



August 28, 2013

MEMORANDUM

TO: Interested Colleagues

FROM: Sara Lazenby, Associate Policy and Planning Analyst, Academic Planning & Institutional Research

SUBJECT: PhD Time-to-Degree Peer Comparisons at the Program Level

We have recently completed tabulations related to time-to-degree for PhD programs at UW-Madison using peer data at the program level from other major research universities. This analysis provides a comparison of the median time-to-degree for UW-Madison PhD programs with at least five PhD recipients (88 of 108 programs) in the last three years with similar programs based on voluntary data submissions from 16 other AAU institutions. Data and peer comparisons are available at the individual program level. The analysis and this memo are posted at: <http://apir.wisc.edu/ttd.htm>.

Among the 88 UW-Madison PhD programs with peer comparison data, 39% (34 programs) had a median time-to-degree that was over half a year longer than comparable peers, and 19% (17 programs) had a median time-to-degree that was at least one year longer than comparable peers. An additional 15% (13 programs) had a median time-to-degree that was over half a year shorter than comparable peers and 8% (7 programs) had a median time-to-degree that was at least one year shorter than comparable peers.

Peer comparisons are provided for two of the available measures of doctoral time-to-degree:

- Graduate-level time-to-degree, measuring the elapsed calendar years from the term entrance as a UW-Madison graduate student to the completion of the PhD degree (referred to above).
- Final PhD program time-to-degree, measuring the elapsed calendar years from the first term the student is enrolled in the PhD program they graduate in to the completion of the PhD degree.

The attached table provides the number of UW-Madison PhD recipients in each program in the last three years, measures of graduate level time-to-degree, doctoral level time-to-degree, final PhD program time-to-degree, and time-to-degree from candidacy in final PhD program. Peer comparisons for graduate level and final PhD Program time-to-degree are provided, along with indicators for programs that are more than half a year longer or more than half a year shorter than peer programs. Definitions for each metric are provided at the bottom of page three of the table in the attached document. Multiple measures of doctoral time to degree are available to account for both the culture and practices of programs at UW-Madison as well as differences across institutions. Additional analyses and peer comparisons for other measures of time-to-degree could be developed and we are happy to discuss supplements to this standard report.

Please feel free to contact me at 608-263-5945 or sllazenby@wisc.edu with any questions or comments.