Task Force on Graduate Education: Selective Excellence

Program Ratings and Rationale

Program: Religious Studies M.A., Ph.D. Program
Rating: Good

According to the NRC report, Religious Studies is the only such program in the CIC consortium of institutions. The department currently offers a graduate program with three areas of concentration: Modern Religious Thought, Historical Religious Traditions, and Religion and Culture in Asia. The student applicant pool is steady and quality is improving, as is selectivity. The program should focus on admitting students whose research interests match those of the department faculty. Diversity in the student body is improving as well. The median TTD of 7.8 yrs for the cohort entering from 1996-2001 seems high, especially considering that another 5 students from this cohort are still enrolled. The % completion of 37% is low, but the program is making strides to improve. The Task Force recognizes the fact that students often need additional language studies and/or time for field research. Placement of degree recipients occurs at a spectrum of academic settings. Although students compete for internal and external funds, financial support models need improvement and likely relate to the long TTD. The size of the graduate program (28 PhD and 7 MA students) related to faculty size (10.75 FTE) seems justified. The program articulated an appreciable self-awareness of its problems and is developing strategies to make improvements. The TF recommends that the graduate program faculty explore potential curricular and scholarly synergies with other humanities programs in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.