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Effectively Managing Time to Degree: Best Practices for Doctoral Advising

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Effectively Managing Time to Degree:
Best Practices for Doctoral Advising
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Project Description

The intent of this project is to identify best practices in doctoral advising at WMU and in the professional literature. This project aims to support the goal of reducing the time to degree for graduate students at WMU, which is identified as an indicator in the Academic Affairs Strategic Plan 2010. This project will focus on time to degree (TTD) for doctoral students at WMU.

Phase I: Data Gathering & Review of Key Literature
- Gather WMU data on doctoral programs
- Collect & review literature
- Academic Leadership Academy Poster Presentation

Phase II: Research Project
- Refine project and gain HSIRB approval
- Identify 2 WMU doctoral programs each in: a) sciences, b) humanities, and c) social sciences
- Conduct focus groups and utilize electronic surveys with faculty doctoral advisors, advanced students and recent graduates
- Identify factors that facilitate and inhibit timely degree completion

Phase III: Distribution of Findings
- Develop & distribute a doctoral advising best practice info sheet
- Share results with key WMU stakeholders & administrators
- Conduct a workshop at WMU for doctoral advisors on TTD
- Submit manuscript for publication

Desired Outcomes

Short-term:
1. Increase awareness of faculty of current data for time in degree for their doctoral program.
2. Identification of best practices for excellent programs at WMU.
3. Identification of best practices in the professional literature for effectively managing time to degree for doctoral studies.
4. Identification of barriers or obstacles that lead to longer time in degree.
5. Develop and distribute to doctoral program faculty and chairs an informational sheet on strategies for effectively managing time to degree and best practices for doctoral advising.

Long-term:
1. Reduce average time to degree for doctoral studies at WMU
2. Reduce time to degree for those programs that have especially long averages for time to degree.

Measuring Time to Degree

Elapsed TTD: Time from entry into doctoral degree to the awarding of the degree (can be difficult to measure when master’s is attained along way and lack of clear beginning of doctorate).

Total TTD: # of years between awarding of the baccalaureate and the attainment of the doctoral degree.

Registered TTD: Includes only when student is registered in graduate school, excluding time taken off.