Using NRC Research Doctorate Assessment Data to Improve Programs

Patrick S. Osmer

July 13, 2009

Council of Graduate Schools Summer Workshop

Quebec

Notes on Methodology Report

- ## Measurement goals
  - Research activity of faculty
  - Student support and outcomes
  - Diversity of the academic environment
  - Quantitative measure of range of rankings of programs (based on countable information)
- ## However, also calibrated against perceived rankings

Participants

- 222 universities, 61 fields, more than 5000 programs

Ratings and Weights

- ## Research activity
  - Publications/faculty have highest weight

- ## Student support and outcomes
  - Student support and completion rates have highest weight (more than time to degree or placement)

- ## Diversity in academic environment
  - Not given high weight

Summary Comment

- Use of dimensional ratings give different rankings compared to overall ratings

- Report correctly states that assessment is a multi-dimensional problem with no clear, simple outcome

- Universities, faculties, and students should use results to meet their own goals

Example for an Economics Department

- Publications/faculty, citations/publication, number of Ph.D.'s, and average GRE-Q scores were given the highest weight
  - And turned out to be the only statistically significant ones
  - Note that there is no direct indicator of student accomplishment or success

Questions for Discussion

- What can you learn about how to improve your programs from the NRC Research Doctorate Assessment?
  - You can learn how you compare with other programs via 19 to 20 different indicators
  - In my opinion, each university should do this independently according to its mission, goals for graduate education and current status

- **What will the ratings and rankings tell you about how your programs compare with others?**
  - There is a wealth of data, and I would urge people to look at this in depth as opposed to just looking at the ratings and rankings
  - I have found that indicators that may be given little to no weight in the NRC study can be critical for assessing or working with individual programs
    - E.g, time to degree, student placement in the context of norms for each field

- **What will you see in the data provided to you on release?**
  - A huge amount of information
  - A plan and team to help assess the data will be crucial to making use of it and responding to questions.

- **How do you explain the methodology producing these outcomes to internal and external audiences?**
  - Use the CGS public relations materials
  - Deans will need to work in advance with communications people on campus