Assessment and Review of Graduate Programs: Doctoral

The Graduate Review & Improvement Process (GRIP)

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What is GRIP?

- GRIP is a **holistic** and **adaptive** model for program review and improvement.
- The evaluation process is **tailored** to the needs and expectations of each program.
- Its approach is **student-centric** and **action-oriented**.
Where it Began

Graduate & Professional 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
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?

Why?

External Review: Every 5 to 10 years

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

Previously administered by the Graduate School, a new academic program review model involving undergraduate education is now in development.

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
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)
How does GRIP work?

With the help of a GRIP facilitator, faculty member(s) and student(s) serve as program representatives to:

- Consider program’s goals and intended outcomes
- Determine data needs for evaluation
- Gather information from faculty and students
- Exchange ideas and expertise (between programs)
- Create an internal “state of the graduate program” report
What Are the Benefits?

• Produce meaningful, actionable, discipline-specific feedback in the form of “state of the program” reports and actions plans for improvement
• Respond to specific disciplinary and departmental contexts
• Provide quantitative data for a narrative that puts the results into context and offers recommendations for how to make changes in real time
• Strengthen program’s internal capacity for ongoing review and improvement
Implementing GRIP

• In 2012-13, eight programs volunteered for GRIP:
  – Business Administration
  – Civil Engineering
  – Dentistry
  – Experimental and Clinical Pharmacology
  – Food Science and Nutrition
  – Organizational Leadership, Policy, and Development
  – Public Policy
  – Veterinary Medicine

• In spring 2014, up to 11 additional programs will pilot a more streamlined model of GRIP.
Sampling of Outcomes

Differential information and responses in the 2012-13 GRIP pilot programs:

- A high-quality, student- and faculty-tested survey that can be administered every few years to keep a “finger” on the student pulse
- Development of more systematic advising and more clear guidelines on milestones to degree completion intended to improve matriculation rates and time to degree
- New space devoted to a resource center and lounge to respond to expressed need for more informal and formal peer connections; also improved orientation activities
- Attention to range of careers after data revealed only small number of students sought R1 academic appointments in some programs
Quantitative Metrics
Standard Measures and Program Narratives

Graduate School provided data to which programs responded:

• **Index covering 10 years** with time to degree and completion and attrition statistics; algorithm to account for leaves and other nuances

• **AAU data on graduate programs in each field**; invitation to provide any other external ranking information specific to field

• **Guidelines for a two-page narrative** for additional data including commentary on changes over time and placement information
Challenges and Questions

- **Decentralized model** of graduate education on campus
- **Reluctance to invest** money and time in program review
- How to **combine graduate and undergraduate information** in academic review?
- How will GRIP and emerging “graduate learning outcomes” relate to **2015 accreditation** of the U of MN Twin Cities campus?
GRIP and Program Investment

• Graduate School has contributed approximately $200,000 since summer 2011 for GRIP:
  – Graduate assistants serving as consultants to the participating pilot programs
  – Publication/presentation costs
  – Minnesota Evaluation Studies Institute (MESI)

• Programs provide student, faculty & staff time from participating programs

• Expertise comes from resources already on campus
  (e.g., College of Education & Human Development; graduate assistants)
GRIP Initiative 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)
Longer-term Prospects

- **Web repository of evaluation tools** and resources (survey instruments, focus group protocols)
- **Consulting assistance from University experts** in higher education and program evaluation, including the Minnesota Evaluation Studies Institute (MESI)
- **Interactive workshop for faculty and students** on graduate program evaluation
- **Specialized graduate evaluation colloquium for student leaders**