

2015 PHD PROGRAM REVIEW SUMMARY REPORT

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PURPOSE

Program review is essential for the development, growth, and sustainability of excellence in graduate education. In order for Washington State University (WSU) to maintain and enhance its research strengths, it is vital that the university maximizes the potential for sustainable excellence in doctoral programs in all fields. In recognition of this imperative, the Graduate School instituted a systematic process of graduate program review to: (1) monitor program changes to improve and enhance the training and education of graduate students; (2) ensure that graduate students are optimally prepared for careers; and (3) increase the overall quality of graduate education at the university.

BACKGROUND

In Spring 2012, the Graduate School conducted a review of PhD programs that included a discussion about program data provided by Institutional Research (IR) and a review of selected documents and information provided by the programs. Graduate School leadership met with program leaders to discuss program quality, faculty involvement, assessment plan development, student learning outcomes, general administration of the program, and program climate based on the results of a 2011 graduate student survey.

The program reviews produced a number of outcomes including recommendations for program improvement and enhancements, development and delivery of workshops for graduate program coordinators and faculty on graduate program assessment, administrative efficiencies, and increased compliance with Graduate School policies and procedures. The Graduate School also organized a Graduate Advisory Committee (GAC) with at least one representative from each college/campus to:

- Develop strategic goals and priorities related to graduate program assessment across the university,
- Assist the Graduate School in implementing these goals and priorities,
- Provide feedback and recommendations regarding graduate and professional program assessment, and
- Help communicate and coordinate the program-level assessment process at the college and campus level

Since 2012, the GAC has met several times to discuss various aspects of graduate education and to provide recommendations and guidance to the Graduate School on its efforts to support graduate programs and improve the quality of graduate education at WSU.

The majority of program chairs and directors who participated in the review meetings expressed appreciation of the perspectives offered by the Graduate School team although a few individuals questioned and/or raised concerns regarding the critiques, suggestions, and/or data provided to them. The Graduate School has continued to refine the program review process and extended it to master's-only programs in Spring 2013. The systematic review of graduate programs has become an important and useful mechanism for the Graduate School to fulfill its oversight responsibility and support graduate education at WSU.

2015 PhD PROGRAM REVIEWS

In November 2014, the Graduate School invited program directors and chairs to participate in the 2015 PhD program review process — a process similar to the 2012 program reviews that would build on the previous dialog and initiatives and include updated data for graduate programs. (See [Appendix A](#).)

Program Materials: In preparation for the review, each PhD program was asked to submit the following information to the Graduate School:

1. A brief *Program Update* of changes since the last program review in Spring 2012
2. *Student Handbook* or similar documents describing the program structure, curriculum, and policies and practices
3. *Student Annual Reviews* for all PhD students, 2013-2014 academic year including completed review forms and feedback from advisors and the department
4. *List of Current Students* with indication of financial support (assistantships, fellowships, international scholarships, etc.)
5. *List of Recent PhD Graduates* with information describing their placement and/or employment history since graduation from WSU

Graduate School Materials: While this information was collected, the Graduate School, with assistance from the Office of Institutional Research, assembled and analyzed the following data:

1. *Program Bylaws* approved by Faculty Senate and *List of Program Graduate Faculty* approved by the Graduate School — These documents assist leadership in administering the program and should be updated by programs on a regular basis (i.e., annually).
2. *Program Fact Sheets* — These documents describe each degree program and are used for student recruitment. Programs are required to update the Graduate School's fact sheet database with admission and degree requirements as well as a list of faculty participating in the program and their research interests.
3. *Programs of Study* — A sample of 10 programs of study for students was reviewed for consistency, adherence to Graduate School policy, use of conjoint and cooperative courses, and committee composition.
4. *Catalog Courses* — The graduate courses listed in the university catalog were reviewed and conjoint and cooperative courses were noted for discussion at the review meeting.
5. *Program Profiles* — Program profiles, compiled by IR, show new and total enrollment from 2009 through 2014; graduate degrees conferred over that time; time to degree; cohort performance and retention data; graduate assistantships by student and department; and faculty appointments in the program's home unit.
6. *Teacher Assignment Data* — This Fall 2014 data, also captured by IR, show the faculty who served as committee chairs for students in the program by major and appointing department.

7. *Program Assessment* — These documents include the assessment plan, student learning outcomes, Fall 2014 assessment review report submitted by the program, feedback from the Graduate School, and other assessment and/or professional accreditation documents as applicable.
8. *Graduate Student Survey Data* — In Spring 2014, the WSU Social and Economic Sciences Research Center (SESRC) conducted a comprehensive, university-wide survey of all graduate students regarding their perceptions of their program, faculty, and climate. Programs received aggregate data for the program, comparison results from the 2011 survey, and average responses for a peer population (i.e., all PhD students in the college).
9. *LinkedIn/Internet Search Data* – The Graduate School supplemented the placement data provided by programs with employment data collected from LinkedIn and Internet search for PhD graduates from 2004-2014.

All of the program review materials were posted on the Graduate School's SharePoint site with a discussion guide summarizing the main points. The senior associate dean and director of graduate assessment from the Graduate School conducted face-to-face review meetings with the department chair and/or program director for every PhD program offered at WSU. Program faculty, the program coordinator, college leadership, and the dean and associate deans from the Graduate School were also welcome to attend. Altogether, 46 program review meetings were conducted from February to July, 2015 with 100% of PhD programs participating in the review process. (See [Appendix C](#).) A post meeting summary was added to the discussion guide and distributed to participants after the meeting to correct inaccuracies, note areas of agreement, and offer recommendations to enhance the program.

THEMATIC AREAS

The program review meetings created an opportunity for faculty and staff to focus on key issues impacting graduate students and their experience at WSU. It was also an opportunity to discuss key changes made to the program since the last review and the impact of those changes on the graduate program and its students. The review stimulated discussions about questions such as:

- Is the program teaching and training students effectively?
- Does the program meet institutional goals?
- Are faculty involved in creating and implementing the program's vision?

The program review meetings were useful in identifying the program strengths, weaknesses, and strategies for program improvement and enhancement. The main discussion topics are summarized in the following thematic areas:

1. Faculty Engagement

- *Program bylaws* have been approved by Faculty Senate and are used to effectively administer the program, bylaws provide sufficient flexibility for faculty and graduate students in the program, programs without bylaws understand the limitations.

- *Approved graduate faculty*: program follows procedure for adding/removing faculty from the list, the list of approved graduate faculty is accurate and up-to-date, review Graduate School policy on graduate committees, discuss exceptions to policy.
- *Faculty participation*: 85% of tenured/tenure-track (T/TT) faculty are expected to chair at least one graduate committee, faculty are recognized for interdisciplinary efforts and participation on committees outside of the program; workloads are evenly distributed among faculty members.

Observations

- Programs whose T/TT faculty were highly engaged in the mentoring process were recognized for their contribution to the graduate program and student experience in the program.
- Some programs did not have enough faculty to support student enrollment or growth.
- In some cases, faculty were not engaged due to limitations in their grant funding or their expertise did not align with the graduate program.
- Some programs would benefit from additional faculty lines if the program is expected to grow or sustain increases in enrollment.
- Some programs would benefit from a review of their strategic plan related to faculty strengths and program expertise.

2. Program Administration

- *Student handbook* contains useful information for students including general information, new student information, faculty and staff resources, academic requirements, degree requirements, dissertation guidelines, program policies and procedures, university regulations, and important forms and deadlines; handbook is updated annually and is compliant with Graduate School policy.
- *Fact sheets* are updated on a regular basis for student recruitment, graduate faculty who are available to advise new students in the program are listed on the fact sheet.
- *Certification of assistantship effort* is documented by the program as required by internal audit and Graduate School policy.
- *Exceptions to policy* are reasonable and within expected limits for the size and structure of the program.
- *Program leadership* is actively engaged in the day-to-day management and long-term planning and development of the program.
- *Program planning* is responsive to resource changes and/or changes within the discipline, curricular changes meet university guidelines and are submitted through the Faculty Senate process.
- *Student learning outcomes* are well-defined at the program level and are published in the student handbook and/or on the program website in compliance with NWCCU accreditation requirements.
- *Program assessment* is on-track, data is collected and reviewed by graduate faculty on a regular basis, and results are used for program planning and improvement.

Observations

- Programs continue to improve their program administration and implement changes that enhance graduate student learning and experience in the program.
- Many programs had updated their student handbook, program website, degree requirements, student annual review process, student learning outcomes, and/or program materials since the 2012 PhD program reviews.
- In a few cases, program materials were not aligned with Graduate School policy and program leadership was asked to update them.
- All of the programs have an assessment plan in place, and most programs (except for new and transitioning programs) have reviewed assessment data and submitted an assessment report documenting their assessment practice for one or more assessment cycles.
- Programs in the process of restructuring and/or curricular changes were provided guidance on policies and processes related to these activities.
- Many programs were encouraged to implement a program of graduate student recruitment.

3. Student Experience

- *Access to courses/faculty/quality programming*: students are able to access graduate courses with appropriate content and academic rigor, both within and outside of the discipline; program limits conjoint courses and effectively manages cooperative courses; doctoral students at urban campuses and research and extension centers are able to access departmental and administrative services.
- *Student annual reviews* are conducted annually and provide useful feedback to students and faculty; process includes certification of assistantship duties, self-evaluation by student, and face-to-face meeting with advisor/graduate committee; review form is signed by the student and the advisor; aggregate results are used for program assessment.
- *Program climate* is positive and supportive; the program has reviewed the 2011/2014 graduate student survey results and identified strengths, weaknesses, and trends; the program is aware of faculty and/or program issues and implements strategies to mitigate their impact on student experience in the program.
- *Placement data* is collected by the program and used to inform program planning and student professional development, program is aware of placement characteristics, PhD graduates are able to secure preferred positions with top-tier employers/institutions within a reasonable timeframe after leaving WSU.
- *Professional development* is provided for doctoral students that meet career expectations in areas such as public speaking, writing articles for publication, writing proposals for funding, developing a professional persona, writing a curriculum vitae for academia, interviewing, working collaboratively, management skills, leadership skills, and ethics.

Observations

- Many programs reported making changes to degree requirements; graduate courses, seminars, and/or curricula; preliminary and final exams; advising requirements; student

annual reviews; student handbook information; professional development opportunities; and/or policies and procedures.

- Many programs indicated that they had used the 2011 graduate student survey results to make changes to the program and improve graduate student experience in the program.
- In a few instances, students reported concerns about the program climate and/or there were climate issues that were the same or had not improved since the 2011 graduate student survey.
- Some students would benefit from additional professional development opportunities and/or career advising during their graduate career.
- Student annual reviews are conducted for most graduate students; however, some programs need to be more consistent in their review process and/or encourage face-to-face meetings between students and their faculty advisors.
- In some cases, programs were encouraged to develop workshops/programs on alternative PhD careers for their students.

4. Program Sustainability

- *Enrollment statistics* should be stable or increasing including applications, admissions, and new and total enrollments; program meets enrollment goals and effectively manages retention issues; program leadership implements strategies to maintain and grow the program considering internal and external constraints.
- *Diversity* is represented in graduate student cohorts including: female and underrepresented minority (URM) enrollments; program actively engages in efforts to diversity graduate enrollments through career fairs, outreach to underrepresented/underserved populations, and participation in programs such as the Campus Visitation Program and the Research Assistantship for Diverse Scholars (RADS) program.
- *Student financial support* is provided to students through graduate assistantships and participation in programs such as the Achievement Rewards for College Scientists (ARCS) fellowship program and Graduate School scholarships and awards for outstanding students; program monitors assistantships to ensure that students make regular progress in their program of study and complete their degree within the expected timeframe.
- *PT/FT students* are able to complete the program within expected timeframes, program faculty provides effective advising and mentoring for PT/FT students.
- *Degree production* meets expectations for the program and the discipline; program faculty effectively train and mentor students to meet the program milestones and degree requirements, faculty review student academic progress, research productivity, and retention issues at faculty meetings and retreats.

Observations

- Many programs have increased PhD enrollments and improved their support for graduate students through course updates, curricular changes, faculty advising, student support services, faculty development, and administrative changes.
- Graduate programs that have participated in the RADS program have been able to recruit and retain well-qualified, diverse scholars, and programs that have been designated as

ARCS recipients have been able to recruit and retain high quality students and improve the overall competitiveness of the program.

- Some programs have struggled to address issues related to low or decreasing enrollments, decreased funding, faculty/staff turnover, loss of faculty, program organization, and/or administrative changes/restructuring. These challenges can be seen in decreasing admission and enrollment trends, lack of average degree production over six years; and/or a minority of tenured/tenure-track faculty chairing student committees, as well as student concerns about the program expressed in the survey. Feedback and recommendations were provided by the Graduate School to address these issues.

NEXT STEPS

The PhD program reviews have facilitated new discussions and perspectives on graduate education and the quality of graduate degree programs at WSU. Building on this experience, the Graduate School is continuing the following next steps for 2015-2016:

- Provide more flexibility to graduate programs through program bylaws, approved graduate faculty lists, and helping programs identify faculty who may serve on graduate committees.
- Work with program leadership and senior administrators to address issues that broadly impact the sustainability and viability of graduate programs.
- Develop technical systems to increase flexibility and efficiency in administering graduate programs and capture important data for program improvement.
- Support minority recruitment programs such as RADS and Visitation Weekend to assist programs in recruiting highly qualified and diverse students.
- Offer scholarship programs to acknowledge outstanding masters and doctoral students.
- Continue Graduate Advisory Committee (GAC) meetings and coordinate with colleges on areas of strategic importance such as graduate admissions, program administration, resource allocation, program review and assessment, and accreditation.
- Meet with college leadership to review program strategies to increase engagement with graduate education.
- Provide top-off scholarships to programs that seek to recruit high achieving new graduate students.
- Increase the number of opportunities for programs to engage in student recruitment activities.

APPENDIX A: 2015 PhD Program Review Announcement



Graduate School

MEMORANDUM

FROM: Pat Sturko, Associate Dean of the Graduate School

CC: William Andrefsky, Jr., Dean of the Graduate School

DATE: November 21, 2014

SUBJECT: 2015 Ph.D. Program Review

Formative assessment is essential for the development, growth, and sustainability of graduate and professional programs. In order for Washington State University to maintain and enhance its research strengths, the University must maximize the potential for sustainable excellence in all academic fields. In recognition of this imperative, the Graduate School is continuing its effort to conduct regular reviews of all graduate degree programs.

This spring, all Ph.D. programs will be asked to participate in program review, an objective process that will involve self-study, review of institutional data, and evaluation of program practices. Based on the review, programs will be invited to work with the Graduate School to implement appropriate program enhancements according to a mutually agreeable timetable. The goals of graduate program review are:

1. To improve the training and education of graduate students;
2. To ensure that graduate students are optimally prepared for careers in their field; and
3. To increase the overall educational and research capacity of WSU.

In preparation for program review, please submit the following information in electronic format to Scott Avery, the Graduate School's Assessment Specialist (scottavery@wsu.edu), before January 2, 2015:

1. A brief (1-2 page) summary of program changes since the last program review in Spring 2012;
2. Student handbook describing the program's structure, curriculum, policies, and practices;
3. Copies of the most recent annual reviews of all Ph.D. students (2013-14)
4. List of all current students with indication of financial support (assistantships, fellowships, etc.); and
5. List of specific recent graduates with information describing their employment history since graduation from WSU, as available.

After the information has been collected and reviewed, the Graduate School will meet with graduate program directors and other appropriate administrative officials and faculty to discuss the results and clarify any remaining issues. A discussion guide and meeting documents will be posted on the Graduate School's Program Review and Assessment SharePoint site at:

<https://sharepoint.ogrd.wsu.edu/ProgramAssessment/SitePages/2015-PhD-Reviews.aspx>. Questions regarding the review process may be directed to: Scott Avery, scottavery@wsu.edu.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Pat Sturko'.

Pat Sturko
Associate Dean
Graduate School
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APPENDIX B: 2015 PhD Program Review Checklist

1. Program Information

- ☐ New and total enrollment numbers—Trend should be increasing new and total enrollments (for programs that need to grow) or stable total enrollments (for programs that have reached saturation)
- ☐ Graduate School Recruitment Info
- ☐ Number of credits per semester (10-12 is the norm)
- ☐ Number of degrees conferred—Increase in degrees conferred per year as enrollments increase
- ☐ Time to degree—varies per discipline, but should be consistent with average time to degree for discipline
- ☐ Retention rate (cohort performance)—Decrease number of students who leave without the doctorate degree; for master's programs, numbers who leave without the master's degree.
- ☐ Number of students funded by program—Increase in relation to proportion of students funded (TAs, RAs, etc.)
- ☐ Percent of program faculty chairing student committees—85% of the tenured/tenured-track faculty should chair at least one graduate committee
- ☐ Diversity of students in program—increase gender/race/ethnicity of students in program
- ☐ Access to program/courses/faculty (campus locations) based on resources
- ☐ Placement of graduates (departments need to track this data to maintain contact with graduates)
- ☐ Graduate School Placement data

2. Graduate School Policy

- ☐ Program Bylaws and Updated Graduate Faculty List
- ☐ Updated Program Factsheet
- ☐ Graduate Student Handbook for program
- ☐ Student Learning Outcomes in Handbook
- ☐ Minimal conjoint coursework
- ☐ Appropriately staffed student committees
- ☐ Minimal exceptions to policy
- ☐ Annual evaluation for every graduate student
- ☐ Graduate Assistant Effort Certification
- ☐ Graduate Student Survey results

3. NWCCU Requirements

- ☐ Assessment plan—Every program must have a complete assessment plan implemented.
- ☐ Student learning outcomes published (handbook, web, other) and available to students
- ☐ Assessment of student learning—program demonstrates use of assessment data to improve program results

4. Other

- ☐ Comments
- ☐ Observations
- ☐ Recommendations

APPENDIX C: 2015 PhD Program Review Schedule

College	PhD Program	Date
Agricultural, Human, and Natural Resource Sciences	Animal Sciences	February 18, 2015
	Biological and Agricultural Engineering	March 10, 2015
	Crop and Soil Sciences	June 8, 2015
	Economic Sciences (PhD in Economics and PhD in Agricultural Economics)	May 5, 2015
	Entomology	June 15, 2015
	Food Science	April 24, 2015
	Horticulture	April 29, 2015
	Plant Pathology	April 15, 2015
	Prevention Science	May 20, 2015
Arts and Sciences	American Studies	February 16, 2015
	Anthropology	February 23, 2015
	Biological Sciences (PhD in Botany and PhD in Zoology)	March 5, 2015
	Chemistry	March 16, 2015
	Clinical Psychology	June 2, 2015
	Criminal Justice and Criminology	March 27, 2015
	English	May 4, 2015
	Experimental Psychology	May 28, 2015
	History	April 27, 2015
	Mathematics	May 1, 2015
	Physics	May 29, 2015
	Political Science	May 12, 2015
	Sociology	May 27, 2015
Business	Business Administration (w/ specializations in Accounting, Finance, Hospitality and Tourism, Information Systems, Management, and Operations and Management Science)	March 6, 2015
Communication	Communication	March 30, 2015
Education	Counseling Psychology	March 25, 2015
	Educational Leadership (incl. EdD and PhD)	April 8, 2015
	Educational Psychology	April 10, 2015
	Teaching and Learning (incl. EdD and PhD w/ specializations in Cultural Studies and Social Thought in Education; Language, Literacy, and Technology; Mathematics and Science Education; and Special Education)	April 1, 2015
Engineering and Architecture	Chemical Engineering	February 27, 2015
	Civil Engineering	April 16, 2015
	Electrical Engineering and Computer Science (PhD in Electrical Engineering and PhD in Computer Science)	April 14, 2015
	Engineering Science	March 23, 2015
	Mechanical and Materials Engineering (PhD in Mechanical Engineering)	May 7, 2015
Graduate School	Individual Interdisciplinary Doctoral Program	July 2, 2015
	Materials Science and Engineering	July 2, 2015
	Molecular Plant Sciences	July 1, 2015
Nursing	Nursing (PhD)	April 17, 2015
	Nursing Practice (DNP)	April 17, 2015
Pharmacy	Pharmaceutical Sciences	June 17, 2015
	Nutrition and Exercise Physiology	*
School of the Environment	Geology	April 22, 2015
	Environmental and Natural Resource Sciences	April 22, 2015
Veterinary Medicine	Integrative Physiology and Neuroscience (PhD in Veterinary Science and PhD in Neuroscience)	May 11, 2015
	Molecular Biosciences	June 18, 2015
	Veterinary Clinical Training (PhD in Veterinary Science)	June 29, 2015
	Veterinary Sciences (w/ specializations in Immunology and Infectious Diseases, Combined Anatomic Pathology Residency Program, and Combined Microbiology Residency Program)	June 25, 2015

*Program in transition.