

Doctoral Program Improvement Planning Survey Report

Background

The Doctoral Program Improvement Plan (DPIP) became formalized as an assessment effort in FY11-12 as a result of a report entitled “The State of Doctoral Education at UF” authored by the Doctoral Education Committee. The goal of the DPIP process is to give departments the opportunity to “re-examine their doctoral programs in light of the [Doctoral Education] committee’s report discussing the characteristics of excellent doctoral programs.” Departments were issued a [proposed process and form](#) for proceeding through the DPIP review in August 2011. The deadline for report submission was specified as November 23, 2011.

In an effort to provide further feedback on ways to improve the DPIP process, the Academic Policy Council (APC) conducted a survey in spring 2012 directed college deans to explore learning and insights gained from the first DPIP planning and review cycle. Deans or assigned proxies were asked to respond to five open-ended questions regarding the review process:

- 1) What was the composition of your college’s doctoral program improvement plan review committee and what procedure was followed in conducting the review?
- 2) What, if any, best practices or plans have you identified from the doctoral program improvement plans process?
- 3) What questions should be included as part of future reviews that were not addressed in the criteria requested this year?
- 4) What recommendations would you make for future doctoral program improvement plan review processes?
- 5) What do you hope the doctoral program improvement plan review will accomplish or reveal?

Results

Participating Colleges

The survey was delivered to 14 UF deans and program directors. Four declined participation because the unit was not classified as a formal academic unit or because did not have a doctoral program. The findings are based on the responses from seven colleges that completed and returned the survey.

- ✓ College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
- ✓ College of Pharmacy
- ✓ College of Engineering
- ✓ Warrington College of Business
- ✓ College of Education
- ✓ College of Journalism and Mass Communication
- ✓ College of Public Health and Health Professions

DPIP Survey Findings by Question Item

1. Committee Composition and Procedure

The composition of the review bodies and the means for identifying members to conduct the DPIP review varied by college.

- ✓ Three colleges relied on an appointed or elected college committee – the faculty council or the graduate studies committee, for example – to conduct the process because it already had equitable representation of all internal stakeholder groups (i.e., graduate coordinators for respective departments, faculty chairs, and associate deans). Working sub-groups or the committee at-large was responsible for the compilation of the final report.
- ✓ Two other colleges reported working with department chairs or directors to identify and appoint members of the faculty to serve on the DPIP committee. Of these, one college specified striving to select “a representative sample of ranks, diversity, and experience with graduate programs.” The representatives then worked together with an associate dean or committee chair to complete the DPIP review.
- ✓ One college appointed only tenured faculty and administrators to serve on its committee, but made no specification as to how those individuals were appointed. Then, chairs were asked to identify “a writing team” from respective PhD areas, which would report to the Review Committee at checkpoints throughout the DPIP review process. Drafts of the DPIP were reviewed by at least two committee members and comments integrated by the DPIP committee.
- ✓ One college applied a process whereby the associate dean of graduate studies completed the review in draft in full and then circulated the draft first to other college governance committees. In this case, the Graduate Committee and College Faculty Senate, respectively, had further input to the draft before it was presented to the college’s full graduate faculty for approval.

2. Best Practices Identified from the DPIP Review

Extensive feedback was provided to the question about “best practices or plans were identified from the DPIP review process,” with answers ranging in scope between the simple identification of a best practice utilized for completing the review to a comprehensive outline of future plans their college/department intended to pursue as a follow up to the review. The majority of responses to this item could be categorized into the latter classification rather than the former. Given the extent of feedback to the question, a table appendix to this memo is provided to give full representation of the comments documented. Please see Table 1 of the appendix.

3. Feedback to additional metrics for future DPIP reviews:

Suggestions addressing the question that asked about other metrics to include for future DPIP reviews were also extensive. The questions and topics recommended fall in to three distinct categories: 1) program accountability; 2) teaching and advising; 3) graduate student progress and productivity; and 4) graduate mentoring and socialization. The specific questions asserted by category are as follows:

a. Program Accountability

1. The average cost of instruction for programs of the last five-year period.
2. The cost of instruction and its variance over the last five-year period.
3. What variables drive the cost of instruction and/or variation in the cost? What steps has the program implemented to monitor and reduce the cost of instruction?
4. The cost of instruction for the program compared to peer institutions.
5. Actual amount of financial resources provided directly to assist in doctoral student enrollment, retention, graduation, socialization, etc.
6. Accountability of student placements/employment after graduation for every student. One respondent also suggest that when the placement is academic, the research prestige/rank of the institution should be documented.
7. Long-range tracking of program graduate for 10 years post doctorate conferral for information on positions held, refereed publications, books, awards, etc.

b. Teaching and Advising

1. Number of courses taught across faculty members.
2. How many doctoral students does each faculty member advise, including those who have not entered the proposal writing stage?
3. How are students held accountable for not making satisfactory progress?

c. Graduate Student Progress/Productivity

1. Student feedback regarding progression/accomplishment of program benchmarks/goals during their study; and quality of their educational experience
2. Number and specification of scholarly output generated by graduate students and their impact.
3. A listing of scholarly output by journal impact factor or journal status in the field

4. Documentation of student grants applied for and attained

d. Graduate Mentoring/Socialization

1. The nature of formal faculty peer mentoring relationships that current senior faculty assist in as part of their responsibilities?
2. What differences exist in the mentoring of doctoral students across various student classifications? (e.g., fellows, graduate assistant but non-fellow, full-time, part-time, national, international, etc.)
3. What activities (academic and social) do students and faculty collaborate/interact on that enhance student social and academic integration of their doctoral specialization processes?

4. Recommendations for future DPIP reviews: Comments made about ways to improve future DPIP review processes covered a gamut of suggestions from the procedural recommendations for conducting the review to varying the timetable between reviews. The following recommendations are categorized according to their relevance to one of three themes — process, content, or communication — in Table 2 of the appendix.

5. DPIP Review Outcomes: The question that asked what respondents hoped the DPIP review would accomplish or reveal resulted in very comprehensive feedback addressing the benefits of having gone through the review, as well as the potential outcomes that would result from the review process. The feedback to the question generally was optimistic in tone. Verbatim feedback organized according to a) benefits realized, b) accomplishments hoped to be obtained, and c) what is hoped to be revealed as an outcome of the DPIP review are as follows:

a. Benefits of the DPIP process

- ✓ Departmental willingness to engage in constructive self-criticism for the purpose of continuing to improve its program....and for determining specific areas and strategies for improving doctoral programs.
- ✓ Identifying areas that can be shared across the college and handled more effectively centrally.

b. Accomplishments Hoped to be attained through the DPIP review

- ✓ Different Colleges / programs face different constraints. Some Colleges must use Ph.D. students to do a considerable amount of teaching. This limits the ability of the student to achieve

research excellence. These constraints must be recognized during program assessment and resource allocation decisions.

- ✓ A University-level strategy that focuses on output outcomes (e.g., scholarly output, placement quality) as opposed to process outcomes (e.g., faculty participation, mentoring, # graduated, % graduated, etc.).

 - ✓ That the program assessment itself will have consequences. If Colleges / programs can be forced to set outcome objectives (e.g., the goal is to place xx% of students at Carnegie Research 1 Institutions), then performance can be measured and rewarded. If the program assessment process results in no outcome objectives, and has no influence on resource allocation, then the program assessment process will have no meaningful impact.
 - ✓ To provide a critical snap-shot of the program and its standing vis-à-vis programs at peer institutions
 - ✓ To develop promotional materials for programs
 - ✓ To identify opportunities to improve doctoral student recruitment, retention, and graduation
 - ✓ To support program enhancements such as additional tenure-track faculty to meet current and future needs
 - ✓ To enhance the administration's understanding of the needs, purposes, opportunities, and goals that could drive improvements
 - ✓
- c. Revealed as an outcome of the process
- ✓ Steps that program faculty can take to strengthen/enhance the program
 - ✓ Specifics of faculty responsibilities and instructional load
 - ✓ Where balance is needed among faculty chairing doctoral students
 - ✓ There are pockets of excellence within the University. These areas should be allocated a disproportionate amount of resources. Invest in successful programs.
 - ✓ There are alternative approaches to doctoral education. Some Colleges/programs seek to maximize the number of Ph.D.'s, the ultimate goal being to place graduates in industry. Other programs seek to be selective, the ultimate goal being to place graduates in prestigious academic positions. Using a common set of metrics to assess the performance of programs (i.e., success) with such disparate goals is counterproductive. To the extent performance measures align with the goals of one or the other approach to graduate education, Colleges using the non-aligned model will be at a funding disadvantage. To the extent the performance metrics "split the difference," all programs

will suffer to the extent they try to satisfy competing goals (e.g., quantity, quality).

- ✓ Clearer delineation of variables that contribute to successful programs. Strengths and limitations of programs.
 - ✓ Challenges and/or weaker areas for which action plans should be considered
 - ✓ Important measures of success that should be tracked regularly
 - ✓ Understanding of the differences across programs within the college.
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- ✓ Shared knowledge of PhD programs that could lead to discussion of opportunities to collaborate on specific operational issues
 - ✓ A compilation of “best practices” (or, at least, a compilation of “suggestions for practices”) to assist programs improve their knowledge about the methods used in other units around the university.
 - ✓ A better understanding about how the university will make these decisions (effective programs versus not effective programs) based on the data we provided

Next Steps

The findings from the spring 2012 DPIIP survey will be submitted to the Faculty Senate for further consideration and distributed to the campus deans, Doctoral Program Improvement Plan Review Committee members, and to the offices of the President and Provost. This information reviewed in this document provide an additional point of reference for ongoing conversation in FY12-13 about the current DPIIP review procedure and opportunities for refinement of future reviews.

Respectfully submitted,

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Past Chair, Academic Policy Council FY11-12

DPIP Survey Results
Qu. 2_Table 1

What, if any, best practices or plans have you identified from the doctoral program improvement plans process?

Category	Response by Respondent
Best Practices Identified	<p>R1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Coordinated the DPIP review with an external review of top programs and schools in the field. According to the respondent, the exercise provided insight into the college's program in context of other programs that excelled in the field. <p>R2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The extent to the college works to achieve a diverse enrollment ✓ The college's retention rate and time to degree ✓ The intense mentoring our doctoral students receive from the time they enter the program through graduation ✓ A format and content of courses that ensures our students are productive researchers <p>R3:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Written guidelines describing program requirements. ✓ Annual feedback on the student's performance within the program. ✓ A Graduate Coordinator that can (1) create individualized study plans for students (2) insure that faculty and students are conforming to the advisor / advisee roles, (3) address issues and roadblocks that arise as a consequence of graduate study. ✓ Opportunities for oral and written presentation of original work. ✓ An academic speaker series that exposes students to leaders in the field. <p>R4:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Graduate recruitment practices have been considered to be more efficient ✓ Peer institutions rely on industry sponsored

	fellowships.
Best Practices Identified (cont.)	<p>R5:</p> <p>a. <u>Recruitment</u>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Adopt active recruitment strategies (e.g. connect with international students and faculty via international research efforts, work with national professional organizations and NIH for identification of minority applicants; network at professional conferences, including identification of minority students) ✓ Ensure website is informative, welcoming, and user friendly; have students review web site for feedback ✓ Have Facebook link on web site to market program events/activities ✓ Ensure have tag lines on program communication that link to web site ✓ Host open houses/visits for prospective students and help defray interview costs for prospective students by using buddy system with current students; conduct Skype interviews for students who can't come to campus ✓ Establish linkages with other universities with high minority populations ✓ Utilize multiple resources for funding support (e.g., UF Office of Graduate Minority Programs; McKnight Fellowships; NIH minority supplements; professional association training grants; multi-center training grants) ✓ Publish achievements in national newsletters/listserves ✓ Increase program visibility by publishing in high impact journals ✓ Solicit recruitment ideas from current students ✓ Look internally to strong master's students and undergraduate honors students ✓ Post recent graduate employment data ✓ Maintain strong linkages with alumni ✓ Assist students with locating strong placements for internships/employment ✓ Maintain state-of-the-art facilities

R5:

b. Retention:

- ✓ Establish written progression plan with measurable milestones for student performance
- ✓ Have routine review of student progression and mentor performance with written feedback of progress on benchmarks and clear plans for remediation as needed
- ✓ Identify (co-)mentors from outside areas and dual-degree opportunities
- ✓ Establish clear criteria regarding faculty roles (e.g. chairing and serving on doctoral committees, serving as an advisor, etc)
- ✓ Create positive culture in which students feel connected with program from the beginning; include orientation to program, and both formal (e.g. colloquia) and informal (e.g. .social) events
- ✓ Use of preparatory courses/sessions for qualifying exams
- ✓ Provide multi-year student funding
- ✓ Ensure students know resource person(s) to address concerns
- ✓ Use somewhat common timelines for benchmark completion to keep students moving
- ✓ Establish forum/feedback loop in which student concerns/ideas can be solicited for program enhancement
- ✓ Use SAKAI, blog, or other social media for informal communication with and between students
- ✓ Cast a broad net when recruiting faculty to increase minority faculty interest
- ✓ Review faculty-student ratio and balance to address needs/enhancements
- ✓ Provide information on common issues relevant to international students

R5:

c. Mentoring:

- ✓ Stated policy on commitment to student mentoring
- ✓ Establish mentor early (as part of admissions process if appropriate)
- ✓ Design plan/compact between student and mentor (e.g., NIDA Mentor's Guide, (<http://www.nida.nih.gov/mentoringguide/>), which includes clearly stated roles and responsibilities of student and mentor and plan for success
- ✓ Conduct regular student-mentor meetings ensuring multiple opportunities for input
- ✓ Develop a mentor guide
- ✓ Hold annual or semi-annual written reviews of student performance
- ✓ Develop mentoring plan for junior faculty (e.g. senior faculty assist/evaluate those junior faculty members who are mentoring doctoral students)
- ✓ Pair junior/inexperienced mentors with senior/successful mentors on committees
- ✓ Recognize faculty for excellence in mentoring activities (e.g., FTE assignment, teaching credit, mentors' award ceremony, etc.)

R5:

d. Professional Development:

- ✓ Establish writing circle with student peers; host seminars on grant preparation, professional writing, job searching; mock study section and journal article review activities, "career toolkit"
- ✓ Establish travel or other professional development fund for students
- ✓ Establish recognition of students in roles as scientists, educators, clinicians, service providers to individuals/community, etc.
- ✓ Set expectations for publishing, presenting, etc.
- ✓ Consistently track professional development
- ✓ Encourage student participation on departmental committees
- ✓ Encourage inclusion of students on grants and

	<p>encourage students to write their own foundation grants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Create central communication mechanism/location to access upcoming professional development opportunities locally (seminars) and more broadly
Plans Identified:	<p>R1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ As a result of this exercise, we have added some much needed changes, such as earmarking dollars to bring in potential and promising doctoral students for campus visits. <p>R2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Admit high quality students. ✓ Provide sufficient resources to students. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The planning process resulted in a move to a five, as opposed to a four, year stipend commitment to incoming students. b. The planning process increased stipend amounts by up to \$7,000 per year (varied by department). c. The planning process resulted in a \$1000 research budget for each current Ph.D. student (starting 2012-2013). This budget can also be used for conferences. Students did not have research budgets prior to this planning process. ✓ Allocate resources where they are likely to have the biggest impact given the goals of the Ph.D. program. ✓ Set performance goals for the program. ✓ Actively monitor program performance. <p>R3:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Attempts or needs to increase stipend and meet benchmarks with peers... we are way behind here

Plans Identified (cont.):	<p>R4: (did not specify if the items were best practices or plans)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Varied, effective recruitment methods ✓ Monitoring time to degree metrics ✓ Annual evaluation processes for doctoral students ✓ Comparison of benchmark data with peer institutions, particularly around variables such as enrollment, number of students admitted, proportion of students that received funding to support their education, and time to degree ✓ Cohort model as a structure to provide graduate students with valuable social and academic supports important for doctoral student persistence and success ✓ Sequence of courses to be offered on a rotation basis instead of a traditional cafeteria style approach to improve administrative preparation for faculty assignments and to approximate number of students needed to sustain programs ✓ Enhanced course offering for EDG 7979 to provide doctoral students with group-facilitated assistance in the preparation of the qualifying examination ✓ Requirement for newly admitted students to take at least six credit hours per term to ensure that part-time students complete their degree requirements in a timely fashion ✓ Required instructor-facilitated dissertation groups for doctoral students at both the pre-proposal stage and the dissertation research stage to enhance student completion of their dissertation in a timely manner ✓ Structured committees to address matters related to graduate education ✓ Well-articulated policies and easy availability of resources related to graduate education ✓ Orientations for doctoral students to provide overview of program and school matters ✓ Workshops for doctoral students to address matters particular to their academic and professional preparation ✓ Research and training grants to provide professional experience and funding for doctoral students, particularly to fund students for full-time study ✓ Faculty engagement in mentoring of doctoral students

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Core course work aligned with the research strength of faculty ✓ Highly qualified faculty of diverse interests to staff programs
Plans Identified (cont.):	<p>R5:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ <u>Recruitment, Retention, and Minority Support</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use social media as an advertising tool, advertising faculty and alumni achievements. • Use fliers to advertise graduate program to chairs and undergraduate coordinators at peer institutions. [For simplicity's sake, the flier could be a webpage on the department host server with a link to the page in the e-mail that is distributed.] • Focus on recruiting students from strong liberal arts colleges in the southeast region, as well as from universities around the state. • Recruit top candidates by connecting promising applicants with faculty members during the application process, followed by personal phone calls. • Admit top applicants early, even before the first application deadline has passed. • Secure privately funded, named supplemental graduate awards. • Conduct video conference or telephone interviews with borderline applicants, especially from overseas, to better evaluate their chances of success at UF. • Invite scholars from HBCUs to give seminars or colloquia in the department, forging a relationship with those scholars that might prompt them to encourage their most promising students to apply to UF graduate programs. • Actively recruit promising minority students from UF's undergraduate student pool. • Expand on ongoing efforts to recruit underrepresented racial/ethnic minorities. • Encourage minority applicants to visit UF using the Campus Visitation Program at the Graduate School's Office of Graduate Minority Programs. • Encourage minority students to apply for McKnight Doctoral Fellowships, the McNair Fellowships, and the Delores Auzene Dissertation Awards. • Identify struggling students early in the program and either help them to succeed or encourage them to pursue other goals. • Implement an exit interview to monitor why students leave without the Ph.D.

Plans Identified (cont.):	<p>R5:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ <u>Graduate Student Mentoring and Professional Development</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assign mentors to first year graduate students. • Provide peer mentors for incoming students. • Provide a workshop for faculty on effective mentoring and standardize the mentoring process. Consider providing a “mentoring mentors” program, in which veteran mentors are invited to share their ideas and experiences in mentoring doctoral students with less experienced faculty. • Provide “meet-the-faculty” sessions to give students a chance to get to know all faculty members and hear brief presentations of each faculty member’s research. • Provide a series of professional development workshops that include advice about writing the dissertation, presenting at conferences, publishing, grant writing, and the job application process. • Give graduate students who are on the job market the opportunity to do mock interviews. • Establish workshops at which graduate students present their work in progress (e.g., a dissertation chapter) to faculty members and fellow graduate students. This could be an on-going brown-bag lunch seminar or something more formal, provided that it gives students with opportunities to improve presentation skills and become more involved in the research activity of their peers. • To help students decide on a dissertation director, it may be useful to maintain a departmental archive of all of the research publications produced by the faculty members. • Encourage faculty to co-author papers and conference presentations with graduate students. • Encourage faculty to co-write grants with graduate students. • Provide teacher training seminars to improve graduate students’ teaching experience. • Provide training to graduate students to teach on-

	<p>line courses.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limit the number of new courses graduate students can teach to place priority on dissertation work.

PIP Survey Results
Qu. 4_Table 2

What recommendations would you make for future DPIP reviews?

Communication	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A college level summary and recommendations for the programs within each college would be helpful. We worked on such a document and it was quite beneficial. 2. It would be helpful to know how this data and report will be used to either reward effective programs or help those programs that are not deemed effective
Process/Timing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Doctoral PIP should be required of different doctoral programs on staggered terms improving departmental/school resources in generating appropriate reporting mechanisms. 2. The reports should be requested from time-to-time and not on an annual basis. Time should be allowed to develop programs, activities, and interventions based on these reports. The premise being that time should be allowed to consider options and alternatives; implement the chosen programs, activities, and interventions; and evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of these programs, activities, and interventions. 3. With an appropriate time-line, attain and utilize feedback from all faculty or select doctoral students in all doctoral programs. 4. Use a structured approach. The structure provided via a template helped [our college] ensure that all PhD programs within the college addressed a common set of essential issues in their reviews. Using a template might prove particularly useful in colleges with a broad range of PhD disciplines. 5. Define terms up front so that they can then be used consistently for data collection and reporting, such as doctoral research faculty vs. tenure track faculty vs. graduate faculty. 6. Broaden the potential participants of the review committee to non-tenured individuals.

Content	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue to allow departments to incorporate departmental internal data to serve as a on data that were found to be either missing or incorrect in the various University databases. This broader incorporation of data proved to be critical and allowed for more accurate and richer engagement with the data that were important for subsequent recommendations and adoption of strategic changes. 2. Assess the funding model of the College / program. The extent to which a program is private pay, grant supported, or College supported can impact the objectives of the program. Private pay Ph.D. programs are revenue generators. Grant supported Ph.D. programs are revenue neutral. College supported Ph.D. programs are an expense. Like it or not, these funding models have recruiting, support, and performance consequences. 3. Subsequent reviews should take into consideration that doctoral programs vary in the types of students who are attracted to and enroll in programs. 4. Because the cost of instruction varies across programs, data relative to the cost of instruction should be included in subsequent analyses. Reconsider use of graduate faculty status in metrics of program and/or faculty productivity. Perhaps such calculations should also stipulate that faculty members are full-time employees in the unit. 5. Programs should be asked to illustrate steps taken to promote the economic delivery of programs, and credit should be given for those efforts that have proven to be effective. 6. Align all assessments and requests for data (PIP, CIP, BOG, etc.) so that the information required for one assessment is required for all assessments. This will improve the information gathering process and enhance the timing that reports may be provided. 7. Create IR data for each doctoral program for each program in the school and update information for those schools we want to be benchmarked against. 8. No questions directed to graduate students to answer in the improvement plan 9. Limit future focus to key quantitative process and outcome indicators with explanations for, and plans to reverse, values headed in an adverse direction.

	<ol style="list-style-type: none">10. Have Institutional Research provide data already collected.11. Consider doctoral faculty and/or PhD student survey as part of data collection.12. Although both current status and future plans were required, it seems more useful to emphasize the future plans, using current status as the foundation or starting point for the future plans' presentation in the same section. In essence, integrating these into one section, rather than two.
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