The role and future graduate education, to date, is yet to be formally addressed throughout campus, but we know it is a topic of interest. The purpose of these faculty forums is to hopefully drive the agenda forward thoughtfully.

Some discussion questions to guide, but not necessarily structure this discussion:
1. What do you think the role of graduate education at the College should be?
2. What do you see as the relationship between graduate and undergraduate education at the College?
3. What are the strengths and weaknesses of graduate education at the College?
4. What is your vision for graduate education in 2020?

Question #1 What do you think the role of graduate education at the College is now, and what should it be?

- Difficult to not fuse this question with Question #2—the two are linked: What does CofC want to be (in comparison to other institutions)?

- Currently, the College is so focused on its undergraduates, these students get attention and research opportunities not afforded elsewhere. There is the thought that expansion of graduate education may detract from this and take away from undergraduate experience. Don’t want to disrupt this unique “Undergraduate Research University”

- At the same time, gaps exist in the job market, the community, as well as with research conducted here at the College, that would benefit from the expansion of certain graduate programs. This expansion would also benefit undergraduate students who wish to continue education, but currently must go elsewhere.

- A conflict, therefore, exists. But, the general consensus is that there are gaps that an expansion of at least certain graduate education programs could certainly fill.

The question, then, becomes: Is this really a zero-sum game? Does the expansion of graduate education have jeopardize/take away from the undergraduate experience?

- The experience of some department chairs that currently have graduate programs is that, NO, graduate education does not have to come at the cost undergraduate. The two are not necessarily mutually exclusive. These departments that have established graduate programs did so due to the size
and diversity of the Charleston area, and an apparent lack of graduate development. To date, program assessment efforts seem to suggest that graduates are filling jobs in the areas that were lacking previously. Seems to demonstrate that graduate education has a purpose in our community and is filling “gaps”

-Another thought is that, proportionally, the number of students interested in advanced degrees and research is relatively small—therefore, diverting resources/focus to this smaller proportion of graduate students shouldn’t necessarily impact the majority of undergraduates. (Some disagreement about this; participants point to the high number of undergraduates that are involved in advanced research).

-Presence of graduate students might encourage and mentor the more promising undergraduate students.

Depending on the type of graduate program that’s being discussed, the needs a program will meet are vast and diverse: What, ultimately, are we trying to accomplish with the expansion of graduate education at the College?

-We feel confident in the job the College is doing at the undergraduate level. But now, recent economic activity in the area seems to indicate that we should expand, become a strong research institution in the Lowcountry.

-Some anecdotal examples of where graduation education expansion did hurt the undergraduate experience—for example: switching faculty lines in order to staff a new program, undergraduate programs suffer.

-Moving forward, then, it is not so much a matter of whether we want or need graduate education expansion, but rather, HOW are we going to accomplish it? Need to understand the policy and process

   For example: one popular way to off-set the cost of graduate education is the use of graduate students (TAs) as instructors—there is a strong notion that this can detract from undergraduate education—but is this the only viable/successful financial model?

The issue of teaching assistance is multifarious, and there are rationales for conflict mentioned above. While some TAs can be used as instructors of record (after 18 hours, etc.), the majority of TAs are not and, instead, are used in lower division courses with heavy supervision. One participant whose department currently relies on TAs believes that a very useful and positive feedback loop can exist between TAs and undergraduates. Support for both graduate and undergraduates can be mutually reinforcing.
"We should be enormously proud of the amount and quality of undergraduate research [at the College]. It is what sets us apart nationally"...and can be enhanced by the presence of graduate students.

Infrastructure can be a concern: Will we be able to offer adequate support to more and more graduate students? Where would this support come from? The financial needs associated with expansion must be a thought-out very carefully, top priority. Currently, this topic lacks feedback from certain levels of the administration at the College.

Institutional identity crises—one participant offers her experiences at another institution that, in trying to become a tier 1 research inst, tripled the size of its graduate school. Very trying, very costly. Consider the fact that graduate programs at the College are already underfunded currently. Her recommendation: Decision-making is problematic when it is top-down, needs to be communicated thoroughly from the bottom-up. (Why these forums are taking place)

Bigger question: What is our goal (with expanding graduate education) Is the ultimate end to become a tier one research university?

What are the questions that we need to ask and have answered before we move forward? (Surely there is institutional knowledge of what these questions are, how can we tap into that?)
  -How will we manage and provide student support?
  -Distance learning? Hands-on research v. distance? (Consensus: distance learning is not desirable)
  -Scholarships & assistantship funding
  -TA/instructor policy questions

“We want to [expand graduate education]. We want to do it right. Because we know we are doing something very, very right at the undergraduate level."

Issues of cost arise again. Question posed to department chairs present: “How many new lines would you like to request today?”

  -For some, it isn’t just faculty lines, but also support lines (i.e. technical support in Geo dept.) to free up time for faculty who are currently covering teaching, research, and support.
  
  -Another program reports it needs 5 or 6 new lines, just to catch up at the undergraduate level.

  -Another program reports that it is dependent on a large number of adjuncts, and would not necessarily like to replace them with a large number of FT faculty—likes working with adjuncts because it provides flexibility as
enrollment surges and lulls from term to term. But would like more funding for adjuncts, as well as for Graduate Assistants.

“We are 240 years old, and we’re still trying to figure out who we want to be.”

Doctoral Programs

-There seems to be a lot of pressure from the outside community in support of instituting more doctoral programs in the Lowcountry—likely due to the robust economy. However, there may be a disconnect here: there isn’t necessarily a high demand for Ph.D.’s in the job market yet. Extremely successful doctoral programs will create that kind of demand in the job market (after a lot of time), not the other way around.

-Do we really want to be competing against older, more established doctoral programs for the type of funding necessary for a strong doctoral program (e.g. an NSF grant)

-It is important to establish what it that we do well, some to agreement on that, and commit to protect it.

-For some programs, many in the Arts, it is not at all necessary to instill a doctoral, or even masters program—these are too theoretical (versus applied) to meet or create job demand in the area

Advance responses to the faculty survey sent by committee (preliminary findings)

1. Vision as a liberal arts and sciences research institution...
   a. Majority of faculty and students choose CofC for this reason

2. ...Further development of master's programs will benefit current mission

3. ...Further development of PhD programs will benefit current mission

*There appears to faculty support for targeted development of master degree programs and select PhD programs.

- In scientific fields, the public sector is shifting toward hiring more Ph.D.’s. However, this is not the trend at all in the public sector in general (outside of sciences) → A “one size fits all” strategy will not work here. Different needs for different fields.

- becoming an all around Tier 1 research institution does not seem to be what we are looking for  → rather, strategic development of targeted programs

What are the technical issues of expansion? What strengths and weaknesses can we identify in preparing to expand?
-Consensus: Commitment to do “do no harm” approach to the unique undergraduate research— we’ve established a floor that we will not go beneath. Now let’s discuss how we improve from where we are now.

-A discussion of political issues—competition with other universities within the State, CHE. Politics is not a problem we are going to solve here. This is not something we can control...What can we control?

-For example: For now, a MUSC-CofC merger is undetermined, but are there opportunities to enhance graduate education through more deliberated and support collaboration between the two NOW?
  -Are there things that we can grasp and drive will impact positively in the future, regardless of what happens politically with the merger?
  -Not just in terms of research, but maybe teaching, collaborative programs, grant opportunities...

-Downsides include: MUSC’s degree of specialization, only certain CofC programs would benefit; history of unequal commitment from both sides of the collaboration (both sides need to be “all in”).

What would it look like if, in your view, we had a very healthy graduate education structure? What would be the characteristics, what goals would we be achieving, what would have to change? What does it look like?

-We need to address physical plant issues
- The way in which we approach scheduling would need to change, especially with peripheral services (i.e. library)
- We would need to strongly strengthen ORGA*
- Understand how we will support graduate student support (assistantships, thesis/dissertation grants, abatements, finding, conferences—would want a very strong structure set up for all of this)
- We would need support from upper tier of administration in place
- We need to understand how to communicate the structure of our graduate education programming effectively and honestly: “Yes, you will have classes taught by a TA from time to time, and here are the benefits of that…”

**We need to have these and other ideas documented and ready to present so that we are prepared once in front of upper administration. Idea: Collect and compile memos written previously on topic. Use targeted areas where we have demonstrated strength in collaboration as examples

Final note/question: What is the vision of a joint undergraduate and graduate institution at the College of Charleston?
  - Perhaps it will be helpful to look at other institutions as models (not draw completely from the abstract).