Growing and Sustaining Interdisciplinary and Intercollegiate Graduate Programs at OSU

Interdisciplinary (ID) programs at OSU may be housed in individual departments (e.g., Forest Ecosystems and Society), individual colleges (e.g., Public Policy) or among Colleges (e.g., Environmental Sciences). Similarly disciplinary programs can be housed in individual departments (e.g., Chemistry), between departments within Colleges (e.g., Masters of Engineering) or among colleges (e.g., Molecular and Cellular Biology). Whereas the opportunities for faculty and graduate students to address complex problems in an interdisciplinary or trans-disciplinary manner often lie at the interface between or among disciplines or institutional units, the flow of resources and faculty lines are often distinct from one academic unit to another. Similarly strong disciplinary programs in areas such as Ecology and Evolutionary Biology are possible, but faculty are distributed among multiple academic units. In an effort to facilitate the growth of interdisciplinary or intercollegiate(IC) degree programs, the Graduate School has been the administrative home for six such programs, several of which have flourished under this structure.

The Role of the Graduate School

The Graduate School can serve as an incubator in developing and administering interdisciplinary and intercollegiate (ID/IC) programs, but it should not become an accumulator of programs. As new programs are proposed and approved, the Graduate School should play an active role in ensuring that the Program Director and support staff, as well as participating academic units, are all working toward a common goal of fostering program growth as evidenced by increased enrollment, regular course offerings, and projected graduation rates that meet or exceed university targets for masters and doctoral programs (2 doctoral students per year/ 5 Masters students per year). After a period of four years the success of the program will be evaluated and if it is succeeding then a new administrative home for the program should be sought using the guidelines provided below. If the program is failing to meet university criteria around enrollment levels or projected graduation rates, then the continuation of the program will be reassessed and if necessary, terminated.

Defining Programs for Graduate School Support

Newly proposed Interdisciplinary and/or intercollegiate (ID/IC) programs which would qualify for initial support from the Provost through the Graduate School would be those that:

1. Involve 3 or more colleges,
2. Involve < 60% of Graduate Faculty from any single academic home unit,
3. Enroll < 60% of students whose major adviser is from a single academic home unit.

Programs not meeting these requirements can still be developed but would be proposed and administered collaboratively between units. Those programs meeting the above criteria would have the Graduate School as their administrative home for four years.

Funding Structure for Newly Proposed ID/IC programs
Newly proposed programs that meet all Category 1 approval processes will be supported by the following Funding Structure for a period of four years:

The Provost via Graduate School will provide funds annually for four years for:

- 0.5 FTE for Program Director
- 0.25 FTE for administrative Assistant
- Up to $5000 for services and supplies

Participating colleges will provide support for the program via a 3-year MOU for:

- Faculty FTE to teach required courses
- GTAs/GRAs
- Other expenses as required (travel, recruiting, etc.)

Program Assessment and Continual Improvement

The Graduate Program will be reviewed after four years to assess success in program growth and progress of enrolled students. If deemed successful, then the program will then enter the decadal Program Review cycle that is required of all graduate programs. The Graduate School will provide annually data on a set of metrics used in program review so that the faculty, students and administration can be aware of the progress being made by the program. In addition, an annual report of progress on achieving program specific graduate learning outcomes will be provided to the Office of Assessment as is required for all graduate programs.

Funding and Administrative Structure for Successful ID/IC programs

Those programs deemed successful after the 4-year incubation period in the Graduate School will be transitioned to an administrative home in one the participating colleges. The program will have a faculty Curriculum Committee consisting of Graduate Faculty from each of the participating units who will ensure continued involvement of all participating units in curriculum, admissions, and program requirements. Funding for the Program Director FTE and Administrative Support FTE will be transferred from the Provost to the administrative home for three years, at which point participating colleges assume responsibility for continued support for the program via an agreed upon MOU.

Termination or Restructuring of a Program

Should any graduate program be deemed unsustainable as a result of failing to meet university metrics on graduation rates, or the result of a graduate program review, then the Graduate School will work with the Graduate Council and the Program Director to cease further admission to the program and initiate a Category 1 proposal to terminate the degree program. All students enrolled at the time of initiating termination procedures will be allowed to complete their degree, but no new students will be admitted.

An alternative to termination is to restructure a program to better meet both graduate learning outcomes as well as university metrics on enrollment and graduation rates. Restructuring can take many forms but may include merging programs and establishing transcript visible options. Graduate options are created and terminated using a Category 2 process so can be much more responsive to market demands as well as shifting expertise among graduate faculty in the program.
Accounting for Faculty Participation in Interdisciplinary Programs

Because faculty can be members of the Graduate Faculty in multiple degree programs, it is important that their supervisor be able to account for Graduate Faculty participation in all programs with which their faculty are involved during annual PROF reviews, and during annual reports to College Deans and the Provost. Similarly, it is important for the directors of interdisciplinary and intercollegiate graduate programs to report accurately the number of students directed by Graduate Faculty in the programs. The Graduate School has begun tracking participation of faculty as graduate advisers and can assist both the Programs and the Departments in documenting faculty participation. Both the Graduate School and the Provost recognize that receiving recognition for their success is important and that student headcount and student credit hours taught (available from the Registrar) should be reported by both the departments for all of their faculty as well as by the graduate programs for all of their faculty. In essence, students are double counted for purposes of receiving appropriate recognition for contributions to multiple graduate programs by a faculty member whose academic home is in a Department or School or College.