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For Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion



## Ten Curriculum Assessment Tools Every Dean Needs: 9. Graduating Class Profile

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Theological school deans are not just theological leaders for their institution, they must be EDUCATIONAL leaders. That is, they must implement sound educational practices related to curriculum, instruction, supervision, assessment, and administration. There is a variety of ways to assess the effectiveness of the curriculum, and there are several levels of assessment (program-level, course-level, student testing, student projects, etc.). While faculty members can focus on course-level and individual student learning assessment, academic deans need to focus on program-level assessment in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the school's curricular course of study. Here are ten basic curriculum assessment tools every academic dean needs:

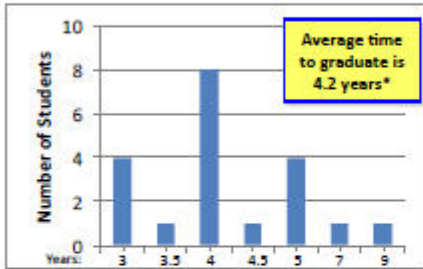


Along with other key metrics, the graduation profile can help the dean and Faculty,

- Evaluate program viability
- Assess program impact on faculty work load (course distribution load, administrative load, student advising, etc.)
- Inform decisions about recruitment
- Give evidence of demonstrable program effectiveness
- Help interpret how enrollment impacts budget
- Plot metrics related to student FTE
- Identify shifting student body factors (diversity, economic, recruitment) which impact curriculum.

# Graduating Class Summary 2015

## 1. Length of Time to Graduate

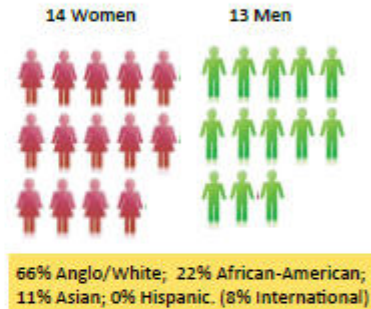


\*Average excludes 9, 13 and 14 year duration of 3 students.

## 2. Graduation Rates

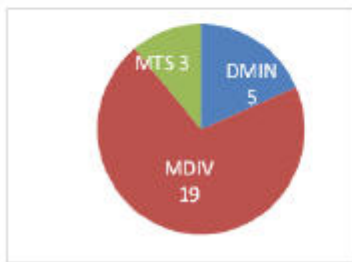


## 3. Graduates by gender and race

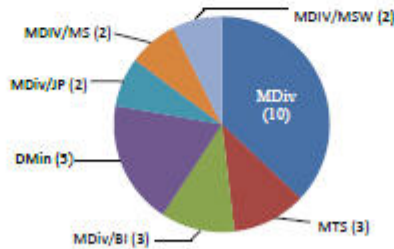


## 4. Programs of Study Profiles

Total in graduating class: 27



Number of graduates by degree emphases



## 5. GPA Profile

Highest GPA: 4.0  
 Lowest GPA: 2.0  
 Avg. GPA: 3.28  
 Median GPA: 3.1

## 6. Semester Hours Earned at CGTS (MDiv only)



## NOTES:

- 78% (15) of graduates took four or more classes

## A GRADUATION PROFILE REPORT

Student program completion is a significant metric that identifies factors which impact the educational program on many levels. Communicating effectively the ways program completion affects the larger programmatic and institutional issues can help faculty members make informed decisions about program-level issues. Using annual graduation data as a marker event is a good point of reference for formative assessment.

This sample report is from the fictional Central Generic Theological Seminary's graduating class. This is a small theological school with a range of degree programs (MDiv, DMin, MTS) and several concentrations within the MDiv. The one-page format helps to visually summarize the data and help interpret the program to Faculty, administration, and trustees. The key

metrics, tracked annually, are:

1. The length of time to graduate
2. Graduation rates
3. Graduating class gender and race profile
4. Graduation by programs of study
5. Student GPA in the graduating class
6. The number of semester hours earned at the seminary.

## **Interpreting the Data**

This one-page report highlights metrics the dean can use to interpret important programmatic issues. Let's review how each can be interpreted to inform program-level decisions, from curriculum matters to recruitment actions. (You can download a .pdf version here: [Download 2015Graduationprofile](#))

**Data sets 1. Length of time to graduate** and **2. Graduation rates** identify a matter of concern that needs to be investigated further as to its cause. The MDiv is identified as a three-year degree program in this school's Catalog, yet, the average time to graduate for this class is 4.2 years. Only about 20% of students are able to finish in three years (data set 2. Graduation rates). The dean should lead the faculty to identify the causes of this as it is detrimental to students and a liability for program viability. Further investigation can reveal a number of causes:

- A course schedule with too many impediments to help students make progress in the course of study
- A negative impact of faculty sabbatical schedules
- The lack of accessibility to courses due to locked-in schedules, a lack of online and other format course options, or, conflicting course schedules for core courses
- A shifting student profile where over half of the student body consists of part-time students.
- A complicated program structure with too many "moving parts" (too many sequenced components, too many prerequisites, too many non-academic requirements)
- The negative impact of reduced or diminishing financial aid
- A large number of required credit hours for the program.

**Data set 3. Graduates by gender and race** show that this school remains predominantly white, but the earnest efforts to work toward a diverse student body is starting to show results with a 33% minority students in the graduating class. Further study can reveal insights about the rate of completion between genders and the rate of completion among minority students.

**Data set 4. Programs of study profile** are helpful in tracking the viability of different degree programs and of concentrations within the MDiv. For a small school, guarding against program proliferation is important as it impacts several areas, including faculty work load and the ability of students in concentrations to make progress in their programs of study.

The information in **data set 5. GPA profile** is important, but additional information is needed to interpret its significance. For example, this data will be more meaningful as comparative data over five years. One-time "snapshot" data like this is interesting but relatively meaningless without comparison. In this snapshot the numbers to give attention to are the median and average GPA.

**Data set 6. Semester hours earned** is an example of one of those key metrics the dean needs to track, but will tend to be of little interest to most others in the system (other than the CFO, perhaps). This data provides important budget and programmatic information. This school's MDiv degree requires 90 semester hours, yet most students do not take the full 90 semester hours due to a variety of reasons, including the transfer of credits. For the current graduating class one student yielded tuition revenue for only 57 semester hours while the average for all MDiv students was 77.6. Because the dean and faculty have been tracking this metric they were able to make programmatic changes resulting in a 34.7% increase in credits taken at the school over the previous year.

Finally, the last bullet point under "Notes" box is an important piece of data. This small school's graduating class comprises 22% of the total student body in its spring semester. This means the school needs to replace more than 22% of its student body in the fall. Given that this small school has a small endowment and is tuition-driven, it must take into consideration that its incoming class numbers must not merely replace the graduating 22%, but must take in a sufficient entering class to offset part-time students' impact on FTE, anticipated recidivism and failure-to-complete students. For budget planning, calculating the anticipated actual number of credits students will take of the 90 semester hours required of the MDiv over a three-year span is very useful.

Assessing the "big picture" of the school's programs of study, evaluating the impact of the student body profile, and monitoring the relationship between the curriculum and the school's educational budget are essential tasks of deans. A simplified and concise infographic can help effectively communicate and interpret key information to faculty, administration, and trustees.

<https://wabashcenter.wabash.edu/2016/07/ten-curriculum-assessment-tools-every-dean-needs-9-graduating-class-profile/>