Chapter 6

From: Diane Corbett
Sent: Monday, November 23, 2009 3:21 PM
To: Sue R Faerman
Cc: Wayne A Locust
Subject: Middle States Edits

Hi Sue,
Please see the attached revision of the Financial Aid section of the Middle States Study (chapter 6, page 8).
Let me know if you have any questions or if I should forward to anyone else.
Thank you!
Diane

Diane Corbett
Interim Director

Financial Aid

The Office of Student Financial Services administers federal, state, and certain institutional student financial assistance programs for undergraduate and graduate students. In addition to overall college financing and financial aid advisement, the office manages a variety of funds, including the Federal Stafford and other federal and state loan programs. It also coordinates the Emergency Loan Fund. All applicants who file a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) are offered at least a $5,500 student loan if sufficient financial need exists. Students may qualify for additional grants, loans or work-study, based on their financial situation and availability of funds.

Of the 13,248 undergraduate students enrolled for Fall 2008, 83% were offered some type of financial assistance including grants and scholarships. Seventy-eight percent of UAlbany undergraduate students apply for need-based financial aid; percentages of students offered financial awards for 2008-09 are in Appendix 6.16. Of the FAFSA filers, 43% have family incomes of less than $50,000. In addition, 23% of FAFSA filers were awarded Perkins Loan, Federal Work-Study and/or Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (FSEOG). More specifically, FSEOG funds are offered to those with a zero family contribution until funds are exhausted. FSEOG funding is limited and insufficient in terms of reaching all of our students with a zero family contribution. Moreover, thirty-nine percent of FAFSA filers receive Pell Grant. This represents approximately 30% of the total undergraduate population for Fall 2008. Pell Grant is the largest federal grant program targeting needy students. Finally, 45 % of students who file the FAFSA receive at least the minimum in New York State Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) Grant assistance. Concerns have been expressed that students are taking off-campus jobs to fill the aid gap thus affecting time to graduation, retention, and grade point average.

Starting in March, admitted students with valid FAFSA data are notified of their financial aid awards. Returning students are emailed that they may view/accept/decline their financial aid awards on MyUAlbany beginning in June for the following fall semester. Students can access additional information on the Financial Aid and Student Services web pages. They may call or visit the Student
Services Center for individualized counseling. In addition, group sessions are held in conjunction with new student orientations. New federal loan borrowers are required to complete loan entrance counseling; they are taken through a series of online data and questions in order to allow their loans to disburse.

We recommend that insofar as possible, UAlbany continue to support and develop initiatives to decrease the amount of unmet need (totaling $27,000,000 for 2007-2008) to allow our students to spend more time on the campus and less time at part-time jobs.

Feedback addressed as follows:
- Revisions incorporated in text.

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Chapter 6.

The “risk/probability factor” model has the benefit of pooling risk across programs. However, it has the potential to result in large enrollment swings from year to year. Can all programs accommodate such fluctuations?

Feedback addressed as follows:
- This concern has been acknowledged in the text, although the subcommittee did not feel that it had evidence to evaluate it. See statement below.

Some faculty have expressed concern that the “risk/probability” model might result in large enrollment swings from year to year, but there is insufficient evidence to date to evaluate this concern.

On p. 15, rather than simply state the average full-time doctoral stipend at UAlbany for 2008-2009, it would be useful to compare that to stipends offered elsewhere, especially at the other University Centers.

Feedback addressed as follows:
- The subcommittee decided that while such comparisons would be interesting, they were not required as part of the self-study.

Regarding the underutilization of ITLAL and GSO, rather than simply encouraging their use, might graduate students who are on teaching assistantships be required to take an ITLAL course?
Feedback addressed as follows:
- The subcommittee decided not to make the proposed recommendation, but it did insert text recommending that the University look into mechanisms for increasing awareness of these services.

Also on p.15, since presently no assistantships are offered to Masters’ students, it might be misleading to say that students at the Masters’ level are supported for two years. Moreover, as stated, it gives the impression that all Masters’ students are supported for two years and all Ph.D. students for four. This should be qualified.

Feedback addressed as follows:
- The text has been revised to incorporate the proposed qualification.

The statement, “Ultimately, all programs were able to make offers of funding to new students for the 2009/10 academic year” on p.15 should be qualified to read “all programs were able to make at least one offer of funding to a new student” since some programs were able to fund only one new student.

Feedback addressed as follows:
- The text has been revised to incorporate the proposed qualification.

At the top of p.16, the full-scale review of doctoral programs was projected for 2009 (not 2010 or 2011) and is currently underway.

Feedback addressed as follows:
- The text has been corrected.

Regarding the second paragraph on p.16, there is disagreement not only on the meaning and measurement of retention across disciplines but also on its significance.

Feedback addressed as follows:
- The subcommittee acknowledges this point but decided no change was required.

On p.16, under “Other Supports,” second paragraph, the Certificate in College Teaching should be prefaced with the adjective “internal,” since this is not a degree-producing certificate program.

Feedback addressed as follows:
- The proposed change has been made.
Overall, there is a contradiction between the recommendation of the MSCHE team of 2000 (p.14) that recommended “substantial enhancement to the graduate student support budget” (which did not occur during the past decade—the increase noted that brought funds to $14.1M represented a small fractional increase over the $13.7M previously allocated) and the recommendation of the Committee now, namely that when a department loses graduate lines it should receive help, including funded initiatives, in regaining strength by revising its practices in light of accepted practice in the discipline” (p.17). The report does not directly reconcile the limited, eroding, and recently cut funding for graduate student support against the recommendation that “funding initiatives” be restored to help programs “regain strength.” While this seems like an excellent idea, there is a disparity between the chapter’s identification of available financial resources and its recommendation concerning programs whose funding may have been cut or which may be cut at some future point.

Feedback addressed as follows:

- **The subcommittee discussed this issue but determined that the text did not require revision.**

On p.19, the recommendation by the Graduate Dean was not to “assure” 5th-year funding, but rather to make it contingent on advancement-to-candidacy by the end of a doctoral student’s funding eligibility, thereby encouraging the student to focus on making progress toward degree and encouraging the student’s advisor (and department) to focus on mentoring their students so that they would be in a position to be eligible for this funding.

Feedback addressed as follows:

- **The relevant text was reworded for clarification about funding being contingent on successful progress towards the degree.**

On p.28, the figures reported for AGEP STEM enrollment may need to be corrected—Appendix 6.22. These appear to be the original figures as reported by a staff person in the Office of Graduate Studies, but were later corrected by a revised report completed by IRPE.

Feedback addressed as follows:

- **These numbers were corrected.**

The chapter is well-written and addresses issues of concern to Graduate Education. In particular, it is commendable to stress that “the University should actively work to ensure that differential cuts to graduate funding across departments as a result of the economic crisis are managed in a way that does not provoke permanent divisions among departments and faculty” (p.20). It would be useful if the report were to offer some suggestions in this regard.

Feedback addressed as follows:

- **The subcommittee determined that the chapter includes a sufficient number of recommendations, especially given page constraints.**
Other comments:
- P. 6: Fourth paragraph, first line: “With regard to building … pool, recommend … “ Is this a command or should it read, “we recommend”? 
- P. 15: Fourth paragraph, last sentence: “ … we funding fewer incoming …” Should read: “ … we are funding fewer incoming …” 
- P.17: The line “based on the risk/probability factor discussed below” should be “based on the risk/probability factor discussed above.”
- P. 35: Retention Object #7, Action Step 1, item 2: --- “Maintain, enhance … and a culture shared of values.” Should read: and a culture of shared values.

Feedback addressed as follows:
- The above editorial changes were made.
- The comments below repeat earlier comments.

From Marjorie Pryse

Chapter 6—
- P.15—The full-scale review of doctoral programs was projected for 2009 (not 2010 or 2011) and is currently underway. (error in fact)
- P. 16—Under “Other Supports,” second paragraph—the Certificate in College Teaching should be prefaced with the adjective “internal,” since this is not a degree-producing certificate program.

Overall, there is a contradiction between the recommendation of the MSCHE team of 2000 (p. 14) that recommended “substantial enhancement to the graduate student support budget” (which did not occur during the past decade—the increase noted that brought funds to $14.1M represented a small fractional increase over the $13.7M previously allocated) and the recommendation of the Committee now, namely that when a department loses graduate lines it should receive help, including funded initiatives, in regaining strength by revising its practices in light of accepted practice in the discipline” (p. 17). The report does not directly reconcile the limited, eroding, and recently cut funding for graduate student support against the recommendation that “funding initiatives” be restored to help programs “regain strength.” While this seems like an excellent idea, I’m simply pointing out the disparity between the chapter’s identification of available financial resources and its recommendation concerning programs whose funding may have been cut or which may be cut at some future point.

- P. 19—Note that the recommendation by the Graduate Dean was not to “assure” 5th-year funding, but rather to make it contingent on advancement-to-candidacy by the end of a doctoral student’s funding eligibility, thereby encouraging the student to focus on making progress toward degree and encouraging the student’s advisor (and department) to focus on mentoring their students so that they would be in a position to be eligible for this funding.

- P. 28—I may be mistaken, but I believe the figures reported for AGEP STEM enrollment need to be corrected—Appendix 6.22. I think these are original figures as reported by a staff person in the Office of Graduate Studies, but were later corrected by a revised report completed by IRPE.

The chapter is well-written and addresses issues of concern to Graduate Education. I am particularly sensitive to the Committee’s concern, as follows: “Actively work to ensure that differential cuts to graduate funding across departments as a result of the economic crisis are
managed in a way that does not provoke permanent divisions among departments and faculty” (p. 20). I wish the report had offered some suggestions in this regard.