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Date: October 12, 2016

Subject: Sustaining Best Practices in Graduate Education at LUC - 2016

Introduction
The Graduate School of Loyola University Chicago opened its doors in September 1926. The earliest degrees awarded were in the humanities, social sciences, science, and educational fields. By the 1950s, a variety of biomedical programs expanded the range of degrees offered by the Graduate School. Today, the Graduate School administers all programs leading to the Doctor of Philosophy, most programs leading to the Master of Arts and Master of Science degrees, the Master of Public Health, and the Master of Public Policy. Approximately 1,500 graduate students are enrolled in 26 PhD programs, a professional doctorate program, 36 master's programs, 10 dual degree programs, and 17 advanced bachelor's/master's programs.

Over the course of its ninety years of operation, the Graduate School has possessed a chief academic officer whose sole or dual responsibility (when conjoined with the chief research officer) is graduate education. Undergraduate education is the core of Loyola University Chicago. It is our institution’s mission and context. At the same time, the University has embraced graduate education and has taken care to ensure that graduate education receives the necessary attention through its ability to govern its own programs in what the Woodrow Wilson Foundation has described as an authentic rather than junior partnership with the programs and colleges of a university (Woodrow Wilson Fellowship National Foundation, 2013).

Best Practices in Graduate Education
As the main professional body representing graduate education in the United States, the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) has developed a set of best practices that identify the basic elements of what is necessary to support graduate education. However the unit is defined, its goal is to articulate a vision for graduate education, establish and support standards of excellence and quality assurance, and create a climate for student success. As set forth by CGS in Organization and Administration of Graduate Education (2004), the role of a graduate school is to:

- Articulate a vision of excellence for the graduate community;
- Provide quality control for all aspects of graduate education;
Maintain equitable standards across all academic disciplines;
Define what graduate education is and what it is not;
Bring an institution-wide perspective to all postbaccalaureate endeavors;
Provide an interdisciplinary perspective;
Enhance the intellectual community of scholars among both graduate students and faculty;
Serve as an advocate for graduate education;
Emphasize the importance of adequately training future college and university teachers and preparing students for diverse career pathways;
Develop ways for graduate education to contribute to and enhance undergraduate education;
Support graduate student services; and
Serve as an advocate for issues and constituencies critical to the success of graduate programs.

In order to carry out its role successfully, graduate education rests upon eight structural elements:

- Governing board and administration that support graduate education;
- Basic faculty units that supervise graduate study and recommend degrees;
- Faculty committed to graduate programs and research;
- Chief academic officer for graduate education;
- Separate degree-granting graduate unit;
- Graduate Program Director in each academic unit;
- Graduate Council; and
- Graduate student representation.

Any consideration of the structure in which graduate education takes place should account for the elements set forth by the Council of Graduate Schools that comprise the role of the graduate school and its structure. Although any individual graduate educational enterprise may possess a distinctive shape, the elements identified above are designed to insure that graduate education receives attention and support to flourish, that it sets the parameters for academic excellence and quality assurance, and that it promotes student success. Additionally, the Graduate School is the unit outside of a department or program that has the independence to speak for graduate students and these students often see this unit as a safe place where they can discuss a range of issues of concern outside of the disciplinary or program power structure.

The annual rankings of undergraduate institutions by U.S. News and World Report offer a measure of where colleges and universities stand within the larger landscape of undergraduate education. Active participation and recognition of a graduate school in the Council of Graduate Schools provides the same type of validation—i.e., it is a measure of the regard by which a graduate school is held. Just as with the undergraduate rankings, it does not stress individual programs or disciplinary positioning but rather national recognition of a graduate school's role in the larger graduate education community. This standing offers opportunities for Graduate School staff to present at national meetings and workshops and participate in CGS best practices projects. This type of engagement allows institutions to contribute to and shape best practices in
graduate education rather than just consume what others have produced. Beginning with the tenure of Dr. Samuel Attoh as Dean of the Graduate School, Loyola’s Graduate School has undergone the transformation from a passive consumer to active agent in promoting and advancing best practices in graduate education which have benefitted all of our stakeholders.

Structure of Graduate Education at Loyola University Chicago – Possibilities

I have been asked to provide a range of structural possibilities for the organization of graduate education at Loyola University Chicago. This report addresses that request. All models on the table reduce staff investment in graduate education. However, in order to support graduate education across the various units, a critical mass of staff is necessary given the range of students, the complexity of graduate education, and a commitment to academic quality. Otherwise, quality assurance and student success is undermined. An institutional commitment to graduate education necessitates an investment in a core staff to address the various elements of and role of graduate education in a university setting.

Current Model – The Graduate School

The current form of the Graduate School represents its continuity with the past as well as all the best practices of graduate education. While its internal organizational structure needs reorganization and selective downsizing (some of which has already taken place), it oversees a range of programs, graduate program directors, and students across three campuses. It serves as the nexus for academic policy and quality certification. It oversees curriculum and program development. It monitors existing programs and assesses the relationship between resources and growth, degree completion, and program climate. It fosters student success through a variety of avenues such as programs for professional development and retention as well as travel and research support. It collaborates with other units, graduate and undergraduate, across campus on programs, activities, and initiatives. It oversees the distribution of fellowships, stipends, and scholarships, works with outside funding sources (grants, fellowships, and international programs), and fundraises. It oversees the recruitment and admission process and works with GPEM on advertising and program promotion. It monitors students’ academic progress and insures that faculty have the appropriate credentials to oversee the examination process and direct student research. It maintains student records, reviews student academic progress, and oversees thesis and dissertation approval and degree verification. Its student record system, Graduate Student Progress System (GSPS), tracks student status and progress through degree conferral. The Graduate School monitors responsible conduct of research and oversees graduate student grievances. It has intentionally integrated diversity and inclusion into its operation and has been recognized externally for its efforts to build and sustain a diverse graduate community. It serves as a safe space for graduate students and, through its chief academic officer, makes sure that graduate student voices, needs, etc. are heard and their education supported.

Having a graduate school that cuts across programs and schools (Stritch, Education, Social Work, and Nursing) has ensured that graduate education in general and the research degrees in particular possess consistent policies and a baseline for quality control. There is consistent attention to the needs of graduate education – funding, responsible conduct of research, student
services, diversity and inclusion – at a visible level. It has a voice at the table of equal stature as the other schools and colleges. It highlights the fact that the University sees graduate education as an important element of its educational landscape. Even though undergraduate education is at the core of Loyola’s essence, the graduate programs enhance the undergraduate experience through teaching, in integrated undergraduate/graduate research teams, and through structured undergraduate/graduate mentoring. Graduate programs play an important role in recruiting excellent faculty who teach and mentor our undergraduate students.

The Graduate School has been an active participant in a number of Council of Graduate School initiatives, none of which would have been possible without having a Graduate School and a chief academic officer for graduate education:

- Doctoral Initiative on Minority Attrition and Completion, 2012-2014, National Science Foundation and the Council of Graduate Schools. Co-PIs Samuel Attoh and Patricia Mooney-Melvin. (Sub-contract)
- Completion and Attrition in STEM Master’s Programs 2011-2012, Alfred P. Sloan Foundation and the Council of Graduate Schools, Co-PIs Samuel Attoh and Patricia Mooney-Melvin. (sub-contract)
- PhD Completion Project 2006-2009, Program Affiliate.

Graduate School staff (Dean, Associate Deans) have been active in CGS through session and workshop presentations and committee service. We have been virtually the only private, faith-based institution, with the exception of Fordham University, that has been consistently visible at this level. Creighton University, St. Louis University, Marquette University, Georgetown University, Catholic University, and Notre Dame have been active more sporadically, at least in the last 12 years. We have been active as well at leadership and participatory levels in the Midwestern Association of Graduate Schools and the Illinois Association of Graduate Schools.

The recent grant the Graduate School received from the National Endowment for the Humanities, Charting Career Pathways: Enhancing and Sustaining Doctoral Education in the Humanities, this fall (PI Patricia Mooney-Melvin) is one of twenty-five planning grants awarded in the inaugural award Next Generation PhD initiative. We are one of three private institutions in the group and with Fordham University, the only faith-based and AJCU member. Reviewers of the proposal noted positively the fact that the project was housed in the Graduate School which they saw as a sign of institutional commitment to the humanities.

Graduate education structures within the AJCU vary considerably and, with one primary exception, the larger institutions have graduate schools that are separate from undergraduate colleges and schools. Universities and colleges with relatively small numbers of graduate programs, few of which are PhD research programs, often – although not always – imbed these programs within the various colleges that comprise the institution. Some have specific associate deans that oversee these programs while others have less formality than that. Marquette University, Georgetown University, Creighton University, Fordham University, and Loyola
University Chicago have structures that, while not the same, possess important similarities in that there are clearly defined chief academic officers for graduate education. Georgetown and Boston College engage less with the larger ACJU world of graduate education but many schools in the AJCU network will seek advice from us, Fordham, Creighton, and Marquette about best practices and the deans remain in contact about a range of issues that transcend our institutions.

The current structure, a free standing graduate school that encompasses a wide range of programs, including all of the research based doctorates, has served the university well and has commanded national attention that has brought resources into the university that have benefitted our students.

Combination Smaller School Dean/Assistant Provost for Graduate Education

Some universities, such as Fordham and Georgetown, have split up the graduate program structure into individual schools. However, so as not to lose the important structural and role elements that comprise best practices, they have graduate deans that serve as chief academic officers for graduate education and who answer to the provost as independent units rather than as elements of an undergraduate structure. While these deans oversee the same types of activities laid out above and have standing in the larger world of graduate education, they only represent one direct component of the graduate education world at their universities. So, for example, if we think in terms of arts and sciences, there could be a Graduate Dean for Arts and Sciences that could represent the bulk of the current Graduate School programs.

However, to better suit our context, it would be prudent to have an additional appointment as Assistant Provost for Graduate Education (a number of deans hold both, for example, Dean of the Graduate School and Associate Provost for Graduate Education so this type of structure would be in line with national trends). The person holding this position would function as a free standing dean and sit at Dean’s Council as the representative for graduate education. This structure would provide a home for fellowships and stipends (Schmitt and Child and Family) situated in the Graduate School that are offered to PhD students in all of the programs currently under the Graduate School. It would provide a home for two units that fall under the Graduate School that are outside of CAS and would have no other academic home – the PhD in Child Development located in the Erikson Institute and the graduate programs located within Stritch School of Medicine whose academic home (not financial) has been in the Graduate School.

The relationship with the Graduate School (which could be preserved through the Assistant Provost structure) is of particular importance for the graduate programs in the Health Sciences Division. These programs are in a unique position, being a part of both SSOM and the Graduate School. Many aspects of Medical Education are uniquely tailored to the MD degree and therefore, the graduate programs (including Biomedical Science graduate programs, Public Health and Bioethics) rely on much of the administrative infrastructure of the Graduate School. HSD Program Directors are appointed by the Dean of the Graduate School, with their qualifications and responsibilities clearly outlined. Program Directors are engaged with the Graduate School via their participation in monthly meetings of the Council of Graduate School Programs, where administrative services and best practices in graduate education are frequently
addressed. HSD graduate students take advantage of the numerous programs offered through the Graduate School, such as the Student Mentoring Program, Dissertation Boot Camp, the Schmitt Fellowship Program, and periodic “life skills” workshops on topics such as diversity and inclusion and financial management. All of these programs benefit from the Graduate Student Progress System (GSPS) of the Graduate School, which tracks student status and progress through degree conferral. The Graduate School provides oversight of academic standards and integrity and the programs are accredited by the Higher Learning Commission under the umbrella of the LUC Graduate School.

This dual structure would provide an independent space for students outside of the disciplinary or line school structure. This structure can serve as a facilitator for collaboration among various schools and programs as well as provide the locus for larger issues of quality assurance and best practices that transcend specific schools. It would allow students to seek advice/information outside of the primary structure of their programs and retain the safe space element of the current model of the graduate school. Also, it preserves the centralized structure that better supports efforts to promote diversity and inclusion.

Decentralized Model of Graduate Education

Some colleges and universities, typically with a limited number of graduate programs and mainly master’s level degrees, have adopted a decentralized model of graduate education. There are colleges, most notably Boston College, that possess more robust graduate offerings that follow this model but these institutions are the exception. Every once in a while a larger institution will move from a centralized model to a decentralized one, but within 3 to 5 years these institutions often revert back to the centralized model because no one with real authority took graduate education as a priority and issues of quality assurance and student success lost the appropriate intensity (examples: Old Dominion University and the University of Kansas). Even the best intentioned line deans focus more on the undergraduate programs under their care and associate deans rarely possess the power or voice to lead as they operate with few dedicated resources.

From an operational standpoint, there are challenges associated with the decentralized system. On the surface, this model appears to draw on fewer staff resources. Staff savings, however, rarely translates into efficient practice and service to the graduate programs and students. Degree programs with an array of internal structures and degree requirement configurations, the typical part-time/fulltime student mix within programs and across programs, a significant number of non-traditional students, the complexity of the individual program and fellowship funding structures, and the range of student support programs as well as collaborations with units across the university suggest a need for more than just a single associate dean, particularly in a college such as CAS with a wide array of PhD, master’s, dual degrees, and advanced bachelors/master’s degrees. Additionally, from the brief period when stipends rested within CAS, stipend levels fell far behind both peer and aspirational institutions and wide disparities existed in terms of workloads and resource distribution.
Conclusion

Recruitment planning, diversity and inclusion, consistency and control across graduate programs, programs designed to promote student success, student tracking systems that collect, track, and assess retention, all work better in more centralized space. Universities with a strong commitment to graduate education as something that both stands alone and nourishes undergraduate education are best served when the graduate oversight structures follow the best practices set forth by the Council of Graduate School.

At present, the Graduate School’s activities reflect best practices in graduate education. It is aligned with the larger university. Its policies and procedures insure consistency across programs and quality assurance. It has a solid records management structure and ability to track completion and retention. It has many strong partnerships with units across campus and has created a robust undergraduate/graduate collaborative environment. It has strong programs to support student success. It has been involved in and received recognition from the national, regional, and state graduate communities. Having a chief academic officer whose sole responsibility is graduate education not only is in line with national best practices, it protects and enhances Loyola University’s Chicago’s prestige as a doctoral institution and master’s community in both the AJCU and CGS. Any change in the structure of graduate education at Loyola should insure that these strengths are not abandoned.