



Ph.D. Completion Project at Ohio State
Phase II Participant

July 13, 2010

Patrick S. Osmer
Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

Graduate Program Participants

- Chemistry
- Electrical and Computer Engineering
- English
- History
- Molecular, Cellular and Developmental Biology
- Neuroscience
- Physics
- Psychology
- Political Science

Features of Ohio State's Project

- All programs were participants in the Carnegie Initiative on the Doctorate
- Programs are largely among Ohio State's strongest
- Proposed interventions ranged from large scale and expensive (Chemistry) to individualized and inexpensive (History, English, Political Science)

Ph.D. Completion Project Interventions

- Carried out within context of
 - More attention to doctoral education at Ohio State
 - Increasing visibility of Graduate School
 - Graduate School leadership in several initiatives and projects

Concurrent Activities

- Graduate program data collected, reviewed for NRC
- Doctoral program assessment project (2008)
- Task forces on life and environmental sciences
- Developing common tools for graduate programs
- New student information system at Ohio State

Broad View: 2007-Present

- Review of Graduate School (completed)
- Review of funding of graduate education (completed)
- Collaborative spirit emphasized
- Recruitment and diversity initiatives given high priority
- Key central services, tools, and communications promoted and developed

Project Partners: Common Problems

- Low stipends, lack of travel and summer support (humanities, social sciences)
- General lack of strategic recruitment (most)
- Support needed for baseline student skills (political sciences, MCDB, chemistry)
- Student data collection problems (most)

Successful Interventions

- Focus on program-specific and often micro-level issues
- Small amounts of money make a big difference for individual students at critical stages of their doctoral programs
- Active and strategic recruiting is key to reducing attrition and increasing completion rate

English

Attrition Problem

Loss of students coming in on fellowships was higher than students coming in with teaching appointments

English

- Intervention: Create a community/cohort among new fellows by hosting regular meetings run by a former fellow now appointed as a peer mentor
- Funds provided: \$7,500 per year to fund one GA on a reduced appointment to convene and mentor new fellows in English

Political Science

Attrition/Completion Problems

- Students need to have significant quantitative skills coming in to the doctoral program in order to successfully navigate coursework and carry out research
- Conference travel grants are in short supply for post-candidacy students

Political Science

- Interventions: Create a two-week summer workshop for all incoming students to gain expertise in the quantitative aspects of the field; provide travel grants for post-candidacy students
- Funds provided: \$15,500 per year

History

Attrition/Completion Problems

- Long time to degree affected by lack of funding during summer months and lack of financial support for conference presentations and job interviews

History

- Intervention: Provide more funding for summer research, increase financial support for presentations at conferences and job interviews
- Funds provided: \$8,000 per year

Physics

Attrition/Completion Problem

- Dropping numbers of women who are successfully recruited to and complete program

Physics

- Intervention: Develop strategic recruitment strategies to attract and retain more women, including targeted recruiting visits and involvement of current women graduate students
- Funds provided: \$2,400 per year

Physics Results

- AU08: 8 out of 35 incoming students are women
 - 2 have since left program
- AU09: 12 out of 42 entering students are women
 - 1 in academic difficulty
- AU10: 5 out of 28 are women

Physics: Factors in Success

- Strategic recruiting plan created
- As academic reputation rises, so does success in recruiting women
- Fellowships were offered to some women who had low GRE scores in physics but were otherwise outstanding
- Current women graduate students actively involved in physics program and recruiting

Lessons Learned

- Active, strategic, thoughtful recruitment is essential
 - Visibility of programs via the web is critical
- Importance of competitive stipends
- Accurate data and ease of access to good data are essential
- Improving attrition and completion rates is best embedded in an overall strategy to improve doctoral program quality at Ohio State

Going Forward

- New central placement database and reports available via the Graduate School
- Require graduate programs to set completion rate and time to degree/time to candidacy targets
- Encourage graduate programs to publish placement and completion data on program websites