

Graduate Education at The Ohio State University: Thoughts on the Past and Some Ideas for the Future





**Based on Presentations Given to The Council on
Research and Graduate Studies and a Meeting
of the Graduate Studies Committee Chairs**

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Please Note

The opinions expressed in this presentation represent my views, not an official view of the administration of the University.



Premises of this Presentation

1. Graduate education is vital to The Ohio State University's mission, goals, and reputation, and to society at large.



Premises of this Presentation

2. Because graduate education is so important, we need to find ways to make it flourish.



Premises of this Presentation

3. To make graduate education flourish, we need the correct information to make decisions, we need to have the right people be part of the conversation, and we have to set the correct goals.



Premises of this Presentation

4. The “correct information” may include but goes far beyond the type of data suggested in the interim report of the “Freeman” Committee. This committee was appointed by the Provost, in part to develop performance metrics for doctoral programs by which major decisions, such as allocation of budget and elimination of programs, could be made.



Premises of this Presentation

5. The right people to be part of the conversation include faculty, students, and support staff. The Council on Research and Graduate Studies, the Graduate Studies Committee Chairs, PIs who support graduate students on grants, Department Chairs, Deans, the Council of Graduate Students, and the Graduate School should all play key roles.



Premises of this Presentation

6. The goal should be to offer the highest quality graduate education.



Premises of this Presentation

7. To offer the highest quality graduate education, we need to:
 - Facilitate the work of the faculty
 - Ensure a high quality of life for our graduate students.



National and International Context for Graduate Education

- While undergraduate education at OSU exists in a largely state-driven environment, graduate education is set in the national and international arenas
- Competition for the best graduate students is national and international
- Competition for federal and other funding exists in national and international arena and is not limited to state resources
- Strategies for graduate education need to take these factors into account



Graduate Education at Ohio State

The following slides show the scope and magnitude of graduate education at Ohio State.



Graduate Programs at Ohio State

100 doctoral programs

120 master's programs

All master's degrees and all PhDs at Ohio State are housed in the Graduate School.

Compared with other major state universities, the number of doctoral programs we have is not large. Some other institutions have as many as double the number. We may, in fact, need additional programs to keep up with the fast-growing fields of knowledge, particularly in science and technology. So, rather than assuming that we should eliminate some programs, a better question might be to ask whether we are configured correctly to meet the demands of new areas of knowledge.

Graduate students enrolled at Ohio State (Columbus)

	<u>AU 03</u>	<u>AU 04</u>
15th day enrollment	9931	10,210
New to OSU	1573	1567
International	2774	2761
African American*	522	567
Hispanic	171	191

*OSU is in the top 3 or 4 among non-minority institutions awarding doctorates to African-Americans. The gains in African-American and Hispanic numbers over the past two years are a significant achievement, particularly considering the downward national trend.

Graduate students constitute 20% of OSU's student population.



Full-time enrollment status

Master's level ~71%

Doctoral level ~90%

Despite the high percentages of full-time students, less than half of Ohio State's graduate students are funded on a University GA appointment or fellowship.

Data Source: G-QUE student survey.



Number of Degrees Awarded Annually

Data based on average of past two years.

2577

Masters awarded

563

Doctorates awarded*

* Approximately 90% of OSU's doctoral students complete their degrees within 5 years of candidacy.



Graduate Student Funding

- 10,000+ graduate students on Columbus campus
 - 2200 GTAs [down from ~3000 two years ago]
 - 2000 GRAs
 - 550 GAAs
 - 700 Fellows and Trainees (all sources of funding, including external; tuition and fees generally provided by the Graduate School)
 - 5180 students not funded through above-type appointments*
- * To attract the best students to our programs & encourage timely degree completion, we need to find more ways to fund students, including tuition-paying GA positions. Budget Restructuring and the recent tuition increases have created great incentives to appoint students as Lecturers, rather than GTAs, and Postdocs instead of GRAs.



State Subsidy for Graduate Students

Graduate students ~**20%** OSU students

Graduate subsidy ~**40%** OSU state subsidy

Are funds derived from graduate subsidy being used to support graduate education as fully as possible?



Graduate Education is Vital to Ohio State's Core Mission

- Our Research /Doctoral Intensive national classification is based on numbers of doctorates awarded plus our funded research volume
- Our success in offering good undergraduate education is highly dependent on our ability to recruit top graduate students as GTAs.
- Our research productivity is tied with the research of our graduate students as GRAs and in the theses and dissertations they produce.
- Most importantly, graduate students are the future leaders of the many fields of study we offer and are vital to the University and to the future of Ohio, the nation, and the world.



In other words . . .

Graduate education is something we should foster, care about, and treat accordingly.



Yet despite this obvious fact . . .

None of the major initiatives undertaken by the University in the past five or six years has taken graduate education into account.



Recent Major Initiatives at OSU

- Academic Plan
- Diversity Plan
- Budget Restructuring
- President's Annual Leadership Agendas*

* This past summer (2004), the wording of a section pertaining to students in the President's Leadership Agenda was expanded slightly to incorporate graduate students. Otherwise, graduate education is virtually absent from or was not taken into account in the design of these initiatives. The effect has not been neutral--it has been highly damaging to graduate education, particularly Budget Restructuring.



The G-QUE*

- The Graduate School and the Council of Graduate Students together undertook the research and publication of the G-QUE* report to assess the quality of the graduate student experience at Ohio State and create a plan for graduate education to flourish.
- One of the key recommendations of the G-QUE report was to “Link objectives for graduate education to Ohio State’s larger institutional goals.”

The purpose of this recommendation was to prod the administration into including graduate education in its strategic planning. But nothing (except the few words added to the Leadership Agenda last summer) has been done to recognize graduate education as central to the core of the University’s activities and to work to make it flourish.

*Graduate Quality of University Experience



Too little, too late?

The addition of a few words to the Leadership Agenda last summer is too little, too late—unless the University takes action.



Beck Committee

- To address the change of leadership in the Graduate School caused by my resignation, the Provost has established a committee (the “Beck” Committee) to examine the organizational structure and other aspects of the Graduate School.
- I believe that this is an excellent committee, that its charge is appropriate, and that the committee will do a thorough and fair job of executing the charge.



However, I suggest that

- Looking at the Graduate School will not, in fact, solve the FUNDAMENTAL problems Ohio State is facing, many of which have been a direct result of recent internal administrative decisions that have been inhospitable to graduate education.
- To make graduate education thrive, these fundamental problems must be addressed. Simply reorganizing offices and reporting lines sidesteps the real issues.



In my view. . .

The key initiatives of the University must be re-designed to situate graduate education within the central academic core of OSU. Further, the problems that have been created by the lack of attention to graduate education in these very important initiatives must be addressed.

These issues must be studied and recommendations made in a rational, holistic manner, with representation from faculty, students, and the other constituents of graduate education listed earlier.



Further. . .

The current plan to conduct a review of doctoral programs based on what I consider to be arbitrary data to make profound budget adjustments without any period during which programs are provided with an opportunity to improve will not solve the problems—and, indeed, may create more.



The Program Review Plan . . .

- Does not address the full range of issues that arise from the previous lack of attention and that are demanded by the national and international environment. **We should ask the right questions and not have pre-selected remedies for perceived problems.** The “charge” to the Freeman Committee did not include all important issues facing the graduate education community at Ohio State. The charge provided the answer (program review as the budget tool), even before the right questions were asked.
- Does not include the right parties at the table. **A good process should include those who will be affected by change, who know what obstacles need to be overcome, and who will have to implement change.**



The Program Review Plan

Would the plan to use review of doctoral programs to eliminate some, put others on notice, and redirect funds help us succeed in accomplishing something valuable?

If so, are the data being targeted the right information to make such important decisions?

Let's look at the data first.



Understanding Data

- Collecting data and measuring something are not the same
- We can tabulate the height and weight of all incoming students, but does this tell us anything?
- Are admissions data and numerical counting of faculty publications indicative of something? If so, what?



Quantitative Measurements*

Professor David Woods of the College of Engineering offers the following terminology to better understand a variety of issues relating to the interpretation of data.

1. TABULATIONS
2. INDICATORS
3. MEASUREMENTS

* I am grateful to Professor Woods for sharing his ideas and for his helpful insights. All errors, of course, are my own.



Quantitative Measurements

1. TABULATIONS

Simple summaries, averages, tabulations.

Example:

The average GRE scores of students entering Program X is Y.

This is the type of information that is being collected and tested as part of the charge to the Freeman Committee.



Quantitative Measurements*

2. INDICATORS

Must relate to something else that is provable.

Example:

Students who have GRE scores of Y when they enter graduate school will complete their degrees in a more timely manner than will others.

The information being collected and tested as part of the charge to the Freeman Committee. is not specifically tied to something provable.



Quantitative Measurements*

3. MEASUREMENTS

Need to exist within a complete model. The model is the precursor to the measurement.

Example:

The GRE test and scores need to be contextualized within a model. A model might propose that we want our students to be good problem-solvers. However, the GRE examination emphasizes analytical skills rather than the ability to synthesize and integrate information. Some capacities, such as visual thinking, are not tested at all by the GRE and yet might be important to a student's problem-solving abilities. Further, if GRE scores of the incoming class are aggregated to be able to evaluate program quality, we cannot determine the problem-solving skills of the individual students that are important to the model.



Tabulation versus Measurement

I suggest that we are not, in fact, measuring, but, rather, tabulating, without knowing what these tabulations might mean.



Even if we could truly measure . . .

Reallocation of funding based on program review is too high-stakes (and almost impossible in the practical sense to implement). We need a more multi-pronged approach.



Disadvantages of Program Review as a High-Stakes Budget Tool

- Elimination of programs is a complicated, protracted, public, and divisive process
- Lowers morale
- Puts programs on defensive, without necessarily helping them get better
- Could create a perpetual downward spiral for some programs
- Could create a two-tier system of programs (master's only and those with doctorates), thus greatly disadvantaging some programs in terms of their teaching and research
- Could impair our ability to attract top students and faculty to our campus



Other Concerns About Program Review as a Budget Tool

1. The actual amount of funds that will be freed up by program elimination or other reductions in programs is small, and not worth the divisiveness, fear, uncertainty, and lack of clarity that will likely result from the process as it has been laid out.
2. We need to find ways to leverage the funds we receive from the state, not simply rearrange them. In cases where we do rearrange the funds, it should not be based simply on past performance but should be used as an incentive for future performance (for example, the University of Michigan model of term-limit “block grants”).”
3. Competitive opportunities (like PEGS, Selective Investment, Academic Enrichment, the Fellowship Programs, and so on) are a way of enabling all to have a fair chance to succeed, stimulates quality, and allows money to follow quality in a nimble fashion.



Lowering morale

Of all of these disadvantages and concerns, lowering morale is, to me, the most serious. Vitality, creativity, and excellence in anything and everything we do at the university can only be accomplished when people know that their needs are understood and being addressed, and when they are valued for their good work.

Money is only one form of currency. The opportunity to be creative and to excel is a major incentive for faculty and others in the University community!



Aligning Quality & Funding

Are there other ways of aligning quality and funding (the Provost's stated objective for the Freeman Committee's work) besides using program review as a high-stakes budget tool?



Yes, and . . .

Some of these solutions directly address the problems and obstacles that have been created by University initiatives (particularly Budget Restructuring) that have ignored the competitive national and international context of graduate education.



Urgent problems

What are some of the problems that we need to address and that are being neglected while the University focuses on high-stakes program review?

1. Fiscal
2. Academic
3. Morale and Creativity



Fiscal # 1: 35% increase in graduate tuition & fees over past 3 years

- PIs supporting students on grants can't support the same numbers of students
- Most colleges are not returning a portion of the tuition and fees to the PIs who are paying them
- Difficulty recruiting top-quality new students if can't fund them
- Pressure to appoint lecturers instead of GTAs and Postdoctoral Fellows instead of GRAs, thus possibly decreasing graduate student support
- Not a single penny of the 35% increase has been targeted to improve graduate education (including graduate-student support, programming, etc.)



Fiscal #2: OSU's new budget system

Ohio State's new budget system is not sensitive to graduate education needs and has created

- Disincentives for 4th quarter fee authorizations for GAs
- Tendency to see students as generators of revenue and units of cost
- Disincentives for interdisciplinary work
- Disincentives for students to take minors, or other courses outside of their home program
- Problems for students who are over 260 credits (not all are “abusers” of the system).
- Fiscal problems for new programs or programs that are growing
- Overpays for terminal master's education to the detriment of doctoral (the funds that would derive from this redirection of funds would exceed the funds obtained from program elimination many times over)

Fiscal #3:

Board of Regents' doctoral cap

In 1998, the Ohio Board of Regents' imposed a funding cap on doctoral enrollments based on spring 1998 enrollment figures. The University thus receives a fixed pot of funding for doctoral education.

When Budget Restructuring was implemented, funds were allocated according to past enrollment trends, rather than to foster quality.

This problem was avoidable, and needs to be addressed in a holistic manner.



Fiscal #4: Interdisciplinary work

Working across the disciplinary boundaries has never been easy at Ohio State. The new budget system creates more obstacles than ever due to different practices among colleges, and makes it increasingly difficult for faculty to put together large interdisciplinary grant proposals.



These problems were avoidable

These problems were totally predictable years ago and could have been addressed by good planning and serious attention.

The Graduate School has documents dating back to 1999 supplying ideas, text, and suggestions for the Academic Plan, the Budget System, and other initiatives, that were ignored or bypassed.

The 35% increase in graduate tuition was not foreseen but the decision was made without consultation with the programs, PIs, and students that affected by it. Further, there was no transition plan for PIs on fixed dollar grants.



Problem 2: Academic

- Program review with high stakes creates an environment of **cautiousness**. Cautiousness is not good for improving quality and forging new frontiers. People will “perform to the test”, and will, for example, seek to bring in students who have higher GPAs because they will help in the review process, not because the students are necessarily better or more creative.
- A very large-scale high stakes program review process creates an environment of **uncertainty**, and makes it difficult for programs to move ahead in terms of curriculum, recruiting, and so on. This can actually cause program deterioration rather than improvement.
- Quantitative measures often ignore the many other factors that affect program quality, such as mentoring relationships, professional development opportunities for students, the quality of supervision of dissertations and theses, the connections faculty have with other institutions, etc.
- High stakes program review is likely to have an adverse effect on diversity and taking a risk on students who do not have the quantitative profile.



Problem 3:

Vitality, Creativity, and Morale

- The specter of high stakes program review forces conformity to a set of prescribed standards, which may be at odds with the creative needs of the program, the faculty, the students, and even the goals of the institution.
- Lowered vitality, creativity, and morale of faculty and graduate students can have an adverse effect on the undergraduate teaching environment
- Faculty have to work harder to achieve the same or less due to obstacles (higher tuition for students they are supporting; administrative hurdles) and feel that they have less control over their own lives than is optimal for them to flourish



Should we have “Program Review”?

Yes.



BUT ...

- **HEALTHY PROGRAM REVIEW** is used to help plan for the future and stimulate improvement.

Program review should be like taking a patient's temperature; it tells you about the current condition of the patient, but does not tell the cause of the condition. The causes, not the symptoms, must be determined and addressed.

- **UNHEALTHY PROGRAM REVIEW** is used to pass judgment on programs and impose sanctions without 1) giving programs advance warning about the criteria and giving them a chance to improve, and 2) taking into account the reasons behind the program's current situation.



Healthy Program Review

Program review can and should be a regular, ongoing part of the oversight of graduate education. We want to ensure that our students are getting the most up-to-date, high quality program possible and we need to find where we are facing obstacles.

Termination of programs may be an outcome of program review, but elimination of programs should not be a goal.

The Graduate School is and has consistently been an advocate of program review and has asked the two most recent provosts to transfer principal responsibility for graduate program review from one of the other Vice Provosts to the Graduate School.



In addition, consider this . . .

- It would be impossible to review all 100 of OSU's doctoral programs simultaneously
- Even at a very ambitious rate of, say, 20 programs per year, it would take 5 years to complete the review
- Programs that would be reviewed later have an unfair advantage over programs that would be reviewed first as they could modify their practices to show “better” results; at the same time, programs reviewed earlier might improve so that by the time all 100 programs had been reviewed, the earlier results might have changed, making any final decisions about their funding or viability outdated.



Therefore . . .

- Why try to reallocate permanent budget in this manner?
- Wouldn't it be better to set a series of goals, which might be different for individual programs, and give programs a chance to make themselves better?
- Isn't this only fair, especially considering the fact that there has been no advance warning to programs (and, indeed, the new budget system has only made things harder for them)?



If I had been asked to help shape the agenda for graduate education, I would have said:

- What can we do to help make graduate education flourish?
- Or, to put it another way, how can we give graduate education a **TAILWIND** instead of a **HEADWIND**?



What do I recommend?

- Address organizational issues
- Address fiscal issues

I believe that if these are addressed, the morale and creativity problems will be solved and the quality of our programs will improve.



Address organizational issues

- Encourage and support the work of the Beck Committee
- Ensure an open and responsive process for selection of next Graduate School dean, including the possibility of a national search
- Revise the university agendas (Diversity Plan, Academic Plan, Budget system) to foster graduate education
- Reframe the charge and membership of the Freeman Committee to look at the range of issues that need urgent attention



Address fiscal issues

- Remove obstacles that are making it increasingly difficult to operate in the national and international environment
- Get the tuition problem under control, including a planning process that includes relevant parties and a moratorium on new increases
- Phase-in (grandfather) any future tuition increases
- Create incentives and rewards for PIs and programs to appoint GAs and Fellows, including possible internal discounts.
- Restore or create incentives and rewards for quality through competitive programs (centralized fellowships, PEGS-like program, etc.)
- Use the 35% increase in graduate tuition to enhance graduate education including return to programs and PIs, not to underwrite other areas of need in the University



Address fiscal issues, cont.

- Keep working to improve graduate student quality of life (including better funding, benefits, professional development, etc.)
- Revise the funding formula so that terminal master's degrees are not funded at the doctoral level
- Redirect some of the funds derived from student application fees to the programs, where much of the work of admissions is actually done.
- Target new fellowships in Ohio State's fund-raising priorities so that we can support more students (only 2.5-3.0% of OSU's incoming students are on Graduate School-funded fellowships). The number and percentage of students we support on fellowships is so small that it is essentially "pencil dust" in the greater scheme of student support at Ohio State.
- Use state funds to leverage other funds (e.g., to use as institutional match in seeking external funds)
- Use an open consultative process to solve fiscal problems.



Conclusions

- Graduate education must be part of the main agenda of Ohio State and its strategies for academic greatness
- Current planning regarding graduate education, including the Beck and Freeman Committees, can play an important role
- However, the work of these committees should not deflect us from the most urgent problems we face, particularly the need to remove the fundamental impediments facing graduate education at Ohio State

The Beginning

