SNAPSHOT

CAWG
of
Student Experiences

The Strategic Plan and Graduate Education: Comparing Campus Objectives and Student Perceptions

Campus Assessment Working Group (CAWG)
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Transforming Maryland: Higher Expectations

- New 10-year strategic plan released in 2008
- Contains numerous initiatives involving graduate education
- Need for baseline data on student perceptions of their doctoral experience to assist implementation efforts

Doctoral Student Survey

- Online survey conducted in S’09
- Administered to all doctoral students
- Focused on graduate student educational experiences and supports
- 1,377 of 4,423 doctoral students responded for a 31% response rate
Comparing Campus Objectives and Student Perceptions

Admissions Fit
Advising and Mentoring
Professional Development
Degree Completion

Admissions Fit

Funding and Finances
Career Aspirations
## Funding and Finances

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Strategic Plan’s Vision for Graduate Education says PhD students will normally:</th>
<th>Graduate students reported the following experiences on the Doctoral Student Survey:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Be fully funded for their term of study.</td>
<td>• 73% relied on an assistantship, a UM scholarship or fellowship, and/or an external scholarship or fellowship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be provided with outstanding financial support.</td>
<td>• 54% (also) relied on loans, savings, and/or family support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate with little or no debt.</td>
<td>• 26% (also) relied on non-assistantship employment on or off campus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59% anticipated they would complete their degree with no graduate educational debt.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Career Aspirations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Strategic Plan’s Vision for Graduate Education:</th>
<th>Graduate students reported on the Doctoral Student Survey:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aims to prepare graduates for positions at prestigious educational institutions and responsible research positions in government, industry, and non-profit organizations.</td>
<td>• 40% want a tenure-track faculty position at a doctoral degree granting institution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 30% want a non-tenure track research-oriented position.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 16% want a tenure-track faculty position at a non-doctoral degree granting institution or a non-tenure track faculty/instructional position.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 14% want an applied practice or higher education position.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Mentoring and Advising

“Doctoral students will receive personal mentoring and rigorous training by faculty.”

Reported Program Experiences

• General Advising
  Advising regarding course selection, advising regarding qualifying exams, advising regarding other program requirements, etc.

• Faculty Engagement
  Accessibility of faculty, sufficient and timely feedback, encouragement of student-faculty collaboration, etc.

• Dissertation Advising
  Advising in developing a thesis topic/proposal, supervision of dissertation, appropriate response to requests for feedback, etc.
Mentoring and Advising

- General Advising: 3.28
- Faculty Engagement: 3.64
- Dissertation Advising: 3.75

Publication Support for Candidates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dissertation advisors in department offer the following:</th>
<th>% Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advice about suitable publication outlets</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help in preparing work for publication submission</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help understanding and responding to comments from publication reviewers</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact editors to encourage consideration of student’s work</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Professional Development

“PhD students will normally have completed substantial published scholarly work, or other creative activities as appropriate, at the time they graduate.”

Professional Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Strategic Plan’s Vision for Graduate Education sets expectations for students to:</th>
<th>Graduate students reported on the Doctoral Student Survey that:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Produce original work through research, scholarship, creative arts, or performance. Give professional presentations at the national/international level. Have knowledge of how to win grants.</td>
<td>• <strong>Roughly half had</strong>: Presented an oral/poster session at a conference; presented an oral/poster session at a UM event; worked with a faculty member on a research team; submitted a research article for publication • <strong>Roughly a quarter had</strong>: Applied for/received a grant from a UM department; applied for/received a grant externally; published an essay, creative work, or book review</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discipline Differences

Dissertation-stage respondents who report that they have done the following since enrolling in their doctoral program:

- Submitted a research article for publication: 52% (Non-STEM), 70% (STEM)
- Worked with a faculty member on a research team: 38% (Non-STEM), 61% (STEM)
- Applied for and/or received a grant on your own through a UM-specific academic department: 41% (Non-STEM), 26% (STEM)
- Published an essay, creative work, or book review: 36% (Non-STEM), 22% (STEM)

Degree Completion

“Doctoral students will normally complete the degree in 4-6 years.”

89% of respondents believed they would at the time they entered their program.
## Post-Survey Progress of Dissertation-Stage Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Graduated</td>
<td>Earned degree by S’10 regardless of time to complete it</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On Target</td>
<td>Enrolled in S’10 and within expected number of semesters</td>
<td>379</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Off Target</td>
<td>Enrolled in S’10 and beyond expected number of semesters</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Registered</td>
<td>Not enrolled in S’10 and had not graduated</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Obstacles and Assistance

**As of the time of the survey, the Off Target and Not Registered dissertation-stage students...**

- Relied more on non-assistantship employment for primary funding.
- Relied less on assistantships, fellowships, and/or scholarships for primary funding.
- Reported at a higher rate that the following are an obstacle: Their advisor, their academic department, family obligations other than childcare, and lack of workspace.

**As of the time of the survey, the On Target and Graduated dissertation-stage students...**

- Relied more on assistantships, fellowships, and/or scholarships for primary funding.
- Relied less on non-assistantship employment for primary funding.
- Reported at a lower rate that the following are an obstacle: Their advisor, their academic department, family obligations other than childcare, and lack of workspace.
Dissertation-Stage Experiences Matter

Students’ reports of their program experiences related to their satisfaction with the educational experience, their quality ratings, and/or degree completion.

Questions to Consider

• Given the Strategic Plan’s focus on tenure-track faculty positions or other research positions, do you think these baseline career goal findings have implications for the University’s doctoral programs?
• What specific faculty engagement experiences do you think students find most helpful? Who provides this support?
• What do you think is behind student reports of their advisors and/or departments as obstacles?
CAWG SNAPSHOTs of student experiences and related IRPA report are available at:

www.umd.edu/cawg