A Message from the Provost

Enhancement of Graduate Research at Rowan

The current model for graduate education at Rowan University was designed for graduate programs that generate revenue from tuition paying students. The model provides for revenue sharing between the general fund, CGCE, the department, the college, and the Provost, and the graduate program must be fully self-sustaining to survive. This model works well for programs that can attract tuition-paying students. However, as Rowan becomes a research university, this model becomes increasingly problematic for graduate programs whose primary mission is to enhance the research capabilities and fund-raising ability of faculty.

As such, the existing structure will be cleaved into two distinct pieces: Revenue-Generating Graduate Programs that will remain under the auspices of CGCE, and Research Graduate Programs, for whom the academics are controlled by the department and whose operation reports through the Associate Provost for Research to the Provost.

For a program to qualify as a Research Graduate Program, it will have to meet the following conditions:

- The primary purpose of the program is to enhance faculty scholarship in an area of targeted research growth in the university (i.e. – STEM).
- Faculty in the program are expected to pursue external funding and must have a self-sustaining program with critical mass within 5 years.
- Faculty in the program are not compensated separately for supervising graduate research as they are working with the students as a means of enhancing their own research rather than as a service to the university.
- The research culminates in a formal Master’s Thesis.
- The student be required to take no more than 30 credits, at least 9 of which are thesis credits.

The funding model that regulates revenue-generating programs cannot be applied to research graduate programs. However, there is a way to allow the programs to thrive at minimal cost. Consider the following analysis:

A typical graduate student takes their classes over three semesters (Summer-1, Fall-1, Spring-1) and finishes his/her thesis in the second summer (Summer-2) while taking the last 3 credits of thesis research (9-9-9-3). Of these 30 credits, each graduate student takes 21 credits of “classroom” classes and 9 credits of thesis research, yielding the following cost structure:
21 credits * $1,400 adjunct cost per credit = $29,400 to cover the cost of classes

9 credits of research * $0 = $0 to supervise the scholarship

However, graduate students do not take a class alone. Currently, most of our graduate classes in potential research programs run with student populations of less than 10 graduate students, but nearly half of the classes operate as cross-listed graduate/undergraduate classes with no unique cost to including graduate students in the course. If we assume that as programs grow, graduate-only courses will be more common but the population in a given graduate course will also increase. With a relatively conservative estimate of 10 graduate students in a class, the unique cost of educating one graduate student becomes:

$29,400 of classes / 10 students per class = $2,940 per student.

Thus, by charging a flat rate of $1,000 per semester for the 4 semesters of residence, we will generate $4,000 in revenue with an actual cost of less than $3,000. The general fund would be unharmed, but the cost for a researcher to support a graduate student from a grant would drop dramatically.

However, reducing tuition alone will not be sufficient to grow research graduate programs. For a research graduate program to thrive, there must be some number of University-sponsored graduate stipends to ensure a critical mass of students as well as provide continuity of funding between external grants for faculty members and support the research efforts of new faculty. Virtually all research universities employ such a model through TAs or university funded RA lines.

Each research graduate program will receive three $12,000 graduate stipends ($1,000 per month) per year. The recipient of each stipend will be required to teach one course (replacing the cost of an adjunct) in the Fall-1 and one course in the Spring-1 semester to maintain the stipend. The savings from not needing to hire a separate adjunct to teach the classes would be $8,400. The total costs of awarding such a stipend would be only $3,600. For a program with 3 such graduate students, the total cost to the university would be $10,800.

For each university-provided stipend that a program wishes to provide, the $3,600 cost be covered in equal thirds by the department (from return on indirects or other CGCE funds), the dean (also from indirects or CGCE), and the Provost’s office.

Also, the reduced tuition rate will allow the department to accept any number of self-funded students for whom the cost of the master’s degree would be only $4,000 total. The department could also choose to cover the tuition costs for some of these students from return of indirects or from CGCE dollars.

It is also possible that a department could have both research-based and revenue-generating programs running at the same time. For example, Civil and Environmental engineering faculty could participate simultaneously in a research-based M.S. in Civil Engineering program run through the Associate Provost for Research and a revenue-generating MEMS (Master of Science in Engineering Management) program through CGCE.

Taken collectively, this plan provides research-based programs with the opportunity to grow significantly with minimal cost to the university. Consider a program with a dozen graduate students. A typical breakdown might come as follows:
• 7 students supported through external grants. Each pays $1,000 per semester of tuition (either personally or covered through the grant). All stipends are paid by the grant.
• 3 students supported by the university-provided stipends of $12,000. Each student teaches one class in the fall and the spring. The remaining $3,600 per student is covered via return on indirects or through revenue-generating programs.
• 2 students self-fund. They pay $1,000 per semester of tuition. They receive no stipend.

Qualifications for approving the research advisor and appointing graduate students in such programs will be handled at the college-level, with final approval coming from the research office. In most cases, the approval will be pro-forma. Any program participating in this model will need to formalize a process for appointing a thesis committee.

At the discretion of the departments, students may have their reduced tuition rate and/or stipend extended for 1 or 2 additional semesters, but university-provided stipends may not extend without expressed consent of the Dean and the Associate Provost for Research.

This new model will come into effect for the next summer session.

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Provost

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