PROGRAM REVIEW AND QUALITY ASSESSMENT

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New Deans’ Institute, Council of Graduate Schools
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- Large public research-intensive University

- Graduate School responsible for 105 Ph.D. programs, 100 master’s programs in 17 schools and colleges

- ~15,000 graduate and professional students on campus. Most students (nearly all Ph.D. students) are full time.
Why Should a Graduate Dean Measure Quality of Graduate Programs?

► To help to improve quality
  ➢ Address poor quality in a systematic way
  ➢ Encourage improvement by faculty

► To assess the validity of student concerns

► To ensure that campus priorities are taken seriously

► To respond to external raters and rankers

► To assure University leaders about quality
Measuring Quality is Harder than it Appears

- Graduate education is multidimensional
- Differences among degrees
- Differences among disciplines and fields of study
- Indicators are subject to distortion
- Only some factors are under the control of the institution or the faculty leaders of graduate programs
Possible Measures of Quality

- Admissions
  - Selectivity / Yield
  - GRE scores, GPA
  - National fellowships/traineeships
- Faculty capacity and quality
- Comparisons to peers
  - Competing for new students
  - National rankings
- Career Success of Students
  - Short run
  - Long run
- Quality of program
  - Mentoring practices
  - Student community
  - Diversity
  - Competitive for external funding
  - Honors and awards
  - Completion rate
  - Time to degree
  - Publications
  - Conference presentations
  - Professional development
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Program Review Process

- Four year review cycle of every degree program
- Process is iterative and interactive
- Faculty engagement is key
- Reviews are data-driven, with multiple levels of comparison
- Students provide input in surveys focused on behavior, opportunity, and academic progress
- Primary goal is program improvement; secondary goal is resource allocation
- Graduate School leads the process; other deans are full participants
Ask Faculty How They Think About Quality

- You learn what is important in their program
- You give legitimacy to the process of quality measurement
- You avoid holding programs to inappropriate standards
Quality as Defined by Faculty in Biological Chemistry

- Scientific productivity of students
- Success of faculty as mentors and instructors
- Receipt of fellowship and training grant support
- Progress of students through the program
- Participation of students in departmental scientific activities
- Long term career outcomes
Quality as Defined by Faculty in Urban & Regional Planning

- Placement in high-level research and government positions (outside academia)
- Securing grants and fellowships from outside sources
- Reputation of peer institutions with which we regularly compete for graduate students
- Research productivity while in doctoral studies, including publications and conference papers
- Completion rate
- Timely completion of requirements
Quality as Defined by Faculty in Comparative Literature

► Reputation among peer institutions

► Diversity of race/ethnicity and gender in graduate students

► Quality of the intellectual engagement between faculty and students

► Honors and awards to students

► Proportion of graduates in academic / scholarly positions
Measuring Quality in the Context of Program Review

- If goal of program review is program improvement, then measures need to be customized to the program.

- If goal of program review is resource allocation or program closure, then measures need to be standardized across programs.
Institutional Choices we Considered in Designing Program Review

► How centralized should this process be?
► Role of school/college deans
► Importance of institutional research capacity
► Role of external reviewers
► Connection between undergraduate and graduate education
► Frequency of review
► Visibility of the results
Potential Products of Program Review

- Report
- Conversation
- Action Plan
- Resource Allocation
- Communication to the constituent groups that care about quality
Strategies that Help Us Gain Acceptance for Recommendations

► Focus on quality measures endorsed by faculty
► Hold conversations about why the data look as they do, to give faculty a chance to explain patterns
► Invite school/college deans to participate in the conversation
► Include the voices of students
Program Review can Make You a Better Graduate Dean

► You learn about your graduate programs
► You have a context to interpret external ratings and rankings
► You can make better decisions about policies and services to the programs
► Working with other University leaders, you can allocate resources toward the greatest needs and the greatest opportunities to serve graduate education