

Memorandum

To: Clifford Fedler, Associate Dean, The Graduate School,
Texas Tech University

From: Kim Hartman, Chair, Curriculum and Instruction,
University of Mississippi

Date: March 7, 2011

Re: Ph.D. Program Review, Department of Curriculum and Instruction

Assessment of Ph.D. Program in Curriculum and Instruction Texas Tech University

Introduction:

On February 16, 2010 the Ph.D. program in Curriculum and Instruction underwent a comprehensive review. The results of the comprehensive review of all graduate programs reviewed have been submitted by Dr. Narissa Carter, Chair of the review committee. This report serves as an addendum to the comprehensive report and examines the PhD program in greater detail than did the overall report.

Prior to the review a copy of the Department of Education, Curriculum and Instruction Graduate Program Review (2004-2010) and links to electronic resources were provided. While on campus at Texas Tech, there were opportunities to meet with the department chair, graduate dean, interim dean, assessment coordinator, graduate students, faculty, and administrative staff. Each group provided information regarding the program and their experiences in the program.

Using the criteria and guidelines from the Graduate School at Texas Tech University, this report provides a summary of the Ph.D. program, an assessment of the program overview and vision, faculty productivity, quality and quantity of graduate students, curriculum, and facilities and resources.

Overview and Vision:

The Doctor of Philosophy in Curriculum and Instruction program is designed to produce advanced practitioners for P-12 settings and faculty members for post-secondary institutions in the U.S and abroad. Students in the PhD in Curriculum and Instruction program study in one of five concentrations:

- Bilingual/ESL Education
- Curriculum Studies/Teacher Education
- Language and Literacy Education
- Physical Education and Sports Science
- Science and Mathematics Education

The Curriculum Studies and Teacher Education concentration in the Ph.D. Program focuses on curricular issues as a field of inquiry and develops strengths in the areas of understanding and addressing the complex and multiple questions that influence curriculum theory, design, development, delivery, assessment, and evaluation. The primary goal of this program is to prepare curriculum leaders, researchers, and professors with the knowledge, skills and dispositions needed to analyze, construct, and evaluate curricula in ways that create optimal learning conditions for all learners. Program work within Curriculum Studies is developed and guided by a strong conceptual framework, standards from the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), and the professional judgment faculty. Students have considerable flexibility in selecting courses for the Curriculum Studies concentration.

The Department of Curriculum and Instruction maintains a strong and productive Ph.D. program. Over the past few years, they have revamped the program to include more emphasis on both qualitative and quantitative research. Faculty reported great satisfaction with the programmatic changes and the support of the interim dean and associate dean. They complimented the strong, transparent leadership. Faculty were eagerly anticipating the arrival of the new dean and looking forward to new opportunities.

The School of Education is growing at a rate that compares well with the other colleges on campus. The final enrollment figures for spring 2011 (2/10/11) indicate the COE has

the highest growth in the University from the previous year, 100.60%. This growth may be attributed to multiple factors, but the strong PhD program certainly leads to at least a portion of that growth.

Rating: Excellent

Faculty and Faculty Productivity:

Faculty productivity is limited by the heavy teaching load and high number of advisees for some faculty. The self reported data indicate that faculty average one publication per year with about half the faculty making an annual presentation or engaging in other scholarly activity. In order to increase research productivity and to include doctoral candidates in research efforts, faculty has formed research teams with common interests. Faculty has also formed strong partnerships with local K-12 schools as a means to increase research productivity and as a way of sharing research with the school systems. With a 3/3 or 3/2 teaching load, little time for research is available. Faculty reported needing release time, additional conference time and a mentoring program for new faculty in order to increase their productivity. Since the education field is more practitioner based than other fields, faculty are to be commended on their research efforts and accomplishments.

Faculty in the PhD program work diligently and their comments indicated that they were dedicated to the program and its students. Faculty comments included that “we are willing to make the program and students successful” and “we spend hours with the students on their dissertations and want them to be well prepared when they leave Tech.” One faculty shared that she chaired as many as 20 dissertations while others chaired none. A systematic plan for equalizing the workload and capping the number of dissertations a faculty may chair at one time may be needed; however, faculty expertise often dictates the number of dissertations chaired. Given budget constraints, hiring more faculty in a particular area may not be immediately possible. However, some faculty were concerned that they were never assigned to teach doctoral classes and thereby, did not have a chance to work on dissertations. The Language and Literacy faculty reported that

they rotated who taught courses so that all faculty had access to doctoral students. Assigning faculty in each concentration of the PhD to teach doctoral classes would be another way to reduce the workload of specific faculty.

Faculty reported excitement that a grant writing expert had been hired to assist faculty in obtaining grant funds. This is a very positive move in garnering increased departmental funding and should increase productivity and perhaps, allow faculty to reduce their teaching loads in order to focus more attention on publications. In the previous report, the department set a goal of increasing the number of faculty publications by 5%. This goal has not been met, but progress in that area is evident and the support of a grant officer should lead to achieving increased productivity.

Faculty were pleased with the streamlining of the PhD program that occurred three years ago. They felt the research requirements were significantly revised and that the revision provided more commonality among programs, strengthened the research core, and provided more preparation for graduates who entered academe. Comments included, “Now we prepare students who are fully equipped to make an impact on the field of education.” Faculty were additionally positive about the plans for a hybrid PhD program that would allow students to take courses online during the school year and come to Lubbock for summer coursework. Faculty perceived that this option would allow more students access and would increase the number of PhDs awarded annually.

Doctoral faculty credentials were strong with 65% of the faculty who worked with doctoral students being tenured full or associate professors. Student evaluations of faculty are extremely positive with the School of Education faculty being ranked number 1 or 2 among the nine traditional colleges. Students interviewed during the review indicated that most faculty were dedicated to them and were interested in their success in the program.

When asked what their biggest challenges were, faculty expressed concerns with lack of time, dealing with difficult personalities in other faculty members, working in multiple

programs, shortage of faculty, and too many advising responsibilities. They recommended the establishment of a graduate advising office to reduce the time they spent answering general questions. Faculty were additionally concerned that their salaries were among the lowest of the big 12 schools and that this often hurt recruitment and retention. Fiscal reductions have provided challenges in retaining and recruiting faculty. However, most universities in the US are experiencing similar budgetary constraints. As funds become available, faculty raises and recruitment of strong faculty should be a priority. In the interim, any possible reductions in faculty loads or more equally distributing numbers of advisees would be productive.

Rating: Acceptable

Quality and Quantity of Graduate Students and Graduates:

Ten PhD students were available to meet with the research team. All were full time students and 40% were minorities. This group was not representative of the entire population of PhD students. Although times during the day and after school were available for students to meet with the review team, few PhD students attended the meetings. Student responses may not be representative and the lack of input from part time students likely skews the results.

Students indicated that they had not been recruited for the doctoral program and that they had chosen the program either based on earning prior degrees at Texas Tech, based on locale, or in the case of two international students, meeting a Texas Tech faculty at a university in their home country. However, students did not see the lack of their being recruited as an obstacle. They did indicate that a more concerted effort to recruit PhD students would likely result in more diversity. Additionally, they were excited about the implementation of the hybrid program and felt that should help with the recruitment. The stipend of about 10K per year is a disadvantage to recruiting out of state students. Student comments indicated that many Texas Tech students were “family people” and could not become full time students. Students suggested that the department examine a

means of providing more competitive assistantships for full time students. As procurement of grants increases, increasing student stipends should be possible.

A few students expressed frustration with the admission process and both faculty and students acknowledged that efforts are being made to streamline this process. However, the biggest concern of doctoral candidates was the process of graduate and research assistant assignments. Students reported being assigned to faculty with whom they had no research interest or outside their focus area. Similarly, faculty expressed dissatisfaction with the system used for assigning graduate assistants. Both students and faculty desired to have more control over this process and to have their needs and research interest more closely aligned. Students reported doing clerical work and feeling disconnected from their assistantships and their programs of study. As in the case of the 2005 report, students still expressed concern over the lack of clarity in the advising process. In the May 10, 2005 report, it was noted that students felt their “shepherding” was insufficient. This continues to be an issue facing students in the PhD program. Careful attention to these areas of concern is needed. Better alignment of assistants and faculty would be mutually beneficial and may serve to reduce the heavy loads carried by many faculty.

Student GRE scores were not impressive. However, the department chair explained that those scores were only a small part of the admission criteria and that a more holistic admission process based on experience and recommendations was used since the degree offered is somewhat practitioner based. There is merit in this process; however, the degree offered is a PhD and not an Ed.D and the department has made concerted efforts to increase the research knowledge base. A reexamination of the admission criteria and the establishment of a more rigorous admission policy may be needed. The chair reported that the students in the program were a “mixed bag” with some very strong candidates and some mediocre candidates. Faculty were generally pleased with the quality of the students. Monitoring the student success over the next few years would help the department to determine their satisfaction with the current admission policy.

The predominance of white females in the graduate program is not atypical of those making up at Ph.D. in education and the student diversity is not problematic. It is noteworthy that in fall 2004, 40% of the doctoral students were full time and in fall 2009 (latest date reported) only 26% of the doctoral students were full time. While no explanation was offered, this bears further examination, especially if the program continues to lose full time students. The graduate handbook for doctoral candidates is well written and clearly delineates the program requirements. However, students reported some frustration in determining who their initially assigned advisor was and of the process needed to determine a permanent advisor. A few of the students were not sure how to choose a dissertation advisor, although the majority of the students understood this process. Those students expressing confusion appeared to be newer students who may not have been enrolled long enough to have been ready to choose a dissertation advisor. The doctoral students with more experience stated that they took a class or two with a faculty member in order to determine their “fit” prior to asking a professor to chair their dissertation. Full time students wanted more day classes. Again, the part time nature of this program and the fiscal constraints make that request not plausible

Rating: Acceptable

Curriculum and Programs of Study:

In order to accommodate a wider range of potential doctoral candidates, the department has proposed offering a hybrid program with candidates taking online courses during the academic year and attending the Lubbock campus in the summers. This should lead to increased enrollment in all areas. Bilingual/ESL Education, Curriculum Studies/Teacher Education and Language and Literacy Education are robust strands of the program with solid programs of study. The Ph.D. allows students to have flexibility in coursework and to tailor the courses to meet their specific interest areas. The curriculum is strong and provides a solid program of study.

Of particular benefit to the continued development and revision of the curriculum is the outstanding assessment system. Dr. Larry Hovey should be commended on his excellence

in this area and this assessment system could easily become a national model for use in many Schools of Education. He works with a 15 member assessment team which serves to strengthen the system. Data driven decision making is evident. In the field of education national attention is being focused on higher education and Schools of Education must report considerable data about their programs, curriculum, and students. Texas Tech is positioned to be able to report all required data. One small area in the PhD program that needs additional assessment is following up on graduates and their employment. However, the assessment team had already identified this need and has solid plans for implementing this data collection.

In order to assure a robust program of study, assessments are collected on the PhD program based on the department's identified purpose statement: "The purpose of the Ph.D. program in Curriculum and Instruction is to develop scholar-practitioners with the research skills needed to enable them to critically examine and utilize current and emerging approaches to their, research, design, practice, and pedagogy within their respective concentrations." The following outcomes are measured; become independent researchers in at least one concentration and one research paradigm; understand qualitative and quantitative research methods, apply, synthesize and evaluate curriculum and instruction theory, and demonstrate mastery of content, pedagogical content knowledge and instructional practices in their field of study. Current means of assessment include defending dissertation including a comprehensive literature review, and passing a qualifying exam. The committee has noted the need to add a doctoral experience survey, a phone survey protocol, and developing rubrics to be used in program transition reports. Coupled with the current assessments, the new assessments serve to strengthen the already sound curriculum and programs of study.

Both faculty and student expressed concern that some students completed a doctoral program without teaching a university level course. However, given that most candidates are part time, requiring everyone to teach a class seems problematic. However, strengthening the curriculum in this area might be accomplished through team teaching experiences even if a student were not available to teach an entire semester

Rating: Excellent

Facilities and Resources:

The use and availability of technology was evident. The School of Education is housed in a beautiful, state-of-the-art building. Technology labs and smart classrooms are available as is space for faculty offices. Graduate assistants have assigned workspace and access to technology. The Curriculum Resource Lab in the building is extraordinary and provides excellent student resources. The facilities are well maintained and common space is decorated and inviting. Given the current fiscal limitations in higher education in the US, the facilities are impressive and provide more than typical resources. The School of Education and Texas Tech are to be commended on the facilities and available resources.

Rating: Excellent

Recommendations and Suggestions:

1. Develop a system to equalize faculty dissertation loads, especially the number of dissertations chaired per faculty member.
2. Provide new students with clear directions on choosing an advisor and dissertation committee members.
3. Develop a system for assigning graduate assistants that includes faculty and student input and that matches research interests. Increase student stipends.
4. Recruit nationally for competitive faculty and students.
5. Increase faculty research productivity.