

Department of Educational Psychology
**Response to Recommendations from the Department's
 10-Year Department/Program Review
 June 12, 2016**

Prepared by B. Bradford Brown
 Professor & Department Chair

The Department of Educational Psychology appreciates the insights and ideas expressed by the external review team as part of the Department's 10-year program review. The review team was comprised of three eminent national scholars—Dr. James Middleton from Arizona State University serving as chair, Dr. Michelle Perry from the University of Illinois-Urbana/Champaign, and Dr. Matthew Burns from the University of Missouri-Columbia—and a representative of the Graduate Faculty Executive Committee (Dr. Tracy Schroeffer, School of Social Work, U.W.-Madison). Prior to their site visit the review team examined documents prepared by the Department as part of our self-study report. Subsequent to the visit Dr. Schroeffer conducted additional interviews with faculty members and students because she was unable to attend some of the site team's meetings. The site team considered general issues relevant to the Department as a whole as well as issues specific to each of our program areas: Human Development, Learning Sciences, Quantitative Methods, and School Psychology.

The site team delivered a report to the Department on December 14, 2015. It listed 12 major strengths of the Department and 7 areas of concerns, then provided 40 specific recommendations beyond its primary recommendation to “continue doing what [the Department is] doing in terms of collaborative, interdisciplinary work.” We are seriously considering each of the concerns and recommendations that the site team listed, although it is not possible to provide a detailed response to each in this short report. Instead, we address what we regard as the major themes emanating from the review, organized into 6 thematic categories.

Department Mission and Visibility

The site team recommended that the Department's mission statement be articulated in a way that aligns more clearly with the School of Education's three major initiatives. They also encouraged us to increase the visibility of faculty research and present a research identity that focuses on important social issues. They suggested designing an annual event to highlight faculty research to alumni, donors, and important local and state constituencies.

We agree with these recommendations. We have already taken action on some of them and have plans to address others in the near future. Specifically:

- We have revised the Department mission statement to provide a more concrete set of guiding objectives that emphasize integrative efforts across the four program areas within the Department. The new mission statement reads:

Our mission is to advance education-related theory and methodology; to improve knowledge about the biological, psychological, technological, and social processes of learning, development, and mental health in diverse populations; and to enhance learning and mental health in educational and community contexts through innovative educational interventions and effective prevention/ intervention programs.

The emphasis on prevention, intervention, and enhancement is intended to identify distinctive features of our program in educational psychology (compared to those in other universities) and underscore integrative themes across program areas that will be reflected in current and new programmatic and research initiatives. Although these are not directly aligned with the (now 6) major strategic initiatives of the School of Education, we believe that such linkages can be made in the ways in which we describe programs and research in the Department.

- As soon as the University settles on a new website platform we intend to make major modifications to the Department web pages that will allow easier browsing and highlight the current activities and accomplishments of Department faculty and graduate students. In the meantime, the “Department Spotlight” and “News” sections on the “front page” of our website highlight accomplishments and research findings of faculty and students.
- The Diversity Summit, hosted by the School Psychology program area each Spring, provides the Department with an opportunity to showcase current faculty research and connect our work to critical issues of great concern to the campus and broader community. This conference can demonstrate how the Department is involved in (a) improving learning and teaching, (b) promoting equity and increasing diversity, and (c) fostering community engaged scholarship (3 of the SoE’s strategic initiatives). We plan to expand this conference to involve participation by faculty and students in all four program areas and to expand participation by students and faculty beyond the Department and SoE; the conference already benefits from participation by campus and community leaders concerning diversity issues. We are exploring plans for an annual conference on prevention and intervention issues, once our new program initiative on Prevention/Intervention Sciences in Education is established.
- Finally, we plan to forge closer relationships with Department alumni by (a) distributing an annual or semi-annual newsletter to alumni (beginning Fall, 2016), (b) featuring alumni accomplishments on our website (as soon as the new website is in operation), and (c) making a concerted effort to invite alums to campus events such as the Diversity Summit.

Relationships Among Program Areas

The site team noted that some students expressed a desire for greater interaction with students in other program areas. The team also recommended that program areas review and revise their program objectives to embody the Department’s mission statement, especially regarding ways in which the programs enhance people’s lives. These are valuable observations and suggestions, addressing the need for the Department to offer more programmatic integration across program areas. We have identified several ways to respond.

- In developing learning goals for each of our degree programs, we have identified a set of learning activities and objectives that are relevant to most if not all of our program areas. These constitute points of integration in our graduate training that can lead to courses taken by students in various program areas to achieve common learning goals.

- The new mission statement—especially its emphasis on themes of prevention, intervention, and enhancement—provides faculty and students with new ways to talk about course work and training experiences that cut across program areas and also are relatable to ways to improve people’s lives. This may create incentives to design courses to attract students across program areas. For example, the School Psychology faculty have arranged with colleagues in the Human Development and Learning Sciences program areas to alter certain courses to include elements required of students in APA accredited school psychology programs. This provides the incentive for students in School Psychology to take courses with students in other program areas, leading to stronger cross-area relationships and a broader learning experience for all students in these courses. We hope to use this as a model for future course planning.
- One topic identified during a faculty retreat in late May was possible expansion of area-specific colloquia to invite participation by students and faculty across program areas. This would allow students to learn more about research going on in the Department in and beyond their own program area. It would also encourage students to think more broadly about their research as they present it to a wider audience, and it would be a venue in which students can develop relationships across program areas.

Understanding and Thriving in the New Budget Model Environment

Recognizing that the new budget model adopted by campus administration may alter the ways in which the Department does business, the site team expressed concern at the confusion among many faculty members about details of this new budget model. They also offered ideas about how to thrive in this new budget environment. Specifically, the site team suggested that the faculty diversify its external grant portfolio to be less dependent on its current, two primary funding sources (National Science Foundation and the Institute of Educational Sciences). They encouraged the Department to consider several ways to take advantage of the new budget model to generate additional revenue: marketing its Masters in Science for Professional Educators (MSPE) program to reach a geographically broader audience, initiating additional cost-recovery programs, and developing a few online courses (with assistance from funding sources within the University) to expand undergraduate enrollments. Some of the revenue realized from these efforts, the site team suggested, could be used to fund student and junior faculty travel to conferences, since such funding currently is remarkably low. These recommendations are consistent with several initiatives underway in the Department, specifically:

- Although the new budget model is still unfolding, so that full details of its implementation and implications are not yet available, the Department Chair takes responsibility for failing to communicate effectively to faculty what is known and what is likely to happen. The Dean’s office is readying a report for faculty members that will explain salient details about implementation of the new budget model. Implications of budget changes will be vetted at an upcoming faculty retreat.
- The new staff person (80% FTE) just hired to serve as Director of the MSPE program was selected in part because of her ideas for marketing the program and expanding its reach to in-service teachers beyond Wisconsin. We have arranged for her to have extra time to devote to marketing and recruitment her first year in the position.

- Plans are underway for a new Educational Specialist degree program in School Psychology for students who want to become certified as school psychology practitioners. There is a compelling need for individuals to fill these positions in schools throughout Wisconsin and in neighboring states, so we are confident that there is a strong market for this program, and the stature of our School Psychology program area will attract a large number of applicants. We are also exploring the possibility of a special degree or certification program in several other areas (to be detailed later in this report), pending a close market analysis. All of these constitute important future sources of revenue for the Department.
- Over the next 12 months, additional ideas will be explored in regular faculty meetings, faculty retreats, and task forces, to generate new revenue for the Department, directly or indirectly. For example, the Department is partnering with Educational Policy Studies and Curriculum and Instruction to initiate a new undergraduate major in Educational Studies. We envision this as a way to grow enrollments in existing undergraduate courses and introduce new undergraduate courses into the curriculum. A similar inter-departmental partnership is envisioned in the area of Prevention/Intervention Sciences and Education.
- We are beginning discussions of the development of online undergraduate courses to be offered initially in the summer term. Other departments have demonstrated a high demand for such courses at this point in the year because students who have summer employment like to take courses online. The Department may have a course or two that is highly marketable to this audience.
- Department faculty have been remarkably successful in procuring external grant funds. They were PIs or Co-PIs on new grants totaling over \$5 million in the last year alone. The Department appreciates the site team's caution about relying too heavily on a limited number of external funding sources, but efforts to diversify these sources (beyond what is naturally occurring at present) is not a high priority for the Department at the moment.

Program Initiatives

In addition to their comments about programmatic changes related to the new budget model, the site team encouraged the Department to create more opportunities for students to connect with each other across program areas (especially for students in School Psychology) and to consider creative ways to meet some of the learning requirements related to APA certification for students in the School Psychology program. They also recommended that the Department seek funding from foundations to support programmatic efforts in neuroscience and education and collaborate with WCER to start a center on the neuroscience of math skills development.

Although the suggested center is too narrow in its focus to be a viable candidate for center status at U.W.-Madison, the other suggestions are sensible and have been incorporated into the Department's plans for strategic program development. Specifically:

- The School Psychology program area is taking the lead in developing new degree programs and creative ways to meet program requirements. Plans are underway for a new educational specialist degree program for school psychology practitioners. In addition to generating

revenue for the Department (cost recovery program), this approach will allow the Department to reconfigure the doctoral program to assure a strong balance between research and practitioner training (a concern among some School Psychology students noted by the review team). We anticipate submitting a proposal for the education specialist program by the Spring of 2017. Led by Dr. Jennifer Asmus, School Psychology faculty members also are investigating the possibility of a Board Certification in Behavior Analysis program. Once the new education specialist program is in place we will conduct a market analysis to determine the financial and programmatic viability of offering such a program. Like MSPE, it could be a blended program offering both online and on-site learning experiences.

- Continuing our partnership with Counseling Psychology and RPSE, the Department is exploring new ways to meet program requirements of our respective practitioner certification programs. This may involve a series of seminars or short courses in place of traditional full-semester courses, which would allow a tighter focus on content directly related to the students' future practice. It would also build relationships among our School Psychology students with peers pursuing similar practitioner credentials in other departments. We expect to have new approaches to these program requirements in place by the spring of 2018.
- During his sabbatical this year, Dr. Craig Albers, who will become the School Psychology Program Director in Fall, 2016, has been meeting with Dr. Mitch Nathan (Learning Sciences) to consider ways to expand the certification program in Prevention and Intervention Sciences. This could evolve into an undergraduate or post-baccalaureate certification program or a separate Special Masters (cost recovery) program, depending on results of a market analysis. We envision potential collaboration with the new undergraduate program in health promotion sponsored by the Department of Kinesiology. Closer study of these options will begin in January, 2017.
- In collaboration with members of the Department of Neuroscience, Dr. Edward Hubbard from our Human Development program area has been exploring possible learning programs in neuroscience and education. As a first step, the Department will formalize a Graduate Minor program in Neuroscience and Education. We expect to complete plans for this program by Spring, 2017. It will give us an opportunity to test the market for expanding to a certificate or degree program at the graduate or undergraduate level.
- As already mentioned, we have already hired a new director for the MSPE program and charged her to expand the reach of this program to new markets. She will explore a new cohort model in which teams from a school or school district enroll in the program and pursue collaborative projects to benefit their sponsoring school district as part of their degree work.
- Finally, although not explicitly mentioned by the site team, the Department has made a commitment to increase attention to diversity issues. We plan to make our annual Diversity Summit, initiated by the School Psychology program area, a Department-wide event featuring research by several of our faculty members. We are examining ways to expand attention to diversity in undergraduate and graduate course offerings. Dr. Percival Matthews (Human Development area) is planning a new course titled "Educational Psychology in a Racialized and Gendered Society."

In pursuing new program initiatives, the Department intends to be measured and strategic. We recognize the importance of pursuing initiatives with a high probability of success and designing new programs in ways that do not undermine the Department's long, outstanding tradition of external funding for high quality, programmatic faculty research.

Enhancing the Quality of an Outstanding Faculty and Staff

Acknowledging the outstanding quality of the Department's faculty and staff, the site team made several recommendations about retention of faculty, nurturing the development of junior faculty, and enhancing the working environment for faculty and staff. The Department is taking several steps to address these recommendations.

- Although the site team encountered concerns among students about the future of the School Psychology program in the face of the imminent or near-future retirement of half the program faculty, these concerns have been alleviated by our hiring an outstanding young scholar for the tenure-track position and an experienced practitioner for the clinical assistant professor position to replace Tom Kratochwill and Julie McGivern, retiring in Summer 2016. Complementing the impressive skills of remaining faculty members, these appointments position the program area well to develop the new Education Specialist degree, advance our programs in Prevention/Intervention Science, and create broader affiliation with clinical training sites by offering a new certificate program in clinical supervision to in-service school psychologists.
- Acting on the site team's recommendations for retaining current faculty members is more challenging. The Department does not have the alumni base to mount a campaign to create a chaired professorship in honor of a renowned previous faculty member, nor is it standard practice to use the salary differential between someone who leaves our faculty and a new faculty hire to redress salary inequities among other faculty members. Nevertheless, the number of chaired or named professorships in the Department has risen from 1 to 3 in the past 2 years, and the Department is actively pursuing nominations of additional faculty to chaired professorships as opportunities to do so occur. Likewise, despite the virtual absence of annual merit exercises over the past 6 years, the Department has successfully negotiated retention packages for almost a third of the faculty (with generous support from WCER and the VCRGE) and addressed salary situations of many others through University initiatives such as the critical compensation fund. In fact, no faculty member has left in response to an outside offer in this 6-year period. The Department administration is committed to seizing every available opportunity to keep faculty salaries competitive.
- To assist in retention of probationary faculty, the Department has produced new, clearer guidelines for promotion and tenure and revamped its mentoring program and annual review process for non-tenured faculty. The Department Chair also has instituted an annual meeting with probationary faculty to discuss concerns that they have and consider their ideas for Department operations.
- Consistent with the site team's recommendations, the Department is committed to increasing diversity among faculty and staff members. Although this is difficult when the pool of candidates from under-represented groups is limited, one-third of our current faculty (including a very active affiliate in School Psychology) are from ethnic minority groups or from outside North America. Twenty-five percent of the support staff are individuals of color.

- Because numerous faculty members and students voiced major concerns about IRB operations and guidelines for conducting certain types of research, the site team encouraged the Department to pursue various avenues for addressing IRB issues. The Department recognizes discrepancies between IRB rules and procedures on this campus compared to peer institutions as a serious problem for the quality of research we can conduct and our ability to retain leading researchers in the long run. Problems with the IRB are beyond our direct control. We plan to work with and support efforts on campus to review the IRB. To that end the Department Chair is gathering information from faculty and students on ways in which IRB operations depart from standard practices at peer institutions.
- Finally, we plan to enhance the skills of our excellent staff members by encouraging their involvement in conferences and special training opportunities. Already this year, half of the staff has taken advantage of funding for such opportunities provided by the School of Education or central administration.

Student Funding

The Department's persistent challenges in matching funding offers made by other institutions to the most promising applicants to our graduate programs prompted several recommendations from the site team. They encouraged the faculty to apply for more training grants and suggested that the Department request assistance from WCER in providing more recruitment packages to top applicants. Another suggestion was for each program area to offer its top applicant each year a multi-year funding offer, with the Department pooling its resources to cover costs. The Department is considering these options but pursuing other ideas as well to enhance student funding.

- This past admission cycle the Department increased the number of multiple-year offers made to prospective students, but matching 5-year offers made by our competitors is difficult to justify without a more solid base of graduate student support.
- Increased efforts to identify and apply for training grants are already yielding some success. A consortium of 4 faculty members that includes Professor Martina Rau (Learning Sciences) recently was awarded an extramural NSF graduate training grant under the NSF Research Traineeship (NRT) Data-Enabled Science and Engineering program. This cross-disciplinary graduate training program is for data-enabled research in human and machine learning and teaching. The new award could support several graduate students in Educational Psych.
- The Department is developing a comprehensive information base on fellowship competitions for students at all levels, with guidelines for applications and a repository of application materials from past winners of these competitions. The Department is considering making an application for one of these fellowships a requirement of graduate training.
- With the assistance of Dean Hess, the Department is attempting to identify donors who might be interested in supporting several cohorts of students engaged in interdisciplinary graduate training around a common theme, such as neuroscience and education. This could be part of the "Nicholas match" fund-raising program for graduate student support.