

ASP Town Meeting – February 18, 2009
Graduate Education Discussion – led by Jakki Mohr

Notes from Barry Brown

The Graduate Education ASP town hall meeting on Feb 18th was well attended (almost every chair was full). After the brief ASP process powerpoint overview the floor was open for questions/ comments. Those attending were mostly faculty with a few graduate students and staff also there. Some comments about graduate education overlapped into comments about research activities.

- We need increased institutional support of Graduate Students (Teaching Assistantships; Research Stipends; etc.) based on a new rational method of appropriation to departments
- We need a reduced teaching workload for faculty engaged in research and graduate student mentorship
- We need increased institutional support of the infrastructure necessary for Graduate Students (e.g. Recruitment costs; Better Online Application System; Library Resources; Lab setups, etc.)
- We need the Graduate School to do more than provide secretarial services; they need to take a leadership role in actively shaping the educational experiences of graduate students and reviewing the allocation of resources for graduate education

Notes from Jim Hirstein

1. There is no budget for recruitment. The application rate has declined. Support for our graduate students is not competitive. Don't forget our master's programs.
2. There was a task force that wrote a report about 5 years ago (the report was never circulated). Where is this report now?
3. That report called for about \$3 million/year for 4 years.
4. The program at Lubrecht currently has one assistant for 18 students in the program. The in-state/out-of-state differential is a real problem. [A large majority agreed.]
5. Fees are a real problem, too. It takes away from the student's stipend.
6. Students without support have to take jobs. This affects the completion rate.
7. Many students are on grants that will not cover tuition and fees. Even if they do, it is a problem keeping grant costs down when out-of-state tuition must be covered.
8. Infrastructure, library, data bases: These all require overhead to keep up to date. Don't forget existing programs that do not have "new money."

9. On-line admissions helps, but it needs to be streamlined (for instance, so students can apply to multiple programs with one applications).
10. The current Graduate School role has been mostly clerical. It needs to be able to deal with judgment. There is no evaluation of effectiveness of allocation of resources. We need to fix the system. The Graduate School needs a role overseeing the program.
11. Did you look at peer institutions? Who are we modeling? Directions? We use Carnegie Doctoral Programs – top 2 levels.]
12. Don't forget programs that have unfunded research, e.g. History vs Chemistry.
13. The ASP Committee is willing to come and talk to groups of faculty and students.
14. The history of graduate support is “Where do the grad students fit into teaching?” We need to increase the allocation to include Research Assistants (and not just for those who are grant funded).
15. We also have to consider the faculty loads when we consider support for graduate programs.
16. We must consider the balance between undergraduate and graduate programs.
17. The formula for allocating TAs was established in 1979 and has never been changed. [Follow-up here: There is a new document.]
18. Does Graduate Council not look at these data? [Grad Council does look at data, but with the change in administrative structure it has been slowed.] The strategic plan should work from an analysis of the needs of the undergraduate program for Teaching Assistants.
19. Frame the need for more TAs in the new Retention Plan.
20. Be mindful that undergraduate students prefer faculty (to TAs) as teachers.
21. Faculty need more credit for teaching undergraduates as well. A research lab educates both graduate and undergraduate students.
22. How do we account for the apprenticeship model of teaching?
23. Here is a good example of the problem: In the new science building we had to designate areas as teaching vs research.
24. Ask graduate student representatives from departments to get feedback from their peers. Do they have weekly meetings?

25. The Counseling Program has a course on “How to be a Professor” but it comes out of our hide. This kind of thing should have Graduate School involvement.
 26. We need more cross-fertilization in programs to support low-enrollment programs.
 27. Support a quality of experience: How to get a job, How to write grants, etc.
 28. When you recruit for undergraduate teaching only, you do not build a community working on the same problem.
 29. Some of the graduate student fees should go to the Graduate School (now it all goes into the general fund).
 30. We have been talking about a campus-based model. Can we look at distance learning as a component?
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Notes from Sarah Cullison

- Recruitment of grad students
 - no budget/materials to recruit students-either to bring to UM or to send profs to mtgs to recruit
 - the grad student application rate is dropping
 - our TA/RA funding is not competitive
 - non-TA/RA students pay out of state tuition; if students take only 6 credits to establish residency they fall behind the rest of their class for graduation rates
 - while we do get excellent students they have to get outside jobs to cover education costs-extends completion rates
 - students pay ~\$1300/semester in fees (this subtracts from the already low stipends), grants won't pay fees/tuition
 - NONE of the fees grad students pay actually go to the grad school
 - At least $\frac{3}{4}$ of those in attendance at meeting came to address these issues
- Masters students contribution/importance is often overlooked
- Grad Ed report
 - did the committee review the outside survey of grad ed that was completed several years ago?
 - concluded UM needed \$3 million/year for 4 years to bring program up to speed
 - report never circulated to campus
- Infrastructure
 - programs grow without having infrastructure in place
 - existing programs need to be reviewed for infrastructure, not just new programs
- Online admissions

-allow students to apply to all programs online; right now only some programs have this feature, when students apply to multiple programs not all departments have equal access to students docs (ie. transcript, recommendations)

- Grad administration
 - UM has a structural problem with the grad administration
 - administration traditionally only did admissions, should now be more of a guiding factor for grad program
 - should have more of a say on programmatic issues, ie. resource allocation, program review, allocation of TA's
 - possible grad school representative for students oral exams; student committee chairs from outside the student's dept.
 - smart hiring of professors, don't just hire based on a class that needs to be taught one semester (need strategic plan for hiring)
- Benchmarking
 - how are we benchmarking? Were peer institutions used for grad school SWOT?
 - committee said we benchmarked more to similar undergrad institutions
- Campus representation by ASP committee
 - need grad student input from depts. that are not from the hard sciences
 - committee could contact GSA student reps to get more students involved
 - committee talked to GSA president about a visit to a GSA officers mtg.
- Optimal enrollment
 - right now TA's mostly teach large, lower level undergrad classes; if we move to a primary research institution and reduce undergrad population grad students will have to be supported more on RA's than TA's (this will be hard for non-science depts.)
- Work load
 - can't have professors working at high research levels as well as full teaching loads
- TA's
 - need new documentation/structure for TA allocation
 - grad school is currently working on this
 - committee could put a fiscal analysis of undergrads/grads into strategic plan to assess how much money we will need
 - UM's limits on the number of TA's limits the size of undergrad classes (ie. more TA's could lead to a more productive undergrad program and more professor time for research)
 - others argue that undergrads don't prefer schools where most classes are taught by TA's instead of professors
- Time spent with grad students

- professors don't get teaching credit for research time spent with grad students; this is really an educational endeavor as well as research
- example: in new interdisciplinary bldg. only formal classrooms could be designated as teaching areas
- we need to be mentoring grad students on topics beyond just research to prepare them for careers (ie. how to write grants, get a job etc...)
- formal classes for this would help, leads in to quality of the grad experience

- Cross-disciplinary
 - campus needs to put more emphasis on cross-disciplinary classes; right now they are very hard to hold, professors. don't get much credit from either dept. for them.
 - need more cross program seminars-need grad school support for this/more structure for these types of classes
- Access to grad education
 - distance learning; can we incorporate this into our program and not just compete with outside programs

Notes from Mark Medvetz

Graduate students & graduate programs

- Many speakers voiced concerns about how the lack of funding impacts grad students and programs
- Grad student: "Let's not be naive": poor support cannot compete with other universities
- Great students with no support = not a good grad experience: completion rates low due to lack of funding
- Faculty cannot utilize the grad student as a "resource": grad students as part of the intellectual activities of faculty
- Workload and excellence -- what's workable what's reasonable
- Grad office/departments needs more autonomy and influence in decision making
 - Rationale for assistantships – allocations
 - "System broken"
 - Representation from grad school: quality control of graduate process
- Lack of support from administration for the non-grant-funding disciplines
 - grad students "second" to grant-funding disciplines
- How to address UG if emphasis is to be Graduate program
 - What would happen to UG?
- No data?: graduate productivity; # of grad stipends and allocations
- Lack of TAs and impact on UG population and courses offered—teaching
- Justifications for more TAs/Assistantships
- More awareness of UG and grad faculty—
 - Research faculty should be acknowledged for contribution to educational process
 - Significant disconnect/administration
 - Apprenticeship model

- What does “competitive” (with other schools/programs) mean?

ASP & use other strategic plans/models?

- Yes -- Employed data & ...
- Feedback begins now open to focused meetings

Infrastructure

- Unfunded mandates -- should be money/support first
- & to maintain and support existing grad programs

Online

- Flexibility – all online factors: registration to instruction
 - Simultaneous application for multiple programs