

Information as Intervention

Ph.D. Completion Project: Promising
Practices to Promote Student Success

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Interventions for Doctoral Completion

Strategy #1

- Shared information about doctoral completion to enhance faculty understanding

Strategy #2

- Provided specific data to assist programs in developing strategies to improve doctoral completion rates

Strategy #1 – Shared Information

- Conducted research to determine key factors necessary for doctoral completion
 1. The right people apply for doctoral study.
 2. The right applicants are admitted as doctoral students.
 3. Students and faculty form productive working relationships.
 4. Students experience social support from fellow students.

Strategy #1 – Shared Information

- Created website for faculty and students
 - ✓ Research briefs
 - ✓ Annotated bibliography
 - ✓ Strategy reports
 - ✓ Interactive forums

Strategy #1 – Shared Information

- Met with faculty multiple times in a variety of formats and settings
 - ✓ Introductory and update sessions
 - ✓ Strategy sharing workshops
 - ✓ Brown bag “best practices” lunch seminars
 - ✓ Faculty presentations

Strategy #2 – Provided Data

- Collected and disseminated program specific data
 - ✓ Multiple data collection points using both qualitative and quantitative methods
 - ✓ Enrollment policy to track students and follow-up with graduate coordinators for accountability
 - ✓ Individual meetings with each participating program to discuss specific issues
 - ✓ Discussion guides provided for faculty meetings

Strategy #2 – Provided Data

- Created a drillable database with doctoral completion figures
 - ✓ For departmental use to monitor their own completion rates
 - ✓ Searchable at the department, college, or university level for comparison data
 - ✓ Master's completion database currently in beta-testing phase

Strategy #2 – Provided Data

- Established doctoral completion benchmarks for each program
 - ✓ Individual reports prepared for all doctoral programs
 - ✓ 10-year timeframe used for tracking completion

Challenges

- Obtaining faculty buy-in
- Ensuring continuous learning opportunities about doctoral completion because of faculty turnover
- Overcoming technical obstacles to construct a data base that tracks the enrollment and completion or dropout information by cohort

Successes

- Providing a theoretical framework for understanding doctoral completion
- Ensuring that faculty examine completion rates for their programs
- Including doctoral completion data in program reviews
- Instituting an enrollment policy for tracking
- Developing a drillable database

Doctoral Completion Today

- All 91 doctoral programs are now involved
- Faculty have the language and the data to make doctoral completion an essential metric for graduate programs
- Departments are examining their own processes to determine their best path
- Departments look at best “fit” – not just scores – in accepting new doctoral students

Doctoral Completion – Next Steps

- The Graduate School plans to offer workshops to improve the understanding and use of benchmarks for individual program improvement
- The knowledge and strategies gained from working on doctoral completion is being extended to all graduate degree programs

Resources

- CGS Doctoral Completion Project at UGA
<http://www.uga.edu/gradschool/cgs/>
- Program Accomplishment Report
<http://www.uga.edu/gradschool/cgs/pdf/ConfReport.pdf>