Program Review and Quality Assessment

Janet A. Weiss

Dean and Vice Provost for Academic Affairs

New Deans' Institute, Council of Graduate Schools

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University of Michigan

- Large public research-intensive University
- Graduate School responsible for 104 Ph.D. programs, 90 master's programs in 17 schools and colleges
- ~8000 Rackham graduate students
- ~7500 Other graduate and professional students on campus

G. Alex Janevski
Ph.D. Student in Geological Sciences
Predoctoral Fellowship

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Why Should a Graduate Dean Measure Quality of Graduate Programs?

- To help to improve quality
  - Address poor quality in a systematic way
  - Encourage improvement
- 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

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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

Joy Oguntebi
Ph.D. Student in Industrial and Operations Engineering
Edward A. Bouchet Graduate Honor Society

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Who Determines Quality?

- Faculty?
- Students?
- The "market"?
- Raters and rankers?
- University leaders?

Darshan Karwat
Ph.D. Student in Aerospace Engineering
Michigan Memorial Phoenix Energy Institute

Nicholas Yoder
Ph.D. Student in Education and Psychology
Rackham Merit Fellow

Possible Measures of Quality

- Admissions
  - Selectivity / Yield
  - GRE and GPA scores
  - National fellowships/ traineeships
- Faculty quality
- Comparison to peers
  - Competing for new students
  - National rankings
- Career Success
  - Short run
  - Long run

- Quality of program
  - Mentoring practices
  - GPA of students
  - Diversity
  - Competitive for external funding
  - Honors and awards
  - Completion rate
  - Time to degree
  - Publications
  - Conference presentations
  - Professional development

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Variation by Degree Level

Doctoral

- Emphasis on academic credentials
- Research experiences
- Engagement in discipline
- Often aimed at academic placement

Master's

- Emphasis on prior preparation (both work and academic)
- Focus on placement
- Leadership in the profession
- Student satisfaction

Variation by Discipline

- Some quality measures widely shared across disciplines
  - Professional placement and success of graduates
- Some quality measures vary by disciplines
  - Publication in peer-reviewed journals while in graduate school
  - Admissions data: Number of applications, GRE scores, GPAs, yield
  - External awards received by current students: NSF Graduate Fellowships

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Ask Faculty for their Measures

- You learn what is important in their program

- You give legitimacy to the process of quality measurement

- You avoid holding programs to inappropriate standards

Yun-Ping Lin
Ph.D. Student in Nursing
Barbour Scholar

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

Aerospace Engineering

- Reputation among peer institutions
- Selectivity / Yield
- GREs and GPAs of student who enroll
- Number of new students
- Competitive fellowships / traineeships
- Proportion of students who are supported by external funding
- Proportion of graduates with tenure-track positions

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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

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, then measures need to be standardized across programs

Ela Gezen
Ph.D. Student in Germanic Language
2008 Outstanding Graduate Student Instructor Award

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Institutional Process for 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

Products of Program Review

- Report
- Conversation
- Action Plan
- Resource Allocation
- Communication to the constituent groups that care about quality

RaShonda Flint
Ph.D. Student in Pharmacology
Edward A. Bouchet Graduate Honor Society

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Strategies to Gain Acceptance for Recommendations

- Use 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

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