



**2023 Academic External Program Review Report
Department of Curriculum and Instruction College of Education
Florida Atlantic University
Site Visit: March 1-2, 2023**

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Part 1: Overview

The Department of Curriculum and Instruction (DCI) at Florida Atlantic University offers three baccalaureate degree programs, eight master's programs, one educational specialist program, and one PhD program. The department reports nine faculty at the rank of full professor, fifteen faculty at the rank of associate professor, one faculty at the rank of assistant professor, one visiting professor, one instructor, and fifty adjuncts (including sixteen current doctoral students serving as course instructors).

The Department of Curriculum and Instruction was constituted in July 2021 through the merger of two departments (Teaching and Learning; Curriculum, Culture, and Educational Inquiry). This restructuring occurred in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the Self-Study Report 2022,

In 2021, the College of Education re-organized. As part of the reorganization, two departments—Teaching and Learning (TL) and Curriculum, Culture, and Educational Inquiry (CCEI) merged in July 2021 to form the Department of Curriculum and Instruction (DCI). This reorganization brought together two dynamic departments with diverse programs (undergraduate and graduate), faculty, and support staff. Merging the two departments is a process requiring a great deal of resources, including time. The end goal can only be accomplished through a meticulous process. While the end product, one department, is obvious, the pathway to produce the desired product is not. Departmental functions did not/could not stop. Merger activities and normal departmental functions have to be conducted simultaneously. There was very little that did not require some attention. Clearly, some issues required more attention than others. The department has and continues to move forward, with the recognition that while much has been accomplished, there is still much more to accomplish.

The report also makes clear that, “[t]o work as a department, it is necessary to know and trust colleagues. This was challenging in light of the COVID pandemic. Each department entered the merger with different ideas about how the process might be facilitated, as expected. Thus, the merger has/will require an approach that appreciates and respects what has been done with an eye toward what can be.”

The organizational structure of DCI includes a department chair (currently interim), a program assistant who serves as the coordinator for doctoral programs, and a second program assistant who serves as the coordinator for master’s programs. The review team observed that DCI continues to work toward a unified department identity, articulate its mission as an academic unit, and create a dynamic departmental culture conducive to fostering excellence in such areas as teaching, research, service, and community engagement. The team encourages faculty and leadership to continue prioritizing this work.

The Office of the Provost invited one internal and three external team members to conduct a review of the Department of Curriculum and Instruction. The following program review report provides a summary and evaluation based on the provided Self-Study Report 2022, copies of various documents such as the FAU Strategic Plan and course syllabi, and a two-day virtual site visit.

A. Degree Programs by Level

Three Bachelor’s (BA Programs):

1. Elementary Education with Reading and ESOL Endorsement
2. English Education with Reading and ESOL Endorsement, Mathematics Education, Science Education (including Biology, Chemistry or Physics), and Social Sciences Education
3. Early Care Education

Eight Master’s (MA) Programs:

1. Elementary Education
2. Elementary Education with Reading and ESOL Endorsement plus Certification
3. Secondary Education plus Certification (English-with Reading and English Endorsements, Mathematics, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Social Science)
4. Curriculum and Instruction
5. Reading Education
6. Education Psychology
7. Instructional Technology
8. Environmental Education

One educational specialist degree program:

1. Graduate (Ed.S.): Curriculum and Instruction

One doctoral degree program:

1. Graduate (Ph.D.): Curriculum and Instruction

B. Major Changes since Last Program Review

According to the Self-Study 2022, DCI has made the following major changes:

- Merged two departments (Teaching and Learning; Curriculum, Culture, and Educational Inquiry) to form the Department of Curriculum and Instruction (DCI), July 2022.
- Adopted use of Live Text, an assessment tool that tracks competencies evaluated within coursework across programs.
- Developed three online master’s degree programs in Curriculum and Instruction, Educational Psychology, and Instructional Technology.

- Created a master schedule that includes undergraduate and graduate courses, reflecting a one-year course rotation for all programs at all levels.
- Initiated a modified doctoral admission process to help standardize the process. For example, the process now includes a common set of questions all applicants answer as part of the application packet, allowing faculty to learn specific information about applicants.
- Standardized the admission process for all seven master's programs.
- Launched recruitment campaigns for the Master's in Curriculum and Instruction, Educational Psychology, and Instructional Technology.
- Initiated review and revision of program sheets for all seven master's programs. Program sheets provide students with course rotations for their respective programs.
- Initiated streamlining of the master's advising process to ensure the timely selection of advisors and efficient student advising.
- Initiated a process to develop and institute a fall orientation for undergraduate students.
- Established a relationship with University Advising Services to ensure that admission information about the department's undergraduate programs is accurate and up-to-date for first time college students. Undergraduate students are not formally admitted into the College of Education until their junior year, so it is critical to provide students with accurate information early to ensure later success.

C. Summary of Visit

The review team was charged with identifying strengths and weaknesses, challenges, and opportunities based on a variety of data sources. The site visit was conducted virtually via Zoom over a two-day period on March 1 and 2, 2023. All review team members were present and actively participated in all interviews. The team thanks the university for its organization and preparation for the site visit. Faculty, administrators, and students were articulate, knowledgeable, and highly engaged in the opportunity to discuss their experiences at FAU.

Day One of the site visit included 7 interviews that ranged from 30 minutes to 1.25 hours. Participants included the Director of Assessment, Accreditation, and Articulation; Dean of the College of Education; Interim Chair of the Department of Curriculum and Instruction; undergraduate students; the Executive Associate Vice President for Research; Associate and Full Professors; and Assistant Professors.

Day Two included 8 interviews with representative adjunct faculty, graduate students, the past and present Directors of Accreditation and Assessment, the Interim Dean of Undergraduate Studies, the Interim Dean of Graduate Studies, and opportunities for closing questions and comments with the Dean of the College of Education followed by the Director of Assessment, Accreditation, and Articulation.

The review team extensively discussed these interviews, the department's self-study report, and several supporting documents, including those provided (e.g., the FAU Strategic Plan and the FAU 2022 Accountability Plan) and those requested (e.g., Promotion and Tenure document, course syllabi). The following sections outline the team's findings based on 15 interviews, documents, and ongoing team discussions. Major changes since the last program review, the department's strengths, comments on student learning outcomes, and weaknesses are included here. Recommendations for the Department of Curriculum and Instruction continued growth and development conclude the report.

D. Context

The review committee emphasizes the importance of affirming and promoting those permutations of diversity that are directly tied to the K-12 student performance, academic freedom, and representational gaps correlated with a history of racial injustice and discrimination. After carefully listening to concerns expressed by various stakeholders in DCI, the members of the review committee consider it critical to mention the serious apprehension expressed by many participants regarding the current developments targeting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) programs and initiatives at state-funded colleges and universities across Florida. The review committee is mindful that university administrators must operate under a regime of statutory constraints and other legal restrictions that are negatively impacting higher education, and teacher education (including teacher recruitment and retention) in Florida.

Nevertheless, the review committee believes that it is necessary to underscore the actual and potential damage caused by the current assault on DEI programs and initiatives. These damages include but are in no way limited to the erosion of academic freedom, the suppression of free speech, the inability to recruit talented and exemplary faculty, and the ability to retain the accomplished and dedicated faculty and administrators who have ensured FAU's success. As well, similar damage will also frustrate and/or compromise efforts to recruit and retain undergraduate and graduate students. Due to the unique geographical profile of the South Florida area, which contributes to its tremendously diverse populations, the education and training of teachers cannot escape the ethical and educational imperative of implementing supportive DEI programs and initiatives.

This concern is further strengthened by the role of education in a pluralistic democracy such as the United States. Education, duly infused with the realities of cultural pluralism, is a nonnegotiable feature of cultivating citizens who are democratically literate—those who stand ready to embrace and continue the traditions and institutions of a democratic society. The DCI at Florida Atlantic University, deeply dedicated to the education and training of teachers, depends on courageous, principled leadership by FAU administration in order to execute its goals and achieve success. This review committee recommends that faculty and administrators collectively raise their voices to combat this repression of freedoms that has made Florida a compelling collective of diverse individuals.

Part 2: Findings

A. Strengths

- The graduate and undergraduate programs have met all criteria for national CAEP accreditation, as well as program approval by the Florida Department of Education.
- The general trajectory of DCI is consistent with the pillars and platforms of the FAU Strategic Plan for The Race to Excellence.
- Undergraduate teacher education candidates report that faculty are supportive and knowledgeable.
- Courses have been redesigned to meet the needs of partner school districts, and the metrics designated by the state of Florida demonstrate that the teacher education programs are high quality.
- The undergraduate teacher education certification programs, master's programs, and the doctoral program have strong enrollments.
- By streamlining the curriculum and supporting the cross-listing of courses, the master's certificate and master's degree programs are aligned.
- Organizations and intentional on-campus activities are being implemented to engage teacher candidates and develop a sense of connectedness with the campus community.

- Field experiences provide teacher education candidates opportunities to interact with PK-12 students from various backgrounds.
- Many faculty are committed to and knowledgeable about instructional practices that support the learning of students from diverse backgrounds.
- Faculty and graduate students pursue research that addresses important educational issues in the local school systems and broader educational community.
- Some faculty see the merger of the two departments as an opportunity to re-envision the direction of the two departments and create a coherent vision for teacher education.
- Many faculty and graduate students have embraced the new collaborative opportunities provided by the department merger.
- Department activities are aligned with the research goals in the FAU campus strategic plan.
- The department implemented effective strategies as students transitioned from virtual instruction to face-to-face instruction post-pandemic.
- Since 2015 the PhD program has graduated 37 candidates, evidence that there is strong demand for this program.
- Faculty have established solid partnerships with local school districts, including two of the largest in the country: Broward and Palm Beach counties.

Student Learning Outcomes

- The college collects detailed information on student progress toward mastering the curricular goals that ground all FAU teacher education programs. This data is managed and disseminated by a central Office of Accreditation and Assessment. Called Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs), these measures are determined by faculty, with target objectives in each program that are linked to specific assessments in selected courses and scored by faculty using approved rubrics. Faculty use this information to direct program improvements, monitor student progress, and inform their work. This system of instrument design and data collection, analysis, and use ensures program success and is on par with industry standards. This College of Education strength is validated by both the 2022 CAEP review and program reviews conducted by the Florida Department of Education.

B and C. Weaknesses and Recommendations (combined)

Weakness:

1. The department lacks a shared vision and sense of community.

Recommendations:

- a. Faculty need to work collaboratively and immediately to develop the DCI mission statement.
- b. Intentional emphasis must be placed on enhancing DCI's academic community and culture. Within this, the focus should be on developing a departmental culture that values the perspectives of all faculty members, and particularly faculty of color.

Weakness:

2. There is a lack of clarity regarding the department and college research and other workload expectations.

Recommendations:

Given the desire of FAU to increase faculty research productivity, workload expectations should be clarified and formalized to eliminate confusion surrounding issues of teaching, service, and research expectations, including:

- a) As a department, work within college boundaries to either lead the College of Education in the establishment of a clear workload policy for all faculty or, if not feasible, develop a department policy immediately. This should be completed in tandem with the on-going revision of the college's Promotion and Tenure document.
 - i) Consider other aspects of workload related to teaching (e.g., number of credit hours generated in addition to the number of courses taught).
 - ii) Consider implementing differentiated teaching and research tracks within the policy so that faculty can opt into more teaching or additional research responsibilities as part of their individual workload.
 - iii) Include clear expectations for the amount of service faculty are expected to engage in.
 - iv) Develop a common departmental understanding of the research expectations for promotion and/or tenure and institute ways to support faculty research.
 - v) Implement a formal mentoring program for new faculty. Consider this when assigning workload.
- b) Allot resources (e.g., designate a grant writer) toward an external grant support in the college. Such positions often pay for themselves in terms of increased grant funding for the college and department.
- c) Include expectations within PhD coursework that can be submitted by candidates for publication. For example, in addition to a traditional dissertation option, consider offering an option featuring two or more manuscripts ready for publication (or recently published). Finally, discuss adding a dissertation project that is more practitioner focused for those candidates not seeking research intensive positions.
- d) Consider how to allocate resources to support full-time doctoral students who can work collaboratively on faculty research projects (simultaneously increasing faculty research productivity while preparing doctoral candidates for the professoriate).
- e) Develop an equitable structure (regularly reviewed) for assigning doctoral students to DCI faculty.

Weakness:

3. Aspects of DCI teacher education programs lack continuity, including aspects of diversity and inclusion.

Recommendations:

- a) Address DEI in all courses as a curricular thread that connects classes, field experiences, curriculum mapping, and theory and practice. Give particular emphasis to Title I schools.
- b) Hire an associate chair to share the duties of the department.
- c) Appoint a course coordinator for those courses with multiple sections or heavy reliance on adjunct faculty. This will ensure both consistency in instruction and effective communication across sections.

Weakness:

4. Enhance regular communication among college administration, faculty, staff, and students.

Recommendations:

- a) Update the DCI website both to meet the information needs of stakeholders and to visually showcase the department. Audit the website regularly to ensure accuracy of information.
- b) Design and implement a marketing plan, including the designation of particular individuals who will support the college and department marketing goals.
- c) Provide “just in time” information for students related to state assessments and other program requirements, possibly using the Canvas platform.
- d) Determine strategies to support communication between faculty and the Director of Assessment and Accreditation.

Weakness:

5. Develop a supportive community for recruiting and retaining graduate students, undergraduate students, and faculty.

Recommendations:

- a) Analyze barriers to student success and remove those that are feasible (e.g., provide focused mentoring and communication about standardized exams, assist with finding financial support through working in partner school districts, address increased class sizes).
- b) Develop and implement retention strategies for undergraduate students (e.g., academic support, financial resources, and sense of belonging).
- c) Increase involvement with the Office of Undergraduate Studies (e.g., undergraduate research, standardized exam support).
- d) Develop structures, activities, and organizations that are intentionally designed to provide a supportive community for underrepresented graduate students, undergraduate students, and faculty.