

Brief report of the breakout sessions on Sustainability of the PSM programs: Gary Crawley

1. How to replace dedicated faculty?

A significant point that was raised was that many of the programs were begun by dedicated faculty who strongly believed in the PSM concept and were willing to spend considerable time and energy to begin such programs. However such faculty wear out or move on and so the question is how to sustain the programs after the dedicated faculty are no longer involved. One solution that seems to have been successful in some institutions is to employ a staff person to provide continuity and to do many of the tasks that otherwise would fall to the faculty including recruiting, guiding the programs through academic governance, arranging internships and even mentoring students particularly in non-academic areas.

The question then became how to provide the salary of these staff people, as well as pay for the other costs to run the program. The main option considered was to use some fraction of the tuition generated by the program. Normally this would be negotiated with the Provost, preferably before the proposal for the program was sent to the Sloan Foundation.

2. What are some of the costs associated with sustaining the program?

Some likely costs are salary for staff, stipends for lecturers of special courses, recruiting costs (brochures, web site), communications and general supplies. Another “not-always-obvious” cost in some programs was the provision of up to date equipment for labs or state of the art computers and associated software. There were examples quoted by a few programs that some of these equipment needs had been met by donations from companies.

The overall estimates for such sustaining costs ranged from \$90K to \$150K per year although at least one program ran at much higher costs. Note that these costs do not include student stipends. Clearly the number of students needed to support these costs depends on the fraction of the tuition returned to the program coupled with the cost of tuition.

3. What should be the lifetime of PSM programs?

In a sense, PSM programs are easy to evaluate. Do sufficient numbers of students enroll in the program and do the graduates find rewarding jobs? Many programs have multiple tracks and it seems likely that not all of these tracks will be successful. Therefore a certain amount of turnover in specific tracks might be quite healthy and expected. However the advice from some programs was that if possible, one should organize the program to make it easy to add or subtract tracks within a given program. This was happening in some programs but it was not always possible and depended on the regulations in particular states.