

Proposal of Themes

PARDEE RAND GRADUATE SCHOOL

Submitted to WSCUC
MAY 31, 2018

Executive Summary

Recognizing that the policy making environment has changed dramatically since Pardee RAND was founded; that problems are increasingly complex; and that technology is changing everything; we are designing a new instructional environment with the goal of producing agile problem solvers, equipped to operate in a rapidly changing world, and capable of successfully leading change. To do this will require the introduction of new mechanisms to enable learning with an emphasis on cross-disciplinary integration, learning by doing through experimentation, understanding the implications and applications of technology, and coupling policy prescriptions with action. We will also be recruiting additional types of students by creating three streams of engagement with our PhD program. The three themes we have chosen for our Thematic Pathway for Reaffirmation have emerged from our redesign efforts.

Theme 1: Building a Truly Integrated and Interdisciplinary Learning Environment

Integration is key to changing how students learn. Our aim is threefold:

1. To integrate our core curriculum so that the contributions each course makes to the overall content ecology is clearly articulated and understood by students and faculty.
2. To integrate critical skills especially ethics, written, oral and visual communication and appreciation of both the role of technology, and the need for a global perspective throughout our content ecology.
3. To design our three streams so that students in each stream are intentionally entangled with each other to develop an appreciation of those with different skills and dispositions, and to engage with and learn from each other through collaborative work.

Theme 2: Expanding Experiential Learning

From our inception, experiential learning has been a distinguishing feature of our PhD program. As part of our redesign, we are expanding opportunities for hands-on learning to include more opportunities in a variety of different experiential learning environments including a Tech and Narrative Lab and Policy Design Studios and in somewhat less structured experiential learning when they are embedded in communities. As we design these elements, we are also creating learning objectives and assessment mechanisms.

Theme 3: Assessing Students' Core Competencies

The dissertation represents the culmination of the PhD degree demonstrating that the student has a working knowledge of all the components needed to act as an independent policy researcher. As we are introducing new elements into the curriculum, we are exploring the idea of introducing an additional summative assessment mechanism. This may take the form of a portfolio where students can accumulate artifacts of their achievements as they move through the program. If we should do this and how we might do this are the focal points of this theme.

Overview of the Institution

The Pardee RAND Graduate School is a unique and exceptional institution. Established as one of the eight original schools of public policy in 1970, Pardee RAND is the only one to be located at a public policy research organization, the RAND Corporation headquartered in Santa Monica, California, and the only one to focus solely on the PhD. From its inception, Pardee RAND has offered a distinctive program featuring a curriculum weighted heavily towards teaching the tools of policy analysis combined with hands-on application of those tools through supervised work on RAND research projects. All students must complete a minimum of 300 days of On-the-Job-Training (OJT) to earn their doctoral degree. We awarded our first doctorate in 1974 and received accreditation from the Western Association of Schools and Colleges in 1975. Accreditation from WASC has been reaffirmed in 1985, 1990, 2000 and 2011. To date, Pardee RAND has granted nearly 400 doctorates in policy analysis. We admit 21-25 new PhD candidates each fall and have a student body of 100 students making us the largest public policy PhD program in the nation.

Early in her tenure, which started January 1, 2009, our current dean, Susan L. Marquis, set forth a vision for the school to be the premier policy PhD program in the nation. Recognizing that achievement of this vision required not just a superior faculty and capable student body but also a firm financial foundation on which to build, she launched a major fundraising campaign which raised \$33 million in new funding. These funds have enabled Pardee RAND to offer full tuition scholarships to all first-year students and partial tuition scholarships to all second-year students, to offer more financial support for dissertations, provide more formal mentoring for students, expand our engagement with RAND research staff; and extend and improve student support services including advanced computing, library and data access, career services, conference travel, and mental and physical health. Through the Pardee Initiative for Global Human Progress, the Cazier Environmental and Energy Sustainability Initiative, and the Brown Faculty Chairs, these funds have enhanced student learning and provided opportunities for more quality faculty engagement.

As we approach our 50th anniversary, we are again pioneering innovation in public policy education. A multi-year reimagining process which engaged our faculty, staff, students, RAND leadership, governing board members and alumni resulted in a new expanded vision for our graduate program. Recognizing that the policy making environment has changed dramatically since Pardee RAND was founded; that the world and its problems are increasingly complex; and that computing and networking technologies are changing everything; we are designing a new instructional environment (we call it a “content ecology”) with the goal of producing a new caliber of policy talent—agile problem solvers, equipped to operate in a rapidly changing world, and capable of successfully leading change on the toughest global policy concerns.

Process for the Development of Themes

To take this vision forward, we created a design team under the oversight of the Dean. Initially coordinated by Dave Baiocchi, a faculty member and Director of Design, the team included key faculty, the Deans and some experts brought in for the new knowledge and insights they could

contribute. Recently, another faculty member with extensive relevant academic experience, Martin Iguchi, has taken over the role directing the redesign. Current members of the team are listed below next to the elements for which they are responsible.

The new vision is that Pardee RAND 2.0 will build on our strong foundation in analytic tools with a new focus on complex problems and on leveraging technology so that students will be prepared to find solutions to seemingly intransigent policy problems. To do this effectively will require the introduction of new mechanisms to facilitate and enable learning with an emphasis on cross-disciplinary integration, learning by doing through trial and experimentation, understanding the implications and applications of technology, and coupling policy prescriptions with action. We will also be recruiting additional types of students by creating three streams of engagement with our PhD program. Each stream is designed to attract students who are dispositionally distinct, yet, we will intentionally entangle them to promote integration across streams and to develop respect and appreciation for the strengths of students in each stream and the ability to work effectively in teams.

Our three streams are:

- **Research, Analysis and Design (Angel O'Mahony, Faculty, with Gery Ryan, Dean)**
This stream will prepare students to tackle the next generations of emerging policy problems where the variables are densely connected, constantly evolving, and often hard to observe, and to lead change. Students in this stream will enter the program with strong quantitative and research skills.
- **Policy and Action (Dan Grunfeld, Dean with Molly Selvin, Faculty)** Building on a strong foundation in policy analysis, students will learn how to combine rigorous research methods and localized context to design and implement effective policies for positive change. Students recruited into this stream will usually combine quantitative skills with field experience.
- **Technologist (Todd Richmond, Tech Lab Director, with Osonde Osoba, Faculty)** This stream will prepare students to use techniques grounded in software engineering and data science to discover, adapt and develop new tools, methods and applications that address complex problems. Students in this stream will be recruited from technical fields including computer science and engineering.

In addition, we are introducing the following new educational elements:

- **Broader more flexible coursework** that brings in disciplines often overlooked in policy analysis (e.g. history, engineering, neuroscience) with new emphasis on written, oral and visual communication skills, ethics and the application and implications of technology (Angel O'Mahony, Gery Ryan plus core faculty)
- **Boot Camp** a pre-term session with an immersive learning component to accelerate learning and build cohort cohesion (Molly Selvin with Gery Ryan and core faculty).
- **Policy Design Studios** a major element in the redesigned curriculum that helps train complexity and innovation leaders who can deal with, and design responses to, complex

problems at scale. These studios will provide an ideal setting for integrating learning and understanding, and unpacking and working on complex problems (Ann Pendleton-Jullian, Architect and Innovation expert, with Gery Ryan and core faculty).

- **Tech and Narrative Lab** physical space where RAND and student researchers can experiment with the applications and implications of various cutting-edge technologies (including AI and virtual reality) to policy problems and design appropriate and effective interventions to tackle persistent societal problems (Todd Richmond with Osonde Osoba).
- **Engagement with Community** Community-embedded learning and problem solving to develop understanding of how to be effective in translating good research and analysis into effective action that produces the intended change (Dan Grunfeld with Molly Selvin).

The three themes we have chosen for our Thematic Pathway for Reaffirmation have emerged from the work our Redesign Teams have been doing. As we build out the individual elements of the redesigned school, we are thinking carefully about how to design the data collection and assessment mechanisms necessary to measure learning throughout these new program elements. We have intentionally asked ourselves what are our learning objectives? How will we know to what extent students are learning within each objective? What mechanisms can we put in place at various stages to enable us to measure student learning?

One of the characteristics of our new content ecology is that it will be designed for iteration and experimentation and constant improvement. Over the next 18-24 months, as we work through these themes, we will do so with an eye towards designing points of reflection, assessment and learning at the programmatic level as well as at the individual level. We plan to launch the three streams in fall 2020 and we envision following up this launch with an external program review in the 2023-25 timeframe.

Below we provide short descriptions of what we hope to accomplish with each of these three themes.

Theme 1: Building a Truly Integrated and Interdisciplinary Learning Environment

Integration is key to changing how students learn. Our lack of disciplinary departments and traditionally tenured professors has enabled us to avoid the siloed environment of many universities. Nevertheless, like that of many other interdisciplinary policy programs, our current curriculum is designed with courses like micro economics, statistics and behavioral sciences that are taught as standalone courses as if we inhabited a regular university structure. In our new content ecology, our aim is threefold:

1. To integrate our core curriculum so that the contributions each course makes to the overall content ecology is clearly articulated and understood by students and faculty.

For instance, our Micro Economics and Statistics sequences will be redesigned so that both prepare students intentionally for econometrics, new statistical techniques and data science. Already, we have redesigned our Social and Behavioral Science course to serve as a bridge between our two first year Policy Design Studio courses. Key to this is engagement of our faculty. Bootcamp, our pre-term immersive experience will be team taught by four first year faculty members from different disciplines to create shared understanding.

2. To integrate critical skills especially ethics, written, oral and visual communication and appreciation of both the role of technology and the need for a global perspective throughout our content ecology. For our students to function as policy innovators and leaders, they need to develop these skills more fully. While in some cases, these skills will be taught in new courses (e.g. Ethics) in most instances, we will weave this content into bootcamp, courses, experiential learning opportunities, and non-credit workshops.
3. To design our three streams so that students in each stream are intentionally entangled with each other enabling them to learn to appreciate those with different skills and dispositions and to engage with and learn from them by working collaboratively in teams in the courses, the Studios, the Tech and Narrative Lab, and when they are embedded in communities.

As we do this work, we will be paying attention to the Criteria for Review (CFR) related to quality of instruction and learning (2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 2.6) and institutional learning and improvement (4.3).

Our goal is to produce and implement a fully articulated content ecology for the core and the stream specific core and electives by Fall 2020.

Theme 2: Expanding Experiential Learning

From our inception, experiential learning has been a distinguishing feature of our PhD program. As part of our redesign, we are expanding opportunities for hands-on learning to include more opportunities in a range of different environments. Students will continue to learn project and professional skills needed for the practice of policy analysis by working as members of research teams on commissioned RAND research for real clients. But they will also engage in structured experiential learning environments in the Tech and Narrative Lab and Policy Design Studios and in somewhat less structured experiential learning when they are embedded in communities. As we design these elements of our learning environment, we are also creating learning objectives and assessment mechanisms to enable us to articulate what we want students to learn through their engagement with these elements and to assess to what extent they are learning.

As we do this work, we will be paying particular attention to the Criteria for Review (CFR) related to quality of instruction and learning (2.3, 2.4, 2.5) and faculty, technical and institutional support (3.2, 3.3, 3.4 and 3.5).

We will be asking ourselves questions such as what do we expect students in each stream to learn through engagement with the Tech and Narrative Lab? Will engagement with the Tech Lab be a required element only for those students in the Technology Stream? Will our expectations for learning through On-the-Job Training (OJT) change as a result of the introduction of these new types of experiential learning? The goal is to produce a fully-articulated series of learning objectives for each new element and a corresponding description of what we expect the element will contribute to each stream by Fall 2020.

Theme 3: Assessing Students' Core Competencies

As a PhD program, we have expected that the vehicle for demonstrating a student has met the learning objectives of the program is the dissertation. It represents the culmination of the degree demonstrating that the student has a working knowledge of all the components needed to act as an independent policy researcher. We will continue to rely on the dissertation as the primary summative assessment tool for students in all three streams. However, because we are introducing new elements into the curriculum that cannot be as easily measured or demonstrated through a written dissertation or its oral defense, we are exploring the idea of introducing new summative assessment mechanisms. This may take the form of a portfolio whereby students in each stream will accumulate artifacts of their achievements as they move through the program. Students in the Technology Stream, for example, may be required to demonstrate the extent to which they have developed the ability to use certain analytic tools to produce outputs.

As we do this work, we will be paying attention to the Criteria for Review (CFR) related to student learning and assessment (2.5, 2.6, and 2.8).

Our goals for this theme will be to

- Decide whether we will require a portfolio or other summative mechanism besides the dissertation for all streams or just certain streams
- Define the skills we expect students in our program and in each stream to master
- Define what constitutes demonstration of mastery
- Define what constitutes a complete portfolio (or other summative mechanism) for each stream

We will complete this task by fall 2020.

Resources:

As noted above, we have identified the key personnel who will be leading these efforts. All of them are included in our budgets for the Redesign for the next two years. We have also included funds to engage students and other faculty in these efforts, although we have not named them specifically.