Graduate Program Review Committee Recommendations and Initial Department Responses
Department of Educational Psychology and Leadership
College of Education, Texas Tech University
August 18, 2011

A Graduate Program Review committee, consisting of three internal reviewers of Drs. Melanie Hart, Jason Whiting, and Greg Mumma, and three external reviewers of Drs. Terence Ahern from West Virginia University, Chris Jenkins from Oklahoma State University, and Joyce Moore from the University of Iowa, conducted a thorough review of the graduate programs offered by the Department of Educational Psychology and Leadership. The subsequent summary report provided high ratings and positive comments on all aspects of program quality. The committee also furnished recommendations for improvement. Following is the action plan that the department will implement to address the committee’s concerns. The committee’s recommendation will be noted first (in Italic), followed by the department’s response.

General Recommendations:

“1. Program coordinators: Despite some financial incentives, support for the faculty coordinating the six masters’ and six doctoral programs is inadequate. Program coordination responsibilities are overburdening the involved faculty. Unless remedied, this problem will quite likely result in undesirable consequences such as reduced faculty productivity or teaching quality. We recommend redefining the functions and roles of the program coordinators so as to focus on the more academic training issues. Additional personnel need to be provided for administrative assistance to the program coordinators to lessen the amount of work presently required of these positions.”

The College of Education, with more than 70 tenured or tenure-track full-time faculty member and more than 100 full-time and part-time instructors, is organized into thirteen programs housed within two departments. Part of the rationale for this structure is to ease administrative costs for the college. Unfortunately, one of the negative consequences of this organization is the college heavily depends on program coordinators to carry operation responsibilities for the departments and for the college. The burden on the program coordinators became even heavier in recent years as the university emphasized the need for accountability and increasing enrollment, requiring program coordinators to increase time in data collection and recruitment activities. Administrators of the college and departments are aware of the problem and have several times attempted to reorganize by adding additional departments. However, the attempts did not move forward due to financial considerations.

Although additional departments are not feasible, the department is relieving some program coordinator duties by centralizing some common responsibilities. For example, the College has hired a part-time staffer to develop recruitment materials and contact prospective students. In addition, the college’s Assessment and Accreditation Office has
been carrying out most assessment tasks required by the college and university, and in so doing minimizes the burden on program coordinators. The college is also constructing databases that integrate data from the university Banner System, Digital Measure, and TracDat. These databases will streamline assessment processes, thus reducing program coordinator responsibilities.

One program does not have senior faculty members, thus causing junior faculty to serve as program coordinators. To address this situation, two coordinators were appointed to divide responsibilities, with one focused on the Doctoral program and one on the Master’s program. It should be noted that both individuals are very aware of their academic duties and are making satisfactory progress toward tenure and promotion.

2. Graduate student recruitment: Faculty members are being asked to devote an unreasonable amount of time and resources to recruitment of graduate students. Much of this time is for activities that could be done by staff. a) We recommend that the department identify a graduate student recruitment strategy that limits the role of faculty. This plan should include diversity enhancement, a somewhat neglected issue within the department. Hiring an additional staff person(s) is necessary and strongly recommended. b) Graduate admissions would also benefit from improved communication from the Graduate School. Obtaining timely information on applicants is necessary.

Texas Tech University has established a priority of increasing enrollment to 40,000 by 2020. Because of this goal, recruitment will continue to be a part of faculty members’ responsibility, especially with the literature indicating that faculty recruitment efforts tend to be more effective than that of staff. However, the department is committed to relieving faculty from the clerical duties of the recruitment process. A staff position has been requested to assist the programs in enrollment and advisement of graduate students. If hired, the staffer will handle clerical duties for recruitment as well as answering students’ questions in the processes of application and course registration.

The college is also working with the Graduate School to streamline the application process, a time consuming process for faculty members. It has been suggested that (a) the application for the College of Education be merged with the application of the Graduate School so students complete the application just once, and (b) the Graduate School utilize online application software to facilitate the admission process.

3. Grant writing support. Provide further support for grant writing and grants administration by establishing a college-level grant and research support office, run by permanent staff. Given the research and grant writing trajectory of the department during the review period and the experience of other colleges that have done so, implementing such a program will quite likely further increase grant submissions and faculty productivity.

Since the completion of the Graduate Program Review in March, 2011, the college has hired a half-time staffer to help faculty handle budgetary issues of grants. In addition to the half-time position, the college is searching for candidates to fill two new positions: a Director of Program Evaluation/Research Support and a full-time pre-and-post award budget
specialist. This is done in order to increase external funding submissions and awards. These new staff positions should help faculty in grant-related activities, allowing individuals to focus their time and effort on grant proposal writing, thus becoming more productive.

4. **Grant writing in tenure and promotion decisions.** Review the role of grant writing in tenure and/or promotion decisions at all levels. Faculty members are devoting increasing efforts to this activity and they deserve clarity on the role of these efforts in tenure and/or promotion decisions.

The college is revising the standards of academe to align with the college’s reform agenda, including procuring external grants as a major focus of the college. Faculty members hired in recent years are expected to write at least one major grant proposal. This is stated in their contract letters. Grant-related activities for all faculty members are evaluated and recognized in their annual evaluations conducted by the department chair. Such activities are clearly communicated as an expectation of faculty’s professional life and consistent with the mission of the college and the university. It has been emphasized that grant-related activities will be considered in all significant decisions of faculty careers, including decisions on tenure, promotion, merit raise, and annual evaluation.

5. **Graduate student enrollment and faculty lines.** As programs increase in graduate student enrollment, additional faculty lines will need to be added. As the university moves toward Tier 1 status and some of the programs in the Department move toward the Ph.D. rather than (or in addition to) the Ed.D., it will become increasingly important to have tenure-track and tenured faculty teach courses and be available to mentor graduate student research (as opposed to relying, in part, on full time, non-tenure track instructors).

With the university’s implementation of Responsibility Center Management (RCM), data will be available that enable the college and the department to connect resource allocation to the performance of the programs. The College of Education is conducting an economics review that calculates revenue generation, which is primarily determined by program enrollment, and the cost of instruction delivery. This will allow an examination of the efficiency of money invested in the programs. Productive programs will be awarded by additional faculty positions when they are approved by the Provost. The recent hiring of faculty members in the programs of special education, educational psychology, and higher education reflects the principle of resource allocation.

**Program Specific Issues and Recommendations:**

*Educational Leadership should identify strategies to compete directly with sub-par universities without sacrificing quality of instruction. Also, consider originating more of the instruction from the sites away from the Lubbock campus. This will assist with providing the “human element” and increase recruitment and retention. “Input from faculty in several of the programs suggests they do not feel they have had a voice in producing these goals or a clear vision of how to assist the College of Education in reaching these goals.*
The college and department are assisting the Educational Leadership program to compete with alternative programs offered by other institutions. First, as a part of the College-wide initiative to improve the quality of education provided, the program is updating student learning outcomes. This is done by developing skill and performance outcomes in addition to the usual knowledge and reasoning ones. In addition, the Educational Leadership Program, as well as the other programs, is forming an advisory committee consisting of school administrators who will help define the skills and products that will make the program graduates competitive in the job market. Second, the program is collaborating with the faculty of the Angelo State University to recruit doctoral students for the doctorate of education program in the Midland/Odessa area. Responses of prospective students from the area to the initial recruitment efforts have been positive. Third, the program has developed an online PhD program of Educational Leadership, which based on a market analysis, should be attractive to educational practitioners wanting to advance their careers. This option will be launched at a proper time when it is reviewed and approved by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.