

NRC Ratings of Doctoral Programs: An Update

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What is the NRC Assessment?

- A study to assess the quality and characteristics of research doctorate programs at institutions in the US
 - The last NRC rankings were provided in 1995
 - Methodology used in this study is quite different and more robust
- 222 institutions participating
 - Data for over 5000 PhD granting programs



UNC-CH Participation

- UNC-Chapel Hill has **54 programs** participating in the NRC study
 - Programs evenly split among the disciplines
 - arts and humanities, life sciences, physical sciences, mathematics and engineering, and the social and behavioral sciences
- Base year for analysis/reporting was AY 2005-06
 - The ratings will be 'dated' by the time they are published



Data Collection

- Four questionnaires used to collect data
 - Institutional Questionnaire: completed by OIRA and GS
 - Program Questionnaire: response rate = 100%
 - Faculty Questionnaire: 1,352 Core and New faculty were invited to participate in the faculty surveys
 - Responses generated the pool for the secondary survey on discipline ratings and priorities
 - Response rate 82%
 - Student Questionnaire: 143 advanced doctoral students participated in the student surveys
 - Four fields: English, Economics, Physics, and Neurobiology
 - Data not included in the ratings



When will we see the data?

- The results have been promised for months (years)
- Methodology guide released in July, 2009
 - OIRA is reviewing the guide as well as our campus data to generate basic analyses
- Target release of ratings data and original plan:
 - “By the end of the year”
 - “Shortly before the assessment is released” to the public, the campus will receive program data, weighting information, and our own ratings by program
 - Institutions may be informed a month in advance of when the 72 hour mark will occur
 - We are working with News Services on communication strategies to have a consistent campus message and with OIRA on data analyses and distribution



Rating based on 20 variables

- Publications per allocated faculty member (from ISI plus books from CV's in humanities)
- Citations per publication (from ISI and only for fields outside the humanities)
- Number of grants per allocated faculty member (from the faculty questionnaire)
- Interdisciplinarity as measured by the percent of associated faculty, as well as the yes/no response to the question about whether the program is interdisciplinary
- Percent of non-Asian minority core or new faculty
- Percent of female core or new faculty
- Honors and awards per allocated faculty member
- Average GRE score for 2004-06 (verbal for humanities, quantitative for all other disciplines)
- Percent of students with full support in the 1st year
- Percent of first year students with external funding



Rating based on 20 variables

- Percent of non-Asian minority students
- Percent female students
- Percent international students
- Average annual PhDs graduated 2002-2006
- Average percent of a cohort completing (8 years for humanities, 6 years for others)
- Median Time to degree for full- and part-time students
- % PhDs with definite plans for an academic position, 2001-05 (including academic post-docs), based on the Survey of Earned Doctorates
- Student Work Space (1=100% of students w/workspace, -1 if <100% students w//workspace)
- Health insurance (1=provides health insurance, -1=does not)
- Student Activities (number offered from a list of 18)



Weighting for variables is customized for each discipline

	Combined Coefficients	Coefficient Contribution						
Prog ID			13572	21412	26129	31266	51916	56669
Pubs per alloc fac	0.168	17.50%	1.4	2.1	3	3.7	2.2	3.1
Cites per pub	0.111	11.60%	2.6	4.7	1.1	3.9	2.7	3.2
Grants per alloc fac	0.131	13.70%						
% fac interdisc	0.043	4.50%						
% non-Asian Minority		0						
% female		0						
awds per allo fac	0.056	5.90%						
avg GRE Q	0.076	7.90%						
% 1st year stdts w/full supp	0.03	3.10%						
% 1st yr stdts w/portables		0						
% non-Asian Minority stdts		0						
% female stdt		0						
% int'l		0						
Avg Phds 02-06	0.148	15.50%						
% compl w/in 6	0.033	3.50%						
TTD	0.03	3.10%						
% stdts Acad pos	0.022	2.30%						
Std work space		0						
Health insurance	0.02	2.10%						
activities offered	0.088	9.20%						

These cells would all be filled in as above with the data for each institution's program

Program in Chemistry. In this example almost 60% of the rating is determined by 4 variables: publications/faculty, citations/pub, grants/faculty, and program size



Results

- The NRC results will provide a range of ratings for each program, as well as sub-dimensions for the areas of research and scholarly productivity, student support and outcomes, and diversity
- Programs will identify variables that make the largest contribution to the overall rating or dimension and compare their data to that of similar programs



Reporting Ranges of Ratings for a Field

- Programs will be arranged alphabetically and the range of ratings will be given for each
- Ranges overlap for most programs. This means that there may be a number of programs of roughly the same quality
- You should identify those similar “in range” programs in discussing the quality of your programs



Results

- The data will help to determine where improvement is needed and which variables to focus on
- Prospective students may elect to use the public NRC database as one source of information as they investigate graduate programs suited to their academic goals and career aspirations



Handling the media

- Want to ensure there is a single message coming from UNC-Chapel Hill
 - The GS and News Services will take the lead on this
 - There will be a webpage on the GS website devoted to the NRC ratings
 - We will be encouraging all programs to direct people to our website for background information
- We do not know what the message will be until we see the results
- We are asking that you direct reporters to the GS for information
 - Stephanie Schmitt and I will be the point people in the GS

