

April 19, 2011

To: Members of the CECPR and ESPSE Departments

From: David H. Monk

Re.: Update and Charge for the new Curriculum Committee

Plans are progressing for combining the CECPR and ESPSE Departments into a new Department of Educational Psychology, Counseling, and Special Education (EPCSE). The Faculty Senate Council unanimously endorsed the proposal for the merger at its April 12, 2011 meeting, and I expect the Board of Trustees to act on the merger proposal at its May, 2011 meeting. The effective date for the merger will be July 1, 2011.

The Interim Vision and Design Committee (Drs. Jim DiPerna, Jackie Edmondson (chair), Karen Murphy, Skip Niles, and Hoi Suen) is also in the process of completing its work and has taken important first steps toward building a core curriculum that draws together elements of learning, measurement and assessment, and school psychology. The Committee has made significant progress and will be sharing the results of its efforts soon. I invite you to join me in thanking the members for what they have accomplished.

As the Committee pursued its work, I became more aware of ways the School Psychology graduate program can be re-designed using existing resources to achieve important goals for the College and University. I also became more sensitive to drawbacks associated with formally dissolving a separately organized School Psychology graduate program. In particular, faculty members in the School Psychology program have expressed interest in developing a professional master's degree in School Psychology possibly in conjunction with an enhanced role for the program in undergraduate education. There are also APA and NASP accreditation issues to consider, including an upcoming APA site visit that we expect to take place in the Spring of 2012.

In light of the evolving ideas for how the program in School Psychology can contribute to the College and University and the need to be prepared for the APA accreditation review, I have concluded that it is not wise at this time to fold the existing School Psychology program into a single, more broadly focused program in Educational Psychology. Instead, we will retain a separately organized graduate program in School Psychology, and I will hold it accountable for achieving enhancements such as a strong professional master's degree program and a presence in undergraduate education.

It is also very important that we not miss this opportunity to build strong ties across an Educational Psychology graduate program with a focus on learning and measurement and assessment and other programs in the new Department, including School Psychology, Counselor Education (including Rehabilitation and Human Services), and Special Education. These ties need to be strengthened and nurtured, and we need to work hard to resist whatever temptation there might be to fall into the trap of working separately and independently in these arenas. The

Interim Vision and Design Committee has taken an important first step in this direction by developing a vision for a common curriculum. We must now build on this work.

I am particularly pleased to see the progress that has been made toward updating the curriculum in Educational Psychology with new courses in the learning strand and new ideas about offering more advanced courses in the measurement and assessment strand more regularly. The curricular proposal that has been posted for faculty input and review in ANGEL is quite promising, and I look forward to seeing this proposal move forward in a timely way.

I hope you realize the need to achieve more meaningful collaboration and cross-fertilization across programs is not unique to the EPCSE Department. Many of the Core Council recommendations grow out of a need throughout the University to achieve more streamlined ways of operating. A parallel effort to achieve greater coherence and a more streamlined operation is taking place currently within the Department of Education Policy Studies where the focus is on the interface between the College Student Affairs Master's Degree program and the graduate program in Higher Education. We will be attentive to other areas of the College as needed as the re-design effort goes forward, and I will be reporting on the progress we have made toward implementing all nine of the Core Council recommendations in a memorandum to the Provost that is due May 1, 2011.

It will be the responsibility of the EPCSE Department's standing Curriculum Committee to take the next steps toward realizing the vision developed by the Interim Vision and Design Committee, and I use the balance of this memorandum to spell-out a charge for the new Curriculum Committee.

Links Within the Department

The Interim Committee appropriately focused on the design of offerings in Educational Psychology and School Psychology. It is now time to broaden the focus to include Counselor Education, Rehabilitation and Human Services, and Special Education. We must strive to avoid a silo mentality and do everything possible to foster and take advantage of complementarities that can and should exist among all four programs in the Department.

Links Beyond the Department

The EPCSE Department is very well situated to foster collaborative and interdisciplinary work across department and college boundaries. In my December 13, 2010 memorandum to the College, I spoke explicitly about the need to build ties between Special Education (SPLED) in the EPCSE Department and Teacher Education in the Curriculum and Instruction (C&I) Department.

There are colleges of education in peer institutions where special education is located organizationally within a teacher education unit like our Department of C&I. While I see advantages to a close connection like this, I also see significant advantages to the existing structure we have at Penn State, but only if we can succeed at building and enhancing meaningful ties across the units. The recently established IUG where students can earn an undergraduate degree in Special Education and a master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction is a good example of meaningful and real collaboration.

A collaboration like this needs to be viewed as a “two-way street,” and I will be asking Dr. Jackie Edmondson, our Associate Dean for Undergraduate and Graduate Studies, to bring together the curriculum committees from EPCSE and C&I to continue the efforts to build strong, mutually beneficial collaborative programs between the two departments. I expect these efforts to explore new ways for SPLED and C&I to work collaboratively to begin next fall.

There also appear to be promising opportunities for the programs in Rehabilitation and Human Services and Special Education to work collaboratively with the undergraduate programs in Curriculum and Instruction and Education Policy Studies. I ask the EPCSE Curriculum Committee to be attentive to these possibilities as well.

There are additional areas where collaboration opportunities appear to be rich and examples include early childhood education, college student mental health, and student affairs, to name just a few. I expect to see the EPCSE Curriculum Committee and the Department taking a leadership role in support of the University’s efforts to foster collaborations and interdisciplinary approaches to instruction, research, and outreach.

The Six Elements

In my charge to the Interim Vision and Design Committee, I explicitly stated the importance of the six elements that all graduate programs in the College need to set as goals. Here, I reiterate the importance of these elements for all four graduate programs in the EPCSE Department. I have publicly stated my expectation 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; e) attract strong graduate students who finish in timely ways to pursue careers as academic or educational professionals; and f) demonstrate their commitment to recruiting and retaining high quality students who will enhance the diversity of the University. It is very important for all programs in EPCSE to embrace and succeed with these six elements.

A Proactive Stance

Finally, I expect the new EPCSE Curriculum Committee to take a more proactive stance with respect to curricular affairs than is typically the case in the College of Education. Rather than wait for proposals to arrive from programs or individual faculty members to review, I ask the Committee to propose changes that need to be made and to operate in a way that is similar to how the Interim Vision and Design Committee has been operating. I see the new curriculum committee becoming a model for the entire College and University.

Because of the large scale of the changes we are implementing and because of the importance of making significant progress, I will be conducting a review of the new

Department's progress during the 2012-2013 academic year. By that time, we should be far enough along with the reorganization to understand what is working and what is not working. If at that time there is evidence of a business as usual approach to these issues, the College will consider making further organizational changes.

I will leave the mechanics surrounding the formation of the new curriculum committee in the hands of the Department. Dr. Niles will be following up soon with additional details.

In closing, let me add stress to the point that we are building here on records of success. Both the CECPR and the ESPSE Departments have long traditions of excellence in their respective histories, and we are trying to find ways to hold onto the successes and position ourselves for even greater success in the future. I realize the past two years have been frustrating, but the good news is that the vision for the future is much clearer now and is quite bright. I have been impressed with the progress that has been made to date, and I think the ideas coming from the Interim Vision and Design Committee are fresh, bold, and intellectually exciting. I genuinely believe we are building on our strengths and that we will emerge with stronger and more coherent programs. Many thanks for all your help as we take these next steps.

P.S. The upgrade of the CEDAR Building also remains on the University's capital project schedule. The timing may be delayed, but the commitment to the project has not been affected by the Governor's budget proposal.

xc.: College Listserv

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