5 Year Program Meeting Redux (3.24.09)

CURRENT GRAD SCHOOL DOCUMENTS

At the meeting today there were numerous issues that were discussed regarding the 5 yr accelerated program. To help understand the CURRENT information that is available to students and programs, I have enclosed PDFs that contains the following Graduate School documents: (all these were revised as of Feb 2009)

1) Accelerated Degree Program Interest Form
2) Accelerated Degree Program Application Form
3) Accelerated Degree Program Guidelines
4) Grad Catalog copy of 5 yr guidelines to each program
5) List of current 5 yr programs

In terms of marketing and building new accelerated program, here is the link to see what is listed on the Graduate School website:
http://www.grad.usf.edu/newsite/grad_accelerated.asp

So there is quite a bit of information that is already in place and some structure already articulated on the building of a new program. Although it would be possible to build in more structure to the various issues regarding the degrees, the key points of emphasis are listed (

IMPORTANT POINT OF CLARIFICATION IN TRACKING STUDENTS

It may not have been clear (at least to me anyway), but a key point to the discussion was the coding of the students in the 5 yr program and at what point they actually could be tracked. My understanding is that STUDENTS ARE NOT CONVERTED TO A5 UNTIL THEY ARE ADMITTED TO GRADUATE STANDING IN THEIR 5 yr PROGRAM. There are currently new attribute codes that differentiate students in the different programs (but this has not been in place very long and may not be in place for all programs).

This means that: THERE IS NO WAY TO TRACK UG STUDENTS THAT MAY CHOSE TO ENTER THE ACCELERATED PROGRAMS UNLESS THEY HAVE SUBMITTED AN INTEREST FORM. This is a very key point regarding advising and communication to these potential students. Until they convert, they are simply in their standard UG Program like all the other students.

NC STATE MODEL

I have enclosed the guidelines for the accelerated degrees at NC State (a peer institution to USF). In thinking about program oversight and time to degree, there is much to like about what they do (required program of study, 3.5 GPA to enter, 12 months to obtain degree post Bach etc.). So this has the 4 +1 type model that was

discussed at the meeting today. In their program, it is not clear how the students are classified once they are converted to grad (they clearly are converted PRIOR to completing the 120 hrs).

ONE SIZE DOES NOT FIT ALL

I have enclosed all of the USF programs and there clearly is much diversity in the types of degrees awarded. Many programs also do not have two degrees that are conferred. Thus, a major policy change is not going to capture all programs and may require changing and modification to several current policies. Overall, the programs have been working and the issues can be defined from a communication point of view (in my opinion, See next item).

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the discussion today and given the limited number of students that are taking advantage of the program, the issue of time to degree does not appear to be something that is a major concern (right now, perhaps if 1000s of students take advantage of the program, this is something that can be evaluated down the road).

Having been in discussions for the past month or so, the major issues with the current programs appear to be ones of communication, advising, oversight of the students in the program and student tracking. I would recommend the following:

Short term:
1) Work on the current policy guidelines to tighten up entry into the programs (> GPA and defined number of UG hrs before students can convert to grad status)
2) Revise policy guidelines to include submission of a course action plan from the student for completion of the degree in a defined period of time upon completion of the Bach degree.

These can be vetted through Grad Council, Associate deans and UG council

Longer term with an eye toward expanding these programs:
3) Work with Grad Programs to evaluate the possibility of increasing the number of shared hours to say 12, to make the accelerated programs more attractive to the top students
4) Work with programs to evaluate the possibility of including thesis based accelerated programs (better define thesis and non-thesis tracks)
5) Evaluate better marketing (i.e. include the discussion of these programs in the honors student orientation, if this exists? Have higher visibility on the UG and GRAD web sites.
6) Prepare a more comprehensive Guide to building and oversight of these programs.