

Proposal for a Continuous Enrollment Requirement for Ph.D. Students

Rackham Chairs and Directors Meeting
February 12 and 13, 2008

The Proposal

- Ph.D. students would be required to register every fall and winter term from matriculation to degree completion, unless on an official leave of absence
- Summer registration would be required only if students are taking a course, taking preliminary examinations, or defending their dissertation

The Proposal

- If students register during the fall and winter terms, students would have an “active” student status year-round, allowing access to the resources and services offered by the University during the summer, even if not registered during the summer term.
- If students do not register, they are considered to have withdrawn and are no longer students

Goals of Continuous Enrollment

- Goals of the change are educational, not financial
- Tuition rates will be reduced in proportion to expected increase in registrations
- Total tuition cost remains the same

The Goals of Continuous Enrollment are Higher Completion Rates and Shorter Times-to-Degree

University of Michigan Ph.D. Statistics

- Overall Completion Rate: 67%
- Median Time-to-Degree: 6.0 years
- Average Time-to-Degree: 6.7 years

- Higher education research confirms importance of continuous enrollment
 - Promotes stronger connections between students and their programs
 - Stronger links between students and their student colleagues
 - Creates more structure with milestones and deadlines
- Most of UM's peer institutions have a continuous enrollment requirement for doctoral students.

University of Michigan International and Domestic Ph.D. Students

	International	Domestic
Completion Rate	75%	60%
Median Time-to-Degree	5.3 years	6.2 years

In every division, international students have higher completion rates and lower time-to-degree.

What Problem are we Trying to Solve?

Students who are not registered face difficulties and hurdles that often slow their progress or contribute to their dropping out of their program. For many purposes, technically they are not students when they are not registered.

What Problem are we Trying to Solve?

- Programs and faculty are more likely to lose track of unregistered students
- Students encounter difficulty accessing University services and resources, and may miss important communications
- Implications for visa status, loan eligibility, loan deferrals, financial aid, and employment
- An unregistered status increases the chance that students will drift

Patterns of Registration for Ph.D. Students

Pre-candidacy

- Most pre-candidates already register continuously
- Registration rates are 95% for fall and winter terms

Patterns of Registration for Ph.D. Students

Candidacy

- Registration rates for candidates are 70%
- Wide variation among the schools and colleges from a low of 30% to a high of 90%
- On average, students register for 5 semesters within an elapsed span of 7 semesters in candidacy

Benefits to Students

- Student status ensures access
- Fosters connections to programs, faculty, student colleagues and reinforces structure in program
- Summer access is part of the proposal
- Provides eligibility for aid and enables loan deferrals
- Encourages and supports expeditious completions

Benefits to Programs

- Active student population is known
- Support systems for enrolled students cover all students
- Encourages and supports expeditious completions

Benefits for Administrators

- Enables the full and consistent provision of services to students
- Supports better decision-making because data reflect the full population
- Eliminates the need for policies that create a student status for non-students

Aspects of the Proposal that bring Additional Benefits

- Elimination of Required Fee Totals
- Leave of absence policy
- Recognition of the year-around claim on students' time and attention
- Lowered tuition rates in candidacy

Proposed Change in Candidacy Tuition

- Candidacy rates will be lowered in proportion to the increase in registrations
≈ 25% reduction
- Total tuition cost and total tuition revenue with the new requirement will be the same as they would be under current practices

What Happens to the Tuition that is Paid?

- All tuition is a revenue source to the General Fund and is allocated by the Provost
- Rackham does not collect tuition and Rackham's budget is not based on tuition revenues. Rackham would not see any change in budget due to the new requirement
- School and College budgets are developed with an activity based model that attributes tuition to them

Won't Students Pay More of the Tuition Bill with this Requirement?

- In candidacy, students (or their direct sponsors) pay about 7% of the total tuition
- The financial modeling of this requirement assumes that the student share remains constant
- The goal of the requirement is to benefit students not to impose a financial burden on them

- Rackham, the deans, and the Provost are committed to making the necessary changes that will smooth the transition to the new requirement
 - Some colleges may need to change the aid allocations to programs
 - Rackham will restructure grants and aid awards to reflect lower tuition rates for all candidates and increased registrations
 - There will be contingency funds at transition to deal with unexpected problems, and a commitment to work on finding permanent solutions to them

Detached Study

- Problems arising from current policy
 - Students aren't eligible for University services or employment yet often are resident in Ann Arbor and need access to these and other items
 - Some programs and some faculty encourage inappropriate use to avoid a tuition assessment even though a student may be disadvantaged by this

Detached Study

Why should students who are remote from Ann Arbor for degree work still register and pay tuition as they would if we adopt the continuous enrollment policy?

Detached Study

- Students are actively working on their UM degree with the supervision and guidance of UM faculty
- Technology and ease of travel allow most students to continue to work with faculty, program and administrative offices
- Registration requirements and tuition assessments are not driven by a measure of an individual's use of resources
- Candidacy rates are being lowered and reflect tuition that would be assessed for periods of remote study

Process and Timeline

- Calendar year 2007
 - Analysis and discussions with:
 - Rackham Executive Board
 - Provost's Office
 - Deans of the schools and colleges with Rackham programs
 - Rackham student leadership
- December 2007
 - Proposal

Process and Timeline

- January – March 2008
 - Input from constituent groups
 - APG (Provost and Deans)
 - Associate Deans/Associate Provosts Group
 - Budget Administrators Group
 - SACUA
 - Rackham Chairs and Directors
 - Rackham Student Forum

Possible Next Steps

- March 2008
 - Decision on the proposed policy by Rackham Executive Board

If Rackham policy changes, then

- April 2008
 - Discussions with Executive Officers and Regents

If tuition rate change proposal and summer access proposals are approved, then announcement will be made that the change will be effective in Fall 2010

Two Year Window to Implementation Allows:

- Current students to finish under old rules, if they choose
- Programs, schools and colleges to revise distribution of aid to reflect lowered tuition rates and increased registrations
- Administrative areas to create procedures, make system changes, and ensure that handbooks and websites reflect changes in policies

The Goals of this Proposed Change are Educational

- Our policies should support our goals for students
 - Successful and expeditious completion of the Ph.D.
 - Early rather than late attrition for students who determine that this isn't their goal
 - Successful professional placement with degree in hand
- The financial incentives arising from our policies should align with our educational goals