

From Randy's Desk – Graduate Student Recruitment 12/16/2015

Dear Colleagues,

In this month's message from my desk, I would like to talk about graduate student recruitment.

Current Cohort Size in Context

We have had quite a range in the number of incoming IBMG students over the years. In the beginning of the program, we had 33 students (Fall 2007), peaking with 46 students in Fall 2009. This year, we had 16 matriculate—the lowest we have ever had. For this year's cohort, the IBMG Admissions Committee - comprised of representatives from all nine Ph.D. programs in the IUSM – recommended that we should make 36 offers. The committee was not comfortable recommending that we make offers to other applicants, as they were not confident those students would be successful in the IBMG Program. Historically, about 50% of those made offers accept them. In some years, we have over 50% accepting our offers (like for the Fall 2014 cohort), whereas in other years it can be less (like this year's cohort).

At this time, we have received 123 applications for the 2016-2017 academic year. Notably, biomedical science programs across the country are seeing a decline in the number of applications received. Thus, we're following trends experienced by many other graduate programs. Each year, the National Association for Graduate Admissions Professionals holds a summer Professional Development Institute. One session from this year's meeting focused on breaking down recent reports from the Council for Graduate Schools. The trends indicate lower numbers of domestic students, with increases in international applicants (albeit decreases in applications from China), as well as a rise in Indian applicants in STEM areas. There have also been increases in URMs in some disciplines.

There are specific ways we can affect the quality and quantity of applicants. Currently, we are doing this by focusing on two key graduate enrollment management components of marketing and recruitment that work together: 1. Maximizing our outreach and communication with prospective students; and 2. Fore-fronting our faculty, research, and what makes our programs great.

Current Outreach Efforts to Prospective Students

Recruitment now extends beyond attending graduate school fairs and focuses on relationship development. As fairs still remain important for certain funding mechanisms, we have increased (in fact, doubled) the number of recruitment fairs and conferences attended this year. Each year, our travel schedule is posted at: <http://grad.medicine.iu.edu/newsevents/recruitment-calendar/>. We have developed a strategic communication plan for communicating with prospects that will be implemented using a CRM (constituent relations management) system, allowing us to data track our relationships with prospective students and advisors like never before. Our faculty and students will be able to reach key student populations and program directors utilizing Career Eco, a web-based service for regular online recruitment events. We have increased the number of current students and alumni involved in recruitment efforts, and would like to see the number of faculty involved increase. In fact, we are working to implement an alumni mentoring program.

We now have a Director of Trainee Services (Lauren Easterling) who can focus on aspects of student training (curriculum and professional development) which are linked heavily to retention. She will also aid in new evaluation practices and processes that will provide guidance to us as we continue our work.

In last month's message, I had mentioned new minors and other aspects that are relevant for looking at the multiple career paths our trainees could potentially take. The attached articles highlight the need for the new directions and programming the Graduate Division is developing, in collaboration with our faculty, students, and staff.

We look forward to our upcoming 2016 IBMG campus visits. This year, changes in the agenda include increased facility tours, faculty talks, and student research talks (TED Style). In addition, we're opening our social activities to ALL faculty and students.

How You Can Help Us Succeed

The first way that you can help us in our efforts is to be involved in our upcoming IBMG campus visits. You can do this through interviewing prospective students, attending lunches and dinners, and participating in social activities. This will help our prospective trainees learn more about the faculty, research activity, and learning environment here at the IUSM.

Secondly, it will be helpful for any of you who are on the "Open Lab List" to be present, so that our prospective students can see and speak with the faculty they could potentially work with. Additionally, these IBMG Campus Visit events are open to ALL faculty. We want our prospective students to see the wide range of outstanding research programs ongoing here at the IUSM.

Your presence, even if not in a formal role (e.g., interviewing) can make a difference. This will allow prospects to see the added value that our entire faculty would bring to their experience at the IUSM.

The dates for the 2016 IBMG Campus Visits are January 28 – 30 and February 25 – 27.

Feel free to contact me and talk with me about ideas you have that will enhance our graduate student recruitment efforts. This can be for IBMG, MSTP or even for Masters students. I want to hear from you.

Sincerely,
Randy

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