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Office of Graduate Studies

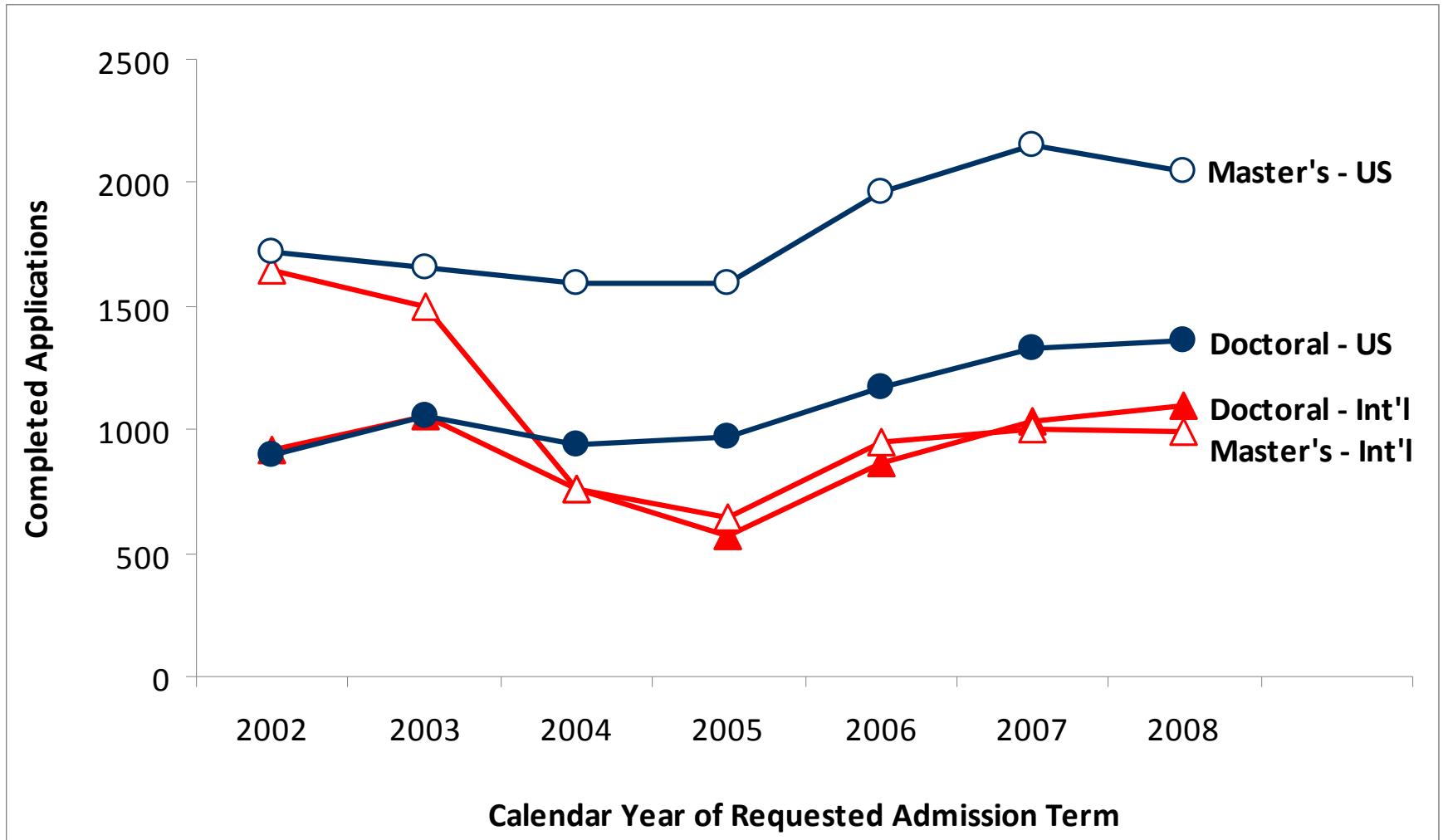
# Graduate Student Recruitment Workshop

September 12, 2008



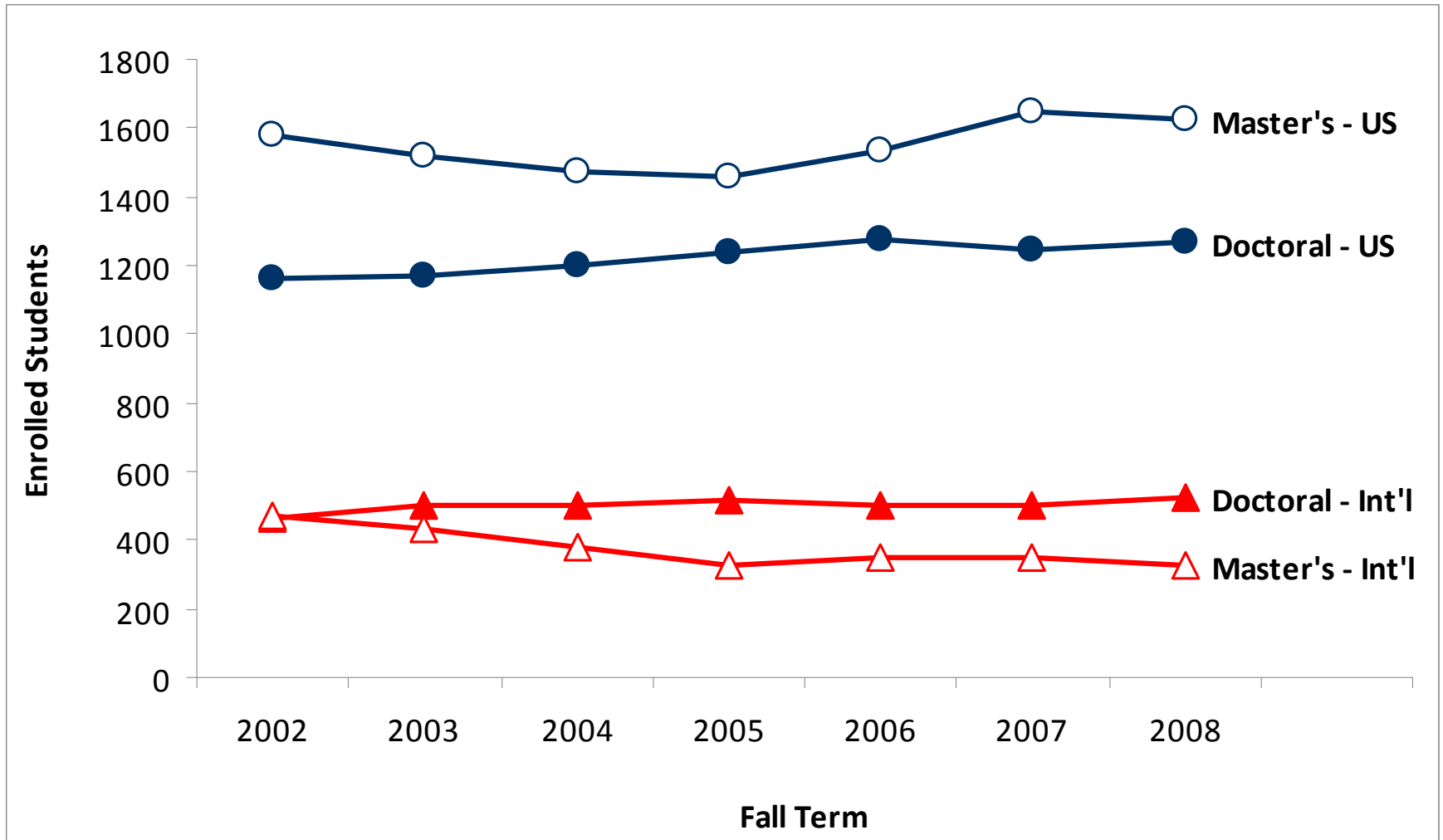


# Graduate Student Application Trends





# Graduate Student Enrollment Trends





# Workshop Agenda

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- New Graduate Studies Web site
- Communicating with applicants
- Helping students enter the intellectual community
- Campus visits and orientation
- Recruitment grant and fellowship application process and timeline



# Fix Your Web Site, Finally

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- Focus on prospective students
- Build it to scan
- Stories, not just facts
- Cross-linking throughout site
- Keep content current
- Update frequently (reason to return)



**“That includes you too, Grad  
Studies”**



# Why?

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- Stealth Applicants—70% of applications come from students who were not previously in Talisma
- Web site is the PRIMARY communication vehicle with students prior to application
- Our goals:
  - Drive students to department Web sites
  - Get students to apply



# How?

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- Set a primary priority for our site and examined needs of other constituent groups
- Anticipated questions and made the answers easier to find
- Considered navigation, eliminated clicks, incorporated more cross-linking
- Set goals for steps in the process
  - Reviewed other sites, brainstormed, drafted text, circulated, revised text, programmed, reviewed beta site, revised text



# Highlights: Program Summaries

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- Enhanced graduate program summaries to include “related programs” and links to all programs offered
- Includes direct link to faculty Web sites and V-cards
- Includes direct link to section in the online Graduate Bulletin
  
- \* Top 10 requested pages
- \* Users spend 2 to 3 minutes on the page!
- \* Used daily in communication to prospective students and applicants



# Highlights: Prospective Students

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- **Why Nebraska?**
  - Our online recruitment brochure, but not a PDF!
- **Steps to Admission**
  - Expanded to include processing timelines and all types of admission
- **International Considerations**
  - Answers to concerns in one easy-to-find place
- **After You're Admitted**
  - Checklists for getting started, includes international and domestic
- **Life in Lincoln**
  - Family, transportation, entertainment & recreation, culture, relocating, and safety
- **FAQ**
  - Not a holding place for miscellaneous things, a pseudo-navigational map which is cross-linked



# Highlights: Current Students

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- New Guide to Graduate Student Success
- Workshops, handbooks and services easier to find
- Interactive forms and deadlines
- Writeable PDF forms



# Web Site 2.0 Round Table

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- 36 programs attended Round Tables last year
- Specific feedback on your current site
- 1-on-1 coaching for improving your site
- Focus on maximizing your site
- Using analytic tools



How do you communicate  
with applicants?



# Applicants = Top Recruits

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- They've invested time and money to let you know who they are
- They already know a lot about you, too
- Ideal opportunity to develop a relationship with them



# Applicant Communication

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- **Timeliness:** Applicants interpret the speed at which you respond to them as proportional to your level of interest in them
  - If you seem disinterested in them, they are likely to lose interest in you



# Applicant Communication

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- Transparency: Ease applicant anxiety by keeping them informed about your process
  - When will you make a decision on their application?
  - How likely is it they will be admitted/funded?



# Applicant Communication

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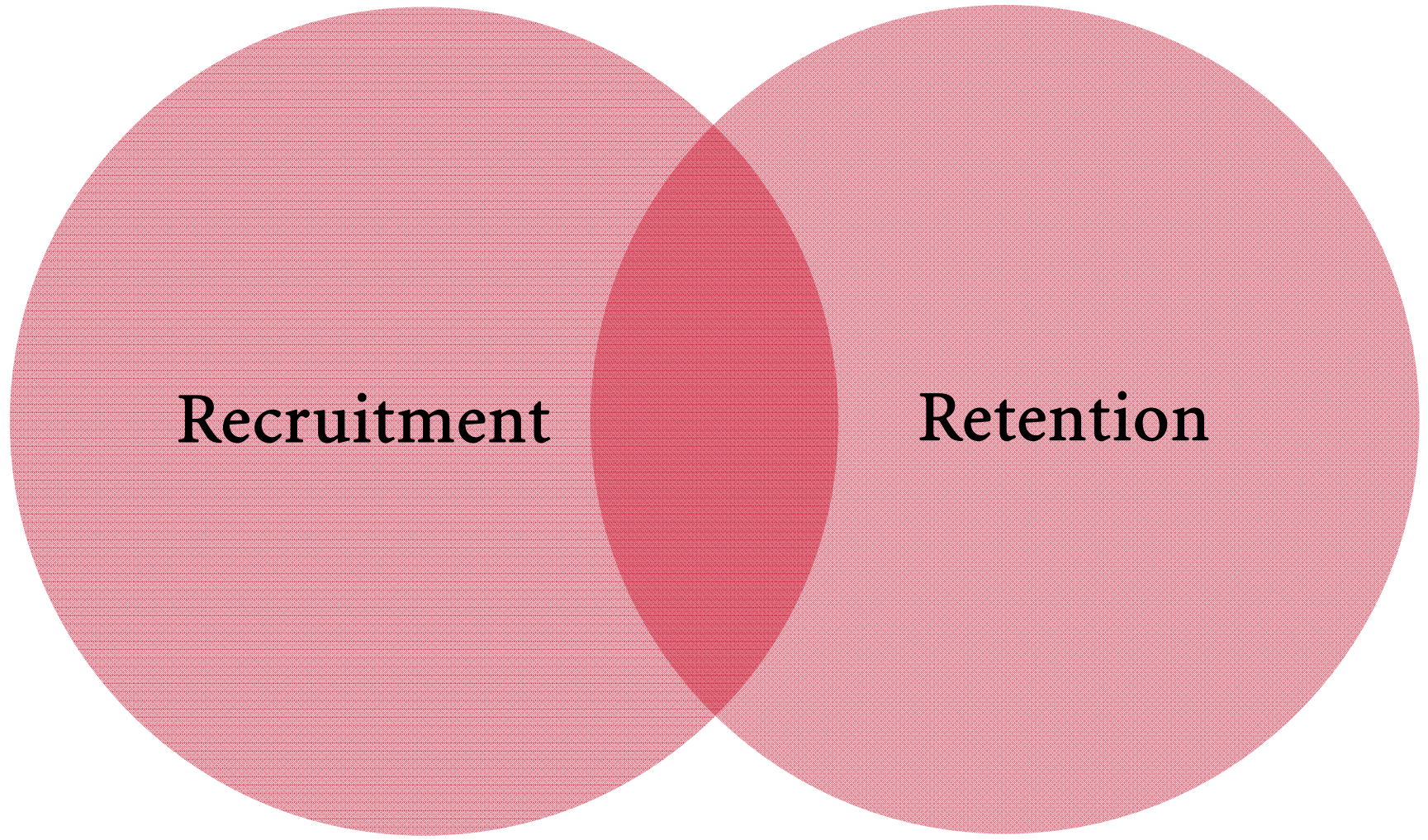
- Consistency: Applicants distrust marketing messages and will seek out the “truth” about your program – what is it really like?
  - Web site, grad chair, faculty, support staff, current students, alums are all potential sources of information – what would they say?



# Communication Round Tables

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- Opportunity to review your communications
- Have a fresh set of eyes to provide a second opinion
- Learn strategies to more effectively communicate with your applicants



**Recruitment**

**Retention**



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**How do students enter and become part of the intellectual community in your department?**



# Campus Visits

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- A critical element in the graduate school selection process
  - “My campus visit changed *everything*.”
- Use campus visits as an initial step in welcoming students into your intellectual community
- Be intentional about developing their expectations
  - What does it mean to be a graduate student in your program?



# Orientation

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- Have plan to welcome new students
- Involve current students, key faculty and staff
- Take care of the basics and answer questions about logistics
- Don't forget the big picture
  - Set expectations for work ethic, communication with advisers, departmental norms, etc.



# Spring Semester Round Tables

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- Results from focus groups with new graduate students about their experiences coming to campus
- Small group discussion
- Best practices from other departments for campus visits and orienting new students
- Individualized assistance in developing a plan



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Why are your current graduate students' experiences important in recruiting new graduate students?



# Final Thoughts

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- Be proactive with your Web site
- Have a plan in place to communicate with applicants
- Be intentional with the messages you send to a student during their visit
- Keep “recruiting” students after they are admitted



# Recruitment Services

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- Individual consultation
- Supporting departments in providing VIP services
- Assisting in developing Talisma campaigns to inquiries
- Monthly prospective student newsletter
  - Average Web page requests in two weeks: 3,575
  - Page requests the day the newsletter was sent: 6,354
  - Page requests day following newsletter: 11,197 (over three times the average!)
- Expanding the procurement of lists
- Campus visit and tours
- Monthly department reports
- Professional photos
- Marketing materials and give-away items



# Recruitment and Retention Grants and Fellowships

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- Application form includes both the Recruitment and Retention Grant & Fellowship requests and budget information
- Electronic version available online at <http://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/facstaff/recruitment/funding.shtml>
- E-mail copy of the completed application directly to Jane Schneider by October 3
- Awards notification by October 31



# Recruitment and Retention Grants and Fellowships

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- **Web site enhancements**
  - If your department is also making an investment
- **Campus visits**
- **Departmental retreats to examine orientation and retention activities**



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Questions?