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Educating Scholars: Doctoral Education in the Humanities is the story of the one of the largest programs ever launched to improve graduate education in the humanities. The book is historical, evaluative, critical and reflective of the Graduation Education Initiative funded by the Mellon Foundation and driven by high attrition and time to degree rates in the humanities. There are 12 chapters and four major parts. Part I describes the data, methods and context of the program implementation. Part II evaluates the measured influences on attrition, completion and time to degree. Part III examines student's transitions from graduate study to career. Finally, Part IV depicts the lessons learned and findings of the program evaluation. The book is full of

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statistical data analyses, graphs, charts and descriptions of the evaluation plan. The strengths of the book are reflections of lessons learned and the recognition that cultural and organizational changes are challenging and unpredictable in a complex higher educational environment. The book reveals the importance of adding to the body of knowledge in scholarly research in that researchers can apply the “lessons learned” to other settings and in particular to programs aimed at organizational change.

Chapter 1 is an Introduction to the Graduate Education Initiative (GEI), a ten-year program from 1991-2000, funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, to the extent of 85 million dollars. At the time of its implementation the GEI was historically the largest effort or initiative in US graduate programs. The intent of the GEI was to improve graduate education in the humanities and other social science areas, reduce high attrition rates and shorten the time to degree. Dissatisfied with previous programs that funded universities or individual students, the GEI provided funding to departments. In addition at the time of its implementation interest in the humanities as a field of study was waning and high attrition rates of 50% or more seemed especially problematic. The disturbing trends concerned scholars and researchers in the humanities and social sciences. Berelson’s study in 1950, known as the “grandparent of the GEI research” (p 4), predicted shortages in future graduate faculty and heightened concerns about the future of “educating scholars” in the field. Understandably, the catalysts for the GEI were Bowen the president of Mellon Foundation and author of several books (most recently “Crossing the Finishing Line”) and vice-president and Rudenstine. Both are notable scholars and researchers in the field of graduate education.

Chapter 2 is a discussion of the research design and evaluation plan. In order to participate, recipients were required to provide student record data and formative evaluations on an annual basis. The provisions of data collection and departmental reports were not negotiable. However, departments were allowed to facilitate and plan programs under their own direction provided the objectives

of GEI were intact. As mentioned, data sources were departmental reports and student record data from the participating institutions. The study used a pre/post longitudinal design to determine program effectiveness. Pre program data were gathered among the institutions to establish baselines. The baseline or pre program measures were compared on an ongoing basis to program outcome measures. Since, the Mellon Foundation recognized early on that economic changes confound results in program evaluation, control groups were established, and measures of program effectiveness captured the “counterfactual.” The “counterfactual” is a term used to indicate what would have occurred had the program not been in place. In 2002 an additional source of data was utilized and integrated into the original research design. The Graduate Education Survey (a survey of completers and non-completers) was developed to get a better understanding of specific program elements and student factors that contributed to program impact.

Chapter 2 is a technical schema of how variables and GEI program effectiveness were measured. Attrition and Time to Degree were outcomes of interest and explanatory variables were GRE scores, race and ethnicity, gender, citizenship, receipt of prior Master’s degree, financial support and academic status each year. The discussion described the use of descriptive summary statistics, multivariate linear regression, logistic regression, factor analysis, marginal effects, t-statistic and difference-in-differences techniques among other sophisticated statistical techniques. The techniques were explained in a manner that an understanding of multi-variate regression and correlations is probably sufficient, although a second read is recommended. The techniques were applied in subsequent chapters and their utility became clearer throughout the book.

Chapter 3 introduced the reader to the participating institutions. Recipient universities were chosen using one single criterion: Ten universities that had attracted the largest number of Mellon foundation fellowships in the humanities were selected: University of California at Berkley, Chicago, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Columbia, Cornell, Harvard, Princeton, Stanford and Yale. The control groups

were chosen among non-treatment departments in the ten universities with three exceptions. To complete the selection of the control groups three comparable universities agreed to provide control group data: University of California at Los Angeles, University of California at San Diego and UNC Chapel Hill. The universities selected four to six departments to receive the awards and were also involved in the selection of control groups. In total 54 departments were involved in the study. Participating treatment institutions submitted proposals explaining changes that would be made to improve their programs. Early on the funders realized that departments varied in terms of size and the envisioned changes perceived as needed to implement the GEI program. The readers will notice that these factors come into play in program evaluation and introduce complexities in determining the effectiveness of the GEI program. In addition, there was “treatment contamination” among the control groups, which led to less than desired indication of differences among the treatment and control groups. The various stages of doctoral completion are pertinent to the discussion of doctoral student progression as Tinto (1993) outlined at the end of his 1993 book and measures were tracked by stages.

The estimates presented in Chapter 4 revealed the GEI led to modest improvement in time to degree, attrition and completion rates. In Chapter 4 authors mentioned “treatment contamination” probably occurred and reduced the extent of impact. The evaluators also understood changes occurred over time and were difficult to measure and capture. Since the program provided financial support, Chapter 5 discussed the influence of financial aid support and the unintended consequences an influx of resources brought to a department.

Recall that financial support was an attractive incentive to participation in the initiative. The results revealed financial aid and the increase of student study time that aid afforded did not go un-noticed by the students. Multi-year packages and front-loading financial aid accelerated in treatment departments, which jointly reduced attrition in the early years but contributed to “languishing” in later years.

Students were attracted to guaranteed or competitive financial aid and over time the quality of students increased as indicated by GRE scores at entry. Departments were allocated the same amount of funding regardless of size and consequently departmental sizes decreased in order to allocate higher amounts of financial aid per student. Competitiveness among students was not one of the original intentions of the GEI but occurred in response to the equal amount of funding (not dependent on departmental size) to participating departments and the departmental decisions to reduce cohort sizes.

Chapter 6 utilized the information gathered from the Graduate Education Survey to understand how various elements of the doctoral programs, and the perceptions of those elements filtered through students, and in turn how those elements affected students' attrition and completion probabilities. Factor analysis was used to reduce the survey elements to scales that were used in subsequent analyses. Overall chapter 6 provided a discussion of the use of factor analysis in survey data and how survey research findings informed program designers. Chapter 6 might serve as a stand-alone chapter for researchers interested in factor analysis as a data reduction tool.

Chapter 7 is an illuminating discussion of the role of gender and marital status upon entry of the program but a noted weakness is the discussion lacked the impact of marriage, parenthood, divorce and other life changes during doctoral study. Those interested in these topics will find the analysis might allay concerns about gender differences in higher education and the impact on completion and attrition rates and is a good introduction to the topic.

Chapter 8 added to the discussion of why students stayed in or left programs and results suggested most students left within the first two years of study. Analyses of why students left programs added to the discussion of doctoral attrition in general, and informed the findings of other scholars in the field such as Chris Golde and Barbara Lovitts and the recent Ph.D. Completion Project ("Ph.D.C Program Attrition Data, 2010,") Barbara Lovitts (2001) found leavers of graduate

school worked in entry level jobs and diminished the value of their unsuccessful educational pursuits. On the other hand, Chris Golde (2005) found students who left programs obtained employment commensurate with their education and skills. Both scholars added insight to a common perception that departed students do not market themselves in terms of increased educational levels. In Golde's (2005) study and among the graduates in the GEI study some non-completing students transferred to other institutions or departments and eventually earned doctorates. In addition students were likely to be employed in tandem with increased skills and employability as a result of graduate work.

Chapter 9 examined career outcomes and whether or not graduates were able to obtain tenure track positions. As expected, immediately after graduate study tenure track positions were less represented among graduates. However, over time, about three years after graduation, the graduates were more likely to seek and obtain tenure track positions. Interestingly the likelihood of a tenure track position after three years diminished if a student prolonged their tenure in graduate school. In addition, publications in graduate study were related to securing a tenure track position.

Chapter 10 revealed the importance of graduate programs encouraging students to publish during graduate study. It is suggested that faculty who promote scholarship among their students are increasing their marketability in the faculty job market.

The strengths of this book are the remaining chapters 11) lessons learned and chapter 12) findings and implications. Specifically, there are practical applications across different settings. As the chapters unfold the complexities of higher education settings are revealed. Departmental sizes, norms, traditions and processes come full circle in a variation of departmental changes with the intent of improving graduate programs. The issues surrounding program evaluation and institutional change are relevant to administrators, staff and faculty members charged with evaluating programmatic changes over an extensive period of time.

The authors revealed programs varied from department to department and among institutions. There is also a thoughtful discussion of the issues in longitudinal research or tracking and measuring change over time. Not only did the programmatic changes vary among institutions and departments, some changes were stopped early on when early reports did not reveal the expected changes in attrition and time to degree. However, as the authors pointed out, institutional change takes time and probably needed more time to influence outcomes.

The reader can learn and apply such terms as counterfactual and the use of baseline data as a methodology of pre-measures that will be used to gauge impact. There is a good discussion of “control group contamination” and why a control group was needed, such as changes taking place in the external environment that prompted the need for a control group. In addition, not only did control group contamination occur due to external forces such as a faltering job market, but also it was likely the control group contamination occurred internally as departments gained “buy in” for and interest in proposed changes.

A discussion of “unintended consequences” is useful for a department, program, or institutions considering intentional change. One unintended consequence of increased financial aid was the increase in competition among students and departments for resources. This outcome is not surprising. Presumably a change in one area leads to an often “unintended” change in another. Discussions of “unintended” consequences are extremely important for program designers and administrators in complex higher education settings.

Related to Chris Golde’s (2005) findings the research indicated that more than a few students who left programs returned to higher education and earned doctorates. As Chris Golde (2005) found in her qualitative study students left programs when the program no longer matched student’s needs or goals and a good number of them succeeded in doctoral education in other venues. However, in “Educating Scholars” the institutions shared responsibility

for the content of their programs and the GEI appeared to generate interest among institutions in critically evaluating its actions and monitoring the progress of students.

One of the fundamental aspects of program evaluation and research in general is to recognize that the GEI did not originate or evolve in a vacuum. In Chapter 1 the authors provide a synopsis of current and past research in the field of doctoral education that helped shape the dialogue concerning doctoral education and the effectiveness of graduate programs. Although not intended to mention all the research, Chapter 1 provided information regarding the debates taking place among scholars regarding the future “stewards” (Golde & Walker, 2006) of the academy.

Overall, the book is technical in scope and lacked a rich discussion of perspectives of faculty, students and administrators. Although not intended to be qualitative in design, germane are the lessons learned and the discussion of common issues in program evaluation or institutional research. To be sure, the technical work involved was well worth the insightful discussion at the end of the book. Interesting to me, there was some discussion of faculty resistance or ambivalence and the authors acknowledged, in hindsight, faculty responsiveness or the lack thereof provided an underlying current to program implementation not fully considered in its outcome measures. I would recommend the book for higher education researchers interested in program evaluation and organizational change. The book does not provide a simple formula to improving graduate programs but an overview of how to measure program impact and the characteristics and challenges of the long and arduous task.

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