

**Educational Leadership
Florida Atlantic University
Program Review
February 2-4, 2016**

Review Team:

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Overview

The team of Dr. Carol Kasworm, Dr. Michael Dantley, Dr. Linda Serra Hagedorn, and Dr. Paul Hart reviewed the three programs in FAU's Department of Educational Leadership and Research Methodology on February 2-4, 2016. The three programs include Adult and Community Education Leadership, Higher Education Leadership, and School Leadership. The Department provided an extensive self-study of the programs that served as a basis for the deliberations conducted during the Review Team's site visit.

The Review began with a dinner session hosted by Dean Valerie Bristol, Department Chair Robert Shockley and Assistant Dean Patricia Heydet-Kirsch.

On the second day of the Review, the Team met with the following individuals:

- Camille Coley, Senior Associate Vice President for Research
- Deborah Floyd, Dean, Graduate College
- Department faculty in three separate meetings (i.e., all full time faculty, untenured tenure-track faculty, and adjunct professors)
- The Dean's Office Group
- Students representing all three program areas
- Department Chair Robert Shockley
- Associate Provost Russ Ivy

On the third day of the Review, the Team met with Dean Bristol and Department Chair Robert Shockley.

Background

The University appointed a new President, Dr. John Kelly, in March of 2014. During the fall of 2014, the President and the Provost conducted sessions with faculty and staff in over 60 units of the University providing input for the development of a strategic plan. On March 24, 2015 the University's Board of Trustees approved the 2015-2025 Strategic Plan for the Race to Excellence. Notably the Plan includes a number of "Pillars and Platforms" upon which the University intends to focus to achieve excellence and recognition. Among the areas of the Plan related to the Department's programs are the Platform called "Leadership, Innovation and Entrepreneurship" and an item under a section of the Plan

called "Synergy" which lists growing the research enterprise and increasing extramural research funding as important strategic goals.

The Strategic Plan articulates aspirations for the University that will have to be implemented by each of the Colleges. Academic units will necessarily have to be engaged in transition efforts if the University is to meet its intended aspirations and goals. The comments and recommendations presented below by the Review Team are intended to provide assistance in executing the Department's transition efforts.

In addition to the importance of the University Strategic Plan, the Review Team also recognizes the importance of the new faculty hires made in recent years; the composition of the Department faculty is changing. This is another development that necessarily implies that the Department is in transition seeking to assimilate and support new faculty. The comments and recommendations by the Review Team are intended to provide guidance with respect to this aspect of the transition as well.

At the outset, we also want to highlight that through our conversations with numerous individuals during our site visit, we came to recognize a nurturing culture in the Department reflected in the dedication of the faculty to students and the student's appreciation of their efforts. The faculty and the College and Department leadership are to be commended for developing and sustaining this culture.

Curriculum

Pursuant to our discussions with students and members of the full time and adjunct faculty, it was evident that there are a number of curricular issues that need the attention of the Department. The three issues we would like to comment on are related to the leadership core courses, the addition of quantitative research courses, and the elimination of the technology test.

Recommendation One. Currently, there are three core leadership courses that are required of both the masters and doctoral students in all three programs. Students in the doctoral program who have not been exposed to these three courses, through their matriculation in the Department's master's degree program, are required to take all three. Students and some faculty members suggested that taking two of the core courses would be sufficient to understand the conceptual underpinnings essential to successfully navigate the succeeding courses in all of the programs.

We received the following suggestion: if indeed, the sequence of three courses were a part of the curriculum to which the faculty felt most obliged to keep, the third course should be one that is more relevant to current conditions in higher education, K-12 leadership education or Adult and Community Education. We clearly understand the efficacy of providing a conceptual foundation that sufficiently grounds the students in subsequent course work. However, we agree with the students and faculty that a third course should engage students in material that is specifically germane to their area of study. In fact, the committee recommends that the third course could be one that focuses on contemporary issues in each of the three areas housed in the Department.

Recommendation Two. From discussions with the graduate students, the Review Team suggests that more research courses, specifically quantitative research courses, should be added to the doctoral curriculum. Students may be required to take an additional quantitative research course or may choose to do so because gaining a more in depth understanding of quantitative methods will enhance their portfolio of professional skills and better prepare them for successfully progressing with their dissertation research. It is rare that students request additional research courses and it would be advantageous for the Department to capitalize on this level of student interest. This recommendation is

not intended to give short shrift to qualitative research methodology but is intended to provide assistance in responding to students' requests. We suggest that the Department benchmark the research methodology courses required of doctoral students in peer and aspirant institutions to determine how to proceed on this matter. Moreover, we note that enhancing quantitative skills in graduate programs would be consistent with the increasing attention being given to data analytical skills across numerous disciplines in the academy.

We also suggest that the Department reexamine the current complement of courses that carry the title of Research. We offer this suggestion as we believe that courses, for instance, that focus on creating a review of the literature, while indeed important to the research process, should not be included as research classes.

Recommendation Three. Finally, faculty and students strongly advocated for the elimination of the technology test that is currently required for all students. Those who voiced this sentiment believed the test to be outdated, a waste of time and definitely should not be required. The Review Team believes it would serve the Department well to take a very good look at no longer requiring this test. There may be a less high stakes way of determining the students' level of technological knowledge that would allow them to get the kind of instruction essential for making presentations, creating spreadsheets, using other software and other necessary technological skills.

Adult and Community Education Masters

A final important area that requires attention is the lack of enrollments in the ACE master's program, and also in the proposed efforts to reinvigorate the masters through a collaborative focus on sustainability. This program needs to have an enrollment that is strong and vibrant. Although the focus of sustainability may be viable, there is concern about its market competitive status.

Recommendation One. One of the external reviewers, as well as one of the adjuncts noted the significant focus of workplace learning as a specialization for a number of successful master's programs in adult and community education. Nationally, this focus has been a viable specialization and represents a number of vibrant online programs across the country. The ACE faculty are encouraged to consider this focus, as they plan their future efforts in developing a stronger master's program.

Dissertation Committees

The Review Team commends the Department for leading Florida Atlantic University in the number of doctoral students enrolled in the three programs offered in School Leadership, Adult and Community Education and Higher Education. At the same time, the large number of doctoral students in these programs is cause for concern. During our relatively short review time, we could only form certain impressions, however we offer the following with the hope that it provide guidance going forward.

Recommendation One. We understand the Department's commitment to support the University's target that the number of doctoral students remains at a minimum of one hundred. However, we must register some concern about the quality of the engagement of the faculty, given the current numbers of students in these programs. Further, we question whether the faculty to student ratio represents an acceptable practice. We recommend that the Department benchmark its faculty to doctoral student ratios and also rubrics to identify the quality of dissertations produced with peer and aspirant institutions. One way of assessing the latter would be to compare the quality of the

publications based on dissertations across the different institutions. We believe that the results of these comparisons will provide the faculty with insightful data and provide a basis for deliberations intended to address these concerns.

Recommendation Two. One of the College's regulations gives us more concerns regarding a possible threat to the quality of these doctoral programs. We find the stipulation that faculty can serve as the chair of a student's dissertation only after six years of service at the University to be constraining and could potentially negatively impact the quality of the work that could be accomplished in the doctoral completion process were this not the case. Our recommendation is that the Department lobbies others throughout the College to change this policy. We were very impressed with the quality of the junior faculty in the Department and feel confident that they would be able to serve, if not as the sole chair of a dissertation, then as a co-chair. And a greater number of students could be positively guided through the dissertation process with these additional faculty.

Recommendation Three. We further questioned the efficacy of what seemed to be, if not a requirement, an unwritten expectation that a member of the Research Methodology faculty would serve on each dissertation committee not only for the Department but also across the College and the University. No doubt, you fully understand the limitations such a process places on the energy, the quality and the available time of the few faculty in the Department who are able to provide this kind of research expertise can offer. We recommend that the Department explore ways where these expert faculty may serve in limited consultative roles to departments outside of ELRM, highlighting the power of qualitative research so that that methodology becomes a viable option for dissertating students, and exploring how faculty in other institutions with this kind of expertise are used in the dissertation process. Hopefully the faculty will find ways that students are better served and members of the faculty are not overwhelmed while meeting the needs of students.

Faculty Research Productivity

With a dominant focus upon graduate student preparation and one of the highest levels of production of yearly doctoral graduates within Florida Atlantic University, this Department faces a changing university culture towards a stronger expectation to advance a research culture. This changing emphasis will support the Department's commitment to developing leaders of professional practice in education, but within a research culture. We suggest that the Department is facing a growing challenge to enhance their research culture for both faculty and graduate students. Further, there is a clear strategic focus in the new FAU's Race for Excellence Strategic Plan and an overarching desire towards a research intensive institutional ranking. It is important that this Department advance its standing within this growing research productive environment so that both faculty and select graduate students are in alignment with these institutional goals.

In our review of faculty vita, course curricula, and research productivity, as well as in discussions with faculty and students, there is currently a strong commitment by its faculty and select graduate students to demonstrate high research publication productivity. As noted by the self-study, the productivity "far exceed the averaged posted by members of others like-sized faculty." We also noted several key examples of significant faculty honors and awards, as well as co-publications and presentations with graduate students in national professional and scholarly forums. However, we are concerned about the extremely heavy instructional and dissertation supervision loads of the faculty and what appears to be related heavy involvement in service obligations. These commitments and

obligations appear to not be supportive of optimal advancement towards a more dominant research culture.

We are also concerned that there appears to be uneven expectations of research productivity among faculty, in relation to standards within the Department of key indicators of *quality* research scholarship. Further, in examining these many components, we are concerned with the high service commitments of the faculty, of potential overcommitted workload issues and potential faculty burnout, as well as desires to establish multiple initiatives focused upon international partnerships. Although all Colleges of Education and similar departments in other research university have ongoing tensions between their focus on serving the educational community and being a research committed department, this Department should identify the limitations of their efforts to serve these multiple arenas, in relation to their university responsibilities for teaching and for research productivity.

Recommendation One. We recommend that the Department identify key understandings and indicators for their increasing role within a research culture. These indicators would be reflected in each faculty member's roles and responsibilities, recognizing that there are differing expectations for different levels of faculty. Further, the Department should establish key indicators of expected "quality and impact" of scholarship. We recognize that the Department has a dominant focus upon professional preparation of leaders and that Departmental scholarship should reflect the varied forms of scholarship – discovery, integration, application, teaching, and engagement. However, faculty in a research intensive climate need to produce scholarship subject to peer review in quality research publications, as well as in peer reviewed professional practice journals. Further, there is need to have a balance in faculty productivity between research journal articles and book chapters, recognizing that the role of a research university is to reflect the impact of the faculty members' research scholarship in national and international research communities. For example, each area of the Department could establish impact levels of journals and establish expectations for publication in these varied levels of impact for journals.

Recommendation Two. As a professional preparation program, there are key standards and expectations in the development of Ph.D. students into competent professionals for the practice world of education. In addition, these individuals are also expected to be *mentored* into the research culture of the Department, to engage in elements of the research discovery and integration process, as well as to participate in potentially co-authored publications and presentations. Faculty should determine and report on their student's progress in these areas and highlight their accomplishments within departmental documents. There was no discussion in the self-study beyond key curricular requirements for doctoral student progress and achievement. To be clear, we view doctoral student progress and accomplishment to be closely tied to faculty research productivity. While doctoral student graduation rate is an important metric, the quality of the research achievement attained by doctoral students is a metric the faculty need to consider in order for the Department to get "to the next level".

Recommendation Three. The institutional shift towards a more enhanced research culture will require a more significant stance towards additional and focused efforts in research and external grant involvement by faculty. We note that there is faculty interest in obtaining external funding; however, there appears to be limited current engagement in seeking grants across the faculty. We also note that while there are certain personnel resources that the Dean has provided, such as staff available for budget proposal preparation and proposal formulation and editing, these resources are perceived by the faculty to be limited. We also acknowledge that it is highly probable that most external grant seeking will require interdisciplinary involvements by faculty in collaborative grant efforts across departments and colleges.

We recommend the Department consider more proactive strategies to connect faculty with grant opportunities, as well as other synergistic activities to engage faculty in gaining skills in grant seeking, grant getting, and grant administration. And, we would hope that the University Research grant officers would be proactive in identifying the wealth of expertise among the faculty and in connecting the departmental faculty to interdisciplinary grant opportunities.

Tenure-Track Faculty Issues

While we heard very positive reports from tenured faculty, students, and adjunct faculty, the levels of security, satisfaction, and overall well-being among junior (pre-tenured) faculty appear low. It is common for junior faculty to have jitters in relation to the road to and the process of tenure, but in the Department of Educational Leadership the junior faculty are hyper-tense, fearful, and generally uninformed.

They sought guidance on “the number of peer review publications” they need each year and how much service is necessary to get tenure. They questioned if and how prior work could be used in their bid for tenure. They stated that they are getting “mixed messages” as they consult with various faculty and others at the University. One faculty member said he heard you have to have two peer reviewed articles per year and another said three. Moreover, they did not know who to ask to answer their questions. Apparently they are asking the senior faculty who have gone through tenure many years ago in different processes when the university had different values and goals. Some junior faculty consulted with their program chair for answers but were confused when the directions differed from those provided by other senior faculty. Some junior faculty appeared reluctant to approach the Department Chair.

Recommendation One. We note that the Department web site has multiple links to information regarding the tenure process. In addition, the Department should consider writing a *Guide to Tenure* specific to the Department similar to that done by the FAU Department of History. See: <http://www.fau.edu/artsandletters/new-pdfs/History.Promotion%20and%20Tenure%20Criteria.pdf>.

Recommendation Two. In general, there is a need for the Department chair to engage in regular annual information sessions with pre-tenure faculty to explain the process. In particular, the University requires that pre-tenure faculty be given annual appraisals of their progress toward tenure which should serve as an important source of feedback for each pre-tenured faculty member. Ideally, this appraisal should include input from appropriate tenured faculty who will ultimately be voting on tenure. The Chair should emphasize that he is willing to answer any questions related to tenure and promotion, or any other topic, and that faculty should feel free to seek his advice. When given conflicting information, the Chair should be the trusted source.

Recommendation Three. The opportunity for junior faculty to have access to successful tenure application portfolios can be useful. However, because these portfolios are typically viewed as part of a faculty member’s personnel file, they cannot be available to the public. Nevertheless, when individual junior faculty request tenured faculty to share their portfolios, our experience is that tenured faculty are often willing to oblige. Reviewing successful application portfolios is a good practice because it provides a concrete framework for understanding what is required to make it through the tenure process. However, the pre-tenured faculty should recognize that expectations regarding requirements for tenure can and do evolve over time across the academic units in universities.

Recommendation Four. The Department should formally assign a mentor to all new junior faculty. Pairing a senior faculty with a junior faculty member provides a “go to” person for the junior faculty and an advocate when faculty conduct progress toward tenure and tenure deliberations. While faculty should be willing to take this responsibility freely, the Department may consider the mentoring of a junior faculty member the equivalent of chairing a dissertation committee.

Student / Alumni Issues

We were impressed by the enthusiasm that the Department of Educational Leadership students expressed for their programs and their faculty. The students spoke glowingly of the faculty who they believe nurture and prepare them for the future. Several students traveled long distances just to attend the meeting to be sure that the Review Team heard about their positive experiences.

Although we did not have the opportunity to specifically visit with alumni, we did have a meeting with adjunct instructors, most of whom were alumni. Like the students, the adjunct professors talked glowingly about the program, the students, and the faculty. They treasured the opportunity to give back to the Department through their teaching.

Recommendation One. The students offered suggestions for making their FAU experience even better. All of the students, but especially those who are enrolled in online programs or were taking courses primarily online expressed strong interest for cohort and at least occasional face-to-face interaction with other students and faculty. One student boldly expressed that our meeting provided the first opportunity to meet other students and to be able to share their reflections. Moreover, master level students expressed strong interest in greater interaction with doctoral students.

The Department should consider adding a “blended” approach to some online courses that would allow students to meet face to face. Also, we recommend promoting or supporting graduate student “mixers” or other activities for graduate students. Perhaps when a special speaker is brought on campus or if a special event is planned, set aside some time and a place for graduate students to come and enjoy light refreshments.

We understand that there are dissertation writing groups. We endorse the value of these writing groups and recommend that if they are informally organized, the Department consider a formal structure for sustaining them. A helpful guide is the “Starting an Effective Dissertation Writing Group by Lee and Golde at: <https://unmgrc.unm.edu/writing-groups/documents/starting-an-effective-group.pdf>.

Recommendation Two. The lack of alumni contact information is a major obstacle to sustaining ongoing relations with alumni and obtaining data necessary for developing a full profile of the Department. Consider the value of being able to boast about alumni achievements and to provide to prospective students the proportion of graduates working in the discipline, the median salaries by program, and the proportion of master students who proceed to the doctorate. If the database of alumni maintained by the University Alumni Office is not current, we recommend supplementing the alumni data collection efforts by assigning a graduate assistant to track alumni through social media beginning with the most recent graduates and working backwards in time.

Recommendation Three. Consider creating a Dean’s Advisory Council made up of up to 25 or 30 successful alumni who meet each semester and provide ideas and networking with local businesses,

schools, and others that hire the graduates of the College's programs. Council members can provide strategic planning advice to support the teaching, research and outreach mission of the College and promote the programs offered by the College. They can also encourage other alumni and others to make gifts to the College. Iowa State University has such a Council and it has been highly helpful in determining the direction of the College. An added plus is that one of the council members recently established a scholarship for those students on unpaid internships. See <http://www.hs.iastate.edu/about-2/people/deans-advisory-council/>

Department Planning Strategy

It appears that the Department has had a long-standing strategy focused on growth through enrollments with extensive service and extensive outreach. We are concerned that the Department needs to recognize the changing institutional cultural shift, which is moving away from the legacy state funding model (i.e., revenue growth contingent FTE growth). While the Department desires to grow programs, FTEs, and serve various new markets, our concern is that there are limited resources to support these initiatives. Requests for additional funding and for additional faculty lines and additional resources to support new areas of outreach are most likely increasingly problematic.

It is our concern that the Department will only be viable in this shifting culture by rethinking the Department strategic plan. Because of the Board of Governor's performance-based funding model and the University's "Race to Excellence" strategic push to intensify research initiatives, the Department needs to reframe its resource planning orientation. There is a need for the Department to make deliberate choices in key areas of focus and in key areas not to serve, rather than attempting to serve all groups, requests, and individual possibilities. In essence, the Department will become responsible for maintaining its excellence and quality with constrained university resources, and recognizing that new resources will come either with congruent initiatives to the University plan or through their own development of external support.

Recommendation One. It is recommended that the Department should establish expectations of key strategic areas of activity, as well as come to an understanding of the limitations of its commitments and resources. Thus, shifting away from the FTE funding model, the Department should create new understandings of *quality* departmental productivity, balancing the expectations for teaching, for service-related engagement and outreach, and for strengthening the growing culture of research. In particular, resource expectations should be focused upon seeking external funding, through contracts and grants, when possible.

We hope the Department will give these recommendations serious consideration. We enjoyed the opportunity to meet with the faculty and students and administrators at Florida Atlantic University. We wish the Department success in its contributions to the University's Race to Excellence.