



Graduate Program GROWTH

By Suzanne Wilcox English M'09

In fall 2009, The University of Findlay marked a major milestone, awarding more graduate degrees than bachelor degrees for the first time in its history. UF has nearly quadrupled its enrollment in the past 25 years, and the growth of its graduate programs, supported by a strong undergraduate program, has been a major contributing factor.





A Generation of Graduate-Level Growth



1982 - Findlay College's centennial - Enrollment stands at 1,200 but a growth spurt begins.

1988 - Enrollment tops 2,000 for the first time.

1989 - Findlay College introduces a master of arts in **teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL) and bilingual education**, and becomes The University of Findlay.



1992 - Master of arts in education added, and enrollment tops 3,000 for the first time.



1993 - Master of business administration (MBA) added.



1994 - Master of environmental, safety and health management (ESH) added.

Daniel J. May, Ph.D., vice president for academic affairs, noted that while more graduate degrees are apt to be awarded than undergraduate degrees, the mix of undergraduate and graduate course offerings will likely remain about three-fourths undergrad to one-quarter graduate, reflecting the relative longer duration of the undergraduate programs.

Findlay College became The University of Findlay in 1989, the same year it added its first master's program in modern times, a master of arts in teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL) and bilingual education, in recognition of its growth and the addition of graduate programming. A series of others followed.

May noted that successful professional programs combine the strengths of undergraduate and graduate education.

"The two dominant end members of American higher education — research universities and undergraduate liberal arts colleges — historically made a strong distinction between undergraduate and post-

baccalaureate graduate experience. Graduate programs traditionally focused on the research and performance activities that advance the knowledge and practices of the discipline itself, rather than any specific individual's needs," May said.

"Many rapidly evolving schools that are focusing on professional preparation, like UF, blur the boundary between the undergraduate and graduate years. More significantly, they shift the focus from research to professional practice, with numerous internship, cooperative experience, field experience and clinical rotations starting in the undergraduate years and continuing in many cases through to an advanced degree level," he said. "Early exposure and entry into professional practice has many positive benefits for most students, and professional practice schools, including comprehensive bachelor's or master's institutions, are the fastest-growing segment of higher education."

Thomas H. Dillon, Ed.D., dean of Graduate and Professional Studies, credits the vision of University leadership in moving into

high-demand fields with the continued strength and health of UF at a time when many institutions with traditional curricula are struggling.

"The administration made the decision to move into programs that were fast-growing and predicted to continue growing," he pointed out. "The nature of the graduate programs we have is that they are all professionally focused programs. That sets us up well to think about continued growth in the professional area — where we can attract students and help graduates obtain good professional jobs at the same time."

Findlay has continued a tradition of entrepreneurial faculty developing innovative programs and moving them to the next level — which has made it well-suited to capitalize on change. Meeting students' needs — another hallmark of a Findlay education since its founding — already included one of Ohio's first weekend college programs, and also came to incorporate online education.

The undergraduate side of the equation benefits from strong



1995 – Bachelor’s degrees in **occupational therapy (OT) and physical therapy (PT)** added.

1997 – Enrollment tops 4,000 for the first time.

1999 – The **MBA** program is offered entirely online.



2000 – Both **OT** and **PT** become master’s programs, and the master’s in **ESH** and three degree completion programs are offered entirely online.



2001 – **Master of arts in liberal studies** program accredited.

2003 – **Master of athletic training** program accredited.



2006 – A new six-year **doctor of pharmacy degree** was approved for pre-candidacy status by the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education.



2008 – **Physical therapy** program becomes a professional doctorate.

2009 – **Physician assistant** program moves to the master’s level.



2010 – **First doctoral hooding ceremony** at UF, slated for spring commencement.



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-Thomas H. Dillon, Ed.D., dean of Graduate and Professional Studies

graduate programs such as occupational therapy, pharmacy and physical therapy, all five-and-a-half- to six-year programs that recruit students directly from high school.

The University’s strong liberal arts core in the undergraduate program, in turn, supports the professional programs, which require that students perform well in their early years to prepare for the demanding professional phase of their programs and, most often, subsequent board exams.

“Our faculty truly believe in the value of a well-rounded arts and sciences pre-professional education, and our programs would not be as good if we did not have such good preparation in the liberal arts and sciences,” Dillon said.

UF’s high graduate enrollment carries with it the responsibility of meeting the unique, varying — and ever-changing — needs of that population, while continuing to ensure high academic quality, delivered in a manner consistent with current best practices in graduate education.

To serve that end, the University has in the past few years reorganized its graduate program structure, added a dean of graduate and professional studies and strengthened the role of its graduate council.

“For me, that growth and change of focus doesn’t mean that we are losing our focus on undergraduate education, but that we are building on the strengths of our undergraduate programs. It means that we are able to serve a broader audience in a much more specific way, and meet the needs of more people in our community,” Dillon said.

“And the people from our graduate programs go on to serve our community as well, and those aims, their contributions — as occupational therapists, physical therapists, teachers, business leaders — are at least as noteworthy and noble as providing a solid liberal arts undergraduate education,” Dillon said. “They touch the lives of so many people — and that makes what we do worthwhile, valuable — exciting!”