

President Cabinet meeting on Apasp: 12/8/17

L. Scott Mills presentation on behalf of Scott Whittenburg

Based on some of the comments from the APASP reviews of the 18 evaluation units associated with the Office of Research and Creative scholarship plus the graduate school, I thought it would be useful to start with a metaphor of “the proof is in the pudding” in assessing this sector.

What I mean by that is that the performance of this sector is in some ways best seen by the performance of the university across all 3 missions of teaching, service and research. A thriving research program fosters a thriving graduate program, and vice versa. And together, a thriving research and graduate program enhances experiential learning for undergraduates that increases undergraduate recruitment and retention. These synergies also heighten the service contributions by faculty and students to the local community, the state of Montana, the country, and the planet.

When you think of this sector in that way, with the office of research and creative scholarship inextricably linked with the graduate school – which in turn nurtures the full scope of the university mission -- there’s a lot of excitement, impressive accomplishments, and cause for optimism.

So turning first to **Research/Creative Scholarship**, which I’ll refer to just as research to save some time. The proof in the pudding – big picture – is the performance of UM’s nationally and internationally-recognized faculty:

For example, depending on which metrics are used Res at UM has grown 50-60% in the past few years. Last year alone, for example, faculty submitted 716 research proposals.

The university is routinely ranked in the top 5% of the world universities in the quality of research our faculty produce; recently we were ranked in the top 200 out of 4,000 research institutions worldwide in terms of number, citations and quality of journal publications in a number of fields.

I won’t push the pudding metaphor too far, but will just say that The Office of Research and the Graduate School are already quite “lean” relative to similar operations at other research intensive graduate institutions.

Several integrations and efficiencies have already produced savings. A notable example includes the cross-training of staff in Office of Research and Sponsored Programs to include both pre- and post-award duties; below I’ll mention some other examples of ongoing efficiencies.

The growth in research has placed additional workload on Research Office and Graduate School units that support the research enterprise. I’ll mention 3 specific examples.

1st: the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs is handling with a fixed staff the growth in the number of new research proposals, and pre- and post-award

processing of new research awards. Augmented ORSP staff will be required to maintain the increasing generation of research proposals.

2nd: centralized management of budgets within the VPR office also has increased workload on a small number of staff in that office, and additional work has fallen on the research compliance units.

3rd: the Broader Impacts Group has been doing an outstanding job of helping to outreach the impact of the research and creative activities of UMs faculty and students, which very much serves as a pipeline for recruitment of top undergraduate students. The university continues to ask BIG to assume more duties that are currently funded by the general fund. While BIG is available to assist where asked, these additional duties will require additional revenue in some fashion. We try to find external funding wherever possible, but external sponsors are hard to find for some of the cross cutting efforts of BIG.

As I mentioned, the high quality of research/creative scholarship initiatives also attracts world-class graduate students, and provides transformative experiential learning opportunities that increase undergraduate enrollment and retention. This is something to be celebrated.

The Graduate School was ranked as a solid 2 in the APASP vote tallies.

If we again address the big picture 'proof in the pudding', Graduate enrollment increased this past Fall semester by 10% to 2,326.

This factoid of a thriving graduate school deserves elaboration:

The UM Graduate School is the largest in MT with more graduate students than all other MT schools combined. Including the law school the graduate school exceeded its expected budget contribution by \$365k for this fall semester.

This increase was a result of efforts by the graduate programs, increase in grant support for research assistants, and additional recruiting by the staff in the Graduate School.

The primary requirement to become a Carnegie R1 university is increasing our doctoral completers.

To accomplish this we need additional general fund support in the Graduate School for recruiting (both national and international), TA/GA lines (reduced in the last budget cut), and out of state tuition waivers.

Although none of the 17 evaluated units from the research and grad school sector were in the APASP category 1, several were highly ranked, and I'll briefly shine a light on two very different ones.

The Montana cooperative wildlife research unit had an average APASP score of 7.6. The cooperative part of the co-op unit is between the US Geological Survey (USGS) and other federal agencies, Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks, and the university of MT, which has housed the unit since 1950.

With 2 federally-paid scientists and one administrative assistant the unit over the past 67 years built trust with state and federal cooperators, mentored more than 250 MS and PhD students, hired hundreds of undergraduate students, obtained millions of dollars in external research support, published hundreds of papers in peer-reviewed journals, and taught approximately 100 graduate courses.

APASP reviewers recognized the strong linking with the UM2020 vision and the tremendous contribution with very limited general fund dollars.

The second example is AccelerateMT. The mission of this program is to help of MT businesses increase their success from the idea stage to global entrepreneurship and implementation.

APASP reviewers noted the strong alignment with UM2020 plan and accomplishments that include job placement rate of over 90% for the Code School, the startup acceleration fostered by the Blackstone Launchpad and MonTec, and the engagement of students, faculty, clients and businesses across MT and beyond.

Some ongoing efficiencies that have been initiated at AccelerateMT include centralizing services such as event planning, and creating a pool of student workers that can be deployed in various areas.

Next I'll address the Two units in the Res Office and Grad School sector that were ranked in category 3.

The Interdisciplinary Graduate Program, housed within the graduate school, fosters innovation by providing opportunities for students and faculty to explore the intersection of new fields of research and thinking.

It also provides a unique opportunity for students to develop research programs that integrate knowledge from different disciplines; this is especially culturally rewarding for Native American students, who make up 42% of the Interdisciplinary Studies graduate program.

Third, the IGP increases the number of doctoral completers, which is a key measure in advancing toward Carnegie R1 status.

Importantly, the IGP does all this at a very low cost: there are no dedicated faculty, and minimal additional time is required for the Graduate School staff to process applications. Therefore, the VPR recommendation is that the IGP program should be maintained intact.

Some modifications are however underway.

The Graduate School is establishing an MOU with Montana Tech to facilitate their doctoral students in Interdisciplinary Studies and we anticipate that will increase the number of doctoral completers.

The Graduate School is also developing a program of support for IGP students, including support for the dissertation writing process, to expedite their movement through the program.

Finally, the Graduate School will develop “themes” and “structures” for interdisciplinary degrees based on existing strengths of our faculty and areas of growth in research and student interest.

The second program in the Research Unit ranked in category 3 was the O’Connor Center for the Rocky Mountain West. The Center is primarily funded thru endowments in the Foundation. The VPR recommendation is to consider reducing general fund support of the Oconner center to the amount required by its gift agreements.

A third Program to mention is the UM Press, under the Graduate Program. The UM press was in cat2 w/ several votes in Cat3.

In the time since APASP Report submission, the UM Press has already made some notable changes, all related to increasing the visibility of the press in the new media landscape.

Some of these include an online purchasing mechanism integrated into the campus website through a partnership with Fact and Fiction, and launching a Blog that focuses on UM Press books, as well as cultural issues relevant to Missoula and Western Montana.

This blog is the beginning of a pivot of the UM Press toward a “knowledge-dissemination model” capitalizing on new media modes, and thus away from a narrow focus on proprietary book publication. In this model, the Press would focus on developing the intellectual and creative “brand” of the University through podcasts, videos, interviews and multi-media editions while maintaining the focus on the quality of thinking, research, and creative output that distinguishes the University of Montana. The VPR recommends that support for the UM Press be maintained.

In short, although we in the Office of Research and Creative Scholarship and the Graduate School recognize challenges ahead, we are excited about where we are and optimistic about the future.