Using NRC Research Doctorate Assessment Data to Improve Programs

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Notes on Methodology Report

• Measurement goals
  – Research activity of faculty
  – Student support and outcomes
  – Diversity of the academic environment
  – Quantitative measure of range of rankings of programs (based on countable information)

• However, also calibrated against perceived rankings
Participants

- 222 universities, 61 fields, more than 5000 programs
Ratings and Weights

• Research activity
  – Publications/faculty have highest weight

• Student support and outcomes
  – Student support and completion rates have highest weight (more than time to degree or placement)

• Diversity in academic environment
  – Not given high weight
Summary Comment

• Use of dimensional ratings give different rankings compared to overall ratings
• Report correctly states that assessment is a multi-dimensional problem with no clear, simple outcome
• Universities, faculties, and students should use results to meet their own goals
Example for an Economics Department

- Publications/faculty, citations/publication, number of Ph.D.’s, and average GRE-Q scores were given the highest weight
  - And turned out to be the only statistically significant ones
  - Note that there is no direct indicator of student accomplishment or success
Questions for Discussion

• What can you learn about how to improve your programs from the NRC Research Doctorate Assessment?
  – You can learn how you compare with other programs via 19 to 20 different indicators
  – In my opinion, each university should do this independently according to its mission, goals for graduate education and current status
• What will the ratings and rankings tell you about how your programs compare with others?
  – There is a wealth of data, and I would urge people to look at this in depth as opposed to just looking at the ratings and rankings
  – I have found that indicators that may be given little to no weight in the NRC study can be critical for assessing or working with individual programs
    • E.g, time to degree, student placement in the context of norms for each field
• What will you see in the data provided to you on release?
  – A huge amount of information
  – A plan and team to help assess the data will be crucial to making use of it and responding to questions.
• How do you explain the methodology producing these outcomes to internal and external audiences?
  – Use the CGS public relations materials
  – Deans will need to work in advance with communications people on campus