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CU I&E Submission: MechE MS Thesis Incentive & Milestones [1]

Category

Finance & Accounting
Sponsored Projects/Research

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Project Description

The MS Thesis Milestones and Incentive project strengthens the graduation path for master's students while saving the department a significant amount of money across its overall budget. The project established a clear, milestone-based framework that defines each stage of a student's academic progress, from identifying a thesis advisor to advancing through research and completion.
By directly connecting a student's academic progress to structured support from the graduate program, the initiative helps faculty more effectively plan and justify funding for their students. Clear milestones and timelines reduce uncertainty, improve communication between students and advisors, and ensure resources are applied where progress is being made.
Originally driven by budget limitations, the project evolved into a comprehensive process improvement that brings clarity to graduation expectations, supports faculty in managing student funding, and enables the department to allocate financial resources more strategically and efficiently.

Project Efficiency

The MS Thesis Milestones and Incentive project gives students and faculty a clear roadmap for academic progress, linking research milestones to graduate program support. By tying completed research to funding, faculty can better support students conducting meaningful research, amplifying the university's mission as an R1 university. Clear milestones reduce confusion and prolonged funding commitments, saving the graduate program and department approximately $100,000 in one fiscal year so far. The framework also improves transparency,

communication, and accountability, helping students advance toward graduation while enabling faculty to manage resources efficiently.

Project Inspiration

The project’s inspiration came from facing budget limitations in the graduate program. I saw an opportunity not just to save money, but to create a system that would have a greater overall impact, helping students stay on track with their research milestones while providing faculty with clear guidance and support for funding their students. That combination of improving student progress and strengthening financial efficiency inspired the MS Thesis Milestones and Incentive project.

What Makes You Happiest about this Project?

What makes me the happiest about this project is seeing how much clarity and structure it brings to students and faculty. By demystifying the process of obtaining a thesis advisor, establishing clear milestones toward graduation, and linking academic progress to financial support, the project increases accountability and makes expectations transparent. It's rewarding to see students advancing steadily in their research and faculty confidently managing funding, knowing the graduate program supports both academic success and efficient use of monetary resources. Saving money also benefits everyone in the department, allowing resources to be used more effectively.

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