GRADUATE PROGRAM REVIEW
THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EXERCISE, & SPORT SCIENCE

Submitted to

THE TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY GRADUATE SCHOOL

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Introduction
The mission for the Department of Health, Exercise, and Sport Sciences (HESS) states that the department is committed to excellence in teaching, research, and service and that it promotes intellectual, personal, and professional development and strives to enhance quality of life through the advancement of knowledge in health and human performance. The members of the committee charged with reviewing the HESS graduate program agree that the department strives to achieve this mission; however, there are a number of issues that need to be addressed for the department to realize its vision of becoming nationally recognized for its promotion of health and human performance.

Five areas that were reviewed are identified below. An overall grade for each area was assigned by the committee and rationale for that grade is provided. The committee’s suggestions for possible improvements in that area are also addressed.

Program Overview and Vision - Excellent
The review committee felt strongly that under the guidance of the new chairperson, Rick Carter, the HESS Department is headed in the right direction. Dr. Carter has a number of innovative ideas, which over time; should allow the department to achieve its vision. The committee senses that the transition from previous chairperson, to interim, to new chairperson has taken a toll on the organization’s culture, which should be remedied with stable leadership.

Faculty Productivity - Satisfactory
The chairperson and faculty are aware of the main issues limiting faculty productivity. As the department’s own program review document states, “the faculty is young and lacks a solid and established group of mentors.” The review also acknowledges that turnover - possibly attributed to salary and facility deficiencies - hampers the department’s ability to move beyond its teaching mission. Of the 20 current HESS faculty members, 12 are assistant professors, six are associate professors, and only two are full professors.

The number of referred publications and memberships in professional organizations has increased over the six review years (1999-2005). Thesis research over that same period however is low with only eight theses published in six years. This is a direct indication of the sub par level of master’s level research in the HESS department. Only eight of the twenty faculty members have served as a thesis committee chairperson, and only five of those have served more than once. Some faculty expressed concern that the culture of the department has recently shifted toward higher expectations for research and grants, while there is little infrastructure in terms of students and facilities to help meet these new objectives.

More mature faculty hired at the associate or full professor level could mentor younger faculty and help guide their research efforts. Unfortunately, attracting established professors with developed and recognized research programs would require significant funds for research start-up and additional staffing. The benefit of these additional costs would, however, be the development of junior faculty who could then work with more thesis master’s students in order to develop their own sustained stream of research.
Quality and Quantity of Graduate Students and Graduates - Poor/Good
Thorough conversations with the chairperson and faculty, the review committee deduced that there was an overall feeling that the quality of HESS graduate students was poor. With 55 graduate students in the department, the quantity of students seems to be good; however, nearly half of those students (27) are in the Sport Management Program.

The desire to develop a nationally recognized department by recruiting better quality students was expressed more than once. Part of the quality issue pertains to the relatively low GRE scores of students applying to HESS. It was suggested that this could be corrected by 1) developing an undergraduate Honors program, 2) by promoting areas of excellence to attract better students and 3) by developing a new web site to advertise and highlight the department.

Only a handful of students in the HESS program choose the thesis route for their studies. A significant reason for that is the extremely heavy workload the department places on its teaching assistants. The department employs 16 teaching assistants, and each is responsible for teaching 6 Personal Fitness & Wellness classes each semester. The sheer teaching load alone almost dictates that teaching assistants will not have to time to conduct research toward a thesis. The review committee suggests that the administration review the teaching load for teaching assistants and drastically reduce it if the department plans to encourage students to write a thesis.

Curriculum and Programs of Study - Satisfactory
The diversity of the programs offered in the HESS Department is overwhelming. While there is a great deal of quality work being conducted in the department, the committee felt that no one program really stands out above the rest. What is the HESS Department at Texas Tech University known for? Why would a graduate student come to Texas Tech over another institution?

The review committee had a difficult time differentiating the vast curriculum offerings in HESS and therefore had a difficult time assigning a grade for the overall curriculum. An excerpt from the HESS Graduate Program Review document helps illustrate this point:

The Department of Health, Exercise, and Sport Sciences offers two distinct degrees within the department, the Master of Science in Exercise and Sport Sciences and the Master in Science in Sports Health. The Master of Science in Exercise and Sport Sciences provides advanced study in biomechanics, exercise physiology, motor behavior, sport and exercise psychology, sports management, or teaching physical education and sport.

…The Master in Science in Sports Health program integrates sports medicine and exercise science for clinical exercise scientists and allied health professionals who wish to pursue careers in fields related to exercise science (pgs. 5-6).

Other issues related to the confusing curriculum are the joint doctoral programs. HESS collaborates with the Department of Physiology at the Health Sciences Center on a Ph.D. in Physiology and with the College of Education’s Ph.D. program in Curriculum and Instruction. It did not appear to the review committee that these programs were truly “joint” since the students are housed in the other areas and only take a few HESS courses.
The committee agreed that steps should be taken to develop an in-house doctoral program in Exercise & Sport Science so that the collaborative program with the Health Science Center could be a true joint program. Developing a new doctoral program would take time, and the department is probably not presently able to support its own Ph.D. program, however; steps should be made toward developing a program in the near future. Hiring more mature faculty and recruiting higher quality students are just two items already addressed that could prepare the department for its own doctoral program.

The review committee believes that the number and scope of programs/tracks within the department is less than optimal for a critical mass for instruction and research and that there is a need for simplification and clarification of the areas. Such an evaluation would best be conducted by an outside agency specializing in curriculum reviews.

Facilities and Resources - Unsatisfactory
To a person, the primary concern that faculty had regarding the HESS Department was the facilities. The Department is unusual in that it is housed in four different buildings (the Sport Studies Center, the Exercise Sciences Center, Holden Hall, and the Student Recreation Center) across campus. The space problem is a major issue for this department--an issue that may limit any growth and development of the department.

The departmental administration is aware of the need for updated facilities. The needs are too numerous to mention in this review, however pages 40-43 of the HESS Graduate Program Review document illustrate some of the specific space requirements identified by the department. In summary, the review states that, “HESS is in need of dedicated research space and a large multifunctional area for faculty and student programs.” It appears that the administration has a facilities plan, some items are short term and would require little additional funding, while others are more long term and costly. In either case, the lack of adequate facilities must be addressed.

Summary
The faculty, staff and administration in The HESS Department are doing an excellent job considering all of the factors hindering their progress. The department is suffering from a number of interrelated issues that form one large circular dilemma. The department needs money to build new facilities, these facilities can be used to attract more mature faculty and better quality students, these faculty and students can work together to develop research projects, these projects can be used to write grants in order to bring in more money to help support the cost of the new facilities, etc. The process has to start somewhere. With the current facilities it is nearly impossible for faculty to conduct research in order to generate funds to help pay for new facilities. The review committee feels that the department budget is already spread thin and the funds for new facilities will have to come from upper administration at Texas Tech University.

In summary, the review committee’s suggestions are as follows:
• An external review of the curriculum and organization of the HESS Graduate Program
• Funding from upper administration to pay for facility renovations
• Steps should be taken to develop an in-house doctoral program in Exercise & Sport Science
• Review the teaching load for teaching assistants and drastically reduce it
• Take steps to recruit better quality students (thesis track)
• Hire more mature faculty at the associate or full professor level