

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

INDIVIDUAL PHD PROGRAM

FIVE YEAR REVIEW REPORT

SITE VISIT DATE: APRIL 5, 2010

Submitted by:

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Executive Summary

The report has been prepared following the directives of the charge to the Program Review Committee from the University of Washington Graduate School. The summary and recommendations reported herein reflect the unanimous findings and recommendations of the Program Review Committee.

The consensus of the Committee was that the Individual PhD (IPhD) Program fills a unique niche for highly motivated students who have developed PhD thesis proposals that require interdisciplinary training unavailable in any single University of Washington Program. The findings of the Committee are that this Program is indeed meeting its mission to create a cadre of graduates with novel interdisciplinary skill sets. However, to strengthen the Program, the Committee has provided recommendations based on this review.

The Program Review Committee supports the continuation of the IPhD program because it serves students, graduate programs and faculty, and the University well in fostering research activity that integrates multidisciplinary studies in answering research questions by harnessing collective expertise across departmental lines. In turn, this encourages interdisciplinary work among faculty as well as students. In light of this, the Committee feels that it is imperative that the University and IPhD Administration address the question of whether the IPhD program is getting the attention, enrollment, and recognition that it deserves.

A concern voiced by all Committee members prior to the site visit was the striking decrease in both the enrollment of new students and the completion of degrees in the time since the previous review (2002-2003). Although various reasons for this decline were cited during the visit, this concern remains a predominant one. Without a clear vision for the future direction of this Program and a plan for enhancing program visibility, the Committee is wary of the continued viability of this valuable Program. The Committee encourages the establishment of a five-year plan to invigorate the IPhD and the development of mechanisms for increasing Program visibility. For this reason, the overall recommendation is that the IPhD Program be reviewed again in 5 years.

While the Committee finds that the academic quality of the Program remains high and the success of the students' individual programs are grounded in the successful collaboration between the students, their advisors, and committee members within a strong framework that provides flexibility and individual structure, our review concludes with the following suggestions:

1. Raise the visibility and awareness of the IPhD Program within the University.
2. Establish a sense of community within the Program which may be possible through a seminar that would be a unifying event.
3. Create an alliance with other interdisciplinary initiatives that are currently ongoing at the University.
4. Develop a vision for growth and visibility for the next 5 years.

The Program Review Committee would like to express their thanks to Dr. Gordon Bradley, Director of the IPhD Program and Jean Rogers, the Administrator of the Program, for their insights into the Program and their quick and complete responses to our requests for information. We would also like to express our thanks to David Canfield-Budde, whose organizational skills facilitated all aspects of the review process.

Summary of the Review Process

On May 22, 2009, the Program Review Committee members met with the Director of the IPhD Program, representatives of the Graduate School and Graduate School Council, and The Dean of the College of Arts and Science. The Committee's charge in the review process and Committee questions regarding the IPhD program were addressed. Following submission of the Self Study (February 1, 2010) and Committee review, the Committee requested clarification and additional information (March 1, 2010), which were promptly provided by Dr. Gordon Bradley and Jean Rogers. Prior to the site visit, the Program Review Committee was provided with the results of a survey of current students, which had been conducted by the GPSS. During the site visit (April 5, 2010), the Review Committee interviewed the individuals listed below. In addition, the Committee contacted two recent graduate students and one former student for their input on the Program.

Director of the IPhD Program (Dr. Gordon Bradley)
Coordinator of the IPhD Program (Jean Rogers)
Former Coordinator of the Program (Julia Carlson)
Members of the Standing Review Committee (Drs. Ginorio and Nolen)
Chairs of current students' committees (Drs. Leiren, Spieker, Bell and Grembowski).
Current students (Ryan Campbell, Charles Cange, Kevin Haggerty, Kay Larson)
IPhD graduate (Dr. Janet Powell)
Chairs of Previous Committees (Drs. Ingebritsen and Schwartz)

Exit interviews were held with Dr. Bradley, Jean Rogers, and Administrators (Dr. Judy Howard, Divisional Dean of Social Sciences; Dr. James Soto Antony, Associate Vice Provost and Associate Dean; and Drs. Sharon Sutton and Richard Presland, Graduate School Council Representatives) in which the Committee summarized their findings and preliminary recommendations. This was followed by an exit interview with the Administrators.

History and distinctive characteristics of the Program

The IPhD Program was established at the University of Washington in the late 1960s under the auspices of the Graduate School. The ultimate goal of this program is to offer the opportunity to pursue an individualized course of study for highly motivated students who have developed a research plan and curriculum that is multidisciplinary and cannot be accommodated in any current PhD program. Since the inception of the IPhD Program, 114 individuals have completed their PhD and the majority has been extremely successful in their chosen careers. At the time of the last program review in 2002-2003, the Program had dwindling enrollment and increasing time to graduation. With the emergence of new interdisciplinary programs across the university, the Graduate School had begun to question the need for the IPhD and had placed a moratorium on enrollment of new students until the Program Review was completed. The main charge of the 2002 Program Review Committee was to recommend whether the IPhD Program should

continue. The Program Review Committee determined that the IPhD Program indeed met a distinct need at the UW. The Review Committee recommended specific restructuring changes in program oversight to enhance program advocacy and stated that recruitment of new students should resume.

The charge of the current IPhD Program Review Committee (2009-2010) was to assess the academic and educational quality of the degree program and to provide the faculty with constructive suggestions for strengthening the program. As outlined below, we found that this Program continues to fulfill a distinct need by providing highly motivated students with a unique pathway to realizing their goals. The IPhD Program serves students, participating faculty, and the University as a whole--all at very minimal cost. The Committee remains concerned about low visibility and diminished enrollment in comparison to the previous time period (1993-2002, 22 graduates; 2003-2009, 2 graduates).

Program Administration

The 2002 Program Review Committee recommended changes in the administration and oversight of the IPhD program, in which the Standing Review Committee, charged with admissions review, was appointed by the Graduate School and chaired by the Dean of the Graduate School. While the Standing Review Committee was effective in its tasks, they were not playing an advocacy role and due to the Dean's other responsibilities, she could not devote sufficient time to one graduate degree program. The proposed restructuring of this governance included having the Graduate Program Coordinator chair the Standing Review Committee, changing the composition of the Standing Committee to faculty members who had been involved with the IDP or had a special interest in the Program, and expanding the responsibilities of the Standing Committee. In response, the governance was restructured in a logical way by appointing Dr. Bradley, who had previous involvement and knowledge of the Program, as the Director and Head of the Standing Review Committee and by inclusion of faculty with IPhD experience and/or strong interest in the Program on the Standing Review Committee.

The Standing Review Committee reviews applications, determines whether there is an existing Program that meets the students' proposed areas of study, reviews student curriculum and committee make-up, and monitors student progress. The Committee meets twice a year to 1) review applications and interview applicants and 2) review current student progress.

The Graduate Program Coordinator (Jean Rogers) oversees the daily administration of all aspects of the Program. Incoming students are provided with clear and complete information about program structure, requirements and expectations, financial considerations, and University requirements for graduation. Students and faculty members alike were satisfied with the Program's communication. Based on the collective comments of those interviewed, it is clear that Jean is the anchor to the Program, students, Standing Committee, and faculty participating in student mentoring/training. The Program Review Committee would like to recognize the outstanding and effective efforts of Jean Rogers in program administration.

Overall, we found that this governance serves the students well. The Standing Review Committee provides appropriate functional oversight and rigorous screening of the proposed

interdisciplinary studies of students seeking admission into the program. It was unclear how many years the members of the Standing Review Committee are expected or committed to serve. We found the members of the Standing Review Committee that we interviewed to be passionate proponents of the Program who were committed to maintaining rigorous curriculum and research expectations of students in the Program. The members of the Standing Review Committee were all enthusiastic and persuasive advocates for the Program's potential.

A finding and major concern of the Program Review Committee is that there does not appear to be a clear direction, goal, or vision for the future of the IPhD program. Different perspectives were heard ranging from keeping the status quo to promoting additional development that would be exciting and invigorating to the IPhD Program and beneficial to the University.

Based on these findings, the recommendations of the Committee are:

1. The Program Administrators should develop a vision of where the program should be in five years and a specific plan on how to get there.
2. Members of the Standing Review Committee should rotate every three years (or other defined time). We encourage recruitment of former students and previous mentors of the program, which will enhance participation of the University community and increase visibility of the Program.

Academic standing

In addition to the materials provided in the self study, the committee asked for and received the proposed programs of study of current and recent students. We found that the curriculum programs were rigorous and reflected the multidisciplinary areas of study. The Program Review Committee questioned whether students who graduate from the IPhD Program do so with the required in-depth knowledge and expertise in each discipline. This concern was abated following discussions with current and former chairs of IPhD Doctoral Committees. In short, the Program provides a successful way to develop both breadth and depth.

The energized students that we interviewed highlight a most compelling need for the IPhD Program and the contribution that it brings to the University. The Committee found a group of very mature students with diverse interests, but a commonality in purpose to pursue a PhD in their unique area of multidisciplinary training. Overall, the students were highly satisfied with the Program. A theme reiterated by all of the students was the opportunities that the IPhD Program provided for motivated students to route and define their own pathway. When asked if there were weaknesses in the Program, the students were unanimous in stating that if students are not self-motivated and self-directed, the IPhD program is not for them.

In turn, the Program Committee found the faculty mentors to be highly committed to student success. One of the advisors noted that an IPhD student, who will graduate soon, was already recognized as a "leading scholar" in the fields of study that she melded. The faculty members find mentoring of IPhD students to be very enriching and rewarding because the research questions were so innovative and interesting. They also highlighted how the multidisciplinary nature of the committee built bridges between disciplines within the University. Although

committee members come from diverse programs, they effectively negotiate general exam format and navigate how research is driven.

Our findings are as follows.

1. The students who are attracted to the IPhD Program are highly motivated, directed and enthusiastic. They view this Program as a unique and wonderful opportunity.
2. The Projects would not be possible under another system and has value that goes beyond individual interests.
3. Without this Program, it was absolutely clear that the University would have lost these students. Some would have gone to other institutions; others would have left academia altogether.
4. These students think “outside of the box” and the training afforded through the IPhD Program produces future leaders who will continue to do so.
5. Major benefits to the University are the fostering of collaborative efforts of faculty in diverse fields and area of expertise and the potential for development of new Interdisciplinary Programs. Indeed, the IPhD training of Dr. Janet Powell, who melded Rehabilitation Medicine /Psychology/Education, was a program incubator that generated a new degree program, Rehabilitation Science, at the University of Washington. Dr. Powell is currently an Associate Professor in the Department of Rehabilitation Medicine at the UW, another beneficial outcome of the IPhD Program to the University.

Program Cohesiveness, Visibility and Recruitment

One of the challenges of this type of Program due to the diverse areas of student study is the development of a sense of community. The Program sponsors a yearly student and faculty get-togethers over lunch to promote interactions, of which current students spoke favorably. Some students integrate into Departments through attendance at seminars or coursework, while others seem to have minimal integration. While the need for a sense of community or program cohesiveness varied among current and former students, additional activities such as quarterly meetings among students to discuss research/programmatic progress or public seminars by students which are attended by IPhD students/faculty would promote cohesiveness. Another possibility to establish a sense of community would be to invite alumni/ae of the Program to the University every year or two to demonstrate successes of individuals completing the IPhD. Public seminars by students/alumni/ae could also enhance program visibility, which is discussed below.

A theme that the committee heard repeatedly was the lack of visibility and awareness of the Program within the University of Washington. We recognize that the IPhD program is targeted toward a unique, but realistically limited group of students and does not actively recruit students because of the nature of the IPhD. However, we anticipate that there are additional students who would seek the opportunities afforded in this Program, if they were aware that such opportunities exist. Suggestions that emerged from site visit discussions included increased advertising, public student research presentations, Program representation at appropriate UW recruitment fairs, highlighting the IPhD program at orientation of new UW faculty and connecting Graduate

Program Coordinators from other Interdisciplinary Programs or Units with an interest in participating/developing interdisciplinary programs with the IPhD Coordinator. The IPhD is a pioneer program and an investment in the future of graduate education. As such, it should be included in interdisciplinary program connections established through the Graduate School and Provost's office. Finally, although it may not be appropriate to recruit students outside the University, the Program itself could serve as an advertisement for the principles of the University of Washington and its commitment to interdisciplinarity and innovative styles of teaching and research.

The 2002-2003 Program Review Committee recommended that the IPhD should also recruit outside of the UW. However, the Graduate School Council in recognizing the need to consider growth in the context of the needs of other Graduate Programs, encouraged enhanced advertisement and visibility at the UW, but not outside recruitment. We revisited the question of limiting enrollment/recruitment to the UW, when the Program had the potential to attract students from other environs. Paradoxically, although the Administrators in the Program felt that familiarity and experience with existing UW programs, curriculum and faculty were critical in developing programs of study, three of the current or recently graduated students effectively had entered into the Program without these advantages.

The recommendations of the Program review committee are:

1. The Director and other members of the Standing Review Committee should explore potential ways to highlight the program and increase program visibility within the University.
2. The University should foster interactions and include the IPhD Program in interdisciplinary program connections.
3. The IPhD Program should have flexibility in recruitment/enrollment of students from outside the UW.

Funding and sustainability

The Program receives limited support from the University of Washington, which is allocated to the necessary administration. Since the last review, a Program Director was appointed, who receives two weeks of summer salary. The budget also supports 15% of the Program Coordinator's time. This financial support should be continued. When Dr. Bradley assumed directorship, there was a very small residual budget to support programmatic activities (\$2800 was available for student travel and programmatic activities for the 2003-2009 period). No additional allocations were given to the Program during this time.

Prior to the site visit, the Program Review Committee had concerns that funding of students would be an issue with students and that IPhD students would be at a disadvantage in competing for traditional funding available in the appropriate Departments. However, we found that the students appear to be resourceful in identifying funding and this did not appear to be a major concern of the current students.

The recommendations of Program Review Committee are:

1. There should be continued financial support of the Director and Graduate Program Coordinator.
2. The University should provide consistent support for programmatic activities to recognize the value of this Program and to foster a sense of community amongst the students and faculty participants in the Program.

Overall Recommendation:

There is enthusiasm for the continuation of this IPhD program which is unique and meets a distinct need at the UW. We recommend that this Program should be reviewed in 5 years.