

Graduate Program Review for the
Family and Consumer Sciences Education Program
in the Department of Applied and Professional Studies
Texas Tech University

External Reviewer Report

General Overview

The program in Family and Consumer Sciences Education (FCSE) provides an academically sound, highly relevant opportunity for graduate education. In particular, the doctoral program prepares graduates for careers in higher education teaching and research, development of educational materials and programs, and professional leadership. The majority of graduates hold faculty positions in higher education consistent with their preparation. The faculty attracts a cadre of talented graduate students to the on-campus program, delivers courses on campus and through the Great Plains IDEAS consortium, and achieves high levels of respect as national leaders in family and consumer sciences education. All this is accomplished with extremely scarce resources. The most severe resource constraints are too few faculty members to meet current goals and future opportunities, and inadequate financial support for graduate students to provide experiences typically available in a high quality graduate program. The FCSE program accomplishments far exceed reasonable expectations given the resources of the program. This success is indicative of the expertise, dedication, and managerial abilities of the faculty and the motivation and intellect of the talented students who enter the program.

Mission, Vision, and Organization

The relatively recent reorganization that created the Department of Applied and Professional Studies (APS) in 2004 has resulted in a unit with shared purpose in terms of applying knowledge to enhance social capital, prevent and solve human problems, and inform public policy. Disciplinary compatibility, intellectual integrity, and demonstrated commitment to service are signature characteristics of the APS Department. Thus, the philosophical rationale for this organizational structure is self-evident to this reviewer, and, in my opinion, offers tremendous opportunities for success.

While the mission statement of the APS Department in Chapter 1 (Program Overview) of the self-study suffices as a statement of intent, the vision statement is inwardly focused, process oriented rather than results oriented, and awkwardly worded. Furthermore, the mission and vision statements in Chapter 1 are not consistent with those in the Strategic Plan (Appendix A). The review committee was informed that these statements and plans were “inherited” from previous organizational periods. Current departmental leadership recognizes a need to revise the mission and vision statements and the strategic plan.

As the vision, mission, and strategic plan are developed for the future, this reviewer suggests that the following questions be addressed: To what extent has the Department of Applied and Professional Studies become an integrated unit? What will it

take to achieve programmatic integration? Is APS functioning as a set of “silos” (i.e., the four program areas) operating in close proximity, or are the programs working toward integration of resources to achieve greater efficiency in program delivery and interdisciplinary expertise on the part of faculty, students, and graduates? It appears to this reviewer that the organization within APS offers tremendous opportunities for innovation that meet current and emerging societal needs. As the programs within the department continue to evolve, APS should continuously work to actualize the maxim from human ecology that “the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.” In other words, to go from “good to great,” APS faculty should build on the synergies that cross program areas and leverage these for greater departmental integration and efficiency to prepare students for emerging opportunities.

Faculty Productivity

There are four FTE faculty positions in the FCSE program with three designated as tenure-track and one non-tenure track. Three positions are filled by two tenured and one tenure-track faculty members who hold doctoral degrees from highly respected graduate programs. The non-tenured Instructor holds a master’s degree, has extensive teaching experience, and is a Ph.D. candidate in the FCSE program. The total faculty workload is extremely high, including teaching graduate and undergraduate courses, serving as major advisor and on graduate student committees, research, grants management, and professional service at the departmental, college, campus and national levels. National organizations have entrusted positions of leadership and responsibility to members of the FCSE faculty, an indicator of the respect they have earned from their peers. Tenure-track faculty members typically serve as dissertation advisors for three to four doctoral students simultaneously and serve on all doctoral committees in FCSE.

Without compensation, faculty developed new courses in order to broaden campus-based course offerings and contribute to the distance learning opportunities in the Great Plains IDEA graduate program. Faculty members individually and collectively expressed their commitment to quality teaching and professional development of students. This commitment appears to be actualized in the performance of their teaching and advising responsibilities.

Graduate students who met with the review team expressed appreciation for the individual attention they receive from the FCSE graduate faculty and were overwhelmingly satisfied with their coursework and advising. However, they perceive that FCSE faculty experience high levels of stress due to their workloads. In addition, faculty members sometimes are not able to support students’ research interests to the extent that the students desire. Data on completion of degrees, graduate student presentations at professional meetings, and publications are evidence of intense and meaningfully investment in graduate student development by the faculty.

The faculty has been successful in securing external and internal competitive funding. This funding level is commendable in an area where grants are typically scarce and relatively small. Faculty scholarship is regularly accepted for presentation at national and international professional meetings. The publications reported in the self study

appear primarily in practitioner-oriented journals. These articles make a scholarly contribution to the intended audience. In order to position the FCSE faculty among the top tier contributors to the body of literature in education and professional studies in general, faculty should direct more of their publication efforts toward journals known for their theoretical and rigorous methodological orientation. Faculty should capitalize more fully on the timely and theoretically grounded dissertation research of the FCSE doctoral students for co-authored manuscripts to be submitted to more rigorous journals.

Quality and Quantity of Graduate Students and Graduates

Nine graduate students met with the review team (8 Ph.D. level, 1 Teacher Certification; 7 females, 2 males; 8 U.S. citizens, 1 from Malaysia). The students represented diverse academic and career backgrounds, but shared common interests in the philosophy and theories of teaching, curriculum and program development, and contemporary educational issues. They were well-chosen as students in FCSE. Their compatibility has led to intra-group support and cohesion indicative of a strong cohort.

During the site visit, the APS department reported that there are/were 17 doctoral students enrolled in FCSE during fall, spring, or both semesters, 2008-09. Only one doctoral student is not making progress toward degree completion. In addition, there are 13 on-campus masters plus certification, masters only, and certification only FCSE students and 8 students in the Great Plains IDEA program pursuing the master's degree in FCSE. The TTU FCSE program surpasses most, if not all, other universities in the number of FCSE graduate students. Furthermore, in the judgment of this reviewer, the quality of the doctoral students is outstanding. (An evaluation of Master's students was not made during this review.)

Based on review of the job placements and recent dissertation titles of FCSE graduates (as well as information gathered from the current students), this reviewer concludes that the FCSE faculty has made sound admissions decisions. Students appear to have capitalized on effective professional mentoring from the faculty and taken their own initiative to build professional expertise. Supplemental information provided during the site visit indicated that from 2002 to 2007, graduate students had 11 refereed publications, 27 refereed conference presentations, and submitted 4 grant proposals. This is an impressive record indicative of the quality of students and guidance from the faculty.

Although the review committee was cautioned that some data in the self-study were erroneous, this reviewer observed a pattern in the tables that bears further scrutiny. The report of graduate applications, admitted graduate students, and enrolled new graduate students appears on page 57 of the self-study. Citing data for the most recent three years, 2005, 2006, 2007, it appears that there was a reasonably strong number of applications (11, 6, 13, respectively), and that the quality of these applicants met program criteria and were admitted (7, 4, 9, respectively). However, very few of the admitted students enrolled (2, 1, and 2). Why? Perhaps a higher "enrollment yield" could be achieved if more students were provided financial support in the form of teaching or research assistantships and fellowships. The absence of or inadequate financial support is

the most frequently identified factor in failure to accept admission to a graduate program. There may be other reasons for the low acceptance of admission, but this question should be explored and corrective action taken in order to maintain an optimal cohort of graduate students moving through the FCSE program.

Curriculum and Programs of Study

The basic program of study for graduate degrees in FCSE is designed on sound educational principles for providing needed content and applied experiences. Doctoral students' programs include core courses in FCSE, courses in an emphasis area that are likely to be in another department with appropriate relationship to the students' interests and goals, two departmental issues seminars, and research, including the dissertation.

A wide variety of courses are taught at the 5000-level and there are fewer course offerings at the 6000-level. Offerings at the 7000- and 8000-level focus primarily on research methods and dissertation research. There is a need to add greater depth to the FCSE doctoral degree program by offering topical courses in pedagogy and theory in family and consumer sciences (or other subjects identified by the faculty) at the 7000-and 8000-level. This need is greatest for those students who enter the Ph.D. program with previous degrees in family and consumer sciences education.

The FCSE graduate course schedule indicates that courses are offered on a regular basis to assure timely completion of degree programs.

Facilities and Resources

The facilities of the College of Human Sciences are outstanding. Offices for faculty and staff appear to be adequate and are in reasonable proximity to classrooms. MFT and PFP programs within the APS department boast state-of-the art research and laboratory facilities. However, aside from the Curriculum Center for Family and Consumer Sciences (a professional service unit), FCSE appears to have no designated space. There were no complaints about this during the site visit. However, the lack of designated facilities for social science and educational research projects is a chronic problem in higher education institutions. This reviewer suggests that space needs of FCSE be further explored prior to completion of the final program review report.

The APS operations budget is minimal for the needs of a robust department with many external constituencies in addition to substantial numbers of students.

Commendations

1. The FCSE faculty is to be commended for the development of a high quality graduate program based on sound educational content and philosophy that meets the needs of students, educational institutions where graduates are employed, and society in general.
2. The FCSE program attracts highly qualified graduate students who demonstrate intellectual competence, focused career goals, and commitment

to improving the human condition through the expertise they gain from their course work and mentoring by the FCSE faculty.

3. The initiative and sustained commitment of FCSE faculty to the development and collaboration with the Great Plains IDEA graduate program is a unique contribution to higher education and specifically to family and consumer sciences education. The TTU FCSE faculty goes beyond ordinary expectations to serve as an integral component of this innovative distance learning initiative. This component of the graduate program is just one indicator of FCSE being on the leading edge in the delivery of educational programming.
4. The FCSE program has the respect and support of the Applied Professional Studies Department Head and Associate Head. Staff members are very competent in their roles and support the FCSE faculty. During the site visit, frequent mention was made by staff and students about the congenial, people-centered environment within the APS department.
5. The physical facilities in the College of Human Sciences are outstanding. The Curriculum Center for Family and Consumer Sciences provides a unique resource to the FCSE program. It occupies a spacious and well-equipped location within close proximity to the APS and FCSE offices and classrooms.
6. The faculty has had success in securing funding for projects that address curriculum development in family and consumer sciences, as well as demographic and social issues related to education. With adequate time to pursue additional grants, they are poised to address emerging issues and innovations related to the content and delivery of education.

Recommendations

1. An additional tenure-track position for FCSE is recommended, along with supporting resources for the position. Additional human resources are desperately needed in order to sustain the high level of productivity in producing doctoral graduates, as well as delivering the on-campus Master's program and teacher certification program, and maintaining the distance education courses and degree through the Great Plains IDEA consortium. All of these programs make a unique and much-needed contribution to the profession of family and consumer sciences nationally and internationally, and bring acclaim to the graduate programs at Texas Tech University.
2. More advanced courses at the 7000 and 8000 level should be offered to provide depth in doctoral programs, especially for those students who enter the doctoral program with backgrounds in family and consumer sciences.

3. Constraints that limit faculty publications mostly to journals with a practitioner audience should be addressed. FCSE faculty members are capable of publications that reflect discourse on educational theory, explore research methods, and advance the understanding of learning strategies. This scholarship should appear in more rigorous research journals.
4. An equitable share of APS departmental resources should be provided to the FCSE program for graduate assistantship support. Doctoral students need opportunities to teach and be engaged in on-going research during their graduate study in order to be fully prepared for future careers, and these are typically supported through assistantship funding. Furthermore, additional resources for graduate assistantships could help relieve the heavy teaching loads of faculty and aid in scholarly productivity.
5. A graduate student handbook is needed and should be developed to provide students with information on policies and procedures. The handbook should include information about opportunities for financial support from professional organizations such as the AAFCS fellowship program. While students have informally developed a quasi-student organization, consideration should be given to formalizing a FCSE graduate student organization. More effective uses of the APS web site in communicating with potential and current students should be considered.
6. Dissertation and thesis information should be submitted for inclusion in the annual report of theses and dissertations completed in family and consumer science published in the *Family and Consumer Sciences Research Journal*. This will provide additional visibility for the FCSE program, which has a strong record of productivity, as well as other graduate programs in the College of Human Sciences at TTU.

Overall Rating

The Graduate Program Review Guidelines offer a list of categories for a “grade assessment” of the program under review. Although this reviewer would not rate the program as “excellent” due to the limitations noted in this report, a rating of “good” is insufficient to fully recognize the strengths and tremendous accomplishments of the FCSE program. Therefore, I suggest a new category of **“Outstanding”** to signify that the FCSE program is very strong and could be on its way from “good to great” if the majority of the points in the recommendations are resolved.

Prepared and Submitted by
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