

# **Academic Program Review Committee Report**

Early Childhood Multicultural Education and Family Studies Programs

(Soon to be merged and known as Family and Child Studies)

College of Education

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# Family and Child Studies (FCS) Program Review

## Overview

This report reviews the strengths and areas of needed improvement for the existing Family Studies and Early Childhood Multicultural programs as these two programs move towards a merger as the Department of Family and Child Studies.

We understand that there has been focused deliberations for the past 2-3 years between the Family Studies (FS) and Early Childhood Multicultural Education (ECME) program faculty, staff and administrators toward a newly created merged Family and Child Studies (FCS) program to be adopted later this spring. This report is based upon the historical record provided to us by both programs. Therefore, at times, this narrative is sometimes addressed to a single program (FS or ECME) or both programs.

It should be noted that the Academic Review Report (APR) was tardy due to a number of competing programmatic deadlines such as the NCATE accreditation and the availability of the previous APR/Self Study was unavailable as a basis to build the current report. At times the APR provided limited indicators of quality and a lack of data that challenged the ability of the review team to adequately judge the degree to which the FS and ECME programs met some of the required criteria. Nevertheless, the review team located a number of strengths present in these programs upon which the merged program will most certainly build. These include the quality and dedication of the faculty, the respect and admiration demonstrated by students, qualified part-time faculty, and the cohesion among full-time faculty toward a shared vision of a merged FS and ECME department. Additionally, there are strong enrollment numbers on the undergraduate level from which to recruit well-prepared and committed graduate students.

## Overall Program Strengths

### Part 1: Existing

The FCS program is comprised of a total of five tenured and tenure track faculty (3 ECME, 2 FS). Collectively, the ECME and FS programs provide a broad range of degree offerings including a B.S. in *Early Childhood Multicultural Education, Family Studies, Human Development and Family Relations*; BA in *Family Studies* (through the College of Arts & Science); M.A. in *Elementary Education, Family Studies*; and a Ph.D. in *Family Studies*. In addition, the programs offer an array of minors, and the ECME is accredited by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE).

Together the ECME and FS's signature feature is their emphasis on culture and diversity (locally, nationally and globally). This is reflected in their scholarship and degree offerings. As such, the programs are in line with the mission of the College of Education and the University (...*faculty's goal is to infuse multicultural and diversity training in all aspects of academic and clinical coursework in order to prepare multiculturally competent counselors and counselor educators*). ECME, in particular, provides strong mentoring and effective placements in diverse community settings in their teacher education/licensure program (Pre-K through 3rd grade).

One of the FCS program's most salient strengths is *faculty commitment*. This commitment was evidenced by the loyalty and respect expressed by the students to the committee. Although acknowledging that the program faced a number of challenges, virtually all students (undergraduate and graduate) expressed appreciation and gratitude for the effort and dedication of the faculty. Despite a context of limited resources afforded to the programs (e.g., number of tenure/tenure track lines), the ECME and FS faculty exhibited a great deal of excitement and optimism regarding their shared vision of a strong interdisciplinary program with its upcoming merger.

Further, both FS and ECME have demonstrated a remarkable level of resiliency. Faculty have "stepped up to the plate" to manage programs and provide student support. The recent addition of Dr. Kelly (assistant professor) in FS has significantly contributed to the research profile of program delivery. Expectations for an additional tenured/tenure-track faculty line will help to better distribute the FS coursework and service load. Also, the pending merger of FS and ECME will likely provide a stronger and more efficient organizational structure to facilitate faculty productivity overall.

## Part 2: Proposed (and recently implemented)

The recent decrease in the number of credits required for program completion should facilitate the progress and completion rate of undergraduate students. Moreover, the ECME program will now be focused on the main campus and has reduced two licenses to one (e.g., no satellite programs; one Pre-k through 3rd grade licensure program). This, along with the statewide articulation agreement, should increase the program's capacity to accommodate more students - transfers as well as incoming freshman. This "growth trajectory" is already evident. While many other programs are dealing with decreasing enrollments, ECME/FS enrollment is increasing. This should serve the merged unit well, particularly if there is an incorporation of the secondary bachelors degree offered through the College of Arts & Sciences. Finally, the merger and alignment of FS and ECME is a logical alliance of strengths, disciplines and theoretical perspectives on life long development in context (e.g., family, communities); this trend is interdisciplinary and these foci represent current faculty

NOTE: This report is categorized by the University criteria of Met with Concerns (MC), Marginally Met (MM) or Not Met (NM). Each criterion begins with a brief introduction.

## Criterion 1: Program Goals

Clear articulation of program goals is essential for the effective and efficient operation of all academic and professional programs. They also provide a framework for accurate evaluation that is necessary for innovative programming.

The committee's overall appraisal is that, even in the context of limited resources, the ECME and FS faculty are deeply committed to actualizing their respective program goals and objectives. However, although the programs clearly stated their goals in the self-study, the committee recommends some refinement and elaboration. It is necessary that the program descriptions, goals, and objectives be specified for each degree program. Also it is important that this information is readily accessible to students and the broader community. Following is a summary of our assessment by each program area.

### Family Studies – Met with Concerns

The review team concluded that although the Family Studies program met the criterion outlined in the APR, they noted some concerns. First, FS indicated that their learning goals are “largely guided by the disciplinary expectations” and the National Council on Family Relations. However, no distinction is made across degree programs. This suggests that the learning goals apply equally to all five degree programs (BA, Family Studies; BS Family Studies; BS, Human Development and Family Relations; MS, Family Studies; PhD, Family Studies). Second, it is the assumption of the review team that although all the degrees are within the same discipline, there are, in fact, significant differences. For example, the extent to which a student has the “*ability to show research skills including research design and methodology, data analysis, and data interpretation,*” (p. 13) would likely vary as a function of degree program (BS vs. MS vs. PhD). As such, program goals and their corresponding assessments would also be expected to vary.

Third, the committee encourages the FS program to expand the processes and platforms for communicating their program goals to students. Although their learning goals are shared directly by instructors and included in course syllabi, more avenues of communication should be implemented. In our face-to-face meetings with students, some graduate students, in particular, expressed a lack of clarity regarding the program goals and expectations, which they believed, hindered them from progressing through the program in a timely manner. FS faculty may want to consider providing students with “handbooks” that outline goals and objectives as well as information regarding programs of study, preparation for comprehensive exams, dissertation process, and timelines for completion. A handbook would help alleviate the confusion reported by some students about the existing dated programs. A similar handbook could be developed for undergraduate students. It was reported that an ECME handbook is being drafted for dissemination later this year. Finally, the committee stresses that although indicators such as syllabi criteria, and GPA can be informative in assessing students' knowledge and skills, a more discreet set of indicators is warranted. More rigor and systematic evaluation using direct measures of student outcomes (e.g., rubrics, checklists) is strongly recommended, as are alumni and employer surveys of satisfaction.

## Early Childhood Multicultural Education - Met

ECME's program goals and learning outcomes are guided by the New Mexico Common Core Standards and NCATE accreditation. As a result, the program goals and outcomes are clearly articulated and varied. As a NCATE accredited program, ECME uses multiple direct and indirect measures to assess their adherence to their stated goals and objectives.

## **Criterion 2: Teaching and Learning Curriculum**

The curriculum of any academic program is the core foundation for the delivery of knowledge, skills and dispositions in particular content areas and programs of study. The curriculum guides the deepening expertise of students as they progress through the program. The delivery of the curriculum by knowledgeable and committed instructors who integrate “best practices” with cutting edge changes in the fields of FS and ECME is critical. Finally, the opportunity to apply knowledge across FCS disciplines is a hallmark of readiness to enter the work force prepared to serve children and families. For this criterion the review team’s findings are separated by program.

### **Family Studies – Mixed Findings**

The review team determined that the quality of instruction reported by students as high quality. However, 64% of the undergraduate coursework is delivered by teaching assistants. There is limited in-service, mentoring and oversight of instructors with the exception of hiring UNM M.S. graduates. It is recommended that efforts to increase in-service for teaching assistants and alignment of teaching assistants’ areas of expertise with assigned course content be conducted. Currently seven new doctoral courses are being designed. This benchmark is Met with Concerns.

There was no information to determine the degree of adequate coordination of course delivery with other units. However, one FS course is cross-listed. Tracking students enrolled in FS courses from other units is recommended. This benchmark is Not Met.

One notable concern by students was the requirements for obtaining Certified Family Life Educator status. Students are unclear about which courses are required for CFLE preparation for certification. This benchmark is Met with Concerns.

The degree to which there are extracurricular activities that expand upon program goals was insufficient. There were no student reports of such experiences. This part of Criterion 2 was not addressed in the Self-Study. This benchmark is Marginally Met.

Program delivery modes are primarily face-to-face. There were no course evaluation data from students to determine if this mode of delivery addressed student needs. Thus the review committee deemed this benchmark is Not Met.

### **ECME – Mixed Findings**

A number of field supervisors of licensure students have been drawn from graduates of the ECME program. This enables ECME to maintain a program delivery aligned to NCATE standards. However, the oversight and coordination of these supervisors was not evident and believed to be due to the limited faculty resources. Thus, this benchmark is Not Met.

ECME has a prescribed and accountable program of study due to NCATE and state requirements with evidenced-based curricular components including field placements. This benchmark is Met.

ECME has one cross-listed course with the department of Language, Literacy and Sociocultural Studies. It is unclear to the review team the degree to which ECME coordinates contributions with other units. Thus, this benchmark is Not Met.

Program delivery modes are varied including online, face-to-face, on-the-floor supervision by field coordinators, and portfolios. There was a reported need for increased coordination of placement site selection for ECME students. This benchmark is Met.

For both FS and ECME students, ITV access by some undergraduate students was reported as sporadic and at times, unavailable. Several students reported that they had difficulty registering for courses. Thus, this benchmark is Met with Concerns.

### **Criterion 3: Teaching and Learning: Continuous Improvement**

Teaching and learning are at the core of the educational enterprise. It is through the evaluation of the process of teaching and learning that insights are gained about effective pedagogy matched to students' levels of comprehension for the implementation of improvement initiatives. In this section we comment on the Family Studies and Early Childhood Multicultural Education programs separately with respect to the regular use of assessment approaches to document progress on respective program learning objectives, teaching effectiveness and ongoing program improvement.

#### **Family Studies - Not Met**

After the review of available evidence, the review team concluded that the Family Studies program has not adequately met this criterion. Although the program review document mentions meeting this criterion through the successful completion of course related tasks by students including theses and dissertations and student participation in faculty research and scholarly activities, there is limited direct assessment provided that measures differentiated growth and development for students and instructors across time. It should be noted that the FS program's emphasis on high quality writing has improved their pass rate on the comprehensive exam and doctoral exams over the past 10 years on all graduate levels. This information is noted, anecdotally, in the APR. Also, within the FS program, based on student reports, the level of instruction is high quality and relevant.

#### **Early Childhood Multicultural Education - Met**

Due to New Mexico's Common Core Standards for professionals working in early care and education, the ECME program follows prescribed competency indicators for course content and evaluation rubrics. These program requirements provide a strong framework for program monitoring and overall assessment.



#### **Criterion 4: Students**

As students are the *raison d'être* for the existence of organized courses of study within higher education, such factors such as recruitment, transfer, individual progress monitoring, advisement, retention and alumni success are important elements in determining overall program effectiveness. Two strengths and weaknesses merit attention for this criterion. First, The students are loyal to and respectful of faculty. There is a strong bond between faculty and students. There is a high commitment on the part of faculty to the learning and wellbeing of their students. Advising and mentoring graduate students appears insufficient. Some advising sheets are out of date or there is a mixture of old and new programs of study that ultimately confuse students. Students consistently reported confusion and a lack of clarity about requirements.

##### **Family Studies - Mixed Findings**

With respect to policies for accepting new and transfer students, there were no data provided from which to make an informed assessment. Thus the review team finds that this benchmark is Not Met. As previously mentioned, student performance and progress are not monitored at the granular level needed to inform practice and student improvement and the review team finds that this benchmark is Met with Concern. Due to the large faculty-student ratios and the need for improved communication between the university advisement center and department advisement, it is a challenge to provide students with adequate and timely advisement including referral to student support services. FS students noted that they receive conflicting direction between their program advisors and professional advisors in the Center for Student Success. FS graduate students reported they receive inadequate mentoring, particularly when they approach the dissertation phase of the program. As a result of review team finds that FS Marginally Met this benchmark.

On the benchmark relative to student success and retention, the review team finds that the FS program met this criterion. Although hindered by large faculty-student ratios and challenges associated with clear advisement messaging across university units, faculty dedicate much time in encouraging students to progress through their course of study and advise each student once per semester. Because data were not provided on the percentage of graduates over time and data on places where alumni are employed was incomplete, the review team finds that FS Marginally Met this criteria.

##### **Early Childhood Multicultural Education - Mixed Findings**

With respect to policies for accepting new and transfer students, there were no data provided from which to make an informed assessment. Thus the review team finds that this benchmark is Not Met. Student performance and progress are adequately monitored and the review team finds that this benchmark is Met. Concerning the adequacy and appropriateness of advisement including referral to student support services, the review team finds that this benchmark is

Marginally Met due to similar challenges encountered by the FS program, particularly the lack of communication between the university advisors and the ECME advisors.

On the benchmark relative to student success and retention, the review team finds that ECME Met this criterion. Students clearly have multiple contact points with faculty and instructors, including field supervisors, cooperating teachers and student teaching instructors, who provide them with relevant information. With regards to the success and employment of the program's graduates, the review team finds that ECME Marginally Met this criteria. Anecdotal information is insufficient to evaluate this benchmark.

## **Criterion 5: Faculty**

The provision of highly qualified faculty in sufficient numbers to deliver high quality academic programs of study is paramount. It is commendable that the faculty are able to produce the high levels of scholarship given the program management demands placed on them. Despite their heavy teaching and advising responsibilities faculty persevere and produce the scholarship that is recognized by the state and the nation.

This is particularly critical when multiple modes of program delivery, coordination of coursework across units, and mentoring graduate students are expected and dependent upon tenured faculty lines. The FS and ECME programs are high demand programs that require diverse forms and schedules of supervision and coordination. At times teaching assistants and adjunct faculty can assist very well. However, such instructional teams are no substitute for tenured faculty who have deep knowledge of the fields of study. Following we provide our findings for the merged, FCS, unit.

### **FS and ECME- Met**

The faculty in FS and ECME were evaluated on six aspects of this criterion. Of these six, three were met. These include, (1) research/creative activities, (2) service activities, and (3) professional development. These three aspects are most noteworthy as they signify the ability of faculty to achieve what is needed to receive promotion and tenure as well as maintain a presence in the college, university, community, and state. That said, the service and teaching demands on all faculty are high and challenges scholarly productivity.

### **FS and ECME - Met with Concerns**

The remaining three of the six aspects were met with concerns. These include, (1) sufficient number of faculty to cover program areas, (2) adequate qualifications, and (3) adequate levels of student-faculty interactions. These criteria address the day-to-day management of the program and of students learning experiences. The number of faculty in this program is inadequate to handle the demands of the courses and the advising loads carried by this faculty. As noted previously, a majority of the FS courses (64%) are taught by teaching assistants. Given the learning objectives and mission of both programs and the erosion of resources across the past five years, the review team has determined it is currently difficult to service all aspects of the unit sufficiently.

With regard to the adequacy of faculty qualifications, the concerns in this area were concentrated on the need for the operationalizing of the CFLE certification component. Although the faculty is highly competent, there is a lack of a qualified leader in this area. While one faculty member indicated an interest in receiving the CFLE certification, it is of concern that this increased workload would add more demands to his teaching and research responsibilities that would be difficult to maintain across time.

Of some concern is the inability to adequately service the undergraduate and doctoral students. The undergraduate students across both programs reported confusion regarding the programs of study expectations. On the graduate level, student reports focused on the need for increased advising and mentoring and clarity regarding expectations and timelines for programs of study (especially in the areas of comprehensive exams and dissertations).

## **Criterion 6: Resources and Planning**

FS and ECME faculty are to be commended for their efforts to combine their two programs. FS and ECME faculty have engaged in intensive, ongoing collaborations regarding strategies for the design of a merger. Additionally, the faculty productivity is high in light of the degree to which faculty time and effort have been devoted to planning. Clearly, administrative support has been offered faculty to find the time and opportunities to sit together, discuss and carve out a cohesive program. The future of the merged program will continue to depend on such collaboration. It is worth considering an external advisory board or committee to assist faculty in fine-tuning delivery of programs that require a high degree of face-to-face contact with faculty and supervisory mentors. In the following section we provide our findings for the merged unit, FCS.

### **FCS – Met**

The first of four aspects of this criterion was met. This aspect includes the collaborative efforts of faculty to meet and plan for a new, merged unit.

### **FCS – Marginally Met**

The remaining 3 aspects of this criterion were marginally met and include, (2) the unit has sufficient resources and institutional support to carry out its mission, (3) staff composition and deployment are adequate, and (4) the unit solicits and receives appropriate levels of external support. With regard to aspect number two, the review committee has several concerns. First, the fulltime tenure lines are insufficient to carry out activities that include mentoring, advising and delivery of courses, particularly with 7 new doctoral courses being added. As stated under criterion five, 64% of the undergraduate curriculum is being taught by teaching assistants/instructors. There is a need for more resources in the oversight and support of this key group of instructional personnel.

## **Criterion 7: Facilities**

The environments of learning contribute to the ability of faculty to teach effectively and ensure supporting the learning potentials of all students. The delivery of programs that include multiple community sites for application of knowledge, skills and dispositions means that facilities also include off campus facilities that serve as field laboratories for research and program delivery. The review team provides our findings for the merged unit, FCS.

### FCS – Met

Campus facilities for teaching, meeting, supervision and laboratory space for faculty are adequate. Library settings are replete with technology and informational/human resources. Some classrooms are “high tech” spaces that allow faculty to teach using a range of access to media. Office space is also adequate for faculty and staff. The review team did not solicit information regarding office space for graduate students. A report by one faculty member’s creation of an adequate space for his research was discussed. The administration and other resources on campus sought to find and outfit needed space with necessary tools and technology for his research.

## **Criterion 8: Program Comparisons**

The review team encourages ongoing program comparisons between the newly created FCS unit and similar programs. As the merged program unfolds a continued analysis of the ways in which FCS is supported regarding personnel, facilities, recruitment, and other necessary resources will be critical. In particular the addition of 7 new doctoral courses raises questions regarding the availability of space and faculty and sufficient numbers of students to fill the courses. Such robust growth can be achieved when institutional support has prioritized the newly merged unit as requiring additional resources to ensure a strong program delivery. Meetings with university leaders and communications with similar programs will benefit goals related to projected growth and innovative programs that now comprise FCS. The review committee reports our findings for FCS below.

### **FCS – Met**

Among the five aspects in this criterion, FCS met three. These include institutional supports sufficient to ensure (1) financial support and staff adequate to meet program needs, (2) acquire, maintain, and operate infrastructure facilities and equipment, and (3) provide an environment to attain student outcomes. There appears to be adequate staff and services for faculty, students and staff to ensure the delivery of FCS programs. Advising and distance learning have contributed to the delivery of programs, although some challenges with central advising do exist. We cannot comment with assurance that there are adequate funds, as disaggregated budget data were difficult to decipher. It is clear that the administration has provided necessary financial resources for a new tenure line hire and discussions for a second new line are promising.

Faculty appear over-taxed and field coordinators are stretched to provide supervision to ECME student teachers. Many students noted a need for more mentoring and faculty support with dissertation preparation/research. Thus, additional faculty resources would be a significant boost to the ability to continue to meet this criterion. Finally, while laboratory space has been secured for new faculty, the availability of space and adequate recourses for new hires is unclear. Currently it is the determination of the review team that there are sufficient resources to create an environment to attain student outcomes. However, resources do appear taxed and any potential growth in student and course numbers will, concomitantly, require increases in resources.

### **FCS – Marginally Met**

More leadership from the institution is needed to hold accountable program leaders and provide guidance to reach decisions for operationalizing the newly merged unit. It may be that people resources in the form of an external advisory group could help ensure a smooth and cohesive roll-out of FCS and explore possible collaboration and partnerships supportive of the program's goals. Finally, while faculty scholarship is commendable there is evidence that more faculty resources (including post-docs, GTAs, etc.) would help tenured faculty meet the high demands of doctoral students as they continue to publish and garner external funding.

### **Criterion 9: Future Directions**

The proposed merger is a strong response to the need to coalesce existing resources. A fine-tuned compass for future directions of FCS has been created in the ongoing strategic planning process for the newly merged unit from which close collegial ties have been forged. Future directions include bringing to campus the delivery of programs at satellite sites for the ECME licensure program to reserve resources and better coordinate delivery of coursework. Faculty expertise in terms of instruction, scholarship and program design is very strong. IT opportunities are expected to add to faculty strengths. Distance learning has been targeted and piloted and expected to grow. The program communities are cohesive and characterized by close student-faculty relationships.

Faculty and staff are committed to serving the New Mexico population in authentic ways. The mission of both programs is crucial to the economic and educational well being of the state through exemplary teaching, scholarship and service to our youngest citizens and their families. Thus, as the flagship university of the state of New Mexico it is incumbent upon the institution to continue to invest available resources to support the growth and ongoing impact of the value of this newly merged program. Findings for this final criterion are presented for the merged unit, FCS.

#### **FCS: Met with Concerns**

The inclusion of four comparison institutions was insufficient due to the overall disparity in program offerings and size of the comparison programs. It is recommended that FCS continue to strive to locate at least one comparison program and pursue ongoing collaborations with that program as part of continued planning and delivery of FCS programs of study.

#### **FCS: Met**

The unit has clearly engaged in extensive strategic planning that has resulted in a successful proposal for merger.

The unit (both FS and ECME) is aware of its strengths and weakness and has targeted plans for improvement. From student reports, the faculty Self-Study, our visits with faculty and administrators it is clear that faculty recognized the role of relationships in exemplary teaching and delivery of programs of study. The collegiality, productivity and mutual regard demonstrated throughout this review has been impressive and will serve FCS as all move forward. Improvements related to new coordination of programs, distance learning to reach more potential students, and hiring of new faculty will contribute to the continued strengthening of the program infrastructure and program excellence.