


Memorandum

To: Faculty Senate
Seton Hall University

From: Karen E. Boroff, Ph.D. 
Interim Provost and Executive Vice President

Re: Approval of Graduate Studies Committee Resolution
2019-FS-12

Date: June 28, 2019

The Office of the Provost received the Graduate Studies Committee Resolution approved by the Faculty Senate on May 10, 2019.

In her opening remarks to the Stewardship Task Force Committee, President Meehan indicated that the rationale in creating the committee and using the Huron analysis to inform discussion was this:

“Well-being and success of students is to be a priority in our decision making... from that follows programs and offerings that will lead to their success... The more we can be the best stewards of the funds to which we are entrusted, the better will be the value proposition of their tuition dollars.”

Graduate degree offerings have been designed by the faculty. As specifically detailed in the *Faculty Guide*, the respective directors of these various programs have the leadership responsibility for their programs. These responsibilities include ensuring that the respective curricula are academically vibrant, and that faculty teaching in these programs have the scholarly portfolio to teach master’s level or doctoral students. An academic director also must ensure that a given program has a business plan that demonstrates program sustainability, or in the alternative, articulates how a program contributes to a college or school in the face of operating deficits. As you know from the Huron analysis, many of our graduate degrees do not have positive margins. Program directors are responsible for understanding the market landscape and demand for their programs. In the face of negative margins, these directors need to confer with their deans to determine the going-forward financial plan so all can make informed decisions on the portfolio of programs in a college.

You know that the Stewardship Task Force was composed of various stakeholders, including the faculty. Both Drs. Lothian and Holtzman were present to hear the discussions. They are both graduate directors of their programs. The Huron consultants met with the deans on the information

that Huron assembled. The firm produced a snapshot, and everyone could weigh in on whether the data was accurate. I instructed the deans to share the information with their program directors. I sent Drs. Lillquist and Cuccia to meetings to review what the Huron data indicated and to answer questions regarding the basic assumptions. I also asked the colleges and schools to respond to a set of questions. One immediate benefit to the Huron information was approval of differential tuition for some graduate programs to help increase enrollment.

In furtherance to keep our graduate portfolio vibrant, I have been very responsive to requests for new programs on the graduate level. Both the MS in Physics and the MS in Data Science have been approved based on the value proposition they put forward. Yes, we ask for information regarding enrollment and sunset clauses so as not to continue a drain of resources that are better used elsewhere. I have offered to fund a full-time faculty member for both programs for three years.

In support of graduate recruitment, I brought the Graduate Processing function under the Office of the Provost. We have seen some benefits in that arrangement including better focus on graduate applications, greater responsiveness to applicants and reduced time to decisions. Certainly, the Graduate Open House attendance has increased and we continue to seek ways to increase the graduate funnel.

I am sure that as President Nyre works with the entire community on a new strategic vision, he will call on various faculty groups to be a significant part of the conversation. Given the vast array of graduate programs, I believe it might be difficult to have a “single vision” of the graduate enterprise at Seton Hall University. I do see several important parameters that may be the lens in which we collectively evaluate any graduate program.

These include:

- Is there a proven market demand for the offering? Is the program competitive in terms of course offerings and time to completion?
- Does the program break even? If it does not, what is the loss tolerance and within the college, how is the loss absorbed?
- Are the faculty teaching in the program research active, to an extent consistent with the typical research expectations for faculty at doctoral institutions?
- Does the program have a proven track record of placing its graduates in careers suitable for the graduate credential earned?

In the book used for facilitating our recent deans retreat, *Surviving to Thriving: A Planned Framework for Leaders of Private Colleges and Universities* by Joanne Soliday and Rick Mann, the point is made that,

“There must be conscious decisions about how many graduate students, how many traditional undergraduate students, how many nontraditional degree-completion students, etc., so that we are planning for growth, not responding to it, or the lack of it. Without careful planning, the pie will cut itself.”

They continue,

“This is about taking control of your own destiny. It is about intentional planning instead of a reactionary response.”

Program directors are at the forefront of the planning and viability of their programs. We owe it to our students and the vitality of our programs to understand the shifting tides of graduate education and the creation of the needed margins to fund scholarships. We all seek a sustainable plan for the future of graduate education. The vision put forth in your document is a good one as long as it recognizes that any good plan entails more than adding to the status quo, or to “lower tuition.” It may require some realignments at times, but directors, more than anyone, can see needed directions first.