




DATE: December 13, 2010

TO: Members of the College of Education

FROM: David H. Monk 

RE: Response to the Re-Design Advisory Team (Re-DAT) Report

The Re-Design Advisory Team (Drs. DiPerna, Edmondson (chair), Greenberg, Niles, Skowron, and Suen) has worked hard and with good results to identify options to consider regarding the organization of graduate programs within the new department we will be forming. I have posted the Team's report on the Web at: <http://www.ed.psu.edu/educ/for-current-faculty-and-staff/college-response-to-core-council>.

As readers of the report will see, two options are identified and the benefits and drawbacks of each are reviewed. Design Option 1 includes a re-designed Educational Psychology graduate program with four emphasis areas: learning, measurement and assessment, school psychology, and counseling psychology along with graduate programs in Counselor Education and Special Education. Design Option 2 is identical to Design Option 1 but calls for the re-designed Educational Psychology program to have three rather than four emphasis areas and removes counseling psychology as a separate emphasis area and essentially closes the existing program in counseling psychology. The Team framed these two options following an extensive review of indicator data and consultation with relevant individuals. I am very grateful to the Team for the thoroughness of its work and for the high quality of the insights being offered. After receiving the Team's report last week, I have been similarly focused on a review of the options.

While I recognize and appreciate the advantages associated with Design Option 1, I am not convinced it will be possible to realize the necessary long term savings if we pursue the four emphasis area model within the re-designed Educational Psychology graduate program. I have therefore concluded that it is in the College's best interest to implement the design identified as Design Option 2 in the Re-DAT report. I am in the process of communicating the decision to close the existing Counseling Psychology program directly with the relevant parties. We cannot afford to operate two distinct doctoral programs in the area of counseling. Doctoral education is very resource intensive, and it is very hard to justify multiple doctoral programs in a given area, particularly when savings need to be identified.

I will be expecting the new graduate program in Educational Psychology to function in ways that are different from the status quo. As the Team correctly points out, they are calling for

a fundamental change in how we pursue graduate education in the College. It is not a simple rearrangement and relabeling of existing programs with a “business as usual” approach to operations. I will be holding the new Educational Psychology graduate program accountable with respect to the five elements of high quality graduate programs that I identified in my September 9, 2010 memorandum to the College Faculty Council.¹ In addition, I will be holding the new graduate program in Educational Psychology accountable for making more progress with a diversity agenda that is well-aligned with College and University priorities. The Re-Design Team found considerable variation in the progress being made with diversity agendas across programs within the two departments. Indeed, the data make it clear that the existing Counseling Psychology program is among the most successful graduate programs in the College regarding its commitment to diversity and the record it has established. One of the drawbacks associated with acting to close this program is the risk we will lose this positive energy for progress.

It is not acceptable to take the view that highly qualified diversity enhancing students do not exist in these areas of study. What is required is a determined effort to search for, recruit, and retain these students (as well as faculty and staff members). We must be pro-active and cannot complacently assume that the students will find their way to our programs. We all must embrace this agenda and not assume that it is the responsibility of our Office of Multicultural Programs.

For these reasons, I am adding a sixth element to the earlier list of five to state explicitly that diversity is a mark of excellence. In particular, the new element will call for programs to demonstrate their commitment to recruiting and retaining high quality students who will enhance the diversity of the University. This new element will apply to the new Educational Psychology graduate program as well as to all other programs in the new department and elsewhere in the College.

In keeping with the Re-DAT recommendations, shortly after the first of the year, I will be convening a faculty committee representing the emphasis areas within the re-designed Educational Psychology program as well as from the continuing CN ED and SPLED programs to determine details about the curriculum and admission standards and procedures. This committee can be thought of as the initial curriculum committee for the new department.

The Re-Design Team took note of “the few complementarities” that exist between the special education curriculum and the other two graduate programs in the new department. I will ask the initial curriculum committee for the new department to be attentive to this issue. I see two possible directions that are not mutually exclusive: a) achieve greater convergence between SPLED and other areas of the new department; and b) achieve greater convergence between SPLED and programs elsewhere in the College. Given the common focus on teacher education within SPLED and C&I, a logical place to look for points of convergence is the Department of Curriculum and Instruction where some work along these lines is already in progress. I will

¹ In that memorandum, I stipulated that all graduate programs in the College need to a) have a strong connection with schools and/or other educational settings; b) engage in a significant way with the College’s undergraduate education mission; c) eliminate under-enrolled classes; d) develop successful research and outreach programs that include major funded projects from IES and other external sources; and e) attract strong graduate students who finish in timely ways to pursue careers as academic or educational professionals.

expect the curriculum committees from C&I and the new department to meet early in the new year to explore ways to strengthen this connection.

Because it is so important for the new program in Educational Psychology to change aspects of its operation, I will be conducting a formal review of the new program during the 2012-2013 academic year. If there is evidence of a “business as usual” approach at that time, the College will consider making further organizational changes.

By moving in this direction, we will be closing the door on the opportunity for new students to study counseling psychology in a separately organized graduate program at Penn State, but we will maintain a strong offering in counselor education and also in educational psychology. Penn State will continue to be an excellent place for students who are interested in the psychological foundations of counseling. Students with these interests can either enter the new Educational Psychology program and include faculty members with expertise in counseling on their graduate committees, or they can enter the Counselor Education graduate program and include faculty members with expertise in Psychology on their graduate committees. What prospective students will need to understand is that it will no longer be possible for them to enter a separately organized program in Counseling Psychology that is accredited by the American Psychological Association. It is also important to be clear that we are committed to making it possible for the current students in the Counseling Psychology doctoral program to complete their degrees.

After the first of the year, I will also seek to meet with each of the four faculty members who are primarily connected to the existing Counseling Psychology Program to discuss implications and future opportunities within the College. I see a number of promising avenues.

In closing, it is worth re-iterating the point that we are engaged in a fundamental re-thinking of how we pursue graduate education in the College of Education. There are implications for all graduate programs throughout the College, and I will be asking our Associate Dean for Undergraduate and Graduate Studies to conduct periodic assessments of the progress being made by each program with respect to the six elements. We will continue to explore the broader ramifications of the new approach and comments are welcome. I will also be looking to the Faculty Council and its meetings as a place where ideas can be shared and fruitfully debated. The Re-Design Team identifies a number of questions that remain unanswered and the Faculty Council will be a good source of insight as we seek answers.

It is important to remember that we received nine recommendations from the Core Council. I asked the Re-Design Team to focus on a subset of the recommendations and they have done so admirably. We are also addressing the remaining recommendations and developments are being shared in a series of progress reports that are available on the web.

I remain confident that we are responding to all nine of the recommendations from the Core Council thoughtfully and deliberately and that the results will be positive and will strengthen us as a College. Please join me in thanking the Re-Design Team for its efforts in the best interests of the College and University.

xc.: B. Bowen, R. Erickson, L. Sandmeyer