Texas Tech University Graduate Program in Human Development & Family Studies

Executive Summary

The Graduate Degree Programs in Human Development & Family Studies (HDFS) in the College of Human Sciences were reviewed and evaluated (pursuant to the periodic review policy of the Graduate School of Texas Tech University) by a committee that included Dr. Lloyd R. Heinz (Chair of Bob L. Herd Department of Petroleum Engineering), Dr. David Rudd (Chair of Department of Psychology), Dr. Howard Curzer (Professor of Department of Philosophy), and one outside reviewer, Dr. Laurie Kramer (Associate Dean of Academic Programs & Professor of Applied Family Studies at the University of Illinois). This report is based on information obtained from the Department of HDFS's self-study document and from a series of separate meetings the committee held on February 18 and 19, 2009, with the Chair of the Department of HDFS, the Program Graduate Director, faculty, and graduate students. The charge of the committee was to evaluate the graduate degree programs in the Department of HDFS in terms of their quality, size, resources, effectiveness, and contributions to Texas Tech University. This review is organized to focus on (1) program overview and vision; (2) faculty productivity; (3) quality and quantity of graduate students; (4) curriculum; and (5) facilities and resources. In each area, we assess the quality, justify the ranking, and include recommendations for the future.

Program Overview and Vision – very good to excellent

The Texas Tech University (TTU) Department of HDFS graduate programs appear to be excellent in nearly every regard. The curriculum demonstrates depth and breadth, the faculty members are of outstanding caliber, the program boasts dedicated and creative leadership, and graduate students are successful.

The TTU Department of HDFS currently demonstrates a high level of success as an outstanding regional comprehensive graduate program that attracts a high caliber of students, trains them through a broad and comprehensive set of degree programs, and enjoys a highly successful placement rate for its graduates.

The mission statement of the Department of HDFS states that it is a multidisciplinary department that applies contextual and systemic frameworks to the study of individual development and relationship processes across the life span through research, teaching, and service. In the HDFS vision statement the department will: be a department of nationally known scholars and educators in the core discipline of HDFS; integrate diversity into every aspect of the department including faculty, students, curriculum, and research; create and maintain nationally-recognized programs in the core discipline; publish and disseminate exceptional research in each program; promote the optimal growth and development of individuals and families; provide meaningful outreach and service to our surrounding community; and develop socially responsible students who can apply their substantive knowledge and critical thinking skills to their own lives, to the profession, and to the wider community.

Faculty Productivity – very good to excellent

Faculty productivity in the areas of teaching and creative work/research was judged to be excellent. Faculty members devote considerable energy and effort to the graduate program. Leadership for the Graduate Program from the Chair of the HDFS Department and the Associate Director for Graduate Programs, by all accounts from graduate students and faculty members, appears to be exceptional. All faculty members make contributions and hold productive publication records. Most faculty members have received grants and support graduate students. Two doctoral students per faculty is the average advising load. Faculty demonstrate excellence in instructing and mentoring their students. Students appreciated the instruction and advising they have received. Both the current and past graduate advisor
focus on recruiting and shepherding graduate students. Their effectiveness has grown the program over the past six years.

New faculty received satisfactory start-up packages. Junior faculty are supported by the senior faculty, department chair and graduate advisors. Past tenure and promotion records indicate the department prepares faculty well. Faculty serve their discipline as members, editors, and leaders in professional societies.

To facilitate tier 1 status, the following is recommended:

- Three faculty tenure track positions added so teaching loads and adjuncts can be reduced.
- Faculty can then devote more time to research production and grant writing.
- Ratio of faculty to undergraduate student be improved from 62:1 to 53:1. A long range optimal target is 20:1.
- More graduate teaching assistantships allowing a one course per semester load instead of the current two.
- A reasonable limit on course enrollments.
- Graduate students need better access to faculty to increase research, scholarship, and publishing.
- Addition of a staff person to assist in budgets and submission of proposals.
- An improvement in campus record keeping would enhance the department's ability to respond and plan. For example, the department's and Institutional Research records differ dramatically on key information as student enrollment and GRE scores. This information is available often six months late.

**Quality and Quantity of Graduate Students and Graduates – good**

The number of graduate students seems appropriate given the size of the faculty. The faculty members appear pleased with their placements and their quality. HDFS has been successful in placing their graduates in good academic positions. The program has been successful in enrolling historically underserved students. The faculty and administration appear to be involved in recruitment of graduate students and invested in their retention and success.

The perspectives of graduate students on their experiences were obtained through a meeting. In addition to endorsing the leadership and graduate faculty members in HDFS, graduate students noted the positive and collegial learning environment of the program. It was noteworthy that approximately 30 graduate students came and actively participated in the meeting. Their high engagement with their programs speaks well to their quality and eventual success.

The quality of the graduate students may be limited by the relatively low stipends, especially when it is understood that tuition and insurance are not included in the stipend. Low stipends are especially difficult when the graduate faculty attempt to recruit non-Texas students to Lubbock. The program will continue to encounter great difficulty in effectively increasing its prominence outside the region if additional funds are not available. Two immediate possibilities would be through offering more scholarships and enhancing the levels of funding for Ph.D. students above Master’s students, in order to cover the full costs of insurance and tuition, and raising the stipend levels.

The department using a holistic review process while evaluating candidate's credentials. Faculty report that some entering graduate students are not well prepared for doctorial study. While this may be partly attributed to the variety of background of incoming students, the department should review it's admission process to ensure the best candidates are selected.

**Curriculum and Programs of Study – very good**
The graduate degrees offered by the TTU Department of HDFS all appear to be outstanding: comprehensive in their content, broad in their scope, reflective of national practice, and uniquely positioned in their intent. Especially noteworthy is its four course statistical sequence in which doctoral students are given the tools to apply newer methodological and statistical processes. Other degree plans across campus are served by this excellent statistical sequence.

**Facilities and Resources: poor (computer labs) to excellent (CDRC, Observational Suite)**

The HDFS department offers innovative training in newer quantitative and qualitative methods, which are critical for the future of the field, this instruction has been hampered by an insufficient number of computers that are loaded with the required software packages. The lack of sufficient software severely limits students' ability to complete required coursework and to make timely progress in their doctoral research. Funds are needed to for sufficient site licenses. It is recommended that central IT assist the department in licensing management, so software can be installed on student owned notebooks and site licenses be securely shared for student and faculty research.

The Child Development Research Center (CDRC), based in HDFS, is a jewel that serves the campus and community. It is the envy of many other campuses, providing excellent education and teacher training and the ability for observational research. Faculty and graduate students from HDFS and other departments on campus perform important practical and theoretical research at the CDRC. A addition of a Faculty Director responsible for coordinating collaborative research projects and facilitating extramural grant proposals would enhance the CDRC opportunities for research, education and outreach.

The new observational suite that should be completed by the end of 2009 promises to become a second department research jewel. It will offer new potential for single and multi researcher externally funded grants.

The department has the advantage to facility their graduate student access to Early Head Start Program, the Institute of Child and Family Studies, and Neuro-imaging, Cognition, and Engineering Labs.

**Recommendations**

- Teaching by graduate students: Graduate students instruct ~ 1/3 of the undergraduate instruction in HDSF. Many doctoral students are teaching two separate courses per semester - a full time faculty teaching load. This load should be reduced to one course, or at least one preparation, so doctoral students can complete their required program of study. Each graduate student should be responsible for at most 50 students, overall. This will increase teaching quality of graduate students, doable only with additional faculty.

- Addition of a course on teaching to the doctoral curriculum which includes both didactic and experiential learning modules.

- Transparency in budgeting and planning is a necessity in times of fiscal uncertainty. The HDFS department, the College of Human Sciences, the Graduate School and the University have decisions and plans that are inter-related. If all involved understand and are able to participate the outcomes will have the best opportunity for success. The department, college, and university all need to be as effective as possible at transmitting expectations, plans, policies, financial models, etc. to each other.

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