

Department of Exceptional Student Education
Program Review
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Review Team:

Susan Fowler (University of Illinois-Urbana Champagne)
Wanda J. Blanchett (Rutgers University)
Lynn Appleton (Florida Atlantic University)

The Department of Exceptional Student Education (ESE) has many demonstrated strengths including success in securing highly competitive external funding, well-respected faculty members with national reputations, and well-regarded academic programs. It has a dedicated and hardworking faculty who are committed to meeting the needs of students with disabilities and their families in a highly diverse context. By the conventional standards of the discipline, the department is doing well – particularly in light of its modest faculty size and limited departmental resources.

One potential barrier to moving “to the next level,” though, is that it is very difficult for the department to know – and therefore for this review team to know -- what constitutes “success” in this local institutional context. The Department has a broad range of initiatives that it is pursuing, and seems to struggle with the question of how to prioritize its efforts. External metrics (imposed at the state level) are important but are problematic: for example, they focus on FTIC students to the exclusion of the transfer students who are a large proportion of the Department’s major. They must be considered but are far from sufficient. To judge success, then, we must look to the standards set by Department, College and University. However, it is unclear to us (from the review material) how the College and the University judge success. Are there particular aspirations for the COE? We were unable to discern what the college values, what it aspires to, and how ESE has aligned or could be aligning itself with a larger clear set of college level goals and priorities. This might have been an artifact of how the program review document was designed, but we do not think so. Although we had access to the FAU strategic plan, we were left unclear about how it shaped or coincided with COE priorities. In general, we concluded that local circumstances and culture have not helped the Department to prioritize and plan.

At the department level, although ESE has some very promising initiatives underway, it does not seem to have a clear conceptual framework that guides or serves as the underpinnings for its academic program offerings, priorities, etc. It seems to have been adaptive rather than proactive in its development. The program review noted that the department frequently had to “weather the storms” of policy set outside the university, as well as to deal with lack of resources and lack of predictability in the availability of resources. Scrambling to deal with challenges often makes it hard to prioritize and plan. Nevertheless, to move to the “next level,”

planning and prioritizing are essential – and these can only be done if it is clear how success will be assessed and rewarded by College and University.

The Department also struggles with structural issues that can only be resolved at the College level. The BECE program is an example of a structural problem that has grown out of lack of clarity about authority and resources. What are the mandates for and resources available to the departments to form a collaborative partnership to provide oversight to this interdisciplinary program? It seems less than adequate or efficient to leave the management solely to the discretion of the two department chairs, as there is no guarantee that they will agree on issues of credit for faculty effort, course provision, hiring etc. Is it possible for the Dean to establish clear policy and resources to ensure that the departments embrace the program and nurture it so that it can be exemplary? What are the opportunities in the future for expanding the number of faculty engaged in the BECE program? Current faculty indicate that the rapid growth has required them to hire adjuncts to teach many of the critical courses. Is there a planning process that could shed light on the feasibility of staffing and growing programs like BECE? Is there a process or policy that would support the key initiatives of the department/College? BECE is a clear opportunity but, in the absence of a plan, the Department and College might not be able to take full advantage of its possibilities for development.

Overall, we have been very impressed with what ESE has accomplished. Indeed, we marvel at the progress that ESE has made despite its lack of: a clearly articulated conceptual framework to guide their programming and departmental initiatives; strategic goals aligned to a larger set of COE strategic goals and therefore supported via resource allocation; strategic goals that could guide their work and the many noteworthy initiatives they undertake as a department. The successes seem to have been guided by a set of core values/commitments rather than emerging from a more formal and focused prioritizing/planning process. What has been done is admirable, but anchoring a department's development on diffuse values and commitments is an unsure method for developing the excellence that the Department seeks. In its self-study, the department notes that, "During the last two decades, when asked to identify pillars and platforms, strategic initiatives, areas for distinctions, spheres of excellence, visioned opportunities, or other imperatives before that, the ESE Department has consistently identified partnerships with districts, schools, and community organizations **as the centerpiece of our research, teaching, and service**" (emphasis added). And, at a later point, the self-study reports, "Whether the University establishes Pillars and Platforms, Strategic Imperatives, Spheres of Excellence, or Community Imperatives before that, the Department has worked within the University's planning context to **create initiatives and deliver programs that bring in people with disabilities**" (again, emphasis added.) Are these priorities in competition for resources? Are they synergistic? Are they embraced by the College and University? Are there other priorities that should be considered? The department has accomplished much but can accomplish even more if it has a clear and institutionally-supported vision for its future and a limited number of "big picture" goals or aspirations with accompanying

objectives to help focus its resources (human and financial), efforts, and requests for faculty replacements and/or additions. Additionally, as the department embarks upon the aforementioned strategic visioning and planning process, we believe the department would be well-served by streamlining its activities and determining what it will **stop doing** in order to invest in taking the department to the next level. As the program self-study recognized, "Because no organization can do all things for all people, it is necessary to consider future directions that actually have a high probability of succeeding." To that, we would add: with limited resources, no organization can continue every good idea that it has started to pursue. ESE's talented and ambitious faculty have pursued a broad range of admirable initiatives, but no one department can do everything. Identifying a set of 3-4 appropriate aspirant peers that align with some of the university's aspirant peers and studying them and their programmatic offerings, structure, accomplishments, etc. in an in-depth manner might help inform the department's visioning and strategic planning process. We were glad to see, in the program self-study, that this process of looking at aspirational peers is already underway. We encourage its further cultivation.

We have organized our discussion of the program review according to the three framing issues posed in the self-study: 1) value, cost, and pragmatics of changing the Ed.D. degree program to a Ph.D. program, 2) revisiting the BECE program and the logic of operating a program across multiple departments; and 3) comments/critiques regarding the advising structure of the programs in ESE. We have added a fourth issue, consideration of the pool of current adjuncts, with an emphasis on increasing its diversity and increasing the adjuncts' connectivity with the department and faculty.

ISSUES

1. Value, cost and pragmatics of shifting from an Ed.D. program to a PhD program

Value: The ESE department has focused energy toward the development of a robust doctoral degree program. It is successfully producing 10 graduates every 5 years and is likely to increase the number based on recent enrollments to 3-4 per year due to increases in external funding. Recognition within the discipline of special education is increasing based on sources of external funds and the research accomplishment of several core faculty members.

- Dr. Brady and colleagues have obtained federal funds to support current students in the doctoral program, through an OSEP/USDE doctoral training grant. These are highly competitive and coveted grants, as only 10 to 15 are funded nationally every year. They provide 5 years of full-time support (stipends and tuition remission) for a cohort of students. These graduates have the opportunity to truly focus on their academic studies and to make

connections with other universities that also have obtained such grants, through increased travel funds and opportunities.

- Dr. Wilson is president of the Higher Education Consortium of Special Education (HECSE) which brings together the top 60 doctoral programs in special education in the country and provides internship opportunities for doctoral students funded on leadership grants and an opportunity to network with peer and aspirational peer programs. Given the convergence of external funding specifically for doctoral training and the national leadership role of Dr. Wilson, FAU students are likely to have expanded opportunities and increased visibility for academic positions following completion of their degree. In fact, they have been involved in recent HECSE meetings and participated in HECSE initiated publications.
- The ESE department is preparing future faculty who are racially and ethnically diverse and who have a strong background in issues associated with cultural and linguistic diversity in education. The demand is high for faculty members from diverse backgrounds and the supply is limited. Over a fourth of the ESE faculty and doctoral students are identified as from underrepresented groups and nearly 50% of the undergraduates. Given this trajectory, the department is well positioned to attract yet more students from diverse backgrounds for doctoral studies.
- The ESE department has funding from the Taft Foundation for establishment of the Academy of Community Inclusion (ACI) program which promises to be a model for other universities that aspire to serve students with disabilities in an inclusive higher education context and will be a source of applied research on effective strategies. In addition, the state funding of the CARD already provides a critical entry point for research on applied intervention strategies for individuals with ASD and their families. These two funding sources provide predictable resources necessary to sustain applied research environments and model program development. However, it would greatly benefit the department to identify and solidify its sustainability strategies while they are still early in the externally funded period of these initiatives.

Cost and pragmatics:

- It is not clear what the shift from an Ed.D. will gain for the doctoral students in the department. Is the shift from Ed.D. to Ph.D. going to increase job opportunities for students? Approximately 75% of the graduates in the past 15 years have accepted positions in local agencies and school districts and appear to be geographically bound to (or have strong preference for) southern Florida. The Ed.D. has been appropriate for these positions in the past, and so the Department might consider whether it is still the most

appropriate degree. We note that the Ed.D. has also been appropriate for assuming adjunct teaching roles at FAU.

- Since 2002, only 7/20 doctoral graduates have continued at universities other than FAU. Four have attained associate professor rank and three are assistant professors. Two of the remaining 13 left university positions for other opportunities. Hiring universities include: Florida Gulf Coast, University of Colorado at Denver, Winthrop University, U of West Georgia, Florida International University and Community College of Rhode Islands. None of these currently are listed as aspirational peers of FAU on page 12.
- To shift to a Ph.D. would require a careful analysis of :
 - What course changes or additions are required?
 - What is the approval process through college, university, and state?
 - Are they likely to recruit students at a national level versus local and regional?
 - Can the department really sustain seven concentration areas? Which are most represented by current students and core to the doctoral program? Clearly identifying what the students' training positions them to do seems important if the department is to cultivate a distinctive identity at the doctoral (Ed.D. or Ph.D.) level.
- Faculty strengths— Any strong doctoral program needs a strong research faculty. Several ESE departmental faculty are research intensive and have thriving research agendas while others are less active in research due, in part, to factors such as teaching load, advising, program development and implementation. To develop greater research strength, the Department may wish to assess hiring patterns and seek faculty from higher ranked universities that stress research preparation. This might also put it in a position to reconsider whether assistant professors should be uniformly barred from dissertation supervision, as research-ready junior faculty should rapidly develop research programs that can involve doctoral students. Additionally, the department might wish to consider broadening the reach of its faculty recruitment. While the Department currently has faculty from Vanderbilt, GA State, and U of AZ), many of the current faculty are from the state of Florida (FIU, UCF, U of Miami, and FSU, etc.) Intra-state hiring may limit the research range and professional networks of the faculty, which might not be in the long-term best interests of the department.

As a way of advancing discussion of the doctoral degree, we suggest that the College of Education consider joining the Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate (CPED) to help inform the Ed.D. Program and to give faculty in the Department of Exceptional Student Education a professional network of colleagues who are engaged in the education doctorate and committed to continuous improvement. The CPED is a consortium of approximately 80 schools/colleges of education that are

engaged in a collaborative process to engage in a critical examination of the doctorate in education through ongoing dialogue, experimentation, critical feedback and evaluation (taken from the CPED website). Given that members of CPED include institutions such as the University of Missouri, University of Texas, University of Pittsburg, University of Southern California, University of Florida, and Rutgers University, being involved in this initiative would likely greatly benefit FAU's College of Education, the Exceptional Student Education Department, and both their faculty and doctoral students.

Discussions with the departmental faculty regarding whether they should consider a move away from the Ed.D. to a Ph.D. suggests that the faculty are mixed in their views. Some believe that they should make this move to better position their students in the market. Others believe that the rationale for the change is unclear and/or that it is not needed due to the rigorous nature of the current Ed.D. program. Whether they were supportive of changing the program, not committed one way or the other or against changing the program, faculty were united in their belief that this would be a lot of work if they took it on and they were unsure as to how it would get done. [Note: we have since learned that the Department might have been overestimating the amount of work necessary. This could allay at least this one concern.] Students in the Ed.D. program indicated that they specifically chose this program because it was an Ed.D. versus a Ph.D. program and they are very happy with the program and would not like to see it changed. This may indicate their satisfaction with their current program – thereby reflecting well on the faculty and its offerings – more than any informed commitment to one or the other terminal degree. However, as we will emphasize below, it is important to understand how the two degrees are perceived by the kinds of students that the Department hopes to recruit before any change is made.

Our recommendation is that the faculty engage in an in-depth conversation before making a decision to move away from the Ed.D. program and to convert it to a Ph.D. program. In addition to the issues raised above, the faculty should also consider what the market will bear. Will they lose students who were interested in the Ed.D.? If so, is their loss likely to be made up by students seeking a Ph.D.? The Provost's office has a marketing research firm on retainer and the department and college should engage in discussions with the Provost about how to research this question. An additional question, of course, is resources. Given that the draw for most Ph.D. students is the availability of funding in the form of graduate assistantships, fellowships, endowed scholarships, tuition remission, etc., will the department be able to compete with the Ph.D. funding packages that their competitors (e.g., University of Florida, University of Central Florida, University of South Florida, Florida State, University of Miami) in the region and state can offer?

They also need to consider what mix of faculty in terms of rank and research productivity will be needed to implement a Ph.D. program in the near future, given that it appears that assistant professors in the COE cannot chair doctoral dissertation committees. This reality also has implications for staffing needs.

2. Viability and Sustainability of Shared Degree Program in BECE

The BECE program has the potential to be a model professional development program for preparing and developing practitioners in early care and education (ECE). It appears to address two kinds of potential students: (a) nontraditional students who are currently practicing teachers, caregivers, directors of programs that serve young children, birth to 8; (b) traditional students who either enter as freshmen or are transfers to FAU at the onset of their junior year. Increase in the enrollment of students in this program has been meteoric, growing from 6 at the initiation of the program to a current enrollment of 282. Of these, half have a reliable source of tuition funds via Palm Beach County.

The first group of students access funding for their tuition from a community agency in Palm Beach County that manages funding from local property tax that has been directed to improving the quality of ECE programs through professional development and achievement of a bachelor's degree. This group of students is racially, ethnically, culturally and linguistically diverse, representing the local population. Their enrollment at FAU has the potential to raise their social mobility, capital and status given successful completion of their bachelors. Undoubtedly many of these are first generation college students. They enter the program typically as transfer students to complete the upper division 60 hours leading to a BA in Blended ECE. This group of students exemplifies the mission of regional service that we believe to be one of the major missions of FAU, offering the chance for a university education to people who are poor or working class, predominately Latino and African American and frequently English second or third language speakers.

The second group represent more traditional students who are majority white and female and completing a degree at a state college and articulating to FAU or entering as FTIC freshmen.

The focus of the program on blended ECE is progressive and leading edge. In the past year the USDE and HHS jointly published a position paper on the critical role of early childhood professionals in including children with disabilities in community programs, as well as Head Start and state pre-k public programs. The national trend is inclusion in early childhood and reflects the fact that many young children with high incidence disabilities (developmental delays, language delays, ASD, ADHD) are identified with learning and behavioral challenges during the early childhood years. These years are a time of critical growth and neurodevelopment for children in terms of social emotional development and cognitive/linguistic development and motor development. Funding has increased dramatically across the nation for preparing professionals to provide quality care and education with 40 states now funding pre-k services and with federal funds available to support states' development of quality rating and improvement systems.

Questions that emerged from the report and interviews with faculty and students include:

- How can a program that is built on faculty support from two departments (CCEI and ESE) best be administered and supported?
- What program improvements are needed to bring the degree and its enrollees to the next level?
- What incentives support the administration of and faculty participation in this program?
- Which department teaches the blended early childhood methods that are key to the program?
- What institutional support (within the College) is needed to maintain and grow the program and help it move to the next level?

A review of material provided shows that 5 classes (14 credits) are provided by ESE faculty, while CCEI manages 3 classes and several classes are made available by other college departments.

Our impression is that the program is a stepchild of both of its core departments, despite ESE's good faith effort to do much of the "heavy lifting" that it has required. Discussion with faculty, students and administration indicate that ESE has been charged with providing the metrics for the program. Even though it has not yet recovered from recent faculty departures, ESE has also supported a proposal to hire a new faculty member to teach the blended methods class and to be housed on the Davies campus. (The search closed last year without a successful candidate and was reinitiated this year and is in process.) Deeper discussion indicates that the program does not have a stable home or full commitment in either department. The dean stated that she brings the chairs together from the two departments to engage in conversations about the program. She has not asked them to articulate a vision (big picture) of what the program could be and leaves the details of how the program is delivered to the two departments. This approach is a risky one, as it means that the program's development depends upon two departments' priorities and commitments aligning through relatively informal discussion and negotiation. For many reasons, we think that the program needs a structure that is less voluntarist.

From our experience with blended and shared programs we would recommend that the College establish an administrative structure that will maximize the program's likelihood of thriving and developing. One model is to use an assistant or associate dean or a faculty member (with release time) as program coordinator as well as to appoint an oversight committee that would draw from faculty in multiple departments and perhaps also include key constituents outside of campus including representation from the external stakeholders (e.g., funders, FL policy makers in ECE). This model would reduce the pressure on any one department and provide an opportunity to create ownership of the program across faculty from multiple departments. The coordinator should report to the Dean (or her designee) and

work closely with the department chairs from the two key departments. This reporting to the Dean should occur on a regularly scheduled basis and should address key metrics developed by the College to assess the program's development. The coordinator's team should have a strong directive from the Dean to collaborate and to evaluate the outcomes of this program, which has the potential to be a state and national model. The BECE staff should have access to space for meeting and regularly discussing the management of the classes. Staff includes TT faculty, doctoral students, supervisors and adjuncts. Through regular planning meetings, this group can coordinate the day-to-day implementation and begin to look at ways for continuous improvement. For example:

- Delineate how recruitment differs between the ECE professionals funded by the county and FTIC or transfer students entering the BECE program.
- Consider how county-level differences in tuition support for BECE students working the field will affect the program's development on the Davie and Boca campuses
- Provide regular reports to the Dean and Chairs on how program is doing
- Develop a system for the College acknowledgement needed for faculty efforts to build this collaborative and interdisciplinary program
- Assess the degree to which this program that could be a model for the College in terms of meeting other emerging needs in education

One of the greatest challenges in education is the disconnect between SPED and general Ed. Early childhood, with the policy mandates to be inclusive of both, is the opportunity to bridge this disconnect. The BECE could be a signature program for COE and FAU and could increase the visibility of the College statewide and nationally. It is a potentially rich resource for conducting research on the program, outcomes and impact particularly with the nontraditional students.

Final thoughts: It is important to challenge assumptions that undergird what you are doing in the BECE programs, particularly the program in which current practitioners are enrolled. Does participation and exit from the program enhance their status and salary and help them to be upwardly mobile? If they begin the program poor, do they move out of poverty as a consequence of completing it? Does it result in improved ratings and quality of ECE provided locally? Given that no practicum or internship is included, do the students who enter who are not teaching in an ECE setting have sufficient practice to be ready to teach? Should there be differences in expectations between the two groups of students? How are the Davie and Boca programs likely to differ in their student constituencies and how should the program respond to any differences that emerge?

3. Advising Structure of the Undergraduate Degree Programs

ESE makes limited use of the professional advisors in the College for its majors. It relies on them for the review of students' records as they seek entry to the major and as backups to a system of faculty advising but does not consider the professional advisor as the student's primary advisor. Students in both of the degree programs (ESE and BECE) are assigned to a faculty advisor. The faculty advisor has two roles: to service as a traditional advisor (i.e., devising a plan of study); to serve as a mentor who connects the student to the department and helps the student to succeed. The concept of an assigned faculty advisor is great for ensuring that students feel welcome and have an opportunity to interact with faculty. However, as this is a small department with a significant number of commitments and commendable aspirations, a key issue is whether advising is a reasonable use of faculty time. Moreover, as "time to degree" is an issue for state-level metrics and degree completion rates are increasingly important, we must ask if this system is efficient for students. We believe that the department should seriously consider a change: keeping a system of designated faculty mentorship for students but handing the work of advising to professional advisors. With professional advisors freeing the faculty from the "nuts and bolts" of advising, faculty can have the time to be true mentors to their students – which, as we understand it, is the motivation for the current system.

There are several reasons why we make this recommendation.

First, we are concerned about variability in the current advising load. We must acknowledge that we are not clear what the student/faculty advising ratio is and if it varies significantly across the lower enrolled ESE program and the exponentially growing BECE program. However, if faculty associated with the BECE program are advising a far greater number of students, then a significant disparity exists and it is reasonable to question why the professional advisors don't assume more responsibility.

Secondly, we wonder about the effectiveness of faculty advising. Professional advisors work with checklists and accountabilities are different from those of faculty. They are trained to get sign-offs, check student understandings, do written plans of study, etc. Without these, problems can develop. For example, one student who completed the BECE degree and was entering the master's ESE program indicated that, as an undergraduate, she had not understood that she was not gaining a credential in the BECE program. Although we do not know the details of this particular case, we do know that this is the kind of misunderstanding that professional advisors are trained to expect and explicitly address. To us, then, this case underlines the need for professional advising.

Thirdly, professional advisors who are involved routinely and directly with students can be a resource for the faculty in its planning for the major. For example, involving the professional advisors may enable them to collect data on the extent to which students are required to move from campus to campus for courses and the impact that attending multiple campuses may have on retention. They can help identify problems in scheduling. In many ways, then, they can help to create a more data-driven and effective scheduling.

Fourth, the extent to which the advising provided to the working BECE students is adequate must be explored. For example, do these students understand the "flight plan" for completing the program and understand the course rotation system? Under the current system, how easy is it for them to get access to advising when their courses are evening and weekend courses? Many of these students are employed full time and, given the low incomes traditionally associated with ECE professions, may be living in poverty or just above poverty level. Given the complexity of their lives, are they able to access advising on a regular basis and get advice about how to avoid barriers to degree completion? We are guessing that this process would be easier with professional advisors, who could then collect and aggregate information and share it back to the faculty. Professional advisors could be scheduled to be available when these students are on campus; professional advisors are easy to reach and appointments are easy to schedule. A faculty member's calendar is often unpredictable and the availability of the faculty cannot be assured when student needs arise. In sum, professional advisors have a scheduling flexibility and availability to students that faculty may not have.

The department's most important resource is the time and energy of its faculty. As we noted earlier, this is a very active and ambitious department. For example, one aspiration of the department is to increase honors enrollment, which in turn would increase undergraduate student involvement in research. We encourage the department to consider the time faculty invest in the basics of advising (i.e., in figuring out what courses need to be taken in what order to meet a planned graduation date) and if it could be better directed to those students who aspire for honors experience and graduate study following completion of bachelors. Mentoring, rather than advising, might be the best goal.

We hasten to add that we heard no complaints from the students with whom we met. They were quite positive about their access to faculty mentors, and agree that faculty are responsive. However, we all recognize that they were a select group of students. Moreover, even if every student was unqualifiedly happy with the current system of advising, the bigger question is whether the scarce resource of faculty time should be committed to work that can be done as well elsewhere. The question is if it is time to shift to a more efficient method of advising with the professional advisors. If so, then we encourage the department to invite the advisors into programmatic meetings to ensure the advisors understand the intricacies of the program and free up faculty time for mentoring honors and other students and for prioritized initiatives.

The team was not certain if one of the issues with advising related to student time to degree (TTD). Given that a majority of students are articulating from AAS degrees, these students are not included in the FTIC-based metrics used by FAU to assess TTD. In addition, students' TTD are influenced by their ability to pass the general knowledge (GK) exam required by the State of FL for entry to the senior year in teacher education. Some students have taken the exam as many as 7 times before passing, delaying TTD by a year because they can not enter their senior year and follow the course rotation that is based on a year by year enrollment. They can't "catch up" if they miss fall classes but must wait until the next fall semester. Others leave the program, with a loss that appears to be as high as 25% between junior and senior year in the ESE program. Professional advisors might be able to provide more support for these students and knowledge of preparatory courses for passing the GK exam within fewer tries. Common use of professional advisors might also allow advisors to begin to identify characteristics or patterns of students that suggest they are at risk for program completion. This type of data is not easily available when multiple faculty are advising.

4. Use of Adjuncts

The adjuncts represent both an area of strength for the department and an area of concern. Our interviews with them indicate that they are motivated to be at FAU, enjoy their roles as teachers and supervisors and are relatively stable with 3 to 15 years experience in their roles as adjuncts. It was not clear however, how these adjuncts help to bridge the authentic experience of the student teachers in the schools with the classroom preparation at FAU. That is, to what extent are the adjuncts' voices included in department discussions of continuous program improvement? Do faculty hear about the actual range of experiences students and their supervisors are encountering in the schools? Is this reflected in faculty curriculum development?

The adjuncts reported that they have frequent one to one contact with Dr. Heiser, the faculty field placement coordinator, and Dr. Brady, chair. We would recommend that the conversations between adjunct and department leadership and faculty be scheduled on a regular basis. For example, given that the adjuncts are in local schools, can they have quarterly or once a semester meetings with the faculty to share information about what they see in the schools, the extent to which class assignments prepare student teachers for practicum and internship, the challenges that these student teachers face and ways in which these challenges could be addressed in course revisions? Their voice appears fragmented under the current reporting system. The group appears to be talented, to have a wealth of authentic experience in the field and could provide critical information for program improvement. Another strategy may be to assign each course taught by adjuncts to a consistent faculty liaison to ensure that the content covered in the courses is consistent from semester to semester and across adjuncts who teach it. This faculty

liaison would also have access to information from the adjuncts that would help to keep courses relevant, be responsive to changes in schools, and identify new trends that the department may want to address.

While the adjuncts represent individuals with excellent teaching experiences and backgrounds (former teachers, administrators, recent FAU doctoral graduates), they are not as diverse as would be expected, given the population that they serve in southern Florida. We recommend that the faculty focus on diversifying their pool of adjuncts to be more representative of the students they serve and to reflect the diversity already available in the TT faculty.

Conclusions

The Department of Exceptional Student Education is to be commended for both its accomplishments and its ambitions. We applaud the spirit in which the self-study recognizes that there are “many doors of opportunity” for faculty and students in the Department, as we also applaud the self-study’s recognition that no program can “do all things for all people.” We hope that the ideas in this program review can help the Department as it grapples with the key questions of how to build towards a higher level of excellence, a greater level of regional and national visibility, and a stronger set of programs within the context of limited resources and institutional priorities.