

## Draft APC Resolution on Graduate Education at Duke

### Preamble

Master's programs at Duke have received significant attention lately, with the Academic Council voicing concern about the large increase in the number of professional Master's programs since 2007. While there is a priori no limitation on the number of such programs that a school or program can offer, care has to be taken about how these programs relate to the overall academic offerings and aspirations of the University. In particular, Academic Council raised questions about: 1) the framework for evaluating new proposals; 2) the impact of new degree programs on existing programs, and on campus wide facilities; and 3) the mode of assessing the quality and impact of newly adopted programs after an initial probationary phase.

In 2015 the Duke Graduate School and Master's Advisory Council released a *Status report on Master's Programs and Enrollment at Duke University*, followed by a review of its recommendations by the Master's Report Implementation Committee in May 2016. In addition, the Graduate School recently proposed a new set of guidelines titled *New Proposals for Graduate Programs*. The Academic Programs Committee met on 9/7/16 and 9/14/16 to discuss the state of graduate education at Duke, review the recent committee reports and provide a broad set of recommendations on how to respond to the aforementioned reports.

Of particular concern to Academic Council and Academic Programs Committee were the hidden cost of Master's degree programs to University-wide resources (e.g. library, language instruction, career services, visa services, CAPS) as well as faculty and staff support in other units beyond the hosting department(s). In addition, Academic Programs Committee noted its concern regarding the consistent availability of standards and metrics for the approval of degree programs that can subsequently also be applied for the regular reviews of these programs. Among the non-trivial questions discussed in this context was how to assess the success of a given program.

Academic Programs Committee noted that the Graduate School provides a comprehensive set of *Best Practices and Core Expectations* for graduate programs on its website. While the committee voiced its general satisfaction with this comprehensive set of standards and guidelines, it was concerned about an apparent lack of awareness of these guidelines on the departmental level as well as a lack of reference of these guidelines in the approval and review process of graduate programs.

During its deliberations, APC recognized the need of structured data on all departments and programs under review, providing the committee with much needed context regarding the proposal at hand and significantly improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the committee's deliberations. The creation, organization and maintenance of this data will be subject of a separate APC resolution.

## Recommendations

APC recommends the following actions to improve graduate education at Duke and the approval and review process of these programs:

- The recommendations outlined in the review of the MAC report by the Master's Report Implementation Committee should be implemented.
- New program proposals should all follow the outline and structure put forward in the Graduate School's recommendation on *New Proposals for Graduate Programs*. Reports due for the program review should follow the same structure and address the same criteria, thus providing a consistent information flow for APC to consider.
- The Graduate School *Best Practices and Core Expectations* should be updated with feedback from departments and schools to ensure buy-in on the departmental level. These updated Graduate School best practices will feed into degree program review and approval process (programs need to address how to conform to these best practices and core expectations)
- Each program proposal should contain a concise set of metrics by which its success can be measured. These metrics are required to include tracking and analysis of student outcomes, but otherwise can be tailored to the individual context of the program and department in which it is housed. Examples for success metrics are:
  - increase in diversity (among student body and faculty)
  - financial health of the department and program
  - growth in research activity (publications, presentations, grants)
  - faculty growth/retention
- Projected metrics of success defined in the original proposal should be evaluated during program reviews. Serious consideration of program sunseting should be given for programs that fail to meet agreed upon metrics in subsequent review cycles.
- All new proposals and programs under review should be required to perform an impact assessment: account for number of courses taken by their students in other units, usage of central resources etc. - these data should flow into a projection of the financial viability of the graduate program and, at time of review, compared with an assessment of actual cost and impact on other units and central services. The central administration should assist in providing the relevant cost estimates.
- New program proposals should contain a comparison of the proposed program to comparable programs at other institutions, discuss how competitive the proposed program would be and what the value-added benefit of creating the program would be at Duke.

- Programs should provide information (e.g. on their website) to prospective applicants about the employment rates of graduates, and refer foreign nationals to information regarding regulations and restrictions governing their employment in the US.
- The review process for new programs should contain a risk assessment, to be conducted either by the Graduate School or by APC:
  - what are the cost of the program?
  - are there reputational risks to the University?
  - What is the value of the program to the University?