

Scenario 3 Management Strategies Related to Workflow and Staff Management Responsibilities

Issue 1: Workflow for Developing, Approving and Implementing New Programs

Developing new graduate programs at a mid-size public university is done in partnership between the academic department/program, the dean of the college that is the administrative home of the department, and the dean of the Graduate School. If it is an applied master's or certificate program the Division of Professional Studies will also be involved. Even though the Graduate School is the academic home of all graduate programs, there have been times when program development gets to an advanced stage before the Graduate School is included in the discussions. It is very important to have a strong working relationship with other deans and with graduate program directors to ensure a smooth process.

There are several stages to the approval process, including department faculty, college dean, graduate dean, provost's office, campus governance, university system office, state higher education body (that may include input from other universities in the state). At each stage the new program proposal must be shepherded, often with a balance of advocacy and diplomacy. Approval of all of the courses that are part of the program must happen before the program itself can be approved. With careful planning and coordination, these approvals can be managed as a package.

Once the program is approved there are several steps that must be completed before students can apply for admission and enroll in the program. Various offices must agree on a unique program "code" that is used on the application and in the student information system (such as PeopleSoft or Banner). For longitudinal tracking data, a former program code cannot be reused. Therefore the Registrar and Institutional Research must be involved in this decision. Once the code is in the system it can be added to the application form. Informational websites that describe graduate programs must be updated. Need to confirm that the Financial Aid Office has recognized the new program. Note that stand alone certificate programs may require an extra step to be approved to be eligible for financial aid and may be subject to Gainful Employment reporting.

At some universities the Registrar's Office is in charge of all processes except updating the Graduate School's website. However many of these steps may fall to the graduate dean to manage, which includes setting up the checklist to ensure that all steps are followed. Challenges often occur since new programs are rare enough that they are not part of the regular rhythm of workflow and there may not be designated staff for each function. At Mid-Size University this was treated as an ad hoc process and the workflow was recreated each time a new program came along. More recently the process has been codified with the workflow process stored on the shared drive with other processes.

Issue 2: Onboarding of New Staff

Every office, whether small or large, will occasionally hire new staff. Offices that employ undergraduate or graduate students will have more frequent turnover. In addition to the standard processes at the university, how do you welcome and train your new employee? Who is responsible? How do you make sure the new person receives needed information? What do you do to make the person feel welcomed and included?

Questions:

1. How does new program approval or onboarding of new staff work on your campus? What is the role of the graduate dean?
2. When a process requires cooperation from several offices across the campus, who is in charge and how do you keep the process moving forward?
3. When do you decide that a formalized or standard process is needed versus handling infrequent events in an ad hoc manner?