



How to Be an Effective Consultant in Graduate Education

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Common Themes In requests for CGS Consultation

- Improving quality of graduate programs
- Evaluating the policies of the graduate school
 - a) Outcome based assessment
 - b) Faculty credentialing process
 - c) Admission requirements and application process
 - d) Program enrollment and completion
 - e) Creation of new programs.
- Marketing; recruitment; communication & web presence
- Administrative structure and graduate governance (most common)
- Potential Expansion of graduate programs (used to be)

Themes contd.

- Graduate school at a turning point/transition – Q. “How does a university remain a high quality teaching university & conduct the scholarship associated with graduate education?”
- SWOT analysis
- Graduate student services/international students
- Development of appropriate metrics

The Process

CGS request the following information from the institution:

- a) The goals of the consultation (in writing)
- b) The desired time frame for the consultants to visit the institution
- c) The number of consultants
- d) Preferences for the types of universities/colleges the consultants represent
- e) Preferences for the academic discipline(s) of the consultant

- CGS provides the institution with a list of names and brief bios of several graduate deans that have the experience and expertise in graduate education to address the issues of interest to the institution.
- The institution is asked to identify individuals from the list that would be acceptable for the consultation, and rank them in order of preference
- CGS contacts the individuals to ascertain interest and availability.
- Once team is identified, the institution works directly with the team on schedule, agenda for the visit & provides the team with the background information for the visit.
- Institution provides additional specific information as requested.

- The institution works directly with team on travel arrangements
- The institution prepares a detailed agenda for the team's campus visit and provides it to consultants several days in advance.
- The team visits the campus and prepares a written report of the findings and recommendations. The report is typically submitted to the institution within 2-4 weeks of the campus visit.
- Upon receipt and approval of the written report the institution notifies CGS that the consultation is completed. (CGS requests a copy of the report for its file.)
- CGS pays the consultants their fees (see web site for updated fee schedule) and any travel expenses not paid directly by the institution.

Benefits of Consultation

- An Independent Analysis provides an untainted and objective analysis
 - Provides ideas for new directions
- Majority of recommendations may have been already considered
 - Gains Support or validates an existing perspective
 - Gains credibility of direction from support of an external source
 - Reduces internal opposition
- Gives authorization to move forward
- Overcomes political implications
- Allows benchmarking against other institutions
- Adds knowledge from consultant's experience
- Provides help when not enough personnel or time to consider the issues

Guiding Principles

- Be Prepared for surprises and be flexible
- Know your boundaries and defer to the Graduate Dean
- Respect the hard work already done by the organization
- Have a close working relationship with the Graduate Dean
- Provide the deliverables according to the pre-arranged schedule
- Maintain a professional demeanor – respectful and not overbearing
- Accept only a consultancy in areas of expertise
- Conclude services after the consultation is over
- Maintain confidentiality of the organization and the Graduate Dean

Consultants as Experts

- Experts with specialized knowledge
 - Dean has knowledge of structure from a number of universities
 - Dean has access to others who can provide unique perspectives
- Concerns when using experts
 - May not understand the nature of the university
 - Politics or culture may have an impact on best recommendations
 - Needs a strong inside champion

Consultants as Facilitators

- Facilitators to help client go through necessary steps to solve problems
 - Assists client to define problem
 - Client involved in analyzing the problem
 - Client involved in deciding on a plan of action
 - Leads to commitment and ownership of action
- Concerns when using facilitators
 - Decision makers at university may not be sure of direction for organization
 - Dean may not have authority to make the necessary decision

Preparation for Consulting

- Who requested the consultation?
- What does the university say needs to be addressed and why?
- What specific outcomes are desired?
- What does the university want the consultant to do?
- What units need to be involved in the process?
- What documents exist that reflect upon the issues?
- What is the overall timeline?
- What is the final product to be?
- Is there an approval process?

Homework for the Visit

- Mission and Vision of the University
- Values of the University
- Graduate School Mission
- Structure of the Graduate School
- Governance at the University
- Governance for graduate studies
 - Committees
 - Subcommittees
 - Graduate Faculty
 - Faculty Senate

Documents Needed

- Annual report
- Organizational chart
- Graduate Catalog
- Noel-Levitz
- Exit surveys
- Delaware study
- Website
- PR Publications
- NSSE report

Preliminary Questions to be Asked

- What are specific examples of the problems
- How long have the problems been going on?
- Who is affected by the problem?
- How has it affected the organization?

Consulting Strategy

- What is the problem that needs exploration?
- Is the problem identified the real problem?
- What is the culture of the university and of graduate studies?
- What information is needed to understand the problem and make recommendations?
- Where is the information located?
- Who are the key individuals that impact the problem? (Formal and informal)
- What conclusion can be drawn based upon the information learned and best practices?
- In the case of reorganization, what is the motivation?

Interviewing Strategies

- Interview key players & committees to understand the scope of the problem
- All interviews must have a purpose even if it is exploring
- Explain purpose of interview
- Prepare questions in advance
- Plan for the time available
- Keep the interview focused
- Be ready for surprises – be flexible
- Conduct with a bias-free and neutral stance
- Ask one question at a time
- Let the interviewees talk and have low talk time yourself
- Ask open ended questions
- Ask follow up questions when answer are unclear or more information is needed
- Encourage interviewees to provide additional details and examples
- Don't be afraid to ask tough questions
- Summarize key points and ask about accuracy
- Ask for anything forgotten
- Document by taking notes during the interview for use in the report

Listening Skills

- “The most valuable characteristic that a consultant has besides intelligence and experience for judging issues is ears to listen and hear how people describe what they are doing in their jobs and how they’re functioning.”
- “You have to have people who naturally can approach people in an organization without threatening them and ask the appropriate questions in a way that leads people to talk about the answers to the questions.”

Paulstein in Singer, 2008

Resistance by the Universities

- Anxiety caused by the consultation
 - Potential losses
 - Job loss
 - Job restructuring
 - Loss of power
 - Loss of privileges
- Reduction of Anxiety
 - Increased communication
 - Sensitivity
 - Facilitate communication of feelings
 - Reach out to variety of groups

The Deliverables

- Use data from documents and information from interviews
- Bring the Dean and Provost along through the process
 - Involve them in discussing the issues
 - Involve them in reviewing the recommendations
 - Be willing to make changes that are appropriate for the university

The Report

- Identify themes at the end of each day
- Prior to leaving, agree on major themes, outline and who will write which sections
- There is no one way to organize, but include at least:
 - The charge/problems to be addressed
 - What was done to prepare (including documents reviewed)
 - With whom you met
 - Major themes
 - Recommendations
- Provide a draft to the dean or person requesting the consultation prior to submitting a final draft to ensure accuracy

Areas of Possible Consultation

Administration of Grad Education

- Organization and Administration of Graduate Education
- Enrollment Planning and Management
- Recruitment Strategies
- Graduate Admissions
- International Graduate Issues
- Electronic Admissions
- Graduate Record Keeping and Auditing
- Distribution and Administration of Assistantships and Fellowships
- Constructing and Using Databases for Graduate Administration
- Managing Multi-campus Graduate Programs
- Graduate Faculty Governance
- Graduate Faculty Status
- Resource Review and Budget Management
- Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Student Services

- Graduate Student Organizations
- Preparing Future Faculty Programs
- Student Life Issues
- Support Services for Graduate Students
- Health Insurance
- Student Grievances
- Mentorship Programs

Ancillary Services

- Advertising and Marketing
- Fundraising for Graduate Schools
- Building an Inclusive Graduate Community
- Developing Productive Synergies and Collaborations
- Curricular Issues

Curricular Issues

- Curriculum Development
- Developing New Graduate Programs
- Graduate Certificate Programs
- Accelerated Bachelor's/Master's Degrees
- Interdisciplinary Programs
- Distance and On-line Graduate Programs
- Professional Science Master's Programs
- Professional Doctorates

Evaluation

- Academic Program Reviews
- Merging or Discontinuing Graduate Programs
- Assessment of Graduate Student Learning Outcomes

Research Activities

- Integrating Research Administration and Graduate Education
- Grant and Contract Management
- Intellectual Property Issues
- Responsible Conduct of Research/Scholarship

Fundraising

- Setting a target
- Annual current use giving
- Establishing endowments
- Establishing development boards

Situational Consultations

- Personnel Issues
- Political crises
- Budget cuts

Resources

- Alexis, M. (2008). Consulting to Universities, New York: Teneo Press
- Block, P. (1981). Flawless consulting: A guide to getting your expertise used. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass