

TRACKING THE BENEFITS OF A GRADUATE PROGRAM: MEASURING VALUE ADDED TO ONE'S OWN FOCUS AREAS OF DEVELOPMENT IN A GRADUATE PROGRAM

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Over the course of a doctoral program, the dissertation or capstone displays the ability of the graduate student to conduct research, interpret data, and even draw a warranted conclusion regarding a specified topic of interest to a target audience. The dissertation has been the traditional expression of doctoral-level knowledge and skill, but Peabody College at Vanderbilt University seems to have more of an appreciation for the capstone (Parks, 2016). To measure value added to the graduate student due to enrollment in a master's or doctoral program, some universities require the submission of a competency report, which is a self-evaluation against the program learning outcomes that the student conducts at the beginning and at the end of the program. The American College of Education (ACE) requires a document of this nature, for example.

For self-evaluation at the beginning of the EdD program, ACE students utilize a SWOT and the Learning Enhancement, Advancement, and Direction (LEAD) Framework (American College of Education, 2016b) to identify their professional areas in most need of development. In my case, those areas are quantitative research, accreditation standards, and budgeting with financing and funding. After identifying these weaknesses, I mapped them to the ACE EdD program outcomes (American College of Education, 2016a) then to specific courses that may enable me to achieve those outcomes (American College of Education, 2018). Finally, I listed a measurement tool from Breslow (2007) that may be used to gauge my achievement (see Appendix).

My current level of math stands at pre-calculus level. After the first few units of calculus, I lose most of my understanding of the concepts. The Educational Testing Service (ETS)

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compared my Graduate Record Examination (GRE) scores to other test takers who were in the field of

education. Although I scored above average in both verbal reasoning and analytical writing, I scored well below average in quantitative reasoning. I am not completely inept, though. I have taken graduate-level courses in business quality that required me to map manufacturing data to a histogram when learning Six Sigma, but it was a sharp learning curve for me. I believe if I want to perform administrative tasks in higher education, I need to be more competent in data analysis.

In my experience at an Asian university, I became familiar with the ASEAN University Network accreditation at program and institution levels. I have also completed self-study on other organizations that provide professional certifications and specific accreditations. However, due to extended stay outside of the U.S., I feel unprepared to perform extensive work regarding institutional quality for regional and state accreditation.

My final area of development is in budgeting, specifically, financing and funding. I see this as reliant on skills in quantitative data and in institutional quality. Without either, it is perhaps difficult to set a budget and find sources of funding that are willing to support the institution. Therefore, I consider this to be one of the developmental areas that will be addressed later in the doctoral program.

To measure value added from a degree program, students need to evaluate themselves both at the beginning and at the end of their programs. The Breslow (2007) measurement is an effective self-evaluation activity that each student, especially at the graduate level, can perform at the beginning of the degree program to plan his or her academic pathway and focus on areas of greatest need. Students can look back at the measurement tool and determine if they achieved their expectations through the degree program.

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Area for development	EdD Program outcome	Applicable course	Measurement tool
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Appendix: Focus areas for development

Quantitative research	Demonstrate competence in the application of multiple research methods.	RES6023 - Quantitative Research Designs	Direct measurement: Standardized testing
Accreditation standards	Contribute to solutions for complex problems of practice with actions based upon theory, standards, and frameworks.	ED6033 - Evaluating Instructional Programs	Direct measurement: Analysis of student work products
Finances and funding	Collaborate in diverse communities of learning, and build partnerships with states, school districts, or other organizations.	LEAD6123 - Management of Financial Resources	Indirect measurement: Alumnus survey

