

**SELF-ASSESSMENT
SUMMARY OF GOALS AND ACTIVITIES
NCSU – ECONOMICS**

- Condition #1:** *The right people apply for doctoral study.*
Condition #2: *The right applicants are admitted as doctoral students*
Condition #3: *Students and faculty form productive working relationships*
Condition #4: *Students experience social support from fellow students*

Conditions	Goals /Activities	Timeline
#1.	<p>Goal: To maintain a high quality applicant pool. Applicants generally obtain a lot of information about our program before applying. They do this by consulting our website, querying the director and assistant director by email, stopping by the economics graduate program office and consulting current students and alumni.</p> <p>The website could be easier to find. It is buried within the broader College of Management website, not an obvious place to look for those keen on Agricultural Economics (The economics grad program is a joint program of two departments (the Econ Dept in the College of Management and the Ag and Resource Econ Dept in the College of Ag and Life Sciences).</p> <p>The international applicants (particularly Chinese) rely quite a lot on published rankings of doctoral programs to learn about us. The rankings are slow to reflect changes in our faculty. This is both good and bad. Our place in the rankings (around 50th?) took a long time to establish and will be slow to dissipate even as some of our star faculty depart (as has happened recently). But failure to maintain a strong faculty will eventually have an adverse effect on our ranking and weaken the pool of applicants semi-permanently. For now, the right people apply, but we should not take this for granted.</p> <p>Activity: The NCSU College of Management has contracted with a third party to completely revamp its web site including the section devoted to the economics grad program.</p>	<p>This will be done within a year and after that we can consider whether further tweaking of the web site is warranted.</p>

#2.

Goal: Re-evaluate the department deferred enrollment and terminal Master degree enrollment practices

A committee of three members of the graduate faculty in economics including the director of the economics graduate program review all applications as they become complete. A complete application includes transcripts, three letters of reference, personal statement, GRE scores and for most international applicants TOEFL scores. In recent years the average number of complete applications received has been around 100 and about 2/3 of these have been accepted. We are only able to offer financial assistance to around 10 entering PhD students, while another 10 usually enroll without our financial support. Having closely observed this process for the last three years, I am confident that our criteria for ranking applicants are correct. The criteria are these:

- Do the letters of reference favorably compare the candidate with other students who have succeeded?
- Does the personal statement highlight relevant accomplishments and indicate the applicant knows what PhD study entails?
- Do the transcripts indicate necessary prior training in math, statistics and economics?
- And finally, do the GRE scores set off alarm bells?

Those ill-prepared for doctoral study, or unsure if it is for them, have the possibility of applying for the masters program (without financial support). This induces self-identification of some marginal students, which is good. Recently there have been some suggestions among faculty that we could better deploy our limited faculty resources by declining to admit terminal masters students and stop offering courses intended for such students. We would continue to allow PhD students to earn a Masters degree en route to the PhD. This would have an adverse effect on recruitment of doctoral students.

We routinely allow those accepted for study to defer enrollment for one year. Occasionally this results in students beginning PhD study elsewhere, and deferring enrollment at NCSU, then encountering academic difficulty and the following year enrolling at NCSU. Those who flunk out of another PhD program and then apply to NCSU for the first time are seldom admitted. Maybe in light of this we should be less free to allow deferrals of enrollment.

In the coming year we should bring the matter of deferred enrollment in the PhD program before the economics graduate faculty and determine whether a less accommodating policy is warranted.

#3.	<p>Goal: Implement Research workshops to assist students in choosing a dissertation Chair an/or a topic.</p> <p>It is very common for PhD students to co-author papers with their dissertation chairman. TAs assigned as graders generally meet with approval. But, student participation in workshops both as presenters and commenters is less than would be ideal.</p> <p>RAs could be used more effectively. Faculty are loathe to train an RA, perhaps because the effort may not pay off. Faculty wish to attract students as RAs who excel in the classes they teach, and who are likely to choose the faculty member as dissertation supervisor. Not every RA can fit this pattern. We need to find other patterns that also work.</p> <p>Students would benefit from more inclusion in workshops. Weaker students need more structure. For example students having passed the written comprehensive exams could be required to regularly attend a series of workshops or even themselves to make a presentation. We have experimented with this sort of requirement with mixed results and should probably keep trying. Many students here flounder a bit at the point of finding a thesis advisor and choosing a topic.</p>	<p>The coming year we should again attempt to form economics PhD students into workshop attending groups based on their specialties.</p>
#4.	<p>Goal: Plan and encourage more social events : Some do more than others. There are informal study groups formed of students in the same cohort for class work and preparation for written comprehensive exams. (The comprehensive exams are four hour exams in microeconomics and macroeconomics taken by all students in the summer after their core year). Inevitably, the informal study groups tend to comprise students of common nationality. This may work against students that are the sole native speakers of a given language (English?). The grad student association is generally active at organizing inclusive social events. The social distance between students and faculty is less here than in many other programs which probably is good.</p> <p>We should probably hold more frequent officially sponsored student social events, ones that include</p>	

	<p>everybody.</p> <p>We had a welcoming reception this year (August 2006) and it was a great success.</p>	<p>We should continue this tradition in future years and seek ways to do more in the years ahead</p>
--	---	--