

Assessing Research-Doctorate Programs: A Methodology Study

Committee Task

- **Review and revise the methodology used to assess the quality and effectiveness of research doctoral programs**
- **Explore new approaches and new sources of information about doctoral programs and new ways of disseminating these data**
- **Recommend whether to conduct a full assessment using the methodology developed in by the committee**

History of NRC Assessments

- **1982 “Assessment of Research-Doctorate Programs in the United States”**
Lyle V. Jones (Co-Chair)
Gardner Lindzey (Co-Chair)
- **1995 “Research-Doctorate Programs in the United States: Continuity & Change”**
Marvin L. Goldberger (Co-Chair)
Brendan Maher (Co-Chair)

Perceived Strengths of Prior NRC Assessments

- **Authoritative source**
- **Comprehensive**
- **Clearly stated methodology**
- **Temporal continuity**
- **Widely quoted and utilized**

2007 Assessment

How does it differ from previous surveys?

What will be its utility?

Taxonomy

- **Expansion of fields grouped under:**
 - **Life Science - 19**
 - **Physical Science, Mathematics, Engineering - 19**
 - **Social and Behavioral - 10**
 - **Arts and Humanities - 14**
- **Subfields**
- **Emerging Fields**

Questionnaires

- Program
- Faculty
- Student

Program Questionnaires

- Faculty – core, new, associated
- Size of program
- Time to degree/Completion data
- Student demographics
- Logistical/policy matters
- Programmatic opportunities
- Financial support
- Postdoctoral information

Faculty Questionnaires

- Professional profiles
- Scholarly activity
- Research activity
- Number of students advised
- Demographic data
- Survey of viewpoint of important characteristics of programs – student and faculty characteristics

Student Questionnaires

- **Educational history**
- **Program support**
- **Financial support**
- **Research presentations**
- **Travel support**
- **Publication record**
- **Career goals**
- **Survey of program characteristics from student perspectives**
- **Assessment (how performed)**
- **Demographic information**

Rating and Ranking

1. **Weighting coefficients assigned to quantitative variables.**
2. **Rankings presented in quartiles**
3. **Anchoring study**

Rating and Ranking

Additional Analyses of Graduate Program Performance

1. “Research Impact”: citations/faculty member, publications/faculty member, honors and awards, etc.
2. “Student Support and Outcomes” – full support, time to degree, attrition rate, position in relevant field
3. “Diversity of Academic Environment” – fraction of students and faculty that are female, minority etc

Utility

1. **Searchable website for prospective graduate students**
2. **Tool for benchmarking**