

ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW
EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY PROGRAM
UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO

Respectfully submitted by

EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY ACADEMIC REVIEW COMMITTEE

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In accordance with the guidelines for Academic Program Review at the University of New Mexico, a collaborative team conducted a review of the Educational Psychology Program, housed within the Department of Individual, Family, and Community Education (IFCE) in the College of Education. This external review was informed by numerous data sources, including the program's self-study document, on-site interviews with program faculty and students, Department and College administration, and representatives of academic and program constituencies, the program website, and supplemental materials.

The exit report and this final document submitted by the Academic Program Review Committee (hereafter referred to as the Committee) is structured around perceived strengths and challenges identified through this review process, and includes general and specific recommendations intended to build on those perceived strengths and to address perceived needs.

Among the many identified strengths of the Educational Psychology program noted by the Committee are a small but productive group of professional young scholars who demonstrate both individual and shared expertise in areas of particular importance to the College, the University, and the Nation. These scholars are engaged in collaborative inquiry with faculty and students within the Department, College, University, and broader educational communities. Perceived challenges confronting the program include a lack of a shared vision effectively communicated to constituent groups at the University and beyond; a need for systematic mechanisms for faculty and student professional development; and, a concomitant absence of intellectual spaces that highlight faculty's scholarship and promote the unified vision of the program.

The general recommendations offered by the Committee consist of opportunities for identity development through a unified vision for the program; the active pursuit of productive interdisciplinary grants and contracts consistent with that vision; dedicated spaces for shared scholarly pursuits among faculty and graduate students; and, a search for a senior scholar with demonstrated abilities to secure external funding. Among the specific recommendations forwarded by the Committee are calls for restructuring the program website to highlight faculty's scholarly activities and achievement; reframing of current minors into transcribed graduate certificates in areas of high need; development of upper-division undergraduate course in statistics and measurement to address the needs of incoming students who have limited preparation in the area; and the institution of a first-year doctoral seminar.

PROGRAM REVIEW CONTEXT

This report represents the 2013 review of the Educational Psychology Program at the University of New Mexico. The review was conducted by external reviewers Patricia A. Alexander of The University of Maryland and Rayne A. Sperling of The Pennsylvania State University accompanied by Susan R. Copeland, Special Education faculty member of the University of New Mexico. The review was informed by the program review guidelines, program's self-study report, numerous requested materials, and a site visit that included scheduled sessions with administrators, faculty, staff, and students who represented both the program and key constituencies. The conclusions and recommendations drawn from are the result of information triangulated from these sources.

Background and Structure of the Program

The Educational Psychology Program is housed within the department of Individual, Family, and Community Education (IFCE) in the College of Education. The current program includes a small faculty. During the past ten years there have been a number of faculty retirements, faculty leaving to accept positions at other universities, and the death of one faculty member (Roxana Moreno). At the time of the review, there were five tenure-track faculty working in the program and one visiting assistant professor. The program has hired a tenure-track assistant professor to start at the beginning of the 2013-14 academic year who will take the place of the visiting assistant professor.

The Educational Psychology program grants master's and doctoral degrees and two minors as well as provides support for numerous other programs within and outside the department and college through coursework at both the graduate and undergraduate level. The program demonstrates strong enrollment in program courses and the number of graduate students

per faculty is also healthy. Constituents noted the importance of the foundational undergraduate courses as well as graduate courses in learning and development and statistics and measurement to their own training programs. The large number of credit hours generated by this small faculty are a strength of the program and appear healthy as the program and university move toward a modified accounting system. The nature of the varied and critical service to other programs in the College is typical of educational psychology programs.

Current and former graduate students in the Educational Psychology program come from a variety of professional backgrounds including faculty members in tenure track faculty lines, higher education administration, principals in K-12 education, K-12 teachers and counselors, state departments of education personnel, health and educational policy personnel, and professionals working on grant funded projects.

Program Review Process

The Academic Program Review (APR) of the Educational Psychology program included two phases. First, review committee members examined the program's self-study report; UNM's *APR Policies, Principles, and Procedures Manual*, in particular, the charge for external review teams found on pp. 6-8; and other materials (e.g., list of peer institutions) provided prior to the site visit. Second, the Committee conducted a two and a half day onsite visit from April 8-10, 2013. During this visit the Committee met with a range of individuals from both within the program and across the university (see Data Sources below). The Committee presented a preliminary summary of its findings in an exit meeting on April 10 with program faculty, UNM administrators, and other related staff. The Committee continued to work on the final report after the site visit, communicating electronically in compiling and summarizing all of the information gathered during the site visit.

Data Sources

The Committee gathered and considered a wealth of information in compiling the APR report. Sources of information related to three main areas: faculty, program, and students. Sources included: the program's self-study report; UNM's *APR Policies, Principles, and Procedures Manual*; the program's website; meetings with individual program faculty and the program faculty as a whole; meetings with faculty and staff from other academic programs (i.e., Counselor Education, Special Education, Nutrition, Teacher Education, Health Education) or university centers (i.e., the Veterans Resource Center) who are constituents of the Educational Psychology program; meetings with Jay Parkes, department chair (also a member of the program faculty), Richard Howell, Dean of the College of Education, and Associate Provost for Curriculum Greg Heileman; and meetings with students in both the MA and doctoral programs in Educational Psychology.

PERCEIVED STRENGTHS

Over the course of its systematic review of the Educational Psychology Program, the Committee noted many apparent strengths pertaining to the faculty, the program, and the students.

Faculty

Specifically with regard to faculty, the Committee found the assistant and associate professors who comprise the Educational Psychology Program to be uniformly capable, productive, and willing to engage in collaborative and interdisciplinary research. Further, this core faculty represents a small but productive and strong group of scholars who consistently contribute to the mission of the program, the College, and the University. Of additional note, these faculty members are still relatively young in their academic careers and are uniquely poised to engage in basic and applied research focusing on diverse and special populations. In effect, there is great opportunity for the faculty to pursue cutting edge and fundable research on the development, learning, and educational experiences of youth and families in New Mexico and the Southwest region that could ultimately inform the rest of the country. The recent hire of an assistant professor with an established record of relevant research and teaching that complements existing expertise will make the outcome even more likely.

As conveyed in their curricular vitae, faculty members not only have well-established individual programs of scholarship, but also manifest areas of shared and overlapping expertise—this latter point being particularly salient to the identity and well-being of the program as a whole. Specifically, faculty members collaborate on research and funded projects with students and scholars across the College, University, and broader academic and professional communities. They are also active regionally and nationally in scholarly communities and

professional service endeavors through work such as editorial board memberships and leadership roles in professional associations. The faculty's shared expertise falls within the areas of cognition, learning, development, and quantitative methodologies, with a particular emphasis on diverse and special populations within the region, the State, and the Nation. The Committee viewed such knowledge and skills as not only vital to the current and future goals of the College and the University but also of great importance to a nation confronting rapidly changing demographics and the concomitant challenges that such changes present. In sum, the current program faculty is capable, productive, and strongly committed to the mission of the University of New Mexico and its members have shown themselves to be good citizens of the College and University.

Program

Based on the data provided, the Educational Psychology program has been successful at generating student credit hours. The number and variability of undergraduate and graduate courses are impressive, especially in light of the relatively small number of core faculty who must oversee those courses. Further, much of the coursework offered within the program, particularly in terms of the quantitative methodology courses, are provided in service to constituent groups within the College and the University. While other units within UNM offer statistics and measurement courses, the Educational Psychology focus on human learning and development addresses a particular need for the College and the campus. The extensive service provided by faculty was clearly recognized and highly regarded by constituent groups within the College and the University with whom the Committee interacted.

Students

As seen within the documentation provided to the Committee, as well in meetings held during the review, the Educational Psychology at UNM serves a diverse student population, including in its graduate programs. Many of these students are non-traditional in their age and work experiences and a substantial percentage pursue their graduate degrees while maintaining full-time employment. Also, based on curricular vitae, formal documents, and interviews, this student population shares research interests with program faculty and are actively engaged in scholarly writings and presentations with faculty members.

PERCEIVED CHALLENGES

Despite the aforementioned strengths, the Committee identified certain challenges confronting the faculty, the program, and its graduate students.

Faculty

As noted, the number of program faculty is small while the demand for service courses that addresses the needs of its constituent groups is high. This condition has been exacerbated by the reduced number of faculty positions over the past several years; a situation that arose as a consequence of retirements, faculty relocations, and the unexpected loss of a senior faculty member Roxana Moreno. While faculty should be commended for continuing to provide valuable coursework for their program students and outside constituencies, one result of this situation is that faculty have had limited opportunity to devise new or innovative courses that not only highlight the scholarly identities of the faculty but also address the associated needs of constituent groups. There have also been limited opportunities for program faculty to meet on any regular basis with constituent groups to ascertain how those constituents' continuing and

evolving needs can be better addressed, even as the Educational Psychology faculty find the opportunity to offer specialized courses reflecting members' scholarly interests.

Another challenge that the Committee identified related to the lack of any systematic focus on professional development to support and sustain the faculty's academic growth and identity. The availability of such professional development is particularly of concern given that professors at the rank of assistant and associate currently comprise this program.

Program

As stated in the self-study report, the Educational Psychology program aspires to become a comprehensive educational psychology program by 2018; that is a program "in which all the primary areas of the discipline of educational psychology are addressed through faculty expertise, faculty and student scholarship, and course curriculum" (p. 7). Such a goal, in the judgment of the Committee, seems unattainable in light of the complexity of the discipline of educational psychology and the evolving nature of quantitative methodology. This is not a criticism of the program per se, but would be true at even the top-ranked national programs in this domain. Moreover, this pursuit of breadth seemingly overlooks the unique character of this program, its faculty, and its students—a character that is timely and highly marketable.

In effect, the Committee noted a lack of a shared and coherent vision for the program founded on faculty's scholarly identities, and consistent with the influential dimensions of the social-cultural context in which the program, the College, and the University operate. While there are clear connections and areas of overlapping interest and strength among the faculty members that, if realized, could greatly enhance the presence and efforts of the program, there was a seeming lack of awareness of individual's connection to that greater program identity and, consequently, less consolidation of individual faculty's strengths and expertise in service of that

collective mission. However, through additional opportunities for self-examination and shared vision development, the faculty members could implement flexible problem solving to garner resources to further both their individual and collective missions.

Our analysis of the online and print materials, such as the program website, suggest that there were limited mechanisms to communicate the program's cohesive vision and identity to outside constituents in the University, State, and Nation. Part of this concern for identity was also evident in the relative absence of physical, scholarly, and collaborative spaces that frame the overall research vision of the faculty (e.g., focused laboratories or centers). The presence of such intellectual spaces could serve to consolidate the shared research agendas among the faculty and to communicate those agenda to others in online and print media.

There were two challenges that drew the attention of the Committee related to the course offerings within the program. The first reflects the varied and evolving expectations for service courses to meet constituent needs. This challenge was particularly evidenced in interactions with faculty representing constituent groups who are confronting shifting programmatic or disciplinary foci. The second programmatic challenge we identified arose in discussions with faculty and students who expressed some concerns about maintaining the quality and consistency in course content across sections and delivery mechanisms. Current procedures for ensuring the consistency of core course content across sections taught by different faculty or students or for courses delivered face-to-face, online, or via some hybrid appear to require refinement.

Students

One of the challenges pertaining to the graduate student population of the Educational Psychology program was what the Committee judged as limited and underutilized student assessment and benchmarking data. Presently, there are certain milestones for graduate students

that are recorded within the program. However, there are not annual benchmarks that indicate these students' systematic progress in the program. Nor is there any orchestrated way in which that benchmarking data are used by program faculty to document or guide these students' academic development.

Perhaps reflective of this need for more explicit or detailed benchmarking, we found that students expressed a general lack of awareness as to programmatic and disciplinary expectations. They also acknowledged limited opportunities to interact with other students in the program or to learn from more senior graduate students as part of their professional development. While some informal student networks have taken shape within the program, the graduate students voiced a desire for more formal mechanisms for such interactions and, perhaps, even designated physical spaces that would support such interactions.

For those graduate students who elect to continue their studies after completion of a master's degree, there was some concern that the distinction between related master's and doctoral courses was currently insufficient. These students sought greater breadth and depth in doctoral offerings so that they did not experience significant overlap in those related courses. At the same time, faculty noted that the diverse needs and differential preparation among graduate students populating courses, especially in the area of quantitative methodology, exacerbated the ability to effectively and efficiently serve the graduate student population.

Finally, graduate students serving as teaching assistants or instructors of record identified the lack of a transparent system for their pedagogical preparation as a particular challenge. The opportunity to mentor under more senior graduate students or faculty prior to assuming full instructional responsibility was one possible response to this challenge they voiced.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the strengths and challenges we discerned from the various data sources, including formal reports and interviews, the Committee forwards recommendations for consideration by the program, College, and University. We have organized those recommendations to address (a) more global issues and concerns (General Recommendations) or (b) more specific, actionable items that seem warranted based on the information garnered from this review (Specific Recommendations). As with the proceeding overview of the perceived strengths and challenges, we have structured those recommendations to address three general areas: faculty, program, and student issues

General Recommendations

Faculty

Shared Vision and Building Community

While the expertise and industry among the Educational Psychology faculty was evident, there was a concern over the broad and rather unattainable goal of developing a “comprehensive” program within educational psychology, coupled with some competing perspectives, agendas, and missions within the program faculty. These circumstances led the Committee to suggest that the faculty dedicate time to forging a more specific vision for the program that not only builds directly on the shared expertise that is apparent, but that also highlights the unique foci and populations served by the UNM faculty and this program. In effect, rather than seek to be comprehensive, we hold that the program should strive to become known for its particular focus on the academic development of diverse and special populations, which distinguishes it from the multitude of programs nationally. The UNM Educational Psychology Program should endeavor

to fill an essential and unique niche within educational psychology—a niche of growing national importance.

Dedicated Spaces for Shared Scholarly Pursuits

Once faculty have build the shared vision of the Educational Psychology program and identified areas of overlapping research interests, those scholarly foci should be translated into physical, intellectual spaces within the College of Education. The existence of physical, intellectual spaces where associated faculty and graduate students can gather to work and share ideas would serve not only to give visibility to the programmatic thrusts within Educational Psychology, but also potentially foster joint research activities among associated faculty and graduates students. In terms of research laboratories, this recommendation would not necessarily require any significant investment of capital.

By contrast, the establishment of a center within the program, such as one dedicated to educational measurement and assessment, similar to the Center for Research Methods and Data Analysis at the University of Kansas, would require long-term commitment on the part of faculty and the College and University administration with expectations for external funding via grants and contracts. Such a center could also provide: (a) quantitative consulting and outreach for students and faculty within the Department, College, and University; (b) opportunities for graduate and postgraduate students to gain additional expertise and skills; and (c) mechanisms to streamline requests for faculty expertise while promoting a strength of the program.

Proactive Pursuit of Interdisciplinary Research Opportunities

In keeping with the prior call for more dedicated intellectual spaces, the Committee urges the program faculty to engage in more proactive pursuit of interdisciplinary research that reflects programmatic strengths and faculty expertise. It was evident to the Committee that the members

of this faculty were often sought after collaborators and contributors to interdisciplinary projects. However, it was not as evident that program faculty were initiators of such interdisciplinary endeavors that emanated directly from their own scholarly interests. Thus, it is the recommendation of this Committee that these faculty members take greater control of their involvement in external grants and contracts in a manner that promotes their professional identity and that of the program.

Professional Development

The program, College, and University have been successful in recruiting excellent faculty members who have both a national reputation and a personal investment in the population of the State and the region. Nonetheless, the professional development of this faculty seems paramount in order to ensure that these individuals are both retained and demonstrate timely progress in their growth toward associate and full professor. This is a relatively young faculty in terms of academic ranks. At the time of review, none of the faculty had achieved the rank of full professor, and several faculty members have held the rank of associate for an extended period. Thus, the presence of full professors within the program who can guide the subsequent development of assistant and associate professors is important. However, while the active promotion of faculty to the ranks of full and associate professors is recommended, the continued development of even full professors merits attention if the program is to remain viable over time. Thus, it is recommended that effort be directed toward the identification of appropriate models and suitable mentors both within the UNM system and nationally to support faculty professional development for all ranks.

Search for an Established Scholar

One step that could be taken by the College and University that would assist in achieving a number of the aforementioned recommendations would be to undertake the search for an established scholar in educational psychology. Whether this scholar holds the rank of associate or full professor, it would be important for him or her to embody the shared vision of the program and to demonstrate leadership in the pursuit of interdisciplinary research opportunities. Thus, an individual who embraces the academic development of diverse and special populations or who is known for expertise in assessment or measurement relative to such populations and with an established record of securing external funding would prove invaluable to the program.

Program

Sufficient Distinction Between Master's and Doctoral Courses

Given the noted presence of both master's and doctoral courses within the program with shared focus, the Committee considered it important that the depth and breadth of these course offerings be clearly distinguishable. This was judged as especially important in that a number of current doctoral students are being recruited from the master's program and would likely be exposed to these associated master's and doctoral course. Thus, whether in terms of the course structure, readings, assessments, or assigned projects, the scholarly expectations and associated rigor should be readily discernible for master's versus doctoral courses.

Consistency in Course Content across Sections and Delivery Mechanisms

While greater distinction between master's and doctoral courses seems warranted, greater consistency within courses taught by different instructors or via different delivery mechanisms is being recommended. At present, it is not evident how the consistency of largely undergraduate courses taught by several instructors or delivered online, in person, or in some hybrid form was

ensured. However, since it appears that courses were frequently part of an established content sequences or associated with particular assessment or certifications, some core level of consistency would seem critical; not only for the students enrolled in those courses but also for the instructors responsible for course delivery.

Course Reframing and Special Course Offering

Additional recommendations pertain to reframing or extending of current course offerings within the program. As might happen within any program where particular faculty members are assigned responsibility for the same course over a period of time, the need to update or reframe those courses may arise. Further, there are inevitably developments within content areas that should be taken into account in course offerings, especially at the graduate level. For those reasons, the Committee recommends that program faculty consider current course offerings with an eye toward updating or reframing. Coordinating this updating and reframing with efforts to provide greater distinction between master's and doctoral courses would seem feasible. Further, to maintain faculty motivation and to draw on particular scholarly interests, the inclusion of periodic "trends and issues" courses, highlighting new developments or faculty expertise, should also be considered.

Regular Communication with Constituent Groups

Related to this call for reframing and extending course offering, the Committee recommends that the program establish policies and procedures for regular communication between program faculty and constituents groups for whom service courses are provided. Since these service courses align with certificates and accreditations offered across the College, understanding the changing needs of the constituent groups is important. These regular

communications can, thus, address not only course offerings, but also the content and sequencing of courses provided by program faculty and graduate students.

Students

Training and Supervision of Graduate Student Instructors

As is typical within doctoral training institutions, doctoral students are often afforded the opportunity to teach undergraduate courses. Within the program and College, graduate students serve in this capacity both for face-to-face, online, or hybrid courses. However, without any formal mechanism for training or supervising graduate student instructors, the quality and consistency of that instruction or the students' efficacy to offer appropriate instruction remains problematic, as noted in this report. Therefore, the Committee recommends the provision of opportunities for training those students who will assume instructional responsibilities within the program. In addition, the supervision of students during the initial phases of their teaching by faculty would allow for those students continued pedagogical development.

Benchmarks for Annual Progress

As noted, there is a need for systematic monitoring of graduate students as they move through the program both to make the expectations for their academic development more transparent to the students and to chronicle their yearly progress toward degree. There are already certain milestones that are recorded for students, but the Committee is recommending that those programmatic milestones be expanded into annual benchmarks that document growth in the areas of research, teaching, and service appropriate to the students' goals and the program's espoused vision. The program faculty then could meet annually as a Committee of the Whole to review students' progress toward degree and their scholarly development, and to

offer those graduate students continued mentoring and guidance commensurate with their career goals.

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

We conclude this Academic Program Review report with recommendations that we judge as more specific and actionable in nature.

- *Restructure the program website to more effectively showcase the emergent vision and the areas of faculty expertise.*

As a step toward increased visibility for the program and as a mechanism for communicating its unique and shared vision, the current program website should be reworked to promote the scholarly activities and achievements of faculty and students and to highlight the areas of shared expertise.

- *Consider replacing current minors with transcribed graduate certificates in areas of high need.*

Currently, the Educational Psychology program offers minors in two strands. It was the judgment of the Committee that the existing minors were problematic in terms of meeting the changing needs of students in the program and the College. Further, the number of students in these minors is not well tracked. In response to this situation, the Committee recommends replacing current minors in the program with transcribed graduate certificates in areas of high need, such as a certificate in quantitative methodologies. Such a certificate would be extremely marketable for the program, could draw from a wide variety of other programs, would enhance continued enrollments, and provide a needed service to the University community and beyond. However, should the current minors be retained, it is recommended that a formal admission process and more systematic tracking of those minors be instituted.

- *Provide an upper-division undergraduate course in statistics and measurement to address the needs of incoming students with limited preparation.*

As a way to address the differential preparation that faculty are confronting in graduate courses, especially those dealing with quantitative methods, the Committee recommends the develop of upper-division undergraduate courses in statistics and measurement that could be taken for credit by graduate students who would find the current graduate courses too taxing. Moreover, these upper-division courses could be taught by doctoral students with the requisite statistics and measurement knowledge; thus, providing those doctoral students the teaching experiences in this content domain that they presently lack.

- *Explore the possibility of a mixed-methods/mixed-models course that integrates the quantitative and qualitative expertise in the program.*

In the portfolio of courses currently offered by the program, there was no evidence of a course addressing mixed-methods/mixed-models designs, despite the growing need of such data-analytic abilities. The program, which has both quantitative and qualitative expertise among its faculty, is nicely positioned to provide such an offering. The integration of the qualitative strand in research methods would also speak to students' request for more attention to alternative methodologies within the program.

- *Consider offering a data-based decision-making undergraduate course that serves the needs of multiple constituent groups.*

At the undergraduate or introductory graduate level a course designed for practitioners in decision making with data would serve both program students and others in the department and college. Such a course may appeal to practitioners as well.

- *Institute a doctoral seminar to orient incoming students to the program structure and expectations.*

As a step that can be taken to address students' need for greater explication of program expectations, while responding to the call for more focused efforts to annually benchmark students' progress, the Committee recommends the institution of a doctoral seminar to be taken during graduate students first semester in the program. The specific milestones and benchmarks could be introduced in this course and the students made aware of faculty particular interests and of the scholarly activities and opportunities underway in the program. This seminar could also function to acquaint incoming graduate students with others in their cohort; thus aiding in community building for this group.

- *Create the means for more senior graduate students to provide peer mentoring and guidance to more junior students in the program.*

As part of increased advising and mentoring and to build community and identity among graduate students, the program might consider instituting a virtual cohort model that allows for regular interactions among graduate students. This virtual cohort model might involve peer mentors, designated spaces for students, professional development workshops, as well as other mechanisms for student academic and social support.