1. Overall

University of Washington committed substantial central resources to ensure that the institutionally coordinated data collection process was honest and consistent. The UW graduate dean, an NRC committee member, guided this process. The UW Graduate School spent several months designing a system to facilitate completion of the program questionnaire by the 62 participating doctoral programs. The system pre-populated the program questionnaire with reliable central faculty and doctoral committee data. UW programs were allowed to supplement and change data but were required to justify changes. All transactions were logged. The Graduate School sought guidance from NRC staff on many questions concerning methods and data throughout the data collection and validation period (2006-2007).

We have attempted to verify, to the extent possible, the validity of UW data in the recently-released NRC database. To provide more complete validation we ask that the NRC provide us with the source data that was not previously reviewed at the institution level, including faculty awards, grants and publications.

Request: Provide UW faculty data to the UW Graduate School for verification, including listings of faculty awards, grants and publications by faculty member.

2. Classification of Faculty

The UW followed NRC instructions closely when identifying doctoral faculty, but clearly the definition used at the UW was broader than that used at many other institutions. The UW pre-populated faculty lists from payroll records and central doctoral committee records and then allowed graduate programs to correct any errors on the list. Using guidance from NRC staff, UW pre-populated the list with affiliate faculty appointments, as well as tenured and tenure-track appointments. Only faculty with doctoral committee service were included. However, the use of affiliate appointments is not uniform across the UW campus and many of these unpaid appointees -- especially in those engineering fields -- were from the business sector and had very little involvement in the doctoral programs beyond serving as an outside committee member. It is clear that many universities in the study took a more narrow view and may have included only tenured and tenure-track faculty. Moreover, using a central system, which at UW was created to reduce the reporting burden on programs and to ensure uniformity and fairness, was not the predominant model at other institutions. Other institutions instructed their individual programs to simply create the faculty lists themselves with little apparent oversight.

Following the release of the NRC database, the UW Graduate School surveyed the 62 programs and found that three-quarters of chairs reported that their core+new and allocated faculty totals were higher than similar-sized peer programs. However, the disparity was greatest in our engineering programs.

A revised faculty list that removes and changes classification of faculty at UW engineering programs is attached. With the understanding that any faculty additions would be problematic at this point, only removals and changes in faculty classification (core/new/associated) are represented.

Request: Use the revised UW faculty list to recalculate faculty measures in engineering programs.

3. Faculty Awards

Faculty award data for several UW programs appear to be incorrect. In our survey of UW program chairs, 39 percent characterized the allocated award ratio in the data provided by NRC as “very low,” and an additional 42 percent said it was “somewhat low.” For example, the NRC awards per allocated faculty member for UW Computer Science and Engineering is .09. Our analysis suggests that this figure should be closer to .9, given the originally submitted faculty list). In another example, our Mathematics program counts at least 22 awards of...
significance for its faculty between 2000 and 2006, which yields a 0.49 per faculty rate. In comparison, the NRC reports a 0.06 award per faculty rate. These are very large differences.

**Request: Research and correct errors in faculty awards.**

### 4. Faculty Publications

Similar to faculty awards, faculty publication values are lower than expected. While the NRC reports an average number of publications per faculty of 1.39 for UW Aquatic and Fishery Science, the program notes that the actual average should be greater than 3 for this time period. Again, the opportunity to review NRC source data on faculty awards, grants and publications would help us clarify these misunderstandings or errors.

**Request: Research and correct errors in faculty publications.**

### 5. Completion Rates

Though the completion data appear to be correct, it is very misleading for readers, such as potential students in social science fields. Though humanities fields were afforded an eight-year range for degree completion, social science was allowed only six. A substantial number of UW doctoral students in the social sciences completed their degrees after six years. The UW requires that doctoral degrees be completed within 10 years. Other universities have other policies. Though our social science programs have an average 25 percent completion rate by the NRC measure, the completion rate is 51 percent when considering those who completed their degrees after the NRC timeframe. Readers should not infer attrition rates based on such time-limited completion rates reported by the NRC.

**Request: Clarify to database users that many students complete their doctoral degrees after the six-year timespan, particularly in the social sciences.**

### 6. Academic Plans

Despite NRC fixing the error in the percent of Ph.D.’s with definite plans for an academic position for UW Computer Science, we are unable to replicate the NRC’s reported results from the Survey of Earned Doctorates (SED). Results from the UW graduate exit questionnaire for the period consistently show a higher percentage of students with definite plans for academic positions. The denominator for this measure may be the total number of degrees awarded for the reporting period, rather than the number of SED respondents. The source data would help verify this measure.

Many of our program chairs commented that it is inadequate to characterize successful student placements by reporting only those with jobs in academia.

**Request: Research and correct errors in the number of students with academic plans. Clarify to database users that this is a ratio relative to total PhDs granted, not survey of earned doctorates respondents. Clarify that many PhD students attain career success outside of academia.**

### 7. Student Workspace

The program questionnaire asked “Approximately what percentage of the doctoral students in your program have a workspace for exclusive access.” Though programs reported percentages ranging from 0 percent to 100 percent, the NRC spreadsheet reduces these responses by reporting responses of less than 100 percent
as “no.” The UW Sociology Department, for example, responded 90 percent which was converted to “no.” This is clearly inaccurate.

Request: Change the database to report the percentage of doctoral students who have exclusive workspace instead of yes/no.

Attachments:
Revised faculty list (U of Washington Faculty-return-to-nrc.xlsx)
List of faculty awards: Computer Science and Engineering (UW CSE Awards_4NRC.xls)