

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

Campus Assessment Working Group (CAWG)
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Retention and Completion Members

Patricia Hunt**
Michelle Appel
John Burczek Dreier*
Chip Denman
Audran Downing
Daniel Fisher
Barbara Jacoby
Jonathan Kandell
Julie Choe Kim
Sharon La Voy
Dora Elias McAllister

Jennifer Meyers
Jessica Mislevy*
Chad Muntz
Jennifer Rossignol
Nicole Roop
Dawn Smith
Pathé Sow
Rob Waters

* Presenter
** Chair

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

The Strategic Plan's Vision for Graduate Education says PhD students will normally:	Graduate students reported the following experiences on the Doctoral Student Survey:
<p>Be fully funded for their term of study.</p> <p>Be provided with outstanding financial support.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 73% relied on an assistantship, a UM scholarship or fellowship, and/or an external scholarship or fellowship. 54% (also) relied on loans, savings, and/or family support. 26% (also) relied on non-assistantship employment on or off campus.
<p>Graduate with little or no debt.</p>	<p>59% anticipated they would complete their degree with no graduate educational debt.</p>

Career Aspirations

The Strategic Plan's Vision for Graduate Education:	Graduate students reported on the Doctoral Student Survey:
<p>Aims to prepare graduates for positions at prestigious educational institutions and responsible research positions in government, industry, and non-profit organizations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 40% want a tenure-track faculty position at a doctoral degree granting institution. 30% want a non-tenure track research-oriented position. 16% want a tenure-track faculty position at a non-doctoral degree granting institution or a non-tenure track faculty/instructional position. 14% want an applied practice or higher education position.

Mentoring and Advising

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

Reported Program Experiences

- **General Advising**

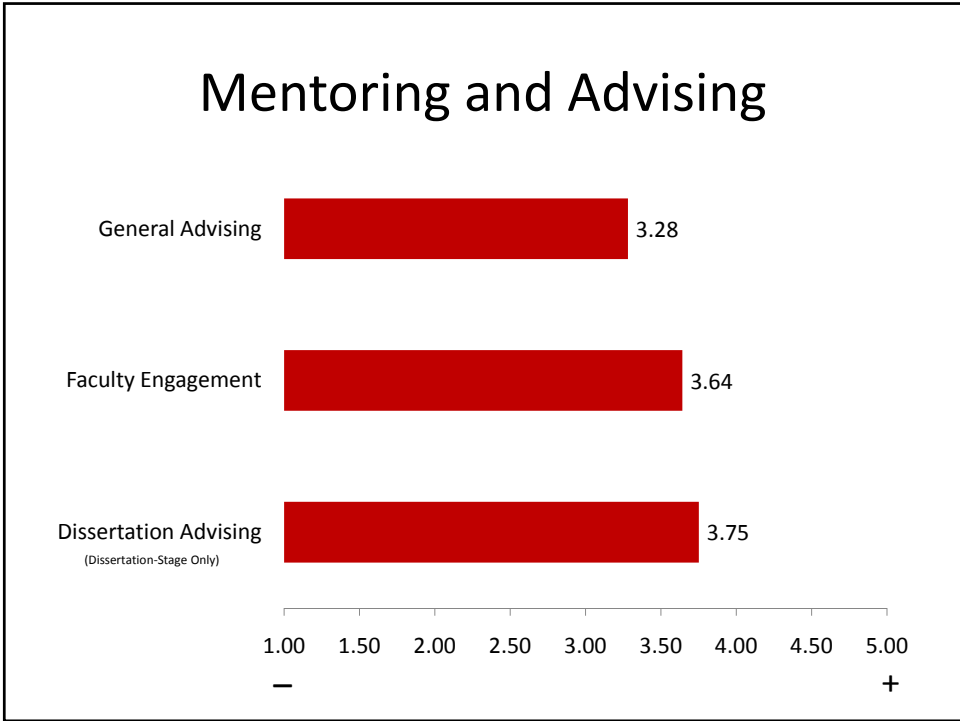
Advising regarding course selection, advising regarding qualifying exams, advising regarding other program requirements, etc.

- **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.



Publication Support for Candidates

Dissertation advisors in department offer the following:	% Yes
Advice about suitable publication outlets	75
Help in preparing work for publication submission	71
Help understanding and responding to comments from publication reviewers	66
Contact editors to encourage consideration of student's work	19

Professional Development

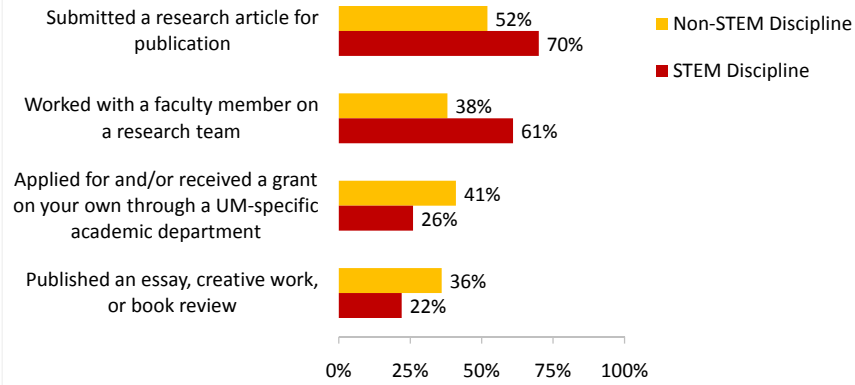
“PhD students will normally have completed substantial published scholarly work, or other creative activities as appropriate, at the time they graduate.”

Professional Development

The Strategic Plan’s Vision for Graduate Education sets expectations for students to:	Graduate students reported on the Doctoral Student Survey that:
<p>Produce original work through research, scholarship, creative arts, or performance.</p> <p>Give professional presentations at the national/international level.</p> <p>Have knowledge of how to win grants.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Roughly half had</u>: 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 • <u>Roughly a quarter had</u>: Applied for/received a grant from a UM department; applied for/received a grant externally; published an essay, creative work, or book review

Discipline Differences

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



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

Graduated	Earned degree by S'10 regardless of time to complete it	185 28%
On Target	Enrolled in S'10 and <u>within</u> expected number of semesters	379 58%
Off Target	Enrolled in S'10 and <u>beyond</u> expected number of semesters	60 9%
Not Registered	Not enrolled in S'10 and had not graduated	28 4%

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?



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CAWG SNAPSHOTS of Student Experiences
and related IRPA report are available at:

www.umd.edu/cawg