



2013 - 2018

# Executive Summary

SCHOOL FOR GRADUATE STUDIES

STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK  
 EMPIRE STATE COLLEGE



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## Introduction

This Academic Plan provides a framework and guide for the academic direction of the School for Graduate Studies. This plan reflects broad input from faculty and staff, and is shaped by the college's commitments and traditions along with SUNY initiatives and goals. As we continuously seek the best ways to serve our students, the plan guides us in enriching high-quality educational experiences, and supports the academic life of the School for Graduate Studies across all programs. Finally, it expresses the distinct identity of the School for Graduate Studies, as it represents the collective consideration of who we are, what we do, and who we serve now and will serve in the future.

Our core graduate programs address critical and enduring educational needs for those seeking to advance in business, education, policy studies and liberal studies. At the same time, student needs are evolving based on societal and environmental trends. These needs demand that we regularly assess and upgrade our curricular offerings, the methods by which we engage students pedagogically, the degree and program options available to students, our collective expertise, technological and administrative support systems and practices, and our understanding of what constitutes a properly educated graduate student.

In short, the academic plan provides a framework for achieving the delicate balance between stability and innovation. It enables us to articulate our approach to achieving our goals to our college community and to external audiences – including prospective students – and to galvanize our energies to fulfill our mission.

## Structure of this Plan

The academic plan for the School for Graduate Studies follows the format of the three sections of the college's plan, in recognition that they reflect the most important overarching areas of strategic concern. Each of the sections offers separate but inter-related goals and objectives relevant for its scope. The three sections around which the plan is organized are: Academic Programs; Environments for Advising, Teaching and Learning; and Faculty Planning, Scholarship and Development.

The goals and strategies identified in the academic plan are aimed at providing quality and relevant education that meets students' needs through interdisciplinary learning opportunities and innovative modes of delivery that enhance students' engagement supported by a culture of continual improvement. The three goals and accompanying strategies draw on the collective strengths of faculty expertise, organizational resources, governance, planning, staffing, coordination, budgeting and decision-making processes that exist in the School for Graduate Studies. The goals follow the external trends and challenges identified by SUNY and Empire State College's Vision 2025 and which also provided direction for SGS goals and strategies.

## Mission

The School for Graduate Studies is committed to excellence in providing enriching and challenging academic programs which serve the professional and personal needs of our diverse students and the larger society. The school offers a range of programs, in various learning modes, that help adult learners make a difference in their lives and in their communities.

## Vision (2018)

The School for Graduate Studies is a widely recognized leader in preparing practitioner-scholars at the master's and doctoral levels, across a range of degree options. The school provides and continually assesses quality educational experiences in innovative and flexible learning formats which promote the development of critical thinkers, creative professionals, engaged citizens, practitioner-scholars and community leaders.

## Values

*The school's vision is built on the following values:*

- **Integrity** in academics and in relationships among students, faculty and staff
- Continuous improvement of **academic quality** through a coherent assessment process focused on student learning outcomes
- Refinement and expansion of adaptable, creative, **student-centered approaches** to learning
- **Judiciously planned program growth** which responds to students' evolving needs, builds on principal areas of the school's expertise, and is sensitive to and anticipates changing environmental conditions
- Ongoing **enhancements of service** to our students, also through a coherent assessment process of student learning and experiences
- Encouragement and support of **faculty development** in research, teaching and advising
- **Engagement** with educational partners to broaden and maximize learning opportunities for students
- Advancement of **outreach** to strengthen students' capacities for contributing to the communities in which they live and work
- Modeling and supporting **lifelong, self-directed learning**

## [A]: Academic Programs<sup>1</sup>

The School for Graduate Studies is responsive to the educational and professional goals of our students, and the needs of our broader society by building on our core values and areas of scholarly strength. Our rich academic offerings allow students to create seamless pathways from their undergraduate to graduate experience, or build on their professional experience as they enhance their knowledge and skills in their chosen field. Empire State College's School for Graduate Studies has developed a reputation for flexible educational programs, offered in multiple formats: totally online, blended with a residency component, and blended with other interpersonal components. Programs range from more structured (MBA, MAT) to more customized (M.A.L.S., MALET), and allow for modular learning in the sense that cross-program course offerings are available to all students. Faculty who serve as graduate advisors are experienced in mentoring practices – long a hallmark of the college as a whole. Altogether, being part of any of Empire State College's graduate programs is an experience characterized by quality teaching, relevant academics, mentorship, flexible learning formats and assessment options, and dynamic relationships that are developed regardless of geographic distances. Our graduates overwhelmingly report finding new and renewed paths to the labor market as well as personal and community enrichment.

### **Goal A1: Expand interdisciplinary learning opportunities that are relevant for students' changing needs**

**Strategy: Encourage cross-program sharing of studies to expand students' learning options, and leverage faculty expertise.**

**Strategy: Expand combined B.A./M.A. degree paths, and joint degree programs with other SUNY schools, and other higher education partners.**

**Strategy: Evaluate and develop combined master's degree opportunities for students whose professional interests span multiple disciplinary areas.**

**Strategy: Design and launch professional doctorate programs in the fields of education and management, with related, supporting certificates.**

**Strategy: Create a systematic process to better understand our current and prospective students in order to continue offering program options that serve their diverse needs.**

**Strategy: Strengthen relationships with regionally based faculty to maximize use of the college's academic talent for graduate offerings.**

**Strategy: Improve relationships and partnerships with SUNY, industry, relevant professional organizations and select international partners.**

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<sup>1</sup> The college's academic plan included criteria against which new programs should be judged for approval. The School for Graduate Studies will use those developed by the college since they are intended to be collegewide. For details, see the Empire State College 2011 - 2015 Academic Plan.

## **Goal A2: Build our inter/national leadership profile as an innovative, cross-disciplinary school for graduate education**

**Strategy:** Establish, with external funds, a Teaching and Learning Research and Design Institute.

**Strategy:** Use existing programs as incubators to explore the development and bundling of new learning opportunities (certificates, programs and joint endeavors).

**Strategy:** Define the role of prior learning assessment in graduate programs, and share our approaches with a broader audience.

**Strategy:** Explore and grow additional partnerships with other SUNY campuses, and select national/international partners in higher education.

**Strategy:** Identify and pursue external funding resources for program-related research and development.

**Strategy:** Expand advisory and fundraising role of alumni and external donors.

**Strategy:** Draft an integrated communications strategy for the school as a whole, to include social media.

**Strategy:** Develop and share widely in public an annual report that highlights the successes of students, faculty and alumni.

## **Goal A3: Enhance our culture of continual improvement**

**Strategy:** Refine existing program-specific learning goals to align with statement of graduate studies learning outcomes.

**Strategy:** Improve means of formative and summative assessment for students, as appropriate to each program.

**Strategy:** Integrate outcomes assessment and analysis at the individual, course and programmatic levels in order to inform program improvements and future growth.

## **[B]: Environments for Advising, Teaching and Learning**

As a learning environment, the School for Graduate Studies encompasses students, faculty, professionals and staff who collectively engage in distinctive academic programs. This rich academic environment fosters a commitment to lifelong learning for all its members by creating an atmosphere that promotes the ideas and practices of engaged public scholars and practitioners. This emerges from a desire to enhance the unique tradition of Empire State College that is characterized by close faculty-student relationships, and the chance to work across traditional disciplinary boundaries.

The school recognizes the unique challenges of its faculty and students being geographically dispersed. Collectively, the members of the school try to organize themselves in ways that foster a sense of cohesion and community. To sustain a positive school culture, we make concerted efforts to interact in meaningful and productive ways for the purpose of not only advising, teaching and learning, but

conducting the work of governance and operations that support our mission. As such, we acknowledge the benefits and challenges of being a highly dispersed community that is acutely reliant on technology to support communication and learning.

Despite such challenges, the school is committed to maintaining a culture of civility, one that is rooted in working relationships that are respectful and open to a diversity of ideas and perspectives. Such an environment can blossom only when there is the recognition that all who serve in the School for Graduate Studies – dean, faculty, professional employees and staff – make contributions of value. Moreover, the quality and tenor of our interpersonal relations within the school should be not only evident to our students, but extended to our students.

The School for Graduate Studies has a long history of working with learners in multiple educational contexts. Using Empire State College's established mentoring approach, the school engages students in technologically mediated as well as in conventional classroom settings, and gives value to students' varied life and professional experiences which become integrated into their learning plans. Given the depth and range of this experience, the school is particularly well-prepared to lead a more systematic study of the rapidly evolving and shifting higher education environment, focusing especially on the implications for learning processes, instructional effectiveness, technological tools, quality and relevance of educational experience, emerging pedagogical strategies, and the role of the instructor.

### **Goal B1: Explore new ways of creating effective, interactive and flexible work and learning environments – both physical and virtual**

**Strategy:** Inventory, assess and support all staffing and infrastructure needs that support communication.

**Strategy:** Plan and participate in a third SGS face-to-face meeting each year – designed as an academic retreat, devoted to sharing scholarship and exploring collaborative research projects.

**Strategy:** Cooperatively establish current design and assessment needs for courses and community spaces across academic programs.

### **Goal B2: Reinvigorate students' academic experience from recruitment through induction, key academic milestones, to graduation**

**Strategy:** Streamline communication and guidance from admissions through enrollment and graduation, for both students and faculty.

**Strategy:** Institute improved measures of identifying target markets and strengthening recruitment and retention strategies and processes.

**Strategy:** Build professional development and networking opportunities among current students, alumni, businesses, community organization and schools.

**Strategy:** Continue to experiment with new designs for engaging and interactive learning experiences, in person and virtually.

**Strategy:** Create new opportunities for students to collaborate with faculty on research or development projects.

### **Goal B3: Enhance our environment of collaboration, diversity and respect**

**Strategy: Encourage and organize more interdisciplinary collaboration across programs, and among faculty research endeavors.**

**Strategy: Develop and implement a progressive approach to achieving and celebrating civility.**

**Strategy: Establish and charge task force to draft a statement of citizenship, to include principles that govern how we manage relationships with students, and among ourselves.**

### **[C]: Faculty Planning and Development**

The primary obligations of faculty in a state institution of higher education include their commitment to the public through service to their professional and local communities, research in their fields, and the principal duty to educate students as they develop as citizens of the state, nation and the world. In that spirit, faculty planning and development speak to the conditions necessary to bring such commitments to fruition. Faculty planning and development may be organized around a set of interdependent goals essential for faculty to perform their roles effectively and which contribute to their capacity for organizing and sustaining an enriching academic experience for their students.

Student interests and faculty interests are not discrete but, rather, intertwined; to the extent that faculty are well-prepared to serve students, they are likely to be active in, and contribute to, their professional fields, enjoy a well-balanced work life, feel effectively assimilated into their work environment, are knowledgeable of pedagogical practice applicable to their learners, reap the benefits of collaboration, and are supported in the pursuit of satisfying their intellectual curiosity. When the conditions which nourish these interests are present, student-faculty engagement is likely to be assessed by both parties as meaningful, challenging, productive, and gratifying. In this respect, even faculty pursuits relative to community service and personal growth effectively inform their ability as teachers.

An overarching aim of faculty development is to create a rich academic environment which fosters the commitment to lifelong learning for students as well as faculty. The intent is to create an atmosphere which promotes the ideas and practices of engaged citizen-scholar practitioners among students and faculty. This emerges from a desire to enhance the unique tradition of Empire State College that enables collaborative relationships between faculty and students to work across traditional disciplinary boundaries.

### **Goal C1: Ensure that faculty maintain relevant content expertise to serve current and future needs of students, pursue scholarly interests, and contribute to their communities**

**Strategy: Support members of the faculty in their endeavors to remain up-to-date in their respective academic and professional fields.**

**Strategy: Support faculty's scholarly productivity so they may expand knowledge in their scholarly fields.**



**Strategy:** Provide relevant resources to the Professional Development Committee to expand their recent initiatives.

**Strategy:** Safeguard faculty participation in recruitment and hiring practices.

## **Goal C2: Ensure that faculty employ sound pedagogical practices, particularly as they pertain to the graduate student body at Empire State College**

**Strategy:** Support the practice of pedagogical approaches, tools and strategies intended to maximize the quality and effectiveness of learning processes for students.

**Strategy:** Develop a collaborative plan with existing institutional resources to enhance faculty's understanding of theory, practice and design that is relevant to graduate education contexts.

## **Goal C3: Support faculty effectiveness across a comprehensive range of their roles in the college, professional organizations and larger community**

**Strategy:** Provide a comprehensive, supportive and multifaceted approach to orienting new members of the faculty.

**Strategy:** Ensure that current members of the faculty have access to institutionally-sponsored education activities related to pedagogy and issues of significance for the college.

**Strategy:** Ensure that faculty development planning and performance review processes are meaningful, constructive and serve as a blueprint for professional growth.

**Strategy:** Ensure faculty have access to a sufficient and appropriate compilation of resources and training to fulfill their responsibilities to their students, to their role as scholars, to the college, and to service in their respective communities.

**Strategy:** Support faculty in developing skills in effective interpersonal and cross-cultural communication relevant to teaching in our online and blended learning environments.

**Strategy:** Strengthen relationships with regionally based faculty to maximize use of the college's academic talent for graduate offerings.

## **Current Academic Program Offerings**

In the 2013 - 2014 academic year, Empire State College's School for Graduate Studies offers 11 degrees and 15 advanced certificates in four broad areas of **Education; Business, Management and Leadership; Policy Studies; Liberal Studies.**

### **Education**

Empire State College's **Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT)** programs are designed for those seeking certification to teach in schools at the middle-school and high-school levels in math, biology, chemistry, earth science, physics, Spanish, French, English and social studies.

The **Master of Arts in Adult Learning** is designed for students interested in adult learning and education, including: learning in organizations, online learning, adult learning in international contexts, adults in higher education, adult literacy, adult learning for social change and community engagement.

The **Master of Arts in Learning and Emerging Technologies** is designed for individuals from a variety of backgrounds, comprising a community engaged in exploring and researching the learning process, specifically with emerging online technologies.

The **Master of Education in Teaching and Learning** degree of Empire State College's School for Graduate Studies prepares innovative educators and policy makers to be valuable resources in K - 12 schools and other educational settings. This allows students to use up to 9 credits earned through New York State United Teacher's Education Learning Trust (ELT), toward the degree.

## **Business, Management and Leadership**

The **Master of Business Administration in Management (MBA-M)** is a competency-based program for professionals and mid-career managers targeted for upward mobility or lateral movement seeking to augment their business, management and leadership skills.

**MBA in Management's Pathway for Service Members and Veterans (MBA-V)** speeds up the time to degree by recognizing veterans and service members' prior learning, and it assists students in reframing their considerable leadership and management knowledge into commercial business terms, increasing employability and success after military service.

**Master of Business Administration in Global leadership (MBA-GL)** is a 45-credit online program designed for those interested in becoming leaders in global organizations.

## **Policy Studies**

The **Master of Arts in Social Policy** is designed for practitioners, managers and administrators in public and private, for-profit and nonprofit sectors who want to learn more about how to make either governmental or organizational policies more effective. (Currently in approvals process to be renamed M.A. in Social and Public Policy)

The **Master of Arts in Labor and Policy Studies** is designed for unionists, human resource professionals, arbitrators, educators, journalists, political activists, lawyers and individuals involved in government or private industry. (Currently in approvals process to be renamed M.A. in Work and Labor Policy.)

The **Master of Arts in Community and Economic Development** serves those who want to be successful in a variety of roles associated with community and economic development. It focuses on the integration of the development of social capital and community capacity with the economic development of the community.

## **Liberal Studies**

The **Master of Arts in Liberal Studies (M.A.L.S.)** is designed for educators, artists, writers, activists, advocates, lifelong learners and others who, in collaboration with their faculty mentor, want to create the design and focus of their own unique graduate degree plan.

### Graduate Certificates (2013 - 2014)

- American Studies (12 credits)
- Child and Family Advocacy (12 credits)
- Community Advocacy (12 credits)
- Financial Management and Analysis (12 credits)
- Global Brand Marketing (12 credits)
- Health Care Management (12 credits)
- Human Resource Management (12 credits)
- Innovation Management and Technology Transfer (12 credits)
- Nonprofit Management (12 credits)
- Optometry Business Management (18 credits)
- Project Management (12 credits)
- Public History (15 credits)
- Public Sector Labor and Employment Policy (12 credits)  
*(Currently in approvals process to be renamed Work and Public Policy)*
- Veterans Services (12 credits)
- Women's and Gender Studies (12 credits)

## The College Learning Goals at the Master's Level

In conjunction with the Academic Plan 2011 - 2015, the college developed broad learning goals for all students across all levels, with the expectation that these would be made more specific for graduate programs. The approved College Learning Goals and their collegewide definitions (in italics) are presented followed by a statement of expected master's level outcomes. The School for Graduate Studies expects students to achieve the outcomes listed below upon completion of an Empire State College master's degree.

### Active Learning

*Assess and build upon previous learning and experiences to independently pursue new learning, and to participate effectively in concert with others.*

Expected master's level learning outcomes:

- Initiate and manage one's own learning, demonstrating mastery in comprehending and engaging complex issues and ideas.
- Create and complete a substantive individual project, paper, portfolio exhibit, performance or other appropriate product, applied or theoretical, that demonstrates the integration of knowledge and application of skills gained across the student's master's curriculum.
- Reframe, adapt, reformulate and employ the principle ideas, techniques or methods at the forefront of the one's own field of study.

### Depth and Breadth of Knowledge

*Cultivate a broad, interdisciplinary understanding in the liberal arts and sciences, as well as expertise in a particular field.*

Expected master's level learning outcomes:

- Explain and interpret the major theories, applications, research methods and approaches to inquiry and/or schools of practice as appropriate to the field of study, demonstrating a critical awareness of current problems and new insights.
- Assess the nature and quality of the contribution of major theoretical figures, and/or schools of thought in the student's field of study.
- Critically evaluate current research and the most recent and advanced scholarship in the student's field of study.

## **Social Responsibility**

*Engage in ethical reasoning, and reflect on issues such as democratic citizenship, diversity, social justice and environmental sustainability, both locally and globally.*

Expected master's level learning outcomes:

- Develop an ethically sound argument or position on a significant, current issue, policy or strategic initiative with significance to society, taking into account the most recent scholarship and published positions, and narratives of relevant interest groups.

## **Communication**

*Express and receive ideas effectively, in multiple contexts and through multiple strategies.*

Expected master's level learning outcomes:

- Create sustained, coherent and effective written and oral arguments or explanations and reflections, for both general and specialized audiences.

## **Critical Thinking and Problem Solving**

*Evaluate, analyze, synthesize and critique key concepts and experiences, and apply diverse perspectives to find creative solutions concerning human behavior, society and the natural world.*

Expected master's level learning outcomes:

- Select and employ appropriate methods of research/inquiry and analysis for investigating questions and problems, and identifying solutions or drawing conclusions.
- Through systematic evaluation and analysis, creatively and articulately address complex issues and ideas, substantively considering diverse perspectives in formulating responses, hypotheses and solutions.

## **Quantitative/Qualitative Literacy**

*Read, interpret, use and present quantitative or qualitative information effectively.*

Expected master's level learning outcomes:

- As appropriate to the field of study, comprehend, interpret, and employ concepts, theories and methodologies suitable to research inquiry.

## **Information Literacy and Digital Media Literacy**

*Critically assess, evaluate, understand and create and share information using a range of collaborative technologies to advance learning, as well as personal and professional development.*

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