Assessment and Review of Graduate Programs: Doctoral

The Graduate Review & Improvement Process (GRIP)

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What is GRIP?

• GRIP is a **student-centered** and **action-oriented** program assessment project

• Puts evaluation & program improvement in the hands of **students, faculty and staff**
Where it Began

Graduate Professional and Education Assembly
University of Minnesota

Academic Program Evaluation
Monday, April 18, 2011
The Carnegie Initiative on the Doctorate

Keynote speakers:

Chris Golde
Stanford University

George Walker
Cleveland State University

University of Minnesota
Driven to Discover™
Why?

External Review: Every 5 to 10 years

*Summative*

- Experts in the field
- Self-study report
- Exit interview

Previously administered by the Graduate School

Internal Ongoing Improvement Process

*Developmental*

- Systematic listening to student and faculty input
- Ongoing adjustment of educational activities to program goals
- Bottom-up approach to quality metrics
Measuring from the Bottom-Up

• In FY12/13, Graduate School funding allocations to colleges were based on discipline-independent, quantitative measures (time to degree, completion/attrition, placement)

• GRIP allows programs to define discipline-specific metrics & outcomes using qualitative data
Qualitative Measures & Methods

• Measuring intangibles in graduate education & research
  – How can we measure originality and innovation?
  – How do we quantify intellectual risk-taking?
  – How will we gauge opportunities to “fail or explore dead ends”?
  – How should we evaluate the crossing of disciplinary boundaries?

• Methodology
  – Focus groups, interviews, town hall meetings, etc.
  – Content analysis of results (e.g. MAXQDA, qualitative data analysis)
• **Content Analysis Tool**
  - Allows for content analysis of focus groups and interviews
  - Word counts; recurring themes; demographic analysis
What Do We Hope to Learn?

• What is the purpose of the program?
  – What are the desired outcomes?

• What is the rationale and educational purpose of each element of the program?
  – Which elements of the program should be retained and affirmed?
  – Which elements could usefully be changed or eliminated?

• How do you know?
  – What evidence aids in answering those questions?
  – What evidence can be collected to determine whether changes serve the desired outcomes?

What Are the Benefits?

- **For participating programs:** Gain evaluation skills and experiences appropriate to their discipline and organizational context
- **For faculty:** Develop strategies for clearly and effectively articulating program goals, standards, and achievements to diverse audiences
- **For students:** Gain evaluation expertise that will give them a voice in shaping the future direction of the discipline and allow them to develop skills applicable to their future careers, both academic and non-academic. Use for dissertations. Students benefit from the review while they are still in the program
Sampling of Findings

- Only **one out of almost 50 students** who participated in focus groups in one department expressed an aspiration to be a faculty member at an R1 institution.
- Focus group participants described **two "castes" of students**, with the line falling between those who have graduate assistantships and those who do not.
- Students questioned the **number of courses required** for a Ph.D. degree, which they claimed was over 30% more than comparable programs and allowed little time for academic research.
- All **students who are in a cohort expressed satisfaction** with their program, and all who are not in a cohort wished they were
Implementing GRIP

• Eight programs volunteered for GRIP, from the following colleges:
  – Carlson School of Management
  – College of Education & Human Development
  – College of Food, Agricultural & Natural Resource Sciences
  – College of Pharmacy
  – College of Science & Engineering
  – College of Veterinary Medicine
  – Humphrey School of Public Affairs
  – School of Dentistry
Challenges

- Decentralized model of graduate education
- Reluctance to invest in program review
- Combination with undergraduate education program review
- 2015 accreditation of the U of MN Twin Cities campus
GRIP Investment

- Graduate School contributed a **one-time investment** of **$80,000** to fund:
  - Graduate assistants serving as consultants to the eight participating pilot programs
  - Publication/presentation costs
  - Minnesota Evaluation Studies Institute (MESI)
- **Plus student, faculty & staff time** from participating programs
- **We are implementing the program with resources that we already have on campus** (e.g., College of Education & Human Development; graduate assistants)
GRIP Pilot Project Includes:

- **Workshops** on program evaluation
- Graduate **evaluation colloquium** for student leaders
- **Resources/toolkit** (survey instruments, focus group protocols)
- **Consulting assistance** from University experts in higher education and program evaluation, including the Minnesota Evaluation Studies Institute (MESI)
Thank you.

Questions?