



Effectively Managing Time to Degree:

Best Practices for Doctoral Advising

Gary H. Bischof, Ph.D., Associate Professor, CECR

in Collaboration with Marianne Di Pierro, Director, Graduate Center for Research and Retention



Project Description

The intent of this project is to identify best practices in doctoral advising at WMU and in the professional literature. This project aims to support the goal of reducing the time to degree for graduate programs at WMU, which is identified as an indicator in the Academic Affairs Strategic Plan 2010. This project will focus on time to degree (TTD) for doctoral students at WMU.

Phase I: Data Gathering & Review of Key Literature

- Gather WMU data on doctoral programs
- Collect & review literature
- Academic Leadership Academy Poster Presentation

Phase II: Research Project

- Refine project and gain HSIRB approval
- Identify 2 WMU doctoral programs each in the: a) sciences, b) humanities, and c) social sciences
- Conduct focus groups and utilize electronic surveys with faculty doctoral advisors, advanced students and recent graduates
- Identify factors that facilitate and inhibit timely degree completion

Phase III: Distribution of Findings

- Develop & distribute a doctoral advising best practice info sheet
- Share results with key WMU stakeholders & administrators
- Conduct a workshop at WMU for doctoral advisors on TTD
- Submit manuscript for publication

Desired Outcomes

Short-term:

1. Increase awareness of faculty of current data for time in degree for their doctoral program.
2. Identification of best practices for excellent programs at WMU.
3. Identification of best practices in the professional literature for effectively managing time to degree for doctoral studies.
3. Identification of barriers or obstacles that lead to longer time in degree.
5. Develop and distribute to doctoral program faculty and chairs an informational sheet on strategies for effectively managing time to degree and best practices for doctoral advising.

Long-term:

1. Reduce average time to degree for doctoral studies at WMU
2. Reduce time to degree for those programs that have especially long averages for time to degree.

Measuring Time to Degree

Elapsed TTD: Time from entry into doctoral degree to the awarding of the degree (can be difficult to measure when master's is attained along way and lack of clear beginning of doctorate).

Total TTD: # of years between awarding of the baccalaureate and the attainment of the doctoral degree.

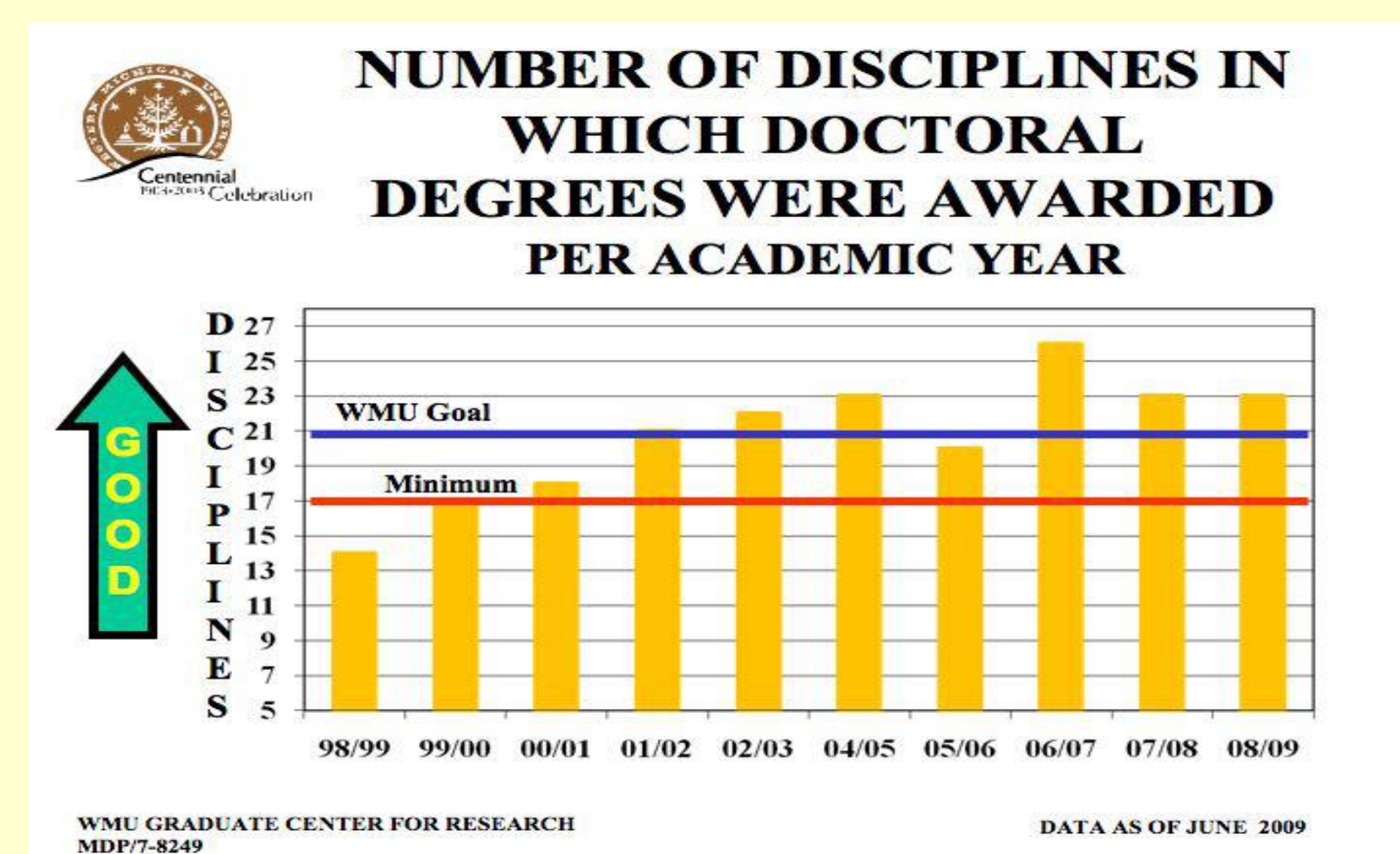
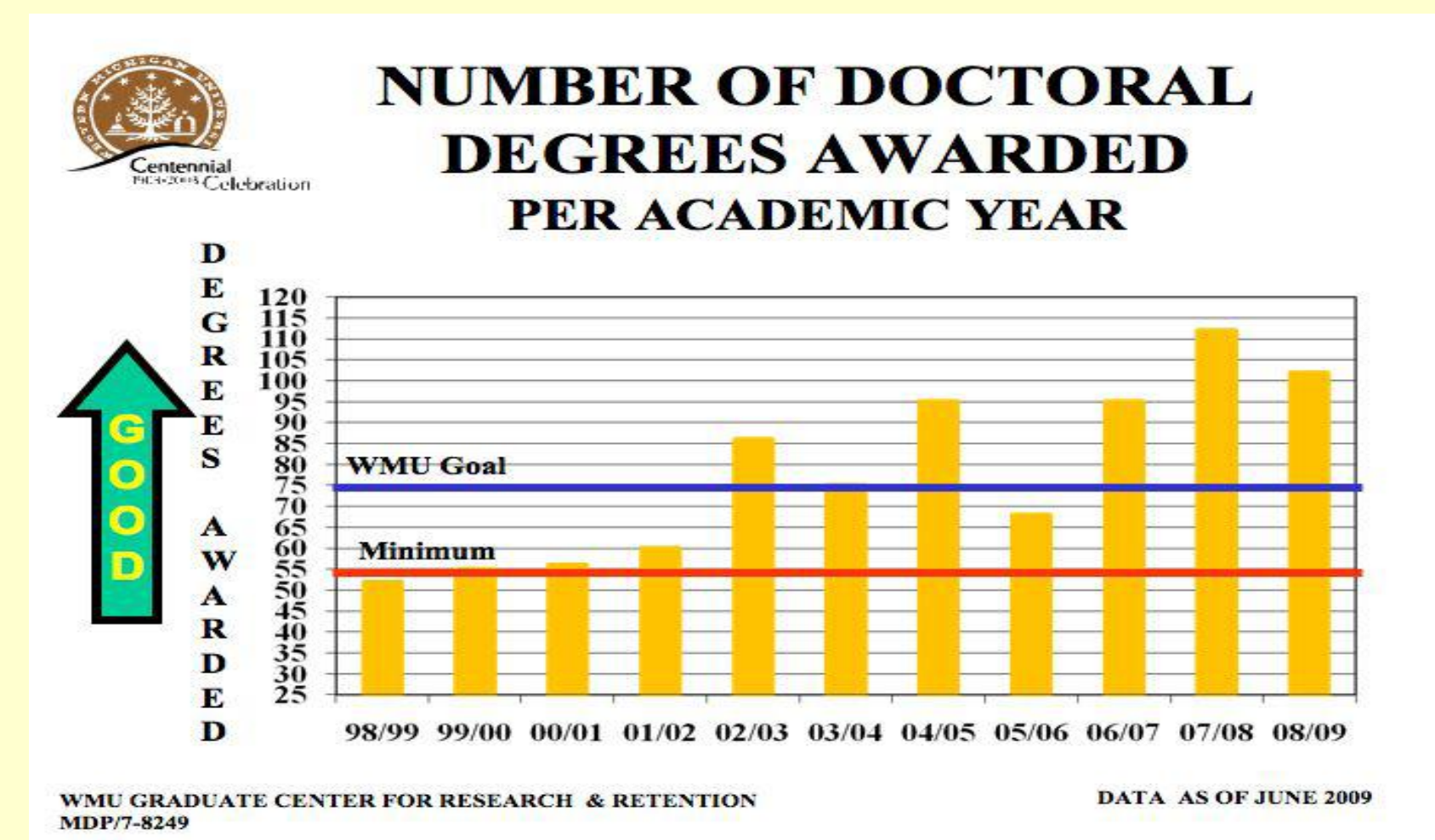
Registered TTD: Includes only when student is registered in graduate school, excluding time taken off.

Doctoral Study at WMU

31 Doctoral Programs

Doctor of Audiology
Ed.D. in Special Education
Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.):
Applied Economics
Biological Sciences
Chemistry
Computer Science
Counseling Psychology
Counselor Education
Educational Leadership
Electrical & Computer Engineer
English
Evaluation
Evaluation, Measurement, & Research
Geosciences
History
Industrial Engineering
Interdisciplinary Health Sciences
Mathematics
Math Education (Collegiate option)
Mechanical Engineering
Paper & Imaging Sci & Engineer.
Physics
Political Science
Psychology
Public Administration
Science Education
Sociology
Spanish
Statistics

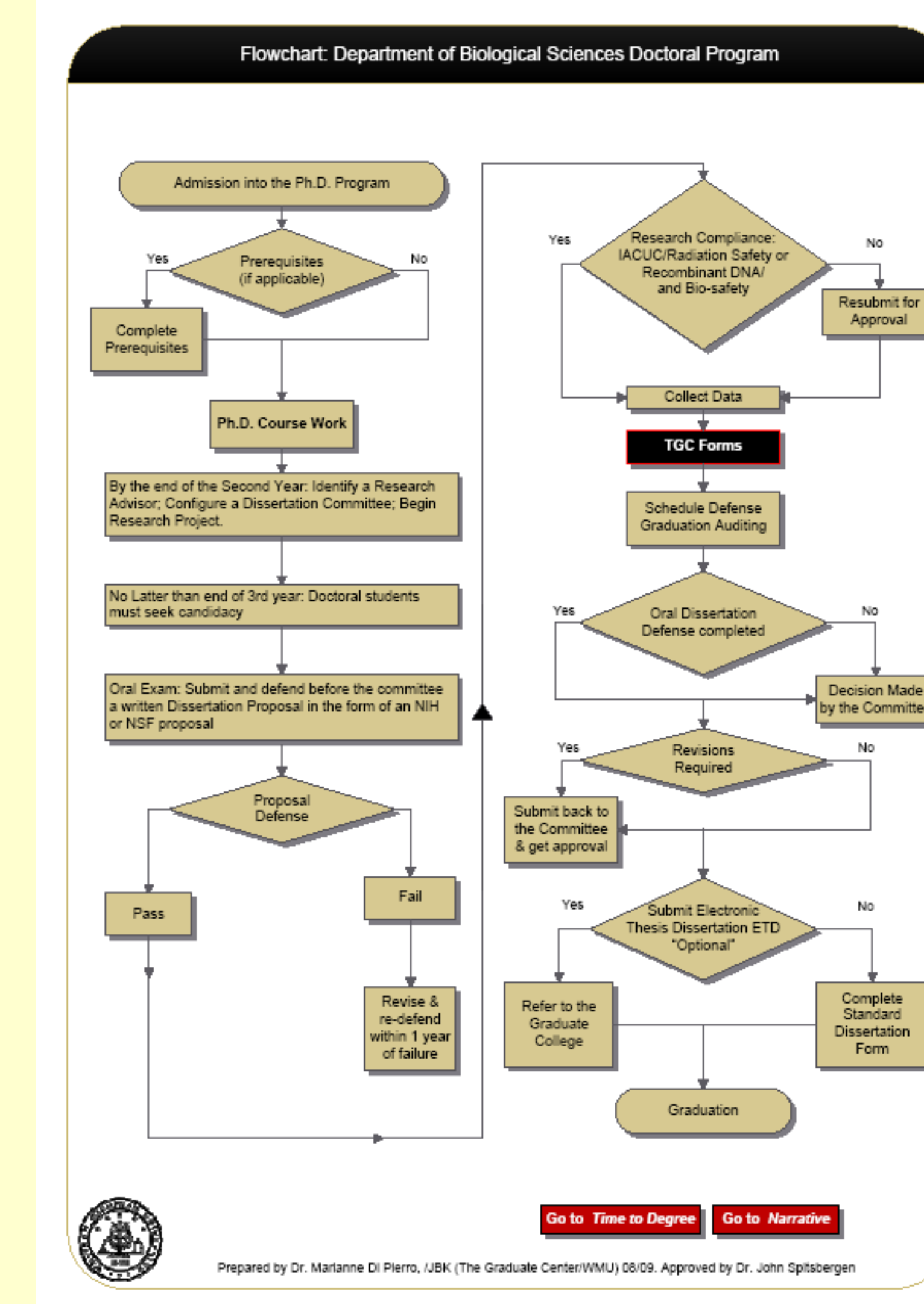
WMU Doctoral Degrees in Last Decade



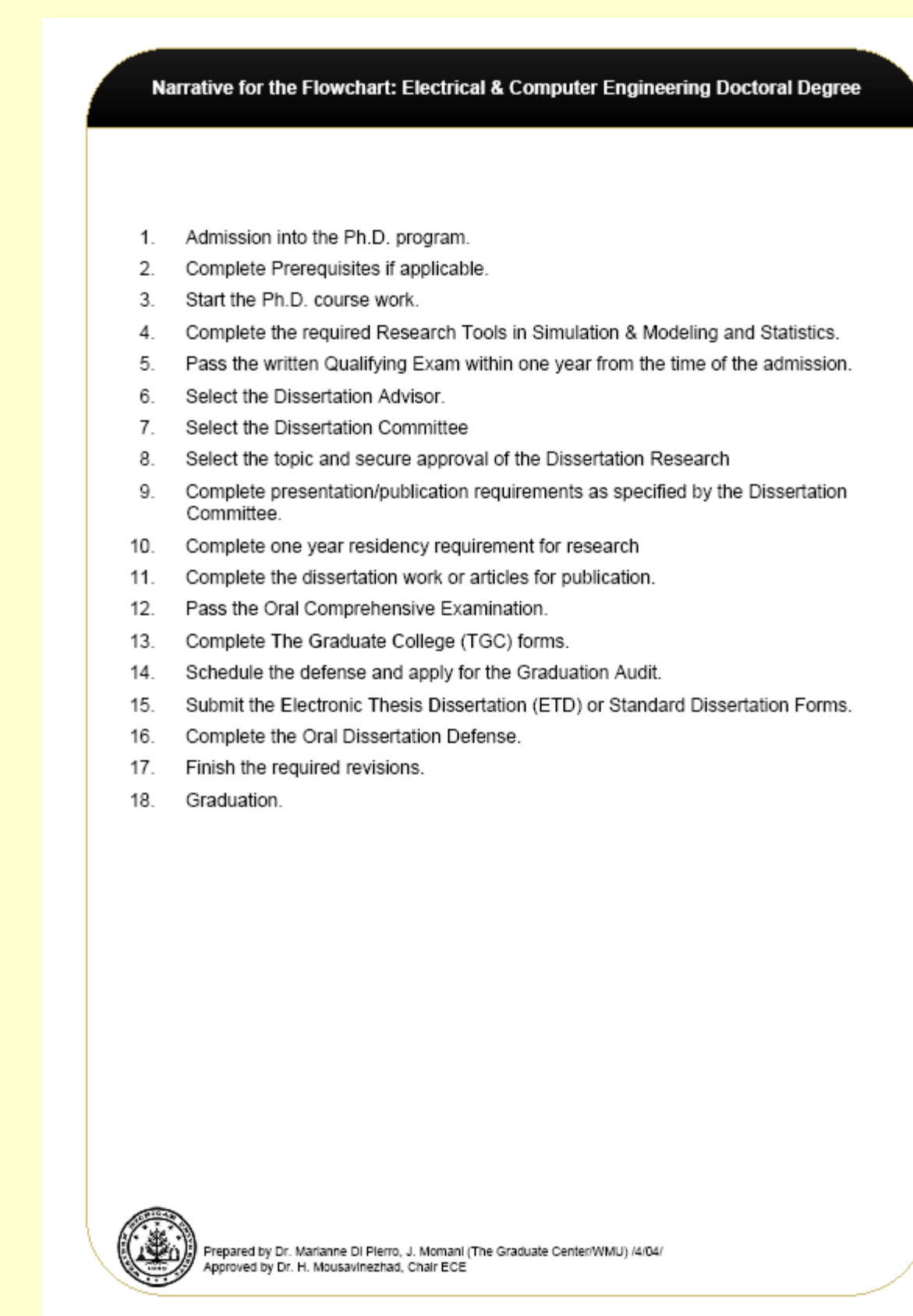
WMU Time to Degree Data 2000-2006

Total Number of Doctoral Degrees : 535			
Elapsed Time to Degree:	Mean	Median	
WMU overall:	5.76 yrs.	5.26 yrs.	
College of Arts & Sciences	5.71	5.00	
College of Education	6.23	5.92	
College of Engineering	4.62	4.60	
College of HHS (PhD)	4.75	---	
College of HHS (Doctorate)	3.67	3.83	
STEM Fields	5.25	4.93	

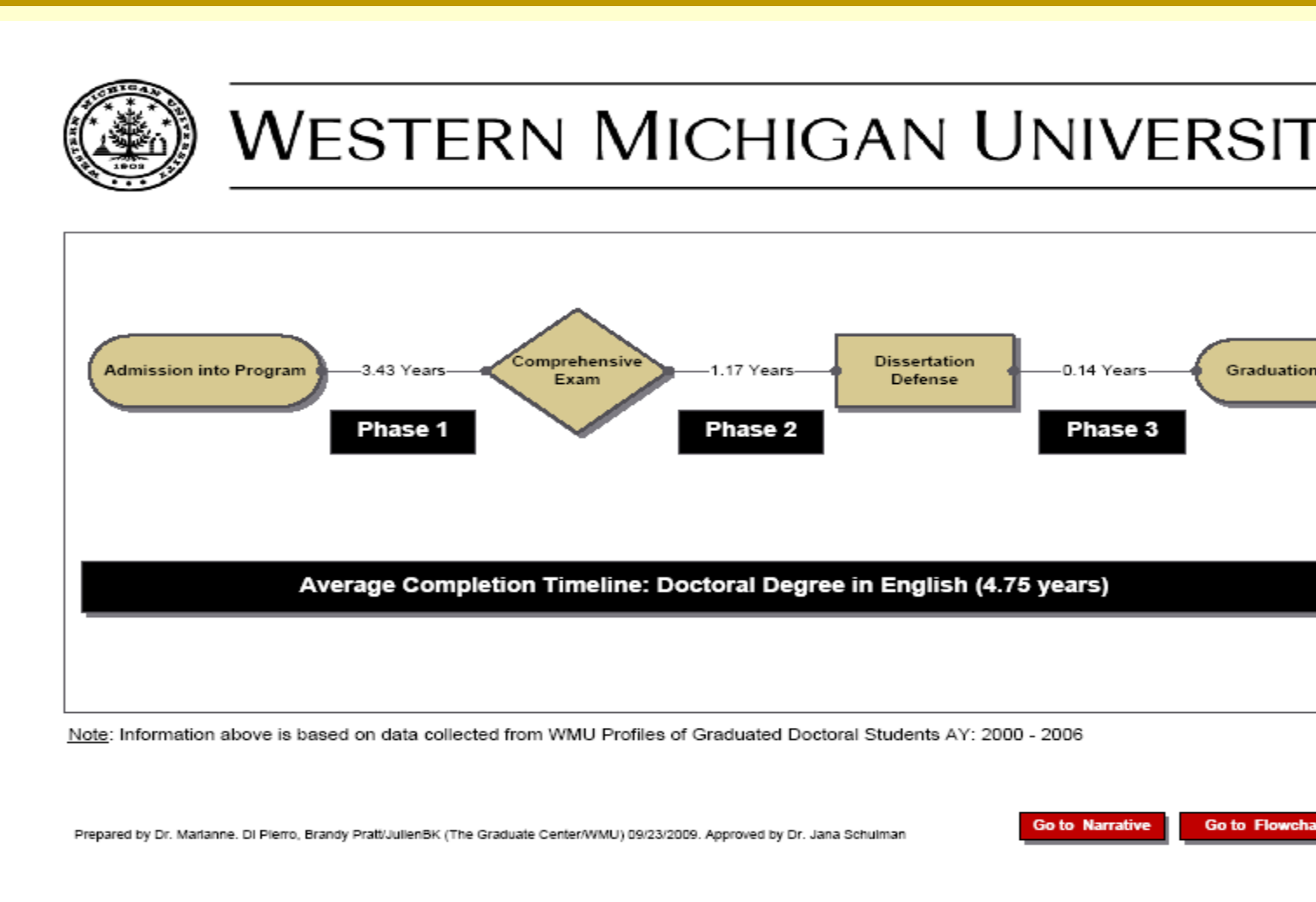
Sample Flow Chart: Biological Sciences



Sample Narrative: Electrical & Computer Engineering



Sample Time to Degree Chart: English



Selected Studies on Doctoral Education & TTD

Council of Graduate Schools:

Ph.D. Completion & Attrition Data

Entered doctoral program '92-93 to '94-95
49,000 students in 5 major fields at 30 institutions

Ph.D. Completion Project

7-year, grant funded, focused on completion & attrition at
29 US & Canadian major research universities
25 additional partner institutions

Graduate Education Initiative: Humanities Doctorates

Mellon Foundation funded
10 universities; 54 departments or programs
Published in *Educating Scholars: Doctoral Education in the Humanities* (2010), by Ehrenberg et al.

1996 Survey of over 9,000 Doctoral Students in 11 Disciplines from 21 Major Doctoral Granting Universities

Published in *Three Magic Letters: Getting to Ph.D.* (2006), by Nettles & Millett

Factors Associated with Degree Completion & TTD

CGS identified 6 institutional and program characteristics as key factors influencing student outcomes that can ultimately affect the likelihood that a particular student will complete a Ph.D. program:

1. Selection/Matching
2. Mentoring & Advising
3. Financial Support & Structure
4. Program Environment
5. Research Experiences
6. Curricular & Administrative Processes & Procedures

Gender: Males complete at higher rates in Engineering, Math & Physical Sciences & Life Sciences; Females at higher rates for Social Sciences & Humanities.

Race/Ethnicity:

Whites overall completed at higher rates than African-American, Asian & Hispanic Students.

Whites & African-Americans had similarly higher completion rates for Life Sciences & Humanities.

Whites, Asians & Hispanics completed Math & Physical Sciences degrees at similar rates, with African-Americans significantly behind.

Program Size: Smaller programs completed students at higher rates.

Contact Information

Gary H. Bischof

Dept of Counselor Education and Counseling Psychology
gary.bischof@wmich.edu
387-5108

Visit the website for the

Graduate Center for Research and Retention:
<http://www.wmich.edu/grad/>