STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT OF THE MARKETING PH.D. PROGRAM

The primary goal of the Marketing Ph.D. Program is “to train doctoral students whose research abilities allow placement at top-tier research universities” (Marketing Department Strategic Plan, revised 10/2008). By serving as teaching assistants in 6M:100 “Introduction to Marketing Strategy” class, the doctoral students enable the supervising faculty member to incorporate projects and assignments that further develop the writing and critical thinking skills of our undergraduate students. In turn, these teaching experiences help prepare our doctoral students for future careers as faculty members. Maintaining a high quality and sufficiently large doctoral program is instrumental in attracting and retaining research active faculty in the areas of marketing modeling, consumer decision making and marketing strategy. Doctoral students also support the department’s outreach efforts by serving as teaching assistants for MBA PM classes taught in off-campus locations throughout the state of Iowa.

Admissions Process and Criteria

The demand for doctoral education continues to be strong, which has allowed the Marketing Department to be highly selective in its admissions. During the years 2004-2008, the department admitted less than 15% of applicants (on average). This trend continued this year (2009), wherein we admitted 4 students out of 32 who applied (12.5%).

Our criteria for admission are comparable to our peer schools in the Big 10. We look for outstanding GMAT scores (at least above those in the highly regarded full-time MBA program) and excellent grades in a candidate’s undergraduate/graduate studies. While our department does not require a master’s degree as a condition of admission, we have found that most -- if not all -- of our applicants have completed prior graduate work before applying to our program.

We have had difficulty in our admission process with lack of usefulness of the TOEFL as a certification of a candidate’s skill with spoken English. In our department, students must be able to work in the classroom in order to receive funding. There are no alternative sources of funding our students. In recent years, we have had several students unable to continue in the program due to their inability to pass the required SPEAK test.

In our admissions process, we admit the best students who apply to Iowa without regard to our being able to enroll them. We occasionally lose an admitted student to another program that offers a higher level of support. In some instances, the student is seeking an appointment that does not require teaching (as is the usual case with most private universities). Despite these challenges, we tend to enroll about half of the students we admit. This year, we will enroll 3 of the 4 students we admitted.
With respect to diversity, our program supports the diversity indicators of progress monitored in the UI strategic plan. Using our 2008-2009 cohort as an example, we have a highly diverse program. Forty percent of the students are female and ninety percent are international students from across Asia (China, Korea, Japan and India).

We have very few applications to our program from Hispanic or African-American candidates. We expect this is primarily due to the fact that, until very recently, there has been a very strong job market for graduates of MBA programs, our main pool of potential applicants. Consider that the typical compensation for a 2008 MBA graduate from the Tippie School of Management was $82,000 versus a package of support totaling some $25,000 in the Marketing Ph.D. program. Consequently, our primary competition for students is with private industry rather than other doctoral programs.

Our standard commitment to a student is for five (5) years of support. Depending on available resources, some of this support is in the form of research scholarships in the second and third years of the program. These awards are funded by SIF grants and allow the student to: 1) write a second year research paper, a major requirement of the program and 2) develop a viable dissertation proposal. All of the other funding for the students comes from a combination of assignments as a grader and a teaching assistant. However, we rarely allow doctoral students to teach an entire course. Teaching assistant assignments are generally in support of a large-section format class taught by a faculty member.

**Program Outcomes**

Our average time to completion over the time period 2004-2008 was 5.0 years, which is in line with the expected program length. This is nearly 18 months less than the average for the entire campus.

Our completion rate (1996-2000 cohorts) was 56% which is higher than the average for social sciences (including business) at 43% and in line with the campus average of 55%. During this time period, we admitted 9 students and 5 completed their doctoral studies. This compares favorably to the accounting and management science departments who had the same number of graduates but admitted 66% and 110% more students respectively. It is important to note, however, that due to the small size of our program, the loss of a single student affects our results by 11 percentage points. Students who leave the Iowa Marketing Doctoral Program usually move to another program (either at Iowa or another university) or take an industry job. On rare occasions, a student is asked to leave due to failure make adequate progress in the Ph.D. program.

From 2004 to 2008, we nominated 10 students for the Presidential Fellowship. A total of 4 students were offered the Fellowship. Of these, only one accepted the offer. The Presidential Fellowship is a very prestigious award and comes with a good level of support. The fact that few of the students who received the award actually enrolled at Iowa is an indication of the level of competition we face for the best students.
To illustrate the quality of the students in our program, we recently examined the outcomes of the research projects that our students undertook during their second year in the program. In 2000, we made a major change in our program to emphasize the importance of empirical research. In the second year of the Iowa Marketing Ph.D. program, each student undertakes a major research study under the supervision of a faculty member. The quality of our students is reflected in the number of these papers that have been published. From 2000 until 2007, nine students successfully completed the second-year paper requirement. Of these, five have been published so far (two journal articles, two articles in refereed conference proceedings and one book chapter). One additional paper is currently being revised for submission after an unsuccessful review at a top-tier journal.

We have only nominated two students for the Ballard Seashore Fellowship (from 2006-2008). One student was offered the award. Two students received Graduate College Summer Fellowships of the seven we nominated between 2004 and 2008.

In the last several years (2001-2008), we graduated 11 students in total. Of these, ten were placed in tenure-track positions. (The eleventh graduate has since secured a tenure track appointment at a historically black college or university (HBCU).) There were four appointments at research universities (Carnegie Classification 15 or 16) and two appointments at research-oriented universities overseas (Nanyang Technological University in Singapore and University of Technology, Sydney). These are highly desirable placements for our graduates since these schools emphasize research in faculty evaluations. The remaining four appointments were at larger, master’s degree granting universities (Carnegie Classification 18), where there is more of a balance between teaching and research. These are very acceptable placements for our graduates.

**Program Characteristics**

The current program has ten students. This is close to our ideal range of 10-12 students in total across all five years of the program. We have recently had several retirements of senior faculty (and one resignation of a junior colleague). In their places, we have hired very high quality assistant professors. These additions bring new skills and interests as well as more energy to the department. However, while these new hires are interested in working closely with doctoral students on their second year papers or dissertations, the Marketing Department cannot permit these activities to interfere with an assistant professor’s research program. Therefore, much of the “day to day” supervision of the doctoral students falls on the senior faculty (4.25 FTE full professors and 2 FTE associate professors).

Our program is similar in size to our peers in the Big 10 (excepting Michigan and Northwestern). One major difference is our reliance on other departments (e.g. economics, statistics, psychology, etc.) for a great deal of the students’ coursework. We offer only two doctoral seminars per year in the department. This is due to restrictions on small class sizes imposed by the Tippie College of Business Dean’s office.
The major strengths of the program arise from the strengths of the University of Iowa and the Tippie College of Business. Our students are able to work with outstanding professors on the leading edge of research methodology from biostatistics, geography, statistics, and economics. Our students who research consumer decision making benefit from the very strong Ph.D. program in psychology. This cross-disciplinary training is very valuable.

We have a few weaknesses to work on. First, due to the program’s structure, many of our students have much more exposure to methodology than substantive problems in marketing. This skews their view of the scope of marketing as a discipline. This narrow focus does not serve them well when they assume their roles as teaching faculty. Second, like those in many fields, our students do not write well. Some of these problems are due to language, since for many in our program, English is not their native tongue. We will have to find ways to leverage UI resources in writing to help our students become better scholarly writers. Finally, our students need to be involved in presenting their work at academic conferences. While the travel support from the Graduate College is greatly appreciated, we have to secure more resources to expand these opportunities for our students.

The current reorganization of funding away from block grants and towards SIF grants has helped us support the change in our program towards involving students in their own research in the second year. However, we do not have the resources to support the research efforts of junior faculty using doctoral student research assistants. (It should be noted that, in past years, research assistants in the Department of Marketing have only worked on research papers in which they were a co-author. Doctoral students in our department have never done “grunt” work.) The lack of research assistantships is a lost opportunity for students in their first year of the program: first-year doctoral students cannot be funded to work on research with Marketing faculty. At the same time, this situation hurts our ability to attract newly minted faculty members, since most other competitive research business schools include research assistants as part of the overall package of support.

The Tippie College of Business is, at its core, a research business school. Unlike faculty at other business schools, professors at Iowa spend comparatively little time on executive training or consulting. For our department, the key to attract and retain high quality junior faculty is a viable and successful doctoral program. It is integral to creating a supportive and successful research environment for everyone in the Department of Marketing.