Strategic Theme 3: Graduate Education

Strategic Objective #1: To inform investment decisions, strengthen the program evaluation process by articulating appropriate criteria and collecting relevant and accurate data.

Action Step 1.1: Identify appropriate external criteria, including national rankings, accreditation, and other disciplinary recognition, for programs.

Action Step 1.2: Identify appropriate internal criteria for evaluating programs in comparison to program goals and in relation to each other.

Summary of activities: the Graduate Education Working Group reviewed a comprehensive set of criteria for evaluating doctoral programs. Potential metrics were identified from external (e.g., National Research Council assessment, Council of Graduate School publications, peer institutions) and internal (e.g., GSS review) sources, and included program characteristics, student characteristics, and faculty characteristics. After several group discussions, a list of 31 potential indicators of program strength was compiled and distributed to group members for their review and evaluation. Group members were asked to rate (independently) each metric on 2 dimensions: the extent to which they felt it was a valid indicator of program quality across disciplines and how much weight should be placed on the metric when assessing program quality. The mean and standard deviation of each rating was computed, along with a composite importance score, which was the cross-product of the validity and weight ratings. Metrics were ranked according to each rating variable. The group met to review the ratings and make a final recommendation. The list of recommended metrics is listed in the table below.

Doctoral Program Evaluation Variables

1. Faculty scholarship: publications per capita
2. Faculty external funding ($ per capita)
3. Degree completion rate
4. Student research productivity per capita (discipline specific, tracked by department)
5. Average GRE scores – discipline specific (e.g., GRE-Q for sciences, GRE-V for humanities); Average GPA (for domestic students only)
6. Time-to-degree (median), compared to discipline norms
7. Percent of dissertations resulting in publications
8. Student placement (immediate) in context of program goals
9. Student placement 5 years post-graduation, in context of program goals
10. Three-year retention rate
11. Average time to candidacy
12. Visibility and reputation as evident in external rankings (NRC, USNWR, etc.)