Evaluation of Master’s Programs

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Outline of topics covered

• About Texas A&M University-Commerce
• Purpose of program assessment
• The values of program assessments
• The process of program assessment
• Student learning assessments
• Expected outcomes
• Program enhancement through program assessment
Texas A&M University System
Texas A&M University-Commerce

• Established in 1889 and is the fifth oldest institution in the State of Texas
• Enrollment: 10,200 with 43% graduate students
• Maintains campuses at 4 sites throughout the Dallas Metroplex
• Joined the Texas A&M University System in 1996
• Graduates the most high school principals, superintendents, and school counselors than any other university in the state
## Doctoral Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROGRAM</th>
<th>DEGREE</th>
<th>FALL ENROLLMENT 2009</th>
<th>GRADUATES 2009-10</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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## Master’s Programs (College of Arts & Sciences)

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<th>PROGRAM</th>
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<th>GRADUATES 2009-10</th>
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# Master’s Programs
## (College of Education & Human Services)

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<th>DEGREE</th>
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# Master’s Programs (College of Business & Technology)

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<th>PROGRAMS</th>
<th>DEGREE</th>
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<th>GRADUATES 2009-10</th>
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<td>N/A</td>
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<td>Marketing</td>
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<td>Technology Management</td>
<td>MS</td>
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<td>23</td>
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Why Evaluate Graduate Programs?

• Provides valuable information about the quality of each academic program
• Provides information about the program’s effectiveness in supporting the University’s mission
• Provides information about the appropriateness of the programs to meet the needs of external stakeholders
• Provides reliable information for assessing areas of strengths and weaknesses of the program
• Assists in the development of strategies to continuously improve the program
Why Evaluate Graduate Programs?

- Provides measurable criteria to assess the progress of programs in meeting established goals
- Provides meaningful comparisons with discipline-specific standards, peer institutions, and related departments within the university
- Provides baseline data for the department and University to make well-informed decisions for program improvement and budget considerations
The Review Process

- **Program review guidelines**
  - Clear guidelines and instructions with appropriate deadlines
  - Published schedule of periodic review of all programs
  - Development of format for self-study review document
  - Relevant documents about the review process should be readily available to departments
  - Get buy-in from university administrators

- **Self-study document**
  - Departmental and peer institution data gathered by Institutional research, grad school, and department
  - Self-study document written by department and approved by graduate school
The Review Process

• Reviewer committee (two external & one internal)
  – Department recommends potential reviewers
  – Recommendations are discussed with college dean and provost
  – Decision on the makeup of review team made by graduate dean
  – Review team receives self-study document prior to site visit

• Site visit
  – Typically two-day visit
  – Discussions with provost, college dean, graduate dean, department head, faculty members, graduate students and others as needed
  – Review team prepares report
The Review Process (Cont’d)

• Findings and recommendations
  – Review team reports to provost, graduate dean, college dean, department head on the outcome of review

• Action plan
  – Department prepares a plan to address recommendations and findings of program review

• A one-year follow up
  – Follow up carried out with provost, dean, and graduate dean
  – Closing-the-loop assessment plan is discussed

• 5-year program review cycle
  – Includes program enhancements based on previous review process
  – Must demonstrate the integration of previous information into program enhancement
The Self-study Document

• Mission Statement
  – Each program should have a clear purpose statement that is linked to mission of the institution

• Purpose of Program
  – A clear purpose and benefit of the program to the discipline and field

• Changes since the last review
  – Changes that have occurred from a previous program review
  – Program enhancements that have resulted as a result of previous program reviews
The Self-study Document (Cont’d)

• Curriculum & Program Profile
  – Enrollment data and trends
  – Semester credit hour production
  – Courses offered and enrollment in each course

• Degrees awarded
  – Number of degrees awarded per year

• Graduation rates
  – Measured as a six-year cohort
• Average time to Degree
  – Typically averages around 2.5 years with the completion of 30 or 36 SCH depending on program

• Admission Criteria
  – Admission standards and acceptance/matriculation rate

• Financial support of students
  – Support for students (GAR, GAT, GANT), scholarships, etc.
  – Major scholarships and awards
The Self-study Document (Cont’d)

• Core faculty
  – Number of core faculty
  – Rank and distribution of faculty
  – Student-to-core faculty ratio
  – Diversity of faculty
  – Teaching load
  – Method of core faculty evaluation

• Research and Creative Activities
  – Number of discipline-related peer-reviewed publications, juried creative/performance accomplishments, books, book chapters, patents, etc.
  – Source and amount of external funding for scholarly activities
• Graduate Students
  – Percentage of full-time students in program
  – Diversity of student population in program (ethnicity & gender)
  – Number of discipline-related refereed papers/publications, juried creative/performance accomplishments, book chapters, books, and external presentations by graduate students
  – Placement of graduates (first major job after graduation)
Student Learning Outcome

• Students should demonstrate professional and attitudinal skills in the discipline.
  – Oral and written communication skills
  – Knowledge of discipline
  – Critical and reflective thinking skills
  – Ability to apply theoretical training to practice
  – Ability to conduct research
  – Ability to teach
Assessment of Learning Outcome

• Aspects to consider in an assessment plan:
  – It should be a meaningful process
  – It takes time to carry out a complete assessment plan
  – It should contain measurable and observable assessments
  – It should not necessarily be designed to address all issues, but to improve the program
  – It should first address issues where there are modest expectations
Enhancement of Program

- **Enhancement Plan**
  - Demonstrate how learning outcome assessments have been used to enhance student learning in the program, i.e., change structure and timeframe for qualifying exams.
  - Demonstrate how the results of faculty evaluation are used to improve teaching effectiveness.
Action Plan

• Important aspects of a good action plan
  – Should address areas of concern and/or emerging new directions for the program identified through this program review
  – Should be written in the form of objectives to be achieved with clear timelines for their achievements, as well as responsible parties
  – May extend over several years
  – Should be evaluated at least yearly
Examples of Program Reviews Outcomes

• English Department restructured to more effectively maximize from existing resources
• Biological Sciences received added faculty lines
• Department of Physics was combined with Astronomy to form a new department, Department of Physics & Astronomy
• Chemistry decided on different recruiting strategies to increase its graduate enrollment
• Agricultural Sciences program was forced to be more focused
Conclusions

- Program review can assist in the departmental planning and evaluation process, i.e., curriculum, student learning, instruction, fiscal resources and mission/purpose.
- Program review should demonstrate how previous evaluations have lead to greater effectiveness within the program
- Areas of strengths and concerns/weaknesses of the program that impact its effectiveness are identified through program review
Conclusions

• Through program review, recommendations for the improvement of the program are gained
• For the process to be meaningful, must build into the review process an accountability mechanism
• The process must include a closing-the-loop assessment plan to indicate what performance measures were not met and what corrective actions are being taken
• The process is manageable, but must work collaboratively with various units of the university