Task Force on Graduate Education: Selective Excellence

Program Ratings and Rationale

Program: Economics M.A., Ph.D. Program
Rating: High Quality

Economics appears to be a strong program of high reputation with many strong attributes including high quality student research, and a strong but changing applicant pool. Selectivity is high, and TTD of 5.3 years compares favorably to other social science programs. However, doctoral degree completion (32%) is low considering the quality of the program and student admits, although according to the strategic assessment it is comparable to Economics programs across the US. Diversity is limited to gender, and a strong international contingent, while under-represented students are very rare. Funding is adequate, but like other TCOB programs, is heavily dependent upon teaching assistantships. However, the TA experience has allowed students to develop as excellent teachers resulting in good academic placements in top Economics departments (i.e., Princeton University, New York University, the University of Virginia). The assessment notes that due to faculty losses, the department is the smallest among its peers. Peer Economics programs are noted to be larger, with more faculty and financial sources to support doctoral students, and many are administratively located in Colleges of Arts and Sciences. The Task Force agrees with the program’s concern that the shrinking faculty size is leading to irreparable damage to the doctoral program and further consideration should be given to prioritize Economics as a central program to the UI’s social science offerings.