

# Building a SERU Graduate Student Survey

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Ron Huesman (University of Minnesota)
SERU Consortium

# Challenges Faced by Graduate Education in the U.S.

### Ph.D. Attrition

- 6.6% leave in their first year
- 30.6% leave without a degree by year ten

### Ph.D. Time to Degree

- 56.6% complete their degree within ten years
- 7.7 years the national median time to degree in 2008

### International Competition

- 33,000 S&E doctoral degrees awarded in the U.S.
- 28,000 S&E doctoral degrees awarded in China
- 15,000 S&E doctoral degrees awarded in Russia
- 11,000 S&E doctoral degrees awarded in Germany

Note: data on doctoral degrees are presented for 2007-2008

Source: Council of Graduate Schools (2008), National Science Foundation (2009, 2012)



## **Survey Rationale**

A survey can provide vital information about graduate/professional student experiences while enrolled that may help improve graduate education outcomes (i.e., increased graduation rates, faster time to degree, and help students find successful careers.)



# The Need for the New Graduate Student Survey

### Existing Surveys

- External exit surveys: Survey of Earned Doctorates & Survey of Doctorate Recipients (NSF)
- Institutional exit surveys: encouraged to use Graduate Education Exit Survey (AAUDE) core as a component
- Locally developed institutional student experience surveys: (UC-Berkeley, the University of Texas at Austin, the University of Michigan, Rutgers)

### Benefits of the New Survey

- a joint effort between AAU and SER-I
- the survey will focus on graduate student experiences while enrolled in school
- the survey will provide data for cross-institutional and international comparisons



# SERU Graduate Student Survey

- Graduate: term used in the broadest sense
  - Master's, Ph.D., and 1<sup>st</sup> Professional
- December 2012 first draft developed by SERU Co-Pl Gregg Thomson
- Joint partnership: current draft is a merging of University of Minnesota-Twin Cities and Center for Studies in Higher Education, UC Berkeley efforts



## Sources: Existing Surveys

- Extensive review of existing surveys
  - Examples
    - External Surveys:
      - Graduate Education Exit Survey -- Association of American Universities Data Exchange (AAUDE)
      - Survey of Doctorate Recipients -- National Science Foundation (NSF) & National Institutes of Health (NIH)
      - Survey of Earned Doctorates -- National Science Foundation (NSF)
    - Institutional Surveys:
      - University of Minnesota Doctoral Graduates Exit Survey (UMN)
      - Duke/MIT Graduate Student Survey (Duke University & MIT)
      - Graduate School Climate Survey University of Texas at Austin



# Sources: Carousel Brainstorming Session at UMN

Areas of Interest in Graduate & Professional Student Experiences Identified during the Brainstorming Session:



Academic, teaching, research, and professional development opportunities



Advising



**Finances** 



Challenges and barriers



# Sources: Carousel Brainstorming Session at UMN



Community



Why are you here?



Support



**Outcomes** 



Health & well-being



Expectation fulfillment



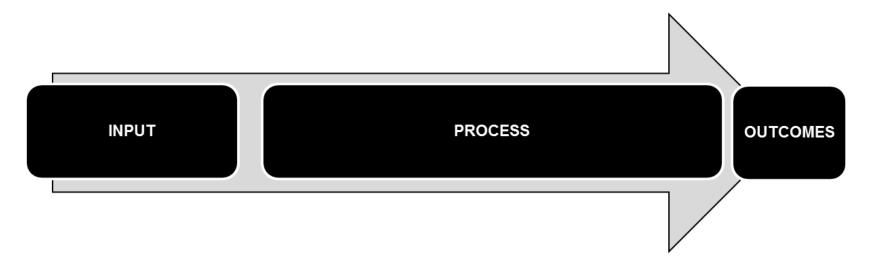
Other (ad hoc topics)

## Sources: Review of Current Research Literature on Student Experience

- Tinto's theory of graduate persistence (1993)
- Astin's model of student development in higher education (1970)
- Research literature that identifies the key individual-and institution-related factors that impact on student success (degree completion & time to degree) in graduate school



## SERU Graduate Survey Conceptual Framework



Conceptual framework: provides a basis/blue-print for survey development; mapping of final items to each domain will provide an item rationale document and a useful guide for conducting research with the survey in the future.

### Attributes Entry Orientations

### **Student Experience**

Socialization

into the

**Profession &** 

**Professional** 

**Development** 

Professional

values and

ethical issues

offered by the

college/school/

Other

Institutional

**Support** 

amenities at the

**Financial** 

**Support** 

financial support

· Satisfaction with

**Graduate School** 

Opportunities

program/

· Quality of

institution

Impact of

employment

university on

degree progress

consequences of

outside the

Anticipated

debt burden

#### **Outcomes**

# Student Background/ Current Status

- Demographics
- Parents' educational attainment
- Current program
- Type of degree
- Stage in the program

# Previous Higher Education Experience

- Degree, field, institution
- Time elapsed since completing a previous degree

### Financial Resources

- · Ability to pay
- Undergraduate /graduate loans

### Admissions & Entrance

- Goals
- Reasons for selecting a program
- Program communications

### Financial Support

- Sources
- Degree of support

### External Commitments

• Work

# • Family

### Program Climate

 Satisfaction with the program climate

### Advising & Mentoring

- Quality of advising
- Areas of support from an advisor
- Areas of support from a mentor

### Dissertation Stage

- Dissertation topic
- Dissertation proposal

#### Research Experience

- Experience with research-related activities
- Sources of financial support
- Interdisciplinary research and its challenges

### Teaching Experience

- Training
- Teaching experience
- Impact on degree progress

### Career Plans & Changes

- Changes in career plans during grad/prof studies
- Careers towards which professional preparation is oriented in a program
- Factors
   influencing
   career choices

#### **Obstacles**

 Factors that help or hinder degree progress

# Graduate/ Professional Degree Completion

 Commitment to complete a degree in the current program

#### Proficiency Levels

 Development of academic, research, and professional skills

## Overall Program Satisfaction

- Satisfaction with various aspects of a program
- Fit between students' values, expectations and the program



Note. Derived from Tinto (1993) and Astin (1970).



## Questions

- Contact
  - -Ron Huesman
  - -huesm003@umn.edu