

THE HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AT VIRGINIA STATE UNIVERSITY

advanced level of understanding and competence necessary for successful professional careers.

History and Philosophy of Graduate Study at Virginia State University

During the summer of 1937, Virginia State offered graduate courses for the first time in two fields—elementary education and secondary education in English, history, and social sciences. In 1939, most departments of the institution offered one or more graduate courses, and the Division of Graduate Studies was established. As a result of continued growth and expansion, the Board of Visitors raised the status of the advanced studies areas to the Graduate School in September 1968.

Prior to September 1968, the Graduate Faculty was assigned all responsibilities related to graduate studies; the programs were coordinated by the Director of the Division of Graduate Studies and Research. The first director, J. McNeile Hunter, was later appointed Dean of the College and served in both capacities after that, until his retirement from administration in 1966. In September 1966, the second director was appointed, and the Graduate Faculty established a Graduate Committee and three sub-committees to provide leadership for, recommend policy to, and execute policies of the Graduate Faculty. In September 1968, a Graduate Council was established and made responsible to the Educational Council of the College. The duties of the Council were assigned in 1969 to the Education Committee of the Graduate Faculty.

The School of Graduate Studies and the School of Continuing Education were merged in July 1993 to form the School of Graduate Studies and Continuing Education. The school changed its name in September 2012 to the College of Graduate Studies. It is one of six colleges headed by a Dean. The College of Graduate Studies does not have a separate faculty. The members of the Graduate Faculty are highly qualified persons who may also teach undergraduate courses. They are nominated by the graduate faculty of affected program areas and are approved by the Policies and Petitions Committee of the Graduate Council.

The philosophy central to all graduate programs in the University includes the following views. First, graduate programs take as a principal purpose, the development and extension of significant specialization in a major academic discipline, interdisciplinary area, or profession. Second, each program has sufficient breadth to include important study in supporting areas and disciplines. As a corollary, programs in the professions include study in the basic academic disciplines from which they are derived or on which they rest and, in addition, include necessary study in supporting areas and disciplines. Third, each program takes as an objective, the development of habits of scholarship and understanding and competence in research consistent with the level and nature of the program. Fourth, each program in the professions takes as an objective, the development of skills and competencies essential to responsible practice.

Graduate education is centered in academic program areas. The primary purpose of the graduate program is to offer capable students an opportunity for advanced study and research in their fields of specialization. One of its aims is to assist students in achieving an