

Graduate Studies Committee Report – February 2022

The Graduate Studies Committee met on Friday, February 4, 2022.

The Committee discussed the recent Senate vote to request the Provost to halt the implementation of APSA/IPAD, and the subsequent request by the Senate Program Review Committee for feedback regarding APSA/IPAD. The Committee discussed several issues and this was centralized in the attached note that has been forwarded to the Program Review Committee.

The Committee discussed briefly the recommendations it would like to forward to the Grad Studies/Admissions Ad Hoc Committee for improving Graduate education. This will be further worked on this semester.

Ruth Tsuria arranged for a presentation by Brittany Scoles, Director of CASE and Graduate Administration in the College of Communications and the Arts on recruitment tactics she and the College are using. For those unable to attend, this presentation was recorded and is available at:

https://studentshu-my.sharepoint.com/:v/g/personal/corrigma_shu_edu/EVikOfUXm4FPu6XQ1h9K9h4Bq6V8aiqTDK_qs6mq2XBUtw

Respectfully Submitted,

Matt Corrigan, GSC Chair

Graduate Studies Committee - APSA/IPAD Concerns

The GSC identified several specific problems with the currently proposed evaluation criteria as operationalized, but also with the appropriateness of some criteria in the analysis. We'll list these concerns by criteria:

Financial/Enrollments (these are interdependent criteria, likely measuring essentially the same characteristic of revenue production)

Appropriateness of Criteria: It has been the experience of faculty that through administrative decisions over the past decade or more, resources have been directed into select areas, while being withheld in others. Despite faculty requests resulting from our current program review method, through this Committee as they relate to Graduate programs, and directly from Programs and Departments to Deans, lack of recruitment and Admission resources have negatively impacted enrollments, and therefore Financials, for many programs. For example, the University has decided to heavily recruit students interested STEM and Health Professions over the last decade, to the detriment of liberal arts majors. Consequently, Social Science and Humanities Departments have struggled to maintain their enrollments, while also reducing the number of students moving on to related Graduate programs at the University. Similarly, the University invests in fulltime professional recruiters for several Graduate Schools/Programs (Law, Business), while choosing not to invest in recruiting resources for others (Arts and Sciences, Diplomacy). The apparently intended results of these resource decisions are that the better resourced Programs are thriving, while the under-resourced are struggling. Thus, it is hard to consider these two criteria as measures of Program success/potential, when they appear to simply be measures of resource allocation.

Specific Concerns: There are many issues identified with the Financial measure, beginning with its opaqueness, it is unclear how this measure is derived. Some specific critiques include incorrect faculty counts and general disagreement with amounts represented. Though a significant concern, specifically related to graduate programs, is how the remission for graduate assistants is allocated. A conversation regarding the choice to consider this item as negative tuition revenue, instead of as a positive salary expense attributed to the "hiring" unit would be welcomed. But short of that, the value generated by the work of the GA ought to be credited to the program that is absorbing the expense. For example, every course taught by a TA, or administrative work done by a GA or RA, creates value for the University. Most easily described, each course taught by a TA is a course that does not require paying an adjunct to teach. That course, at a very bare minimum (because the tuition revenue created by teaching a class far exceeds the faculty cost to teach that course), ought to have the adjunct savings offsetting the TAs tuition expense. This value created by the GA seems to be either missing from this financial analysis or is misplaced (it seems that the value created by GAs is applied to the "hiring" unit – in the TA example, it is applied to the UG Credit Hours Generated number, but the Grad program is paying for the TAs tuition).

The Graduate Studies Committee requests that, if these criteria can even be used to justify the maintenance of academic programs at all, they be wholly revised and done so with faculty input, in an open manner.

Mission

Appropriateness of Criteria: While it is hard to conceive of an academic program that does not support the mission of a university, it is even more difficult to think of one that has lost its ability to support the academic mission. As a Program is proposed and vetted through its college, a part of the vetting is determining if the overall mission is furthered by the Program. The role of the College/School will be discussed further below.

Specific Concerns: The Mission criteria seems to be subjective/qualitative but is presented as an objective/quantitative measure.

Retention and Graduation

Appropriateness of Criteria: These criteria seem appropriate, though could they be combined into one?

Specific Concerns: Both criteria seem to have considerable operational difficulties on the Graduate level and ought to be referred back to each program being measured to more accurately define expected time to graduation and the like.

Scholarship

Appropriateness of Criteria: There are considerable differences in expectations across disciplines and Colleges/Schools for scholarship. The consensus among the Graduate Studies Committee is that attempting to find one quantifiable measure that sufficiently captures this broad expanse is not feasible and that each Program must define expectations for itself.

Specific Concerns: The Scholarship criteria seems to have been operationalized to count faculty that do not have scholarship requirement as part of their job description, so a program that has 4 T/TT faculty and 2 non-TT faculty cannot meet the requirement of 75% active scholars.

General Concerns

The faculty as a whole has not been allowed to question or suggest any modifications to these criteria that might make them more relevant.

Transparency for the entire process from identification of programs to how data is collected is lacking.

Procedures for appeal do not exist (concerns raised about accuracy of the information with no set procedures for appeal).

No process in place for how to forward corrections of errors in financial calculations.

No process for restoration of programs, e.g., removal of suspended admissions, with time frames.

How are factors, such as the demographic cliff, increased competition from opening of similar programs in our region, and cost of a SHU education weighted when programs have less accepted students in a given year?

What additional resources are provided to support program growth (for all)?

Role of Colleges

The APSA/IPAD review process as established has the effect of isolating a program from its College. As this is a process developed by, and answerable to, the Provost's Office, despite having the College Dean as intermediary, as it currently exists in most Colleges, there is no role for the College as a whole to play in this process. Whereas all new programs must be vetted by the College, this potential elimination of a program does not allow for input from the College. While this is an issue to be handled within each College, the extremely rushed development and implementation of the new APSA/IPAD program review process did not allow time for such oversight measures to be put into place. Furthermore, the push to eliminate programs is founded on the premise of financial distress, with no justification for why the University cannot start new programs while keeping those that we have. Without knowledge of the full financial health and spending priorities of the University we cannot appropriately decide that an academic program is too costly. Too costly as opposed to what, what other costs could be cut instead? We are being asked to make ill informed, potentially unethical, decisions.

The Graduate Studies Committee requests that the APSA/IPAD program review process not move forward until all appropriate policies and procedures are developed, including those policies necessary to support this change in every College/School.