I. Graduate Student Support
   A. Introduction of the topic - Susan Murphy
      1. Graduate students make up approximately one-third of Cornell University’s total student population.
      2. There is a diversity of experiences in backgrounds that graduate students bring.
      3. There are both opportunities and challenges particular to supporting the health and welfare of graduate students vs. undergrads.
      4. The Graduate and Professional Student Assembly (GPSA) has drafted a resolution calling for the university to look at graduate student life, as it has for undergraduates with the Residential Initiative.

II. Panel Discussion
   A. Distinct Issues for Graduate Students – Sunny Power, Dean of Graduate School
      1. Graduate students come into the university at a different time of life, which means that the support they need is different than that of an undergrad.
         a. Many have families who accompany them, which means they are juggling many roles simultaneously
      2. They are a heavily international population.
         a. This requires numerous additional, significant adjustments
      3. The structure of the graduate school does not easily lend itself to providing support.
         a. The graduate school office itself is small
         b. There is only one half of a position dedicated to “student support”
      4. The roles and relationship between faculty and graduate student are very different than that of undergrads.
         a. Graduate students have an “intimate” relationship with faculty
         b. The faculty member may have multiple roles – [academic]advisor, chair of committee and mentor
         c. When things go wrong in this relationship the graduate student experiences great levels of stress
         d. Recognizing the stress itself is often what is not addressed in the relationship
      5. Some common stress points for graduate students include:
         a. Courses and exams
         b. Relationship difficulties with advisor or chair of committee
         c. “A” exams (which permit the student to advance to candidacy)
         d. Dissertation (which is difficult even for the very best students)
A. Defense of the thesis/dissertation
B. VISA issues for international students

B. A College Perspective – Zellman Warhaft, Professor in the College of Engineering
   1. Graduate school is extraordinarily focused and intense, which is different from the rich and complex life of an undergraduate.
   2. Within the College of Engineering, awareness of the added stress on graduate students, especially women, minority and international students, has led to the implementation of support activities and resources such as:
      a. Weekly lunches with focused discussion about aspects of being a grad student
      b. Workshops and speakers
      c. Graduate Students Association Handbook
      d. Mentoring guidelines
   3. More transparency to the process of getting through graduate school would decrease student stress level.

C. Dean of Students Office Perspective – Kent Hubbell
   1. Graduate school is a qualitatively different experience from undergraduate education; however, from a dean of students’ perspective, there should be some fun in the experience as well.
   2. There seems to be need for balance, for a life outside of the lab and research.
   3. Graduate students and undergrads can enrich the lives of each other when they are in each others’ midst.

D. Graduate School Student Support Services – Richard Kiely
   1. His position is ½ time student support and ½ time career counseling for graduate students.
   2. Due to the limited nature of the position, other campus resources and services must be engaged to provide support.
   3. Working with the Graduate and Professional Student Assembly, Richard envisions the community initiative encompassing the areas of housing, health care, mentorship, a teaching certificate program and a seminar series by faculty to address the complex support needs of graduate students.

E. International Students & Scholars Office (ISSO) – Brendan O’Brien
   1. The additional pressures on an international graduate student are exponentially greater than that of other students.
   2. The little difficulties of every day life create substantial adjustment pressures.
      a. Language subtleties can be very challenging. There is always the question, “Am I not understanding, or am I being taken advantage of or dismissed due to being a foreigner?”
      b. Issues of funding are monumental as they are directly related to being able to remain in the country
   3. An effective strategy is to do programs “in advance” of the need (e.g. driving in winter).
   4. It is important to work with other offices on campus (e.g. Gannett Health Center).
      a. ISSO staff present basic mental health information, hoping to break down stigma and then be able to successfully refer students to community-based or in-house CAPS services.

III. Discussion – facilitated by Tim Marchell
   A. Of our confirmed suicides over the past 10 years, half were graduate students and all but 1 of those was an international student.
   B. What is our vision for optimal resources for our graduate students?
      1. What are the gaps?
      2. What is needed?
   C. Are there other capacities from other colleges to support graduate students?

IV. Discussion Points – Council Members
   A. Due to the nature and power dynamic of the grad student/ faculty relationship, there is a need for mental health support and services to be out where the students are, in the departments.
      1. Graduate Field Assistants (GFAs)
         a. In every field
         b. An untapped resource
         c. Students go to them; they are already providing student support beyond academic advising
      2. QPR (Question-Persuade-Refer) Training for Assisting Students in Distress for GFAs
         a. Was provided to GFAs in College of Engineering this past week
         b. Very favorable response from GFAs
• “I feel better equipped to talk with students in distress”
• “I now realize that I do not have to solve the emotional distress problems. I do feel like I now have permission to ask about the level of distress, so I have a clearer picture of which resources to refer the student to.”

3. From a graduate student’s perspective, it would be most helpful to have some kind of workshop &/or written information that clearly spells out what the student/faculty advisor relationship is really all about.
   a. The faculty advisor or committee chair controls the funding.
   b. Confusion sometimes arises when committee chairs attempt to communicate to students that they will not be allowed to continue with their program because of insufficient progress. In these situations, a faculty member may simply say, “I will no longer be the chair of your committee”. This unclear communication can cause confusion and stress.
   c. Policy consideration: we don’t sever undergrads from the university without first placing them on academic warning, so it seems strange that a graduate student can be terminated from a program based on one person’s decision and without the giving of a formal warning.

4. Faculty need to be engaged around issues of the relationship dynamic and student distress
   a. Five to six years ago there was ½ day training session for assistant professors, but since then there has not been a systematic effort to educate faculty on student mental health.
   b. This year the Graduate School provided a presentation about how to be an advisor to graduate students (vs. undergrads).
   c. Faculty are in a position to be “eyes & ears” for recognizing students who may be “under the radar”, especially by knowing the stress points of the graduate student journey, and getting them referred into our network of mental health resources and services.

B. Isolation is a substantial issue for graduate students
   1. The idea of an expanded graduate center with greater opportunities to have informal exchanges with faculty was suggested.

C. Potential for follow-up
   1. GFA QPR training
   2. Determine feasibility of “Assisting Students in Distress” presentation at new faculty orientation.

V. Meeting adjourned at 5pm

Minutes taken by Catherine Thrasher-Carroll