

Memorandum

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

From: Narissra Punyanunt-Carter, College of Arts of Sciences, Department of Communication Studies
Gene Wilde, College of Arts and Sciences, Department of Biology
Stephen Maas, College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources, Department of Plant and Soil Science
Kim Hartman, University of Mississippi

Date: 2/16/2010

RE: Department of Curriculum and Instruction, Graduate Program Review

Executive Report

The on-site review of the Department of Curriculum and Instruction graduate program at Texas Tech University was conducted on February 16, 2011. The review team included faculty members from the Department of Communication Studies in the College of Arts and Sciences, the Department of Biology in the College of Arts and Sciences; and the Department of Plant and Soil Science in the in the College Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources.and an external reviewer from the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Mississippi.

The team reviewed the self-report that was submitted by the Department of Curriculum and Instruction and met with the department chair, the graduate deans, the interim dean, Coordinator of Assessment for COE, the program coordinators, members of the faculty, and graduate students. In addition, the team toured the facilities available in the department. After the review and meetings, the team discussed the information provided in the report and the interviews.

Using criteria and guidelines from the Graduate School at Texas Tech University, this report provides a summary of the graduate program review, as well as assessments of the program overview and vision, faculty productivity, quality and quantity of graduate students and graduates, curriculum and programs of study and facilities and resources. The review includes a summary statement from the team, as well as a separate statement from the external reviewer.

The review team agrees with the following assessments:

Program Overview and Vision: Good

Faculty Productivity: Good

Quality and Quantity of Graduate Students and Graduates: Good

Curriculum and Programs of Study: Good

Facilities and Resources: Excellent

Program Overview and Vision

In the department's mission statement, it outlines The department 's mission statement outlines their vision to provide degree and certification programs that meet state and national standards for students seeking careers as professional educators. Based on the review of the department's self study and conversations with administrators, faculty and students, the review team believes that the curriculum and instruction graduate program exhibits a **good** standard in its program overview and vision.

The Department of Curriculum & Instruction (C & I) continues to maintain a strong and productive graduate program. Over the years, faculty have increased both grant acquisition and scholarly publication. These increases have been achieved partly through collaborative efforts among a significant portion of the faculty with others in the college and through the formation of research teams examining specific topics.

The major strengths for the department include strategic updated priorities/goals that are related to the university's strategic plan to achieve national research university status. The College of Education has a strong action plan for increasing enrollment and promoting student success. It is important to note that they have increase enrollment by 3% each year. Moreover, the department has expanded and enhanced their research productivity and funding. They have tried to increase this amount by 5%. The department has also provided scholarly outreach opportunities and partnerships with the community, locally and internationally.

Faculty

In the meeting with faculty members, the external review team heard from many of the

tenured or tenure-track faculty members. In general, the faculty members acknowledged the their excitement about the new leadership in the college. Specifically, the faculty were excited about the new dean for the college, the new leadership at the local school districts, and an additional person to assist with grant writing efforts. Additionally, the faculty discussed concerns about how to teach classes effectively online. At the same time, they seemed excited about the possibility of offering online doctoral programs. Furthermore, there was some discussion about how certain programs lost some tenure-track faculty because their salaries were considered the lowest among the big 12 schools.

Students

When meeting with the students about the vision and quality of the program, most of the students agreed that the program and its faculty were satisfactory. Some of the students expressed concern about the lack of advising and advertisement of the program to other potential students. Some of the students suggested a handbook or advising flow chart to assist with student concerns. Further, some of the students felt that the bilingual program boast itself on diversity, yet does not offer many diversity classes. In general, the comments from the student survey were very positive about the program; however, the master's degree students seemed more pleased with the program than did the doctoral students.

Assessment and Recommendations

Because of the concerns raised by faculty and students, the committee rates the program overview and vision as **good** with an ability to become excellent in a short period.

First, the department should provide clear and concise ways to meet their strategic priorities. The department has specific target numbers, but does not provide specific ways for attaining these numbers.

Second, as suggested by the graduate students, it may be beneficial to have a clear flowchart of information for advising.

Third, there needs to be better assessment for improving the quality of online education because the department will be offering course via the Internet.

Faculty Productivity

The Department of Curriculum and Instruction supports a large and societally important graduate program. Since its last review, graduate enrollment has averaged 140+ students, of which nearly half are in the department's sole PhD program. Regardless of degree (MS or PhD) or programmatic area, most graduate students are part-time and most MS degrees are

nonthesis. In addition to degree programs, the department awards a number of post-baccalaureate certifications, which enroll several hundred students.

MS thesis and PhD dissertation committee chairmanships are unevenly distributed among the faculty. Several faculty chair no committees and one individual serves as chair of 20 committees. This is particularly problematic in the PhD program. Selection of MS thesis and PhD dissertation advisors is unrelated to funding (i.e., graduate student support). Instead students appear to select as advisors the nominal heads of instruction areas or faculty with whom they have had graduate courses. Only a handful of faculty serve as heads of instruction areas and several do not instruct courses taken by PhD students.

Chairmanship of nonthesis MS examination committees similarly concentrated among a small number of faculty. This may be optimum, allowing a small number of faculty to shoulder these responsibilities as a service to the department.

The size of the department's graduate program requires faculty to teach relatively high loads, typically three courses per semester. Many courses require extensive time outside the classroom for trips to area schools, etc. Graduate enrollment in the department is growing, in accordance with the strategic plan of the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, College of Education, and Texas Tech University. Given that such a large proportion of the department's graduate students are in nonthesis programs, this growth presents a potential constraint to another departmental goal: increasing research productivity, in terms of both scholarly output and extramural funding. (Note, a reduced load is given to faculty advising large numbers of students or who are involved in funded research. However, continued enrollment growth may preclude allowing reduced teaching loads.)

Based on data reported by the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, the faculty of that department publish an average of one peer-reviewed article per year. In addition, faculty publish an average of 0.5 conference proceedings, book chapters, or other peer-reviewed publications per year. Based on faculty comments, two publications per year appears to be the expected norm and the Chairman reported that he advises faculty to publish at least one paper per year plus produce an additional secondary product, such as a grant proposal, publication, or other major work. Given the high teaching load borne by faculty within the department, these

expectations seem reasonable. However, if Texas Tech desires to recruit students outside the local geographic area, faculty productivity and visibility need to increase.

Extramural funding within the Department of Curriculum and Instruction increased annually from \$469,000 in 2004/05 to \$1,430,000 in the 2008/09 academic year, but decreased to \$365,000 in 2009. Only one new award was received in this latter year. When asked about this, the Chairman speculated that most faculty who wanted grants had them, and so the number of proposals submitted and awards received dropped in 2009.

To meet departmental, college, and university goals of increasing research productivity, faculty within the department have begun assembling informal research teams to draft proposals and, presumably, publish research articles. Although it is too early to assess the success of these teams, faculty were generally (delete) optimistic about these teams. The Chairman has, within the past year, instituted a new policy for allocating and assessing faculty workload that should encourage increased productivity.

Assessment and Recommendations

Because of the concerns raised by faculty and students, the committee rates faculty productivity as **good**.

Based on our review, we can offer the Department of Curriculum and Instruction two suggestions for possibly increasing research productivity. First, although the needs and interests of PhD students should play a large part in choice of advisor, the department might consider how PhD committee chairmanships, particularly for full-time students who are funded, are allocated among faculty to increase research productivity among both those faculty who chair many committees and those who chair none. Second, the department has twin goals of increasing the number of PhD students and increasing research productivity (in terms of both research funding and scholarly output). The department may wish to consider adding adopting a goal increasing the number of full-time PhD students who are funded on research grants.

Quality and Quantity of Graduate Students and Graduates

GRE scores for enrolled graduate students in all disciplines were not impressive and did not increase over time, although the Department Chair indicated that this was not overly a concern with him. Admission to the program is not based on GRE score, but is primarily based on other factors, including “experience.” From interviews with the graduate students, it appears that the program at Texas Tech is more accepting of “non-regular” students such as older students that felt that they would be excluded from other institutions, such as The University of Texas. The Department appears to be satisfied with the quality of graduate students coming to the program, and these students, once they are in the program, perform well in their coursework as indicated by the high GPA levels that they attain (generally in the range of 3.5 and above). This is supported by the observation that those graduate students seeking certification have a high pass rate (generally above 95%) for the state-required exams. This result, however, is primarily an indicator for the graduate students in the Master’s programs, which contain the majority of graduate students in the Department. It should be noted that these individuals appear to be highly motivated, and have personal interests in improving their knowledge and skills, since most will not receive monetary rewards from their existing job for their investments in bettering their education. Interviews with graduate students during the review involved only full-time (and primarily PhD candidate) students, which is a smaller fraction of the total graduate students in the Department. The individuals in this group generally appeared bright and motivated. So, in general, it appears that the Department successfully supports a relatively small number of qualified full-time students and a large number of part-time students that satisfy the requirements of the departmental degree program and the state-required certification process.

In terms of the recruitment of new graduate students, the Department faces a daunting problem. The majority of graduate students in the Department are part-time students that already have daytime teaching jobs and families in the region immediately around Lubbock. The number of students from other states, including New Mexico (the eastern portion of which is generally a fertile ground for recruitment by Texas Tech), is remarkably small. It was explained by a number of faculty and graduate students during the review that the choice of a university for these types of students is based on proximity, i.e., these individual “don’t want to move” to another location to get their degree. Thus, if the region from which the majority of graduate student recruits are drawn from is the area immediately around Lubbock, then the hopes of consistently increasing the enrollment in the graduate program over time will be primarily linked to the local pool. Having a finite pool to draw from could limit recruitment of these types of graduate students.

Recruitment of full-time graduate students should not face this difficulty, yet a relatively small number of these students have come from other states. Several faculty members indicated

that recruitment efforts at national meetings (such as a Department booth) were uncommon in recent years. They also felt that the current Department website was not well-suited for graduate student recruitment. Several graduate students indicated that they learned about the Texas Tech program through personal contacts, as opposed to official Department sources. Another factor limiting full-time graduate student enrollment is the availability of support through assistantships, which is linked to the success of proposal-writing activities among the faculty. Stipends for PhD students in the Department are comparatively small (generally less than \$10K per year). Some faculty members indicated that there was a group in the faculty active in proposal-writing, while another group that was not. More emphasis on proposal-writing might lead to additional support for full-time graduate students, making it more attractive for these types of students to come to Texas Tech.

During the meetings with Department graduate students, one student involved in recruitment activities strongly suggested that recruitment efforts in the Dallas area were ineffective.

One possible way to increase graduate student enrollment would be through expanded distance curricula, including the offering of degrees-at-a-distance. Other departments on campus have seen significant increases in graduate enrollment through distance techniques. This could help part-time students in the Master's programs, since they are already taking a majority of courses at non-traditional times (in the evenings). The acceptance and use of distance techniques by the Department faculty increased during the period since the previous review (the lack of use of distance methods was criticized in the previous review). Several faculty members indicated that resources in the Department were available for instructors to create distance courses. The increased use and development of distance programs might help the Department reach out beyond the local region, particularly for part-time students who don't want to move. Of course, a balance must be struck between on-campus and distance teaching, but a continued increase in distance teaching efforts would likely be beneficial to graduate student enrollment in the Department.

The fact that most of the graduate students enrolled in the Department come from the local area is apparent in the ethnic and cultural diversity of that student body. The relative numbers of minority individuals (particularly Hispanic and African-American students) in the Department follows their relative abundance in the local population. This being the case, it is unlikely that major increases in the numbers of minority students can be achieved over the current situation. Ethnic diversity is more apparent in the group of full-time students, primarily the result of a substantial number of international students. However, this group makes up only a small fraction of the total number of graduate students, which is dominated by part-time students seeking a Master's degree or certification. Without additional steps (such as providing a

substantial number of fellowships solely for minority students), it is likely that the Department has reached an effective maximum level for minority student enrollment in the program.

Comments made by several graduate students are revealing in terms of current satisfaction with aspects of the graduate program in the Department. Most commented that awareness of diversity issues among the faculty was good. Several students expressed confusion about the advising of graduate students in the Department, indicating that they didn't know how advisors were assigned (this was in contrast to discussions with the faculty, who described what seemed to be a fairly organized method for advising). There were a number of negative comments from graduate students regarding the assignment of assistantship supervisors, and the tasks assigned to students under assistantships. These individuals felt that they were assigned to advisors who were outside their areas of interest, and that tasks assigned in assistantships were not related to the students' programs of study and often consisted of clerical activities (looking things up, grading, sitting in for the professor in class, etc.).

Several full-time graduate students expressed concerns arising from their involvement in the instruction of local teachers who were in the process of pursuing Master's degrees. While they felt that these largely part-time students were receiving adequate instruction in teaching methods, they were strongly disappointed in the general levels of knowledge that these teachers had in their supposed areas of expertise (science and Spanish language skills were mentioned). If this is a prevalent problem, a solution may be largely outside the realm of the Department, unless the Department decides to make the admission requirements for the graduate program more stringent.

Statistically, it appears that the Department is performing reasonably well in its attempt to meet the stated goals, within the limitations imposed by drawing students predominantly from the local area. The program is dominated by part-time students who are generally seeking a Master's degree or certification and who already have teaching jobs in the local area. The reviewers had some difficulty in assessing the quality and concerns of this group, since meetings with the graduate students were dominated by full-time students. Supplemental information provided by the faculty and administrators suggests that this group is generally successful in their academic programs and is getting the desired outcome from their educational experience.

Assessment and Recommendations

Because of the concerns raised by faculty and students, the committee rates the quality and quantity of graduate students and graduates as **good** with an ability to become excellent in a short period

The department should look for better ways for graduate student recruitment, retention, and advisement. Moreover, offering courses that will assist with their students' success.

Curriculum and Programs of Study

The Department of Curriculum and Instruction the following graduate degree programs and certificates:

- Master of Education in Bilingual Education
- Master of Education in Curriculum and Instruction
- Master of Education in Elementary Education
- Master of Education in Language Literacy Education
- Master of Education in Secondary Education
- Master of Science in Multidisciplinary Science
- Doctor of Philosophy in Curriculum and Instruction
- Post-baccalaureate Initial Teaching Certification
- Graduate Certificate in Developmental Literacy
- Master Mentor Teacher Graduate Certificate

It is important to note that the numbers of doctoral students in the department of Curriculum and Instruction have gone up over the years. The Faculty have truly taken the graduate program more seriously. They have worked on ways to streamline the application and admissions process into graduate school. Assessment results show that the faculty are continuing to do collaborations with many of the school districts near Texas Tech University. In fact, many of the districts south out help from the program directly. Many of the successes of the department have helped with the strategic goals set by the department. The college and department have experienced impressive success in forming partnerships in the community and beyond For instance, the college has continued their work with the Gaps, Raiders Rojos, and the Dean's Future Scholars program.

Core Courses

Feedback from Program Chairs, Faculty, and Students

Program Chairs and faculty

There is no question about the strength of the faculty in terms of teaching the graduate curricula.

The faculty publishes in areas where they are contributing to the scholarship related to the core curriculum and elective courses. There was concern about scheduling classes and offering classes that would better align with what the field wants. Moreover, many of the faculty discusses concerns with faculty funding shortages to observe and supervise student teaching and field projects.

Students

During discussions with current graduate students, there were both positive and negative comments about the curriculum and the frequency of the offerings. Most of the positive comments focused on the flexibility the program offered (offering a non-thesis option) and the support of the faculty. At the same time, the negative comments focused on not having classes at other times besides evening hours and the poorly constructed online course. One student commented that there were not enough diversity courses taught in bilingual education.

Assessment and Recommendations

Based on the action plan from the previous graduate program review, the current self-study and the discussions with administrators, faculty and students, this committee makes the following recommendations as related to the curriculum and program of study.

The committee recommends:

First, program coordinators come up with a better way to schedule courses to accommodate all students. Second, there needs to be a better assessment for online courses for graduate students. Third, there needs to be a clear curriculum guide for all graduate students.

Assessment of Curriculum: Good

Facilities and Resources

The College of Education is housed in a spectacular new building designed in the Spanish Renaissance style that was used for the original campus. It is an exceptionally pleasant physical space that seems to serve most of the College's needs. The department benefits substantively from the College's relatively state-of-the-art technology, coupled with excellent support from training staff for using technology in teaching and research. The chair stated that most of the Department's courses are enhanced with other digital aids including "smart rooms." There is plenty of space for graduate students and staff.

Assessment of Facilities and Resources: Excellent