Graduate students are busy people. They must balance multiple roles as students, researchers and teachers; also as spouses, partners and parents. Yet many graduate students still find time and make a commitment to bettering the communities in which they live. The Graduate School salutes these graduate student volunteers. This issue of The Graduate Post features the experiences of several graduate students who volunteer their time through area organizations while balancing their academic lives.
n the middle of December, a group of medical students walked into the Graduate School’s thesis and dissertation office with large bags bulging with packages. As they opened the bags, my staff members began to smile broadly. The students had brought dozens of Christmas presents, neatly wrapped in colorful paper, to be put into the Toys for Tots barrels that we had available. Even though busily studying for exams, these students wanted to contribute to the community in a way that would also put them in the holiday spirit and give them some relief from the arduous path through medical school. So they took up a collection from fellow students, went to Meijers to become kids again while shopping for toys, wrapped the gifts and, finally, made a “road trip” to Linton Hall to deliver them. Now I ask you, besides an excellent medical education, won’t their bedside manners be wonderful? This is just one example of our graduate students’ commitment to the greater Lansing and East Lansing communities.

One of our feature articles in this issue of The Graduate Post highlights other, generous acts of volunteerism. Graduate students are very busy people, often with multiple roles to play, but many still find at least a brief amount of time to refresh themselves by giving that time to others in need. The Graduate School salutes these graduate students, as well as others who we have not featured, who enrich their lives and ours by being volunteers.

Our second feature article is on the MSU Certification in College Teaching programs. There are currently several active programs, including the College of Natural Science, MSU’s first such program, the Department of English, and two new programs that began this year in the College of Engineering and the College of Communication Arts and Sciences. These programs offer graduate students a more formal way to organize their teaching experiences, to participate in courses designed specifically for the pedagogical techniques in their disciplines, and to work with faculty on a mentored project to enhance the teaching and courses in their own departments. Such preparation has been encouraged by a number of national reports on graduate education, including the “COSEPUP” report (National Research Council Committee on Science, Engineering and Public Policy: Reshaping the graduate education of scientists and engineers, 1995), the AAU Association of Graduate Schools report on COSEPUP (http://www.ags.ucsd.edu/cosepup/statement.htm) and the American Association of Higher Education’s Preparing Graduate Students to Teach (Lambert, et al, 1993).

It is my pleasure to introduce Cara Boeff to you in this issue. Cara joins the Graduate School (we have a whole 25% of her time!) and both the Honors College and the Office of Admissions and Scholarships to assist us in our development efforts. The Graduate School’s major goal is to raise funds that can be used to support graduate student travel to present their research findings at state, national and international conferences. A regular feature of The Graduate Post (in the last section of each issue) lists the students that we have assisted in this regard. Participation in disciplinary societies and professional conferences is very important for exchanging ideas, advancing knowledge and for networking. It is not only important for the students, but also important for MSU’s visibility in the scholarly communities. We’d like to be able to do more!

Finally, let me share a few thoughts from a very unique conference that I just attended in Seattle, April 14-16 called “Re-envisioning the Ph.D.” The Conference was convened by the University of Washington who was funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts to spend a year exploring the future of the Ph.D. in the 21st century by interviewing the major producers of doctorates (e.g. MSU and other Research I institutions), as well as the various employers of Ph.D.s (e.g. government, business and industry, 4-year colleges and universities, community colleges, foundations and other non-profits). MSU was also represented by Dean Wendy Wilkins, College of Arts and Letters and Ann Austin, Associate Professor in the Department of Educational Administration. I was asked to provide an “innovative ideas” display that included our Certification in College Teaching programs, Conflict Resolution program, Research Integrity Newsletters, as well as other MSU efforts in innovative graduate education.

In a very brief summary, the private sectors represented asked for a continuation of the depth we now provide in doctoral education, but requested that we consider more breadth, especially by including more interdisciplinary areas. They also asked for more opportunities for students to practice teamwork and written and oral communication skills, and they stressed the importance of increased diversity in order to fulfill what they considered to be an important goal of theirs: workforce diversity. Academic institutions at all levels requested additional training and preparation for teaching. I will provide more in-depth information on this conference throughout next year.

Have a great summer!

Karen L. Klomparens
Dean of the Graduate School
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