



To: Interim Executive VP and Provost Sue Curry
From: Dean Daniel L. Clay
Date: March 5, 2018
Re: Response to Collegiate Review Report

College of Education Review Report 2017 Response
March 2, 2018

Overview

The report from the External Review Team was shared with the College of Education faculty and staff, with directions to share reactions and feedback confidentially (but not anonymously) with a member of the Dean's staff. Fewer than 10 people responded to the call for feedback. The feedback was then given to Professor Debora Liddell, our internal coordinator for the review process, who de-identified and summarized the feedback received and integrated it into this response. Members of the Executive Council collaborated with Dean Clay on this response.

One point to correct in the team's report is their statement that the last review of the COE is unknown, as no previous report could be located by either the College or the Provost. In fact, while the last review is beyond the Provost's retention schedule, the College has on file the entire review that concluded with the Review of the College of Education Final Report dated May 11, 1998. Additionally, a College of Education Self Study was completed in 2005, with an addendum in August 2006. Because of leadership transitions at the time, the self-study was not followed by an external review.

1. We concur with the committee's assessment of the strengths of the College. The program rankings, community relationships, and support across campus are indicative of a vibrant scholastic community.

We would like to respond to items in Section 2 of the report: Concerns and Challenges to Address.

- 2.1 We understand that the emerging model of budgeting has created ambiguity and uncertainty across campus. This has been a topic of conversation among programs coordinators, the College Faculty Advisory Committee, COE Executive Council, and the Faculty Senate. Without knowing how resources are going to be distributed or the criteria for evaluating programs and individuals, it is challenging for the College to lead the faculty and its programs. We have been proactive in sharing information as it becomes available including visits to department meetings and a College-wide meeting to share the CEA including the Dean, fiscal officer, and

Don Szeszycki. Once the budget model is finalized and an implementation plan is in place, we will hold another College-wide meeting to present the new model and answer any questions.

- 2.2 The committee points to the “glaring lack of focus on diversity in our discussions with faculty and administrators,” a general lack of attention on diversity in the self-study, and reports on concerns from those with minoritized identities that diversity could be better addressed. We agree that there is work to do. Our Collegiate Diversity Committee has been a mainstay and champion across campus for over 25 years. That said, we recognize that effective and sustainable diversity is the work of everyone in the College.

More recent initiatives that began in the College were the campus-wide movement to establish gender-inclusive restrooms in every campus building and provide signage for such. For the past 19 years, the College has been deeply involved with the CDE’s Iowa Latinx Conference, and this year, the inaugural College of Education Latinx Educational Excellence in the Midwest conference brought in over 160 participants from across the Midwest.

The committee makes reference to “microaggressions (which) were reported as common.” Microaggressions in academic and social spaces increase isolation, cultivate white supremacy, and damage individuals and communities (Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). This is something that clearly warrants greater effort with the goals of: (1) increasing support for faculty, staff, and students with minoritized identities, (2) educating faculty and staff on preventing and responding to microaggressions in academic spaces, (3) supporting the development of counterspaces designed to decrease isolation. Tapping into faculty expertise on countering the effects of racism will help us address this.

The College has initiated a pilot program for underrepresented first-year students interested in Teacher Education. The TEAM program (Teaching for the Enrichment of All Minds) was piloted Fall 2017 with seven students. Early evaluation of the program has been largely positive.

It is fair to say that while the College may be seen as a leader on campus on diversity initiatives, we have some sustained work to do to ensure that we are welcoming and inclusive across persons, perspectives, and roles. Improvements in this area would be evident on improvements on some metrics in the Working at Iowa survey, and on specific markers in the Strategic Plan. We are examining various options for how the College can cultivate a more cohesive infrastructure for supporting diversity and inclusion in all aspects of the College. The recent consultation of a doctoral level course (Multicultural Initiatives in Education, taught by Professor Sherry Watt) resulted in some recommendations that we are evaluating. We hear the need for improving the centrality and visibility of diversity initiatives in the College and will continue evaluating options for moving forward to systemically address the issues identified by the review.

We are finalizing our new collegiate strategic plan, of which a substantial portion addresses diversity and equitable action in the College (draft plan attached). Once the plan is launched, we will initiate discussions on the best implementation approach to reach our diversity goals.

2.3 Regarding professional accreditation in the Teacher Education Program, the College is currently undergoing our re-accreditation review of educator preparation programs by the State of Iowa, which entails rigorous reporting, self-study, and a four-day site visit with 12 review team members. This accreditation process is completed every seven years but also includes annual reporting and self-study. The site visit was completed February 19-23, culminating in recommendations and direct guidance in areas where our Teacher Education Program needs to improve. It is likely that some of the areas mentioned in the college external review as needing attention will emerge from the State Review process. Once the State report is returned to us (early April), we will look at the CAEP Standards to assess whether there is value to be gained by another review for national accreditation in addition to the rigorous state accreditation. We plan to reassess this decision annually to see if we are missing an opportunity to promote strengths in our program by only completing one accreditation review or if it would add value to complete two accreditations (State and national). While the external review proposed CAEP accreditation to improve data collection and “provide a framework for growth, accountability, and continued excellence,” we will evaluate our own continuous improvement efforts. And if we determine that there is benefit to pursuing national accreditation, we will do so.

We considered a number of issues in this decision. One is that neither Iowa nor Illinois are partner states with CAEP, which has value-added implications as these are the two states in which most of our graduates find employment. Further, we reviewed the State of Iowa’s decision not to be a partner state with CAEP, which they explored in 2013. The State Bureau of Educational Examiners provided detailed information on their exploration of partnering with CAEP, which entailed comparing the State review and CAEP standards/procedures, the costs of CAEP dues, and other information. However, as 30 states are partners with CAEP, we will reassess our decision annually to monitor the impact on our graduates in terms of their employment. National accreditation will also be a topic we will bring to our annual Teacher Education Advisory Board (April 25), to hear their views on the merit of national accreditation.

The recommendation to join CAEP included the view that it would improve our selectivity in admissions and overcome the change to “lowering the GPA requirement for entry into the Teacher Education Program.” We would like to clarify our enrollment procedures. In November 2016, a change was made from the 3.0 grade-point cut-off requirement for applying to the Teacher Education Program to the following policy: “For undergraduate and post-baccalaureate admission, a cumulative grade-point average of 2.50 is recommended, but not mandatory.” Understandably, this has resulted in the perception that we have lowered our admission requirement. Rather, by eliminating a strict cut-off GPA requirement, we are engaging in a more holistic review of students’ credentials. The review is not a guarantee of admission, but does allow for a review of each candidate by the faculty. In addition to GPA, faculty members review minimum scores on a Pre-Professional Skills Test (Praxis), a preadmission field experience, an application essay, and letters of recommendation. To better communicate our admission process and avoid the perception that we have lowered standards, the Teacher Education Committee decided in February 2018 to revise the language

around GPA as follows, “For undergraduate and post-baccalaureate admission, cumulative grade-point average is considered and reviewed on an individual basis.”

As three semesters have passed since the change to a more holistic approach to admission, we are able to review preliminary impact data. Three trends have been identified and will continue to be monitored: (1) the average GPA across admitted teacher education students is 3.2 or higher in all program areas, (2) our enrollment of underrepresented students has increased in both secondary and elementary programs, and (3) we have returned to enrollment levels held prior to five years of declining numbers.

- 2.4 We have opened an Office of Assessment; a new director has been hired and starts March 1. The director will develop an overall assessment framework for the College designed to meet accreditation standards of all our programs in addition to supporting data needs for our continuous improvement. The director will work with faculty to identify a comprehensive set of measurable outcomes and process variables, and will assist us as we standardize metrics for decision-making and accountability.
- 2.5 Lower enrollments in graduate programs reflect a national trend affecting some programs in the College of Education. Additionally, retirements and other faculty changes in the College of Education have led to questions about the strength and viability of some graduate programs. The College of Education is responding to these issues in several ways. Our goal is maximize efficiencies in graduate education by phasing out programs that are no longer viable (e.g. School Psychology), merging smaller programs in cases where a more robust, interdisciplinary program would add value to students’ experiences (e.g. merging doctoral programs in Foreign Language/ESL Education; Social Studies Education; and Language, Literacy, and Culture), and developing a comprehensive recruitment plan for growing program enrollments in areas where we have strengths and capacity. We note as well that in some cases (e.g. School Counseling, Counseling Psychology, Rehabilitation Counseling), accreditation drives enrollment targets, at least at the classroom level.
- 2.6 Transition in collegiate leadership can certainly create some confusion and ambiguity. Regarding the Faculty Advisory Committee, roughly one-third of the Committee turns over each year; their term begins with the start of the fall semester. Given how early in the year the review committee met with the FAC, and their tradition of holding one-hour monthly meetings, these concerns may be remedied by suggesting to the faculty the FAC structure be reviewed.

The Dean attends departmental meetings, FAC, and Staff Council meetings upon request. The Executive Council has discussed strategies for improving communication between the Deans, DEOs, and the College, including a more central and visible webpage dedicated to issues related to shared governance. This page could include: notification of decisions made by Executive Council, committee membership and ways to be involved, a visible repository for College Committees agendas and minutes, etc.

- 2.7 The review committee may have been misinformed about relationships and contracts with centers. All MOUs and contracts are subjected to the same rigorous review process. There have historically been variances in how contracts with centers have been handled and some of these concerns are remnants of that past. New processes were implemented to ensure that all centers are subject to consistent conformity to current university policies and practices.
- 2.8 The new Associate Dean for Research has coordinated a Research Advisory Council (RAC) comprised of a representative from each department and the chair of the FAC. One function of this council is to develop events to bring together faculty from different departments in the College (and larger university) to find opportunities for collaboration. We have started an annual debate on contemporary scholarly issues, a brown bag series, and are continuing the research series that are formal opportunities for faculty to hear about each other's work. The RAC is currently discussing ways to incentivize collaboration through funding mechanisms internal to the College.
- 2.9 The report asserts that *research productivity especially beyond the College Centers to achieve greater national notoriety, which may require professional development around grant writing and other research-related processes*. As part of the annual review procedures, each faculty and staff member is asked to establish a professional development plan. Funds are available to both faculty and staff to execute their plans. The College provides opportunities for faculty to hone their grant writing skills and help them develop long-term research plans. Last Spring, the College supported the participation of seven faculty (rank of associate and assistant professor) in a 2-day grant writing workshop sponsored by the VPR-ED office. Each year the College sends faculty whose research is promising to regional grant conferences for NSF and NIH. Faculty have access to collegiate funds to meet with program officers at the national level. Faculty also receive support from the Grants and Research Services Center (GRSC) in terms of matching research interests with funding agencies, providing preliminary budget information to determine viability of project, and assisting faculty with every facet of their proposal development. The Research Advisory Council (referenced in 2.8) is finding new ways to incentivize faculty to seek external funds and recommend ways to best-position/train individual faculty and centers to succeed in their efforts to secure grants. The RAC is charged with defining priorities around research-related process in the College that link directly with the strategic plan.

The review committee made several recommendations; these are addressed below.

- 3.1 The committee recommends developing common metrics for assessment and clarifying expectations for evidence of success. We agree and are working toward this with the establishment of a new Office of Assessment. See 2.4.
- 3.2 The committee recommends a review of organizational structure and operating procedures. Addressed in 2.6, we have proposed a website to facilitate information sharing. We agree that decision-making processes should be transparent and inclusive — this includes decisions

about faculty evaluations, resource allocations, departmental leadership, engagement with stakeholders, and decisions about programs.

We agree that clarifying expectations and communication across the College will assist in remedying confusion. One approach is to clarify for the College faculty and staff the important roles that the FAC and Staff Council have in representing their constituents. In January, the FAC did hold a first-ever “listening session” for faculty only as a follow-up to data indicating where improvement is desired. Approximately 60 faculty participated. But making sure the FAC summarizes those data and shares them with the Executive Council and the faculty are important ways to encourage engagement. We will explore other options for improvement with the appropriate governance bodies.

The Dean meets at least twice per semester or as invited by departments and centers to discuss current issues, explain rationale and process for decisions, and answer any questions that faculty or staff may have. We are considering a more active role of both an undergraduate and graduate student advisory group. We will meet with students to identify whether they would value such opportunity or identify other means to ensure their input into collegiate decisions and operations.

- 3.3 As was discussed in 2.5, we recognize the need to look closely at our graduate programs, taking into consideration their alignment with our strategic priorities, the value they provide to our students, and their efficiency and capacity. Our strategic plan will provide a key reference point for determining where and in what ways to invest our resources in graduate education. Faculty input and engagement in this process will also be critical. The decision to close the School Psychology Program, for instance, came only after careful deliberation and negotiation among faculty members in the program and was driven both by low enrollments and by faculty retirements and attrition. Similarly, the current effort to merge three lower-enrollment doctoral programs has been led by the faculty in those programs (Language, Literacy, and Culture; Social Studies Education; and Foreign Language/ESL Education). Faculty agree that a merger of these programs not only represents national trends toward interdisciplinary study in these fields, but also provides students with a more robust and valuable experience while increasing program efficiencies and maximizing faculty capacity.

With our new strategic plan nearly in place, the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Graduate Programs will coordinate faculty collaborations to develop a strategic approach to program investments that represent our strengths, priorities, and goals. This strategic approach will include a comprehensive recruitment plan for growing program enrollments and capacity across the College, honing in on programs identified for greater investment.

- 3.4 The recommendation to pursue CAEP accreditation is thoroughly addressed in 2.3.
- 3.5 This recommendation is addressed in 2.2. We agree that developing a measurable diversity agenda that is broad, deep, and inclusive will be useful to advancing the goals of the College. With assessment experts inside the College faculty, regular and systematic assessments of our

community culture and climate will help us identify problems before they get too big to handle. Faculty, staff, and students have had significant formative input to our evolving Strategic Plan (draft attached), particularly around the College diversity initiatives.

- 3.6 Faculty collaboration in the College is important. As we mentioned in 2.8, the new Collegiate Research Advisory Committee will help identify ways to further facilitate college-wide collaboration.
- 3.7 As we referenced in 2.7, all centers are subject to the same review of contracts.
- 3.8 We agree that procedures for student complaints must be transparent and inclusive, especially for students, whose engagement with the College may be more transitory than faculty/staff. Although grievance procedures for issues relative to coursework are clearly specified in all College syllabi, we know we can make a greater effort to ensure that students are aware of policies related to grievance procedures for program issues beyond coursework. Developing a feedback loop for students will be important in increasing transparency with our grievance procedures and for learning more about students' needs and concerns. One way that we intend to create a feedback loop is through the College's Graduate Student Executive Committee. This committee supports new graduate students, provides an orientation, offers informational sessions, and organizes social functions. The mission of this committee, however, also includes serving in an advisory role in reporting to the Associate Dean for Faculty and Graduate Programs on student issues. In recent years, the advisory role of this committee has waned. In an effort to develop a feedback loop for graduate students, the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Graduate Programs will work with this committee to reinstate their advisory role and to convene regular meetings for information sharing and for raising issues and concerns. The College will look into similar options for creating a feedback loop for undergraduate students. Finally, the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Graduate Programs holds regular professional development sessions for faculty and will explore the inclusion of sessions on communication with students in the coming year.
- 3.9 As we referenced in 2.1, we recognize that lack of clear information about the budgeting model has created anxiety for stakeholders. In fact, we have heard across campus that this is the case. We have held and will continue to hold information sessions with faculty and staff when this is settled by Central Administration.

REFERENCES

Solorzano, D. Ceja, M., & Yosso, T. (2000). Critical Race Theory, racial microaggressions, and campus racial climate: The experiences of African American college students. The Journal of Negro Education, 69, 60-73. Retrieved from: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2696265>