

UW-Madison Graduate School

Assessment Plan, April 2003

Spanning all divisions and colleges, the Graduate School enrolls more than 8,500 Masters and Ph.D. students each year in more than 160 majors. The nature of graduate level education, coupled with the decentralized nature of the campus, dictates that most activity regarding assessment is appropriately handled within individual departments. Nevertheless, the Graduate School supports the assessment activities of individual programs in a variety of ways.

Each year the Graduate School produces the Program Profiles for campus use. Available on the web since 1994, the Profiles document trends in enrollment, admissions, degrees and financial support. Departments are encouraged to access information in the profiles for purposes ranging from strategic planning to program assessment and review. The Graduate School also provides specialized reports, when feasible, to programs and departments seeking information for more unique needs. Finally, the Annual Report of the Graduate School, also available via the Internet, documents overall trends in student-related data in aggregate form.

The Graduate School serves as the admitting office for graduate students across campus. Consequently, the Graduate School is in the unique position of documenting and maintaining admissions records. The Graduate School provides tools for campus use ranging from data views in the InfoAccess Campus Data Warehouse to Graduate Web Information Systems (GWIS). This information is available for program use as they assess recruitment and retention efforts. Further, the Graduate School also seeks to ensure departmental personnel obtain the training they need to successfully use the information available to them on campus. To that end, the Graduate School offers workshops on GWIS and campus data resources annually.

In recent years the Graduate School has sought more detailed information on graduate student satisfaction and life through two surveys: the Graduate Student Satisfaction Survey, which was modeled on the undergraduate survey conducted every other year on the UW-Madison campus, and an alumni survey which was a joint effort with the College of Letters and Science and the Wisconsin Alumni Association. The results of those two surveys indicated broad satisfaction and support on the part of students and alumni. The results also confirmed that the direct impact the Graduate School has on the lives of students is limited. Most concerns and issues are appropriately addressed and evaluated at the program or department level. The Graduate School will continue to support the initiatives of departments to evaluate and assess their programs and provide the tools necessary.

Current and future Graduate School initiatives with assessment components include investigating how the results of the Survey of Earned Doctorates (SED), administered to each graduating Ph.D. candidate, can be used and the National Research Council (NRC) study of the quality of research doctoral education at academic institutions in the United

States. The NRC study is currently in development and details are not available at this time. However, it is to be assumed from past experience that this will be an exhaustive effort to compile all relevant information regarding graduate programs and will require significant staff time to complete.

Finally, the Graduate School is in the process of developing a program review and planning web site. The process of periodic program review is intended to ensure that standards of excellence are maintained and offers a mechanism for the Graduate School to provide advice for improvement and recognize examples of quality and effectiveness. Program review also provides the context for continuous assessment and improvement. The Graduate School program review and planning web site will clarify the roles of the various players in program review, suggest ways in which departments can prepare for reviews and direct them to sources that contain information relevant to a review.

Submitted by Gesele Durham, 3/21/2003