, staffing, and evaluation take place at the department level. Most major campus discussions have focused on the undergraduate curriculum and programs. Also, unlike undergraduates, graduate students are drawn to individual programs rather than to Brooklyn College as a whole. In this context, it has been difficult for the college to develop, plan, and project a sense of its Graduate Division as a separate entity. As with undergraduate programs, departments often work with each other to jointly develop programs and to use each other's resources, but these plans are usually ad hoc. The college is not developing the same sense of a coherent strategy for graduate programs that it is seeking with its undergraduate programs.

In planning for the future the college needs both to recognize the unique association of graduate programs with the undergraduate majors and to examine the ways the Division of Graduate Studies makes a unique, coherent, and integrated contribution to Brooklyn College's overall mission. In order to begin this process, existing programs need to be examined in their own right as well as in relation to other programs. The Graduate Division would benefit by a comprehensive program review and a study of its special place in the college's mission.
Because of its size and importance, special attention needs to be paid to the School of Education. The quality of the graduate Education programs has a clear and direct connection to the quality of instruction that the children of Brooklyn (and the rest of New York City) receive. The greatest problem of the Graduate Education programs is the severe shortage of full-time faculty to sustain them. Over the course of the last eight years, they have lost over half of their faculty. In 1997-98, over 75% of Education graduate classes were taught by adjuncts. Given the infusion of new faculty for 1998-99, this percentage should be reduced a little.

In any future review of graduate programs, all of the questions we ask about our undergraduate majors need to be asked separately about our graduate programs, especially the relationship between the liberal arts and career-oriented programs and the relationship between our programs and our students and the communities from which they come. The college needs to assess its strengths and focus on they ways they add to a common direction or a synergistic pattern of accomplishments. This brief review of key programs suggests some of what might be found, but it is important that the college articulate a collective vision of a direction for the Division of Graduate Studies.