

# Graduate School Admissions Optimization

**Problem / Opportunity Statement** While there are high-performing, dedicated staff, as well as strong leadership, in Graduate Admissions (GA), leaders and staff have never had the opportunity to look purposefully at their admissions processes with an eye toward process improvement. GA comprises a number of complex operations internally and in cooperation with 90+ graduate programs. Additionally, DGSs and advisers in the different programs can change rapidly. This creates a need for re-education on a regular basis. Programs can also have practices that can cause some problems while addressing local needs (e.g., delayed admittance, non-standardized letters of offer). Taking a careful look at the admissions process as well as connecting processes in some high volume programs will help improve communication and function within the Graduate School (GS) as well as between the GS and the programs.

## Goals

- Development of standardized processes where appropriate.
- Applicants receiving reliable information about where they are in the application process.
- Strategic collaboration between Graduate School and programs.
- Increase the quality and quantity of graduate student applications.
- Get high quality applicants approved in a timely manner.
- Create a process that will best utilize the CRM.

## Beneficiary value

- Decreases in time spent on non-value added work (photocopying)
- Staff satisfaction in both the graduate school and the programs

## In Scope

- Evaluating admission processes within the Graduate School and determining locations for streamlining
- Determine where processes can be standardized between the Graduate School and the programs

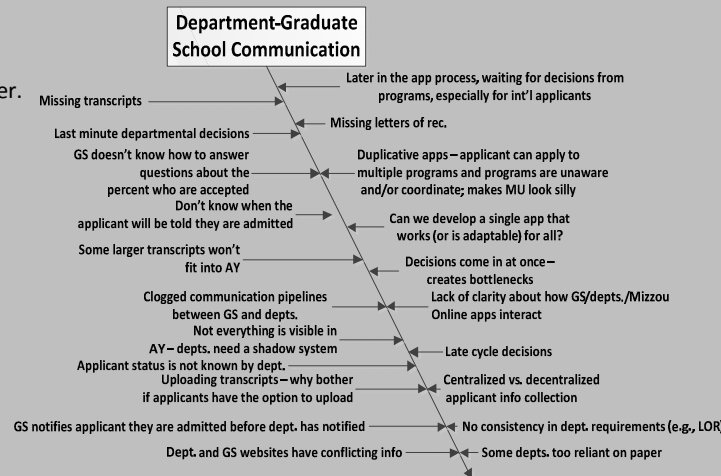
## Out of Scope

- Recruitment – will be addressed at a later date

**Issues Identified** By surveying recent applicants, DGSs, and admissions contacts in the programs/departments, over 90 issues were identified with regard to the graduate school admissions process. The issues were grouped into 5 categories:

- Department-GS communication (e.g., conflicting info on websites, last minute department decisions, lack of understanding of GS workflow and peak times)
- Department/Program issues (e.g., published deadlines not enforced, DGSs using handed down processes that are inefficient, printing applications – lots of printing)
- Applicant to MU communication (e.g., applicant not including all necessary documents, applicants contacting MU with questions that are published)
- MU to applicant communication (e.g., applicants unsure when they will be notified of decisions, departments not sure what the GS has told applicants)
- Workload and tech issues (e.g., ApplyYourself bogs down at busy times, different systems don't work well together)

As an example, the figure below represents issues identified within Department-GS Communication



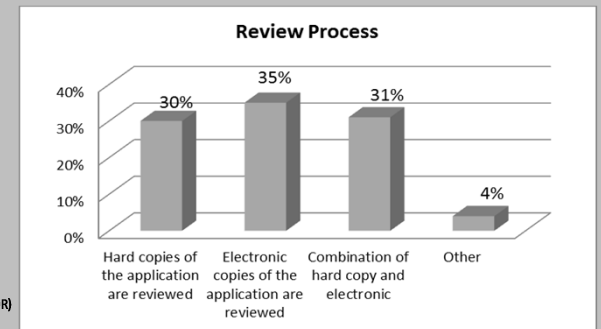
**Proposed changes** Four broad areas of improvement have been identified:

- Training that will assist with decreasing workloads and creating more efficient work processes
- Process changes to improve workflow
- Communication enhancement to improve communication between all stakeholders
- Technical adjustments to improve stakeholders' abilities with technologies related to graduate admissions

## Examples - targeted plans for improvement

- Applicants: mandatory upload of transcripts
- DGSs: defining roles/responsibilities of department vs. graduate school
- Graduate School: revamping the Graduate Contacts Forum to meet the needs of the graduate contacts
- Department contacts: offer training on the process of "going electronic" with the admissions process

The below figure, derived from the Grad Contacts survey, shows that 61% of programs are still viewing hard copies of application materials. Data reveals this to be a dissatisfier for both contacts and some DGSs. Presentations will be given during the contacts forum to help other programs move to an electronic process. This will increase staff/faculty satisfaction, decrease the use of paper, and decrease time spent photocopying applications.



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