

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

Detailed Assessment Report 2013-2014 Dean's Office - Graduate School *As of: 7/21/2014 10:46 AM EST*

Mission / Purpose

To advance graduate education as a critical component in the transmission of new knowledge, new research, new ideas, and new scholarship in the university and to provide a rich learning environment that attracts and retains outstanding graduate students to work closely with outstanding faculty to advance knowledge and understanding that enables us to address the complex issues of today's society and tomorrow's future.

Graduate School Core Functions

- Continuously reviews the university's graduate programs and policies
- Establishes and maintains rigorous admission and academic standards
- Acts as an advocate for graduate education in the university and the state
- Supports interdisciplinary communication and endeavors
- Helps prepare graduates to serve as leaders for the commonwealth, the nation, and the world

Admissions and Academic Progress

Provide services that support policies and promote good practices relating to graduate admissions, education, enrollment and degree completion.

- Ensures that admission standards are met
- Monitors academic progress of enrolled graduate students
- Enforces Graduate School policies
- Ensures that graduation standards are met

Recruitment and Diversity

Build and promote a diverse and inclusive graduate community by working with academic and administrative units in the recruitment, retention, and graduation of a high performing, diverse student body.

- Manages student recruitment strategies
- Organizes programming to support the growth and community building of underrepresented populations
- Responds to general inquiries about graduate education at Virginia Tech
- Organizes campus visits
- Sponsors cross-campus collaborations of promoting an inclusive campus community

Student Services

Provide services that contribute to the professional and academic development of graduate students and enhance their quality of life while at Virginia Tech; promote a microcosm of graduate culture in the university environment.

- Administers graduate assistantship program, including tuition remissions
- Organizes seminars and workshops to support the personal and professional development of graduate students
- Manages GLC reservations
- Organizes orientation programs

International Graduate Student Services

Provide immigration support services that keep the university in compliance with federal regulations and uphold Graduate School policies and procedures while supporting the academic goals and objectives of international students.

- Issues immigration documents to all qualifying international students
- Manages SEVIS registration each semester
- Monitors immigration status of international students and ensures continued eligibility for benefits or employment

Goals

G 1: Timely and accurate response to inquiries

Provide timely and accurate information about Graduate School policies and procedures and about the status of student records (applications, exams, Plans of Study, etc).

G 6: Increase GAAP Advisor job responsibility efficiency

Increase staff efficiency by reviewing all current job responsibilities and eliminating outdated job duties (rejected applicant transcript processing, ETD review items) as technology enhancements have been implemented.

G 7: Update GAAPs scanning protocols to include IGSS immigration/financial documents

IGSS currently scans immigration documents as part of the face-to-face check in process with all international graduate students: passport ID page; I-94; I-20 or DS-2019 form; and a check in sheet noting the student's local address. Scans

are done of incoming government funding documents as well. There is no other scanning function in place at this time.

IGSS staff were concerned about all immigration financial documents not being scanned upon receipt, and needed to address an ongoing problem with missing documents that did not make their way to IGSS for processing.

IGSS decided to propose a meeting with Graduate Admission and Academic Progress staff (GAAPs) and IGSS staff regarding a possible change to the GAAPs scanning protocol for incoming documents. Currently, immigration documents (Immigration Information Form, passport ID page, affidavit of support, funding documents at a minimum) are not scanned when received by mail or email by the GAAPs Document Manager.

G 8: Create workflow for IGSS to receive scanned documents in BDMS from a GAAPs workflow

An initial meeting was held on October 31, 2013. Participants invited were Mark Hoppe and Caleb Wherry from DMS; Janice Austin, Director of Graduate Admissions; Ruth Athanson, Tina Lapel and Zelma Harris from IGSS.

Janice indicated that the Document Manager could scan in all incoming immigration documents as part of her current processing. In the current GAAPs process, the Document Manager scans in incoming documents, and an existing workflow fires which lets a GAAPs employee know that they have documents in their inbox that need to be reviewed and processed. A new process could have the Document Manager scanning GAAPs documents to a GAAPs bucket and IGSS documents to an IGSS bucket, and two separate workflows would fire to GAAPs and IGSS staff.

Pdf scans that come to the grads.vt.edu email can be scanned by the Document Manager directly to IGSS.

Mark and Caleb from BDMS in AIS had several concerns and pointed out decisions that need to be made:

- Too many places to store data—needs to be discussed
- Who has query access to what information? Security permissions needed.
- FERPA requires secure transmission of documents
- Who has access to what information? GAAPs to IGSS; IGSS to GAAPs; scan only; add or delete; index, re-index, or annotate?

The group decided that GAAPs and IGSS can query each other's documents, but only GAAPs can change GAAPs documents, and IGSS can only change IGSS documents. Janice will request permissions from Caleb for cross-queries as part of a JIRA request update.

IGSS needs to develop additional document types for scanning so these can be added to BDMS

Caleb has to create a workflow to fire documents to IGSS, and once this is in place Tina and Ruth will have to check daily and process incoming documents

Other Outcomes/Objectives, with Any Associations and Related Measures, Targets, Findings, and Action Plans

O/O 3: Class on diversity and inclusiveness

Δεπελοπ ανδ οφφερ α χλασσ about topics and research in the areas of diversity and inclusiveness.

O/O 4: Expedited review of POS

Plans of study will be reviewed and approved or returned to the academic unit for corrections/modifications within one calendar month of receipt in GR status.

O/O 6: Update GAAP Advisor Job Responsibilities

Review and update GAAP job description responsibilities to reflect current duties and priorities

Related Measures

M 2: Assess GAAP Advisor Job Responsibility: Transcript Processing

Review transcript processing procedures to identify where efficiencies can be introduced based on number of transcripts received per year and the amount of staff processing time is required for transcript review.

Source of Evidence: Efficiency

Target:

Reduce staff processing time on application transcripts in the length of time taken between transcript submission and coding into Banner

Finding (2012-2013) - Target: Met

The fastest transcript processing time (calculate gpa, look up id, code in SOAPCOL) was determined to be an average of 3 minutes per transcript. For 2012, we received a total of 12,314 applications of which 4,925 were recommended for admission and 7,389 were rejected. Using the general assumption that we receive one transcript for master's applicants (8,229) and two transcripts for doctoral applicants (4,085), we estimate that we received 16,399 transcripts. If the fastest transcript processing staff member did all transcript processing, it would take that staff member 102 8-hour days to process transcripts each year. If the fastest transcript processing staff member did only transcripts for applicants recommended for admission, it would take that staff member 39 8-hour days to process transcripts each year. The difference in staff processing time between processing all transcripts and processing only those for applicants recommended for admission is 63 8-hour days. After review of the time we were taking to process transcripts for all applicants of which over half were rejected for admission, we began only processing transcripts for students recommended by academic units for admission. This change in practice has freed staff time to focus on other job responsibilities, allowed for more rapid review of transcripts for those who are recommended for admission and improved staff morale regarding timeliness of processing and not feeling as if they are always months behind in their work.

Old process: a staff member reviewed each transcript received, calculated the gpa for the last 60 hours and coded the transcript information into Banner for all transcripts received (~16,399)

New process: a staff member reviewed each transcript received, calculates the gpa for the last 60 hours and codes the transcript information into Banner for only applicants recommended for admission (~6,189 transcripts)

M 3: Assess GAAP Advisor Job Responsibility: ETD Review Process

Review items advisers must review when approving an ETD to determine what items are outdated due to technology enhancements, which items are unnecessary to review, and which items must continue to be reviewed. For those items identified to continue review, document justification for review.

Source of Evidence: Efficiency

Target:

Reduce staff processing time on ETD review by identifying outdated review items and providing justification for the items that must continue to be reviewed.

Finding (2012-2013) - Target: Met

A 24 item checklist was being used to review ETDs. Each item was reviewed individually to determine if the item should remain or could be removed from the review list. Upon review, 8 items were identified as no longer needing review due to technology enhancements during the submission process that matched the student information with their record in Banner automatically, were rarely used features (hyperlinking), or were part of the degree clearance review process. The remaining 16 items were identified as necessary to continue reviewing. Justification as to why the item is reviewed was documented.

O/O 7: (7) Create new GAAPs scanning protocols for IGSS immigration documents

- (7) Improve efficiency in handling receipt of immigration documents
- Save paper by scanning instead of copying
- Save advisor time and printer time by scanning rather than copying
- Save work study time by not creating additional documents for filing

Related Measures

M 5: Discussion about handling immigration paperwork between GAAPs and IGSS

Discuss changing scanning protocols in GAAPs to include scanning IGSS immigration documents
Increase collaboration between GAAP and IGSS staff

Source of Evidence: Discussions / Coffee Talk

Target:

Work with Janice Austin to document current scanning process in GAAPs

Create a flow chart of the current scanning process

Discuss how the scanning process will change by adding IGSS immigration documents

Create a flow chart of the proposed updated scanning process

Continue work with Janice and BDMS staff to make the necessary changes

Flow charts and procedures also are available on the Graduate School shared drive, and are used as training materials for continuing and new IGSS staff members.

Finding (2013-2014) - Target: Partially Met

Met with Janice Austin on 2/24/14 and went through the BDMS process currently used by GAAPs to scan and log in received documents.

Developed flow charts showing the current processes.

Once the Banner Data Management team develop the additional workflow piece, we will add an additional flow chart showing the new process(es).

Flow charts and procedures also are available on the Graduate School shared drive, and are used as training materials for continuing and new IGSS staff members.

M 6: Increase efficiency in handling immigration documents required for immigration form issuance

- Increase collaboration between GAAP and IGSS staff
- Encourage students to upload pdf files by email to IGSS advisors for review, rather than mailing paper documents
- Expand existing scanning process in GAAPs to include IGSS immigration paperwork
- Store scans in one place for quick retrieval by both GAAP and IGSS staff
- Develop workflow in BDMS so that scans from GAAPs will move automatically to IGSS for processing

Source of Evidence: Efficiency

Target:

Work with Janice Austin to document current scanning process in GAAPs.

Create a flow chart of the current scanning process.

Discuss how the scanning process will change by adding IGSS immigration documents.

Create a flow chart of the proposed updated scanning process.

Continue work with Janice and BDMS staff to make the necessary changes.

Met with Janice in April 2014. She indicated that Phase 2 of her GAAPs work with the Banner BDMS team is supposed to be completed sometime in June, but it may not be in time for any additional targets for the 2013-14 assessment cycle. This work probably will have to carry over to the 2014-15 cycle.

O/O 8: (8) Create workflows in BDMS for IGSS documents

Increased IGSS efficiency

Save student's time and money by accepting pdf scans of immigration documents rather than mailing original paper documents

Decreased filing for advisors and work study students

Workflow streamlines document management and access to documents after scanning

Related Measures

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- Develop workflow in BDMS so that scans from GAAPs will move automatically to IGSS for processing

Source of Evidence: Efficiency

Target:

- Work with Janice Austin to document current scanning process in GAAPs
- Create a flow chart of the current scanning process
- Discuss how the scanning process will change by adding IGSS immigration documents
- Create a flow chart of the proposed updated scanning process
- Continue work with Janice and BDMS staff to make the necessary changes
- Document the new IGSS workflow as a new procedure
- Create a flow chart of the new process

As per a meeting with Janice Austin in April 2014, Phase 2 of her GAAPs BDMS updates may not be done until sometime in June, which may be too late for the 2013-14 cycle. This probably will have to carry over into the 2014-15 cycle.

Details of Action Plans for This Cycle (by Established cycle, then alpha)

Further analysis of use of departmental email accounts

In 2012-13 further analyze the use of departmental email accounts to eliminate redundancies, clarify purpose of each account and make clear for students what account is to be used for what types of inquiries.

Established in Cycle: 2011-2012

Implementation Status: Planned

Priority: High

Implementation Description: Form committee to analyze established traffic-patterns on various departmental email accounts and create recommendation for more efficient use of these accounts.

Responsible Person/Group: Director of student services (currently Monika Gibson)

Additional Resources: None

Management plan for account

Create account-management plan to reduce response time on <gradappl> account.

Established in Cycle: 2011-2012

Implementation Status: Planned

Priority: High

Implementation Description: Review current use of gradappl account and create new structure to shorten response time.

Responsible Person/Group: Director of admissions and academic progress (currently Janice Austin)

Additional Resources: None

Expedited review of POS

Our goal was a reduction in the standard length of time to review and approve or return the plan of study for the academic unit for corrections/modifications. The expectation to review plans of study within one calendar month was set in June 2012. Through tracking we were able to determine that the number of plans of study that remained unreviewed for more than one month was lower than previous years however our goal of 100% reviewed within one month should be adjusted. There are times when 100% completion is not realistic either due to other processes/reviews out of our control (ie. Dean's review, needing additional documentation, etc) or other time sensitive job responsibilities must take priority (ie. peak season for ETD review and clearances). A more realistic goal is to have 90% of plans of study reviewed within one month and only 10% unreviewed or pending additional items.

Established in Cycle: 2012-2013

Implementation Status: Planned

Priority: Medium

Implementation Description: Continue tracking plan of study review using the adjusted goal as a benchmark

Projected Completion Date: 06/2014

Responsible Person/Group: Director of Admissions and Academic Progress and GAAP staff

Additional Resources: None

Restructure use of pace accounts and phone system

1. Collapse three current accounts (gradappl; gradrec and grads) into a central Graduate School account for all official emails coming to the Graduate School (not addressed to a specific person): grads@vt.edu
 - a. When email is received in central account, provide auto-response: "... your email was received, we will respond within 1-2 business days..."
 - b. Sort emails in central account into pre-defined subfolders by topic:
 - i. when sorting, put email into primary box based on main question;
 - ii. if multiple questions are included, answer primary question and refer to other unit for secondary answers (with cc to other person/unit);
 - iii. use agreed-upon key word in answer to assist with auto-sorting into correct inbox

2. FAQ tool – align categories with email sorting categories
3. Update “Contact us” section on Graduate School website to lead users to an intermediary page with three options:
 - a. FAQs
 - b. Submit an inquiry (drop-down menu sorts by topic)
 - c. Talk to us – live chat? [potential for future]
 - d. Set up an appointment with (drop down menu...)
4. 120 group meet with some regularity (or make it a standard part of Wednesday meetings) to compare notes about frequently asked questions (phone and email) to identify and respond to emerging patterns [eg. recurring questions about policies, events, etc -> improve clarity of online and print resources].
5. Call/Contact Center
 - a. Experiment: with the "premium" call center for one year. The initial year will allow us to capture important data on one of the key areas of preferred communication, the phones.
 - b. Experiment with subgroup:
 - i. Route calls to appropriate parties/specialists
-calls are routed based on skills, not strictly availability
 - ii. Content specific
 - iii. Achieves minimal transfers
 - iv. With this tool we will have a better picture of what our inbound call volume is by having a queue, see how many call backs, and dropped callers we have.
 - c. Reporting: analysis of inbound call subject, volume, response time
 - d. Expansion:
 - Potential expansion to GSSO and with finer granularity to GAAPS.
 - Call center expansion (phases two/three):
 - Web chat, Email, SMS, Fax, web service conferencing and Banner development. This would allow a more holistic opportunity for us to analyze the efficiency and effectiveness in the other primary contact vehicle identified by students.
 - e. Projected Cost:
 - Standard: \$40.00/month & \$5.00 per agent
 - Enhanced: \$65.00 per month & \$5.00 per agent
 - Premier: \$250.00 per month & \$5.00 per agent
 - f. Other: We will have announcements on hold, based on season, to potentially redirect students to other resources such as our web tools.

Established in Cycle: 2012-2013

Implementation Status: Planned

Priority: High

Projected Completion Date: 05/2014

Responsible Person/Group: Graduate School unit directors

Create workflow for IGSS immigration documents as part of GAAPs scanning process

The new workflow process is supposed to part of a Phase 2 project already in the works between GAAPs and Central IT BDMS staff. Once IGSS immigration documents are scanned by GAAPs into BDMS, then a workflow will be developed. This workflow will notify IGSS staff when immigration documents have been scanned into BDMS, so that the documents can be logged into SZAIDOC in Banner, and immigration form issuance can be enhanced and streamlined.

Flow charts and procedures also are available on the Graduate School shared drive, and are used as training materials for continuing and new IGSS staff members.

Established in Cycle: 2013-2014

Implementation Status: Planned

Priority: Medium

Implementation Description: Central IT BDMS staff are working with Janice Austin on the Phase 2 implementation. Once the new scanning process is completed, then the workflow for IGSS can be implemented, and training planned and held for GAAPs and IGSS staff. The projected completion date is based on assumptions that BDMS staff will not have competing priorities in the meantime, and the fact that the lead BDMS IT person is retiring in 2014.

Projected Completion Date: 06/2014

Responsible Person/Group: Central IT BDMS staff, Janice Austin, and Tina Lapel

Update GAAPs scanning protocols to include IGSS immigration paperwork

Began work with Janice Austin, Director of Graduate Admissions, and staff from VT Central IT who work with the Banner Data Management System (BDMS) to develop a plan to modify the GAAPs current scanning processes to add scanning of IGSS immigration-related documents.

Met with Janice to create a flow chart of the current GAAPs scanning process, in preparation for the eventual addition of the scanning of IGSS documents.

Waiting for IT BDMS staff to complete their work on what needs to change in the Banner processes to accommodate the change.

Flow charts and procedures also are available on the Graduate School shared drive, and are used as training materials for continuing and new IGSS staff members.

Established in Cycle: 2013-2014

Implementation Status: Planned

Priority: High

Implementation Description: Scanning updates are supposed to be part of a Phase 2 rollout between BDMS staff and GAAPs. This is a best-guess timeline, depending on other projects that might have to take priority for BDMS staff, and the knowledge that the lead IT person for BDMS is retiring in 2014.

Projected Completion Date: 06/2014

Responsible Person/Group: Central IT BDMS team/Janice Austin/Tina Lapel