Opening Discussion to Rename “Office of Graduate Studies” to 
The Graduate School 
at the University at Albany

“The graduate school ideally stands at the very center of a research university. It is where everything comes together. Graduate students imbibe the scholarly and research strategies employed by faculty while they also develop their abilities as mentors of undergraduates; . . . the graduate school should become the intellectual center of the university.” (Woodrow Wilson Foundation, “The Responsive Ph.D.,” 6)

Our History
Prior to the appointment of the current Dean, the University at Albany exercised a “weak graduate dean” model, a descriptor that also fairly applies to a “weak” approach to graduate education generally. Graduate student support had remained flat or decreased slightly, there was little visible campus-wide presence of graduate education outside each individual program or College, and the Office of Graduate Studies had no autonomous organizational or budget structure prior to academic year 2006-07.

Nevertheless, the Office of Graduate Studies maintains key functions:
• quality control in the areas of program and curricular policy, providing services to faculty and academic programs;
• shepherding student academic grievances and helping resolve when possible all kinds of problems for students;
• liaison with and staffing of the Senate’s Graduate Academic Council;
• regular oversight and regulation of students’ compliance with graduate registration policies;
• thesis and dissertation submission requirements; and
• student recruitment and retention efforts, particularly of students from underrepresented groups;
• coordination with Graduate Admissions to manage both the admission of graduate students and degree clearance for those same students at the conclusion of their programs of study.

In January, 2005, the University appointed a member of the teaching faculty as half-time Interim Dean (and permanent full-time Dean during July, 2006). The Graduate Dean role brought the first infusion of new resources into Graduate Studies in recent memory and the current Dean has focused efforts during 2006-07 on increasing doctoral stipends, supporting graduate student recruitment, and responding to the needs of graduate programs, graduate students, and graduate excellence at the University at Albany.

Merits of a Graduate School
During 2005-06, the Office of Graduate Studies first proposed the formation of a Graduate School as part of our Compact Plan. (The proposal was finally removed from consideration because we were not asking for additional funding.)

We now bring to the table for governance discussion the merits of such a proposal.
1. The University at Albany is the only one of the 4 SUNY research universities that does not have a Graduate School. Among the larger list of 26 peer and aspirational peer institutions to which we have compared our campus in the past, 16 have a Graduate School and an additional 4 have adopted a Graduate Division.

2. Currently every tenure-track and tenured teaching faculty member at the University at Albany automatically becomes a member of the Graduate Faculty and would, under a new structure, become a member of the Graduate School.

3. The timing is right; since we are involved in a Presidential Search, it matters that graduate education achieve full visibility on campus.

4. We aspire to do the following under the rubric of the Graduate School:
   a. increase the visibility of graduate education at the University at Albany;
   b. create an enhanced platform for the Graduate Dean to advocate for increased funding for graduate education;
   c. establish a more visible public presence for the support services we deliver to faculty, prospective and current students, and future alumni;
   e. enable longer-range viability for graduate education and advancement efforts by providing graduate alumni “dual citizenship” with their program of study and with The Graduate School;
   f. serve as an integrative hub to foster cross-School/College interactions between faculty and students.

Financial Implications
The proposal to rename “Graduate Studies” as “The Graduate School” has no financial implications other than those that the existing “Graduate Studies” unit already has, but it may provide development opportunities down the road. While most graduate alumni who wish to donate will do so directly within their Schools and Colleges, by not having a functioning Graduate School we have foreclosed the possibility that the Graduate School itself—and individuals within it—might make the significant difference in a student’s career and lead that graduate alum to want to contribute to the University. A Graduate School gives such students another way to direct their giving, and a Dean of a Graduate School lends stature to development claims about graduate education at Albany.