

The UNLV logo is rendered in a bold, red, serif font. It is positioned at the top of a white rectangular box that contains the title and date of the document. The background of the entire page is a faded, grayscale photograph of the UNLV campus, featuring a prominent brick tower with 'UNLV' inscribed on it, a modern building with a glass facade, and a Ferris wheel in the distance under a cloudy sky.

**UNLV**

**Recommended  
Practices  
Aligned to the  
Top Tier  
Strategic Plan**

**February 2019**

## Recommended Practices to Increase Undergraduate Metrics

*2025 Goals: 85% first-year retention and 50% six-year graduation rates.*

### 1. Help to recruit highly qualified students with potential to succeed at UNLV.

- a. Ensure that information about programs offered by your unit is clear, up-to-date, and readily available to prospective and admitted students. This includes any additional requirements for admission to programs, beyond the minimum admissions standards for the university, especially for programs with limited or competitive admissions.
- b. Work with the Office of Undergraduate Admissions and the Graduate College to plan communications with prospective and admitted students. Confusion or conflicting messages from different sources can negatively impact yield.
- c. Whenever possible, accelerate the timeline for awarding College scholarships so that it aligns with the timeline for awarding University and federal financial aid. A complete, coherent financial aid package is a powerful recruiting tool.

### 2. Review and consider revising program curricula to support students' progression and completion.

- a. Encourage departments to review data provided by Office of Decision Support on curricular complexity, course enrollments, and D/F/W/I rates. These data can help identify bottlenecks, overly complicated pre-requisite pathways, and courses that could benefit from re-design.
- b. Inactivate courses that have not been offered recently so students don't expect to use those courses to fulfill degree requirements.
- c. Review the number of degree audit exceptions and waivers approved by your department each year. If many students need exceptions to graduate, degree requirements should be re-examined.
- d. Revisit program curriculum maps. Determine whether all learning outcomes are being addressed and in which courses. The Office of Academic Assessment can help departments review and revise their maps.
- e. Close the loop on assessment of student learning. Encourage departments to take time each year to reflect on the evidence of student learning they've collected as part of their program assessment activities and to recommend curriculum changes if students are not achieving program learning outcomes.

### 3. Review and enhance College-level co-curricular opportunities to support student engagement.

- a. Focus on building co-curricular programs and experiences that:
  - i. connect students with faculty, either formally or informally.
  - ii. connect what students are learning in their major course of study to career opportunities.
  - iii. specifically address the needs of historically underserved students (e.g., racial/ethnic minority groups, first-generation students, non-traditional, online, transfer, etc.).
  - iv. are available throughout the student life-cycle.
- b. Consider applying for grants to support initiatives for at-risk students.

### 4. Support dissemination and adoption of instructional practices that best support student learning.

- a. Examine D/F/W rates by course and by section and encourage reflection and discussion among faculty
- b. Encourage and support faculty-driven re-design of "gateway" or "bottleneck" courses, which students must pass to progress in a degree program.
- c. Encourage faculty to participate in teaching workshops and webinars offered by the Faculty Development center, and consider hosting college-level events or interest groups to promote best practices.
- d. Discourage norm-referenced grading (i.e., grading on a "curve") at the section level. This is the grading scheme most strongly associated with section-to-section variation in grade distributions. Encourage grading methods that focus on content mastery.

### 5. Provide exceptional support services to students that help them successfully navigate systems and policies and allow them to focus on their academic success.

- a. Encourage adoption of the REBELS Way service philosophy by all front-line, student-facing staff.
- b. Support faculty awareness of academic support services offered by the Academic Success Center, including supplemental instruction, success coaching, tutoring, and workshops.
- c. Collaborate with central student service units to provide cross-training to College staff so that students get the same answer to a question, regardless of where or to whom they ask it.
- d. Encourage follow-up on referrals to student support services in other units.

## Recommended Practices to Increase Graduate Metrics

*2025 Goals: 200 research doctorates and 272 professional practice doctorates.*

### 1. Increase research doctoral degrees conferred

- a. Engage strategic recruitment and admissions practices to (re)fill the doctoral enrollment pipeline with the most qualified and best-fit students (in terms of areas of interest, program expectations, career aspirations) for each program.
- b. Support student success to improve retention, progression, and timely completion as measured by enrollment, progression through milestones, and time-to-degree.
- c. Align R2PC targets & program requirements with career placement opportunities, including career pathways outside academia.
- d. Expand GAs and fellowship opportunities to fund a higher percentage of doctoral students; strive for summer awards and 12-month GAs.
- e. If high-demand program and growth is possible, consider deploying more graduate faculty in graduate education and rely more on FIRS and instructional faculty at the undergraduate level.
- f. Hire new research active faculty and encourage their participation in graduate education and student mentorship.
- g. Assess, report, and reward successful doctoral student mentorship in P&T, annual evaluations, etc.

### 2. Increase professional doctoral degrees conferred

- a. Engage strategic recruitment and admissions practices to (re)fill the doctoral enrollment pipeline with the most qualified and best-fit students (in terms of areas of interest, program expectations, career aspirations) for each program.
- b. Support student success to improve retention, progression, and timely completion as measured by enrollment, progression through milestones, and time-to-degree.
- c. Align R2PC targets & program requirements with career placement opportunities.
- d. Expand GAs and fellowship opportunities to fund a higher percentage of doctoral students.
- e. If high-demand program and growth is possible, consider deploying more graduate faculty in the professional doc program and rely more on FIRS and instructional faculty at the undergraduate level.
- f. Hire new faculty and encourage their participation in graduate education and student mentorship.
- g. Assess, report, and reward successful doctoral student mentorship in P&T, annual evaluations, etc.

### 3. Raise graduate FTE/enrollment

- a. Engage strategic recruitment and admissions practices to (re)fill the doctoral enrollment pipeline with the most qualified and best-fit students (in terms of areas of interest, program expectations, career aspirations) for each program.
- b. Support student success through deployment of best practices (program to career alignment; strong, consistent advisement; constructive and regular student feedback; strong supportive mentorship; well-run graduate program with a well-informed graduate coordinator; offer classes in a predictable schedule to support student degree planning; etc.) and engaged commitment to grad retention and progression.
- c. Fully utilize the mandatory Annual Graduate Student evaluation as an opportunity to assess the student's progress and accomplishments in the last year & establish goals for the next.
- d. Encourage full-time enrollment and summer program engagement.
- e. Cultivate a pro-student climate; be sure that your program's climate is inclusive, supportive of diversity, and reflects an egalitarian approach to treatment of students.
- f. Expand GAs and fellowship opportunities to fund a higher percentage of students.
- g. If high-demand program and growth is possible, consider deploying more graduate faculty in your graduate programs to support program enrollment growth, and rely more on FIRS and instructional faculty at the undergraduate level.
- h. Hire new faculty and encourage their participation in graduate education and student mentorship.
- i. Look at your data and identify program weak spots where students get stuck, slowed-down, or leave program; work to fix them.
- j. Ask: "If we were designing our program today, would we design the program we have now?" If yes, good! If not, work with the Graduate College to make changes to the program, curriculum, etc. to support student success.
- k. Graduate College commitment to continuing and enhancing our commitment to "100% Solutions" and The REBELS Way.

### 4. Expand graduate assistantships

- a. Increase external funding with more grants, and writing in more GA lines; fund as many GAs as possible on existing grants. When possible, fund GAs for 12-months.
- b. The university must continue to allocate funding for GAs and the Graduate College should continue to advocate for GA funding increases and seek new ways to financially support graduate students.
- c. Work with development directors and the Graduate College to create CGRA positions (Community Graduate Research Assistantships).
- d. Continue providing Campus Professional Development GRA opportunities where appropriate.
- e. Strive to increase stipend levels and insurance benefits to better recruit and support GAs.

## Recommended Practices to Increase Research Expenditures Metrics

*2025 Goal: \$150 million*

### 1. Increase research expenditures

- a. The culture needs to shift from submitting grants and contracts to receiving funding. This culture shift can be achieved by providing faculty with the skills, resources, and tools necessary for them to write and submit competitive grants and contracts. The Research Excellence Program will aid in achieving this goal and shifting the culture to one of research excellence.
- b. Developing more interdisciplinary research teams will increase the competitiveness of UNLV.
- c. Identifying areas of excellence and recruiting greater numbers of research intensive faculty in those areas will increase grant funding and research expenditures.
- c. The most senior faculty should be rewarded both for continuing their own research careers, as well as mentoring less senior faculty and graduate students. Heavier service commitments at the national and international level should bring prominence to both the faculty member and to UNLV. Ideally, post-tenure review and promotion will be considered in an effort to continue to recognize and reward these faculty.
- d. A proposed working definition of research-intensive faculty is 50% or more of both time and funding devoted to research endeavors. The amount and sources of funding will differ by field and discipline, but ideally UNLV research-intensive faculty will fall in the top 50% of funded researchers in their field.

### 2. Recruit and retain research-intensive faculty

- a. Recruit junior faculty with very limited teaching loads so they have sufficient time to write grants and launch their research careers. Provide significant mentoring from senior faculty with successful research careers, including pairing junior and senior faculty up in research laboratories and environments, and sharing graduate students and post-docs. By their third year on faculty, it should be expected that 50% of a faculty members salary is covered by research grants or contracts. This can be accomplished through K awards and other mechanisms for junior faculty, as well as serving as co-investigators on others' grants.
- b. As faculty become mid-level, their teaching load can increase slightly and should include graduate student mentoring. Service commitments, both within UNLV and nationally, should also begin in relation to one's own research endeavors; however, the majority of their time still needs to be focused on research. Compensation associated with the quality and quantity of research funding should be considered since successful mid-level faculty will be courted by other institutions.
- e. In order to be successful in recruiting research-intensive faculty, UNLV must adopt best practices in hiring, competitive compensation packages, and provide high-quality and easily accessible centralized research services for all faculty and students, including grant writing and review, statistical services, data management, and manuscript preparation / editing services. The proposed Research Excellence Program, as well as the new structure and certification requirements of the Office of Sponsored Programs, will aid in this effort.
- f. In support of these efforts and to ensure other Top Tier metrics are met, it is critical that teaching-intensive faculty also have reward structures that recognize excellence in teaching and pay for heavier teaching loads. In addition to recognizing their own contributions to our teaching mission, these faculty also enable research-intensive faculty to have lower teaching loads.

## Recommended Practices to Increase Non-Faculty Researchers Metrics

*2025 Goal: 120*

### Increase the numbers of non-faculty researchers

- a. Faculty should include graduate students and post-doctoral fellows in grant funding requests, as well as more junior faculty.
- b. Improved and sustainable support for core research services, including core laboratory managers, services, and equipment, will enable non-faculty researchers to provide higher levels of service and achieve greater job satisfaction. Recharge mechanisms and oversight will assist in this effort.
- c. The Research Excellence Program will also provide opportunities for providing core research support services from additional non-faculty researchers.