

Strategic Collaborations and Partnerships

Graduate School Assessment

One of the most consequential partnerships for campus housing and residence life is with graduate preparation programs. Graduate students/assistants who live in the residence halls provide an integral part of the workforce and are the primary employee pipeline for the profession. Whether it is a student affairs (or related) program at the same institution or an agreement with an outside institution to provide a pool of candidates, it is critical that the two entities are on the same page in terms of professional preparation. A strong preparation for full-time work that incorporates both theory and practice can be crucial to job satisfaction and retention.

As higher education is changing rapidly, so must the professional and academic preparation programs. The purpose of the assessment tool is to gain an understanding of how graduate program curriculum prepares graduates for professional work in higher education. This assessment would be administered to recent graduates within ten years of their degree program. The results can be a springboard to a conversation with faculty to continually reflect upon and improve graduation preparation programs.

With this exercise, the assumption is that the graduate program is either housed on the campus or has a relationship with another institution where assistantships or similar practical experiences are offered to graduate students. Before administering the assessment, here are a few important considerations:

1. What is the current status of the relationship between the HRL staff (primarily the staff responsible for g.a. assignments) and faculty or the program director? If it is not good, what is the root cause? How can it be improved?
2. What are the enrollment trends for the graduate program? Are you easily filling positions, or do you need to recruit outside of the traditional graduate program? What impact is this having on your workforce?
3. What benefits can you offer to the graduate program? If 'perks' in assistantship packages have been removed, can you put some or all back in to aid in the recruitment of top candidates?
 - a. Housing, meal plans, and parking may be standard. Can you look at paid hours of vacation? Promoting continuing education such as a PhD? Built-in professional development and full-time job placement training?
4. Do you frequently share positive news from the division or graduate assistants with the faculty?
5. Many of our staff in HRL have terminal degrees.
 - a. Can members of your team teach in the program? Or assist with courses that are related to current trends that are more practical in nature? Serve on committees?
 - b. For new faculty, can you develop a research partnership as they seek tenure?

This tool is designed to assess the practitioner's:

1. Feeling of preparedness for their work in higher education
2. Gaps in preparation for the actual work experience
3. Reliance on academic preparation in the scope of their work
4. Practical experience from assistantships, practicums, etc. that are still useful in their day-to-day work
5. Advancement of their own professional learning

Data from this tool can be utilized in several ways, including:

- to augment institutional training and professional development plans
- to augment association training and development plans
- to open dialogues with graduate programs regarding ways to incorporate more practical applications of theory
- to support or initiate research projects conducted by ACUHO-I, regional associations, and/or other student affairs professional organizations
- to 'tell a story' of the profession of higher education and/or student affairs administration in order to gain a better understanding
- to develop vision/mission for the higher education and student affairs profession

Graduate Program Assessment Tool

Below are the questions that we recommend including in the assessment. You are encouraged to tailor the questions to meet your specific needs.

- Questions 1-5 are suggested to be drop-down or forced choice so that you can develop a demographic profile that is consistent from year to year.
 - Questions 6-12 can have a drop-down component followed by an open-ended question.
 - Questions 13-18 are completely open-ended, but you may want to add a word limit to make the analysis easier to do. You can add a contact if the respondent would like to give more qualitative information.
1. What was the institution type that housed your academic program?
 - a. Public
 - b. Private

2. In which region was the institution located?
 - a. AIMHO (Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Saskatchewan, Utah, Wyoming)
 - b. GLACUHO (Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio)
 - c. MACUHO (Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, West Virginia)
 - d. NEACUHO (Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Rhode Island, Vermont)
 - e. NWACUHO (Alaska, Alberta, British Columbia, Oregon, Washington, Yukon Territory)
 - f. SEAHO (Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia)
 - g. SWACUHO (Arkansas, Oklahoma, Texas)
 - h. UMR-ACUHO (Iowa, Kansas, Manitoba, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wisconsin)
 - i. WACUHO (California, Hawaii)
 - j. Other (including non-US based): _____

3. Which best describes your academic program? Check all that apply.
 - a. Higher Education/Student Affairs
 - b. Higher Education Administration
 - c. College Student Personnel
 - d. Adult Education
 - e. Counseling/Counselor Education
 - f. Other: _____

4. How large was your cohort or graduating class?
 - a. 10 or less
 - b. 10-25
 - c. 25-50
 - d. 50 or more

5. Did you participate in a practicum, internship, and/or graduate assistantship during your program?
 - a. If yes, which department(s) or student affairs/higher education area were these based in?

6. What was the overall most beneficial (i.e., what helped prepare you the most) aspect of your graduate program?
 - a. Why?

7. What was the most beneficial course or academic component that was part of your academic program?
 - a. Why?

8. What was the overall least beneficial aspect of your graduate program?
 - a. Why?

9. What was the least beneficial course or academic component that was part of your academic program?
 - a. Why?
10. What skills or knowledge did you gain during/from your graduate program?
11. What was the most beneficial aspect of your practical experience (i.e., internship, practicum, or other hands-on training related to your vocation) while participating in your graduate academic program?
 - a. Why?
12. What was the least beneficial aspect of your practical experience while participating in your graduate academic program?
 - a. Why?
13. What specifically was missing from your academic program?
14. What specifically was missing from your practical experience during your graduate program?
15. How did your academic program benefit you most to prepare you for success in your career?
16. How did your practical experience during your graduate program benefit you most to prepare you for your career?
17. What advice do you have for current new graduate students in the field?
18. What advice do you have for graduate students about to graduate and start their first post-graduate full-time position?