


April 16, 2010

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Dr. Dennie Smith, Professor and Head, Teaching, Learning and Culture

**FROM:** Dr. Robert C. Webb 

**SUBJECT:** Teaching, Learning and Culture Program Review Final Report

Enclosed is the Teaching, Learning and Culture academic program review final report submitted by your external review team. As outlined in the *Academic Program Review Guidelines*, please forward your written response to these findings to me at the Office of Graduate Studies within 30 days of receipt of this memo, or no later than Friday, May 28, 2010.

The Office of Graduate Studies will work with your program to schedule a meeting with you, the Interim Provost & Executive Vice President for Academics, the Vice Provost, the Associate Provost for Undergraduate Studies, the Interim Dean of Graduate Studies, and the Dean of your college within two weeks of receipt of your response to discuss follow-up issues and action items. Feel free to invite other individuals from your department who are integral in this process. I will "host" this post-review meeting, but you, with input from your Dean and any guests you invite, will lead the bulk of the discussion. The discussion should focus on what the department plans to do moving forward. The *Guidelines* on our website at <http://ogs.tamu.edu/faculty/program-review-self-study/APRGdlns-Oct08WEBVersion.pdf> contain a sample post review meeting agenda for your convenience. Please take time to review the sample agenda, and call me so we may discuss how you would like to present your thoughts at this meeting.

**Enclosures**

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**Program Review Report  
Department of Teaching, Learning and Culture  
Texas A&M University  
April 2010**

**Panel Members**

Richard Duschl (Chair)  
Waterbury Chaired Professor, Department of Curriculum & Instruction  
Pennsylvania State University

Renee Clift  
Associate Dean and Professor  
College of Education  
University of Arizona

Norm Stahl  
Professor, Department of Literacy Education  
Northern Illinois University

Date of Site Visit: 28 February – 3 March

Date of Report: 16 April 2010

## Executive Summary

- TLAC has used the Faculty Reinvestment Funds effectively to hire both tenure-track and clinical faculty. The new hires have diversified the faculty and strengthened the prospects of TLAC engaging in classroom-based and school-based research on 1) the impact different models of teacher professional development has on student learning outcomes, and 2) how the design of learning environments impacts student learning outcomes.
- The department has made successful strides with and is seen by other TAMU College of Education departments as a leader for the infusion of technology into both campus-based and on-line programs of study. Attention will need to be given to classroom space in the years ahead as classrooms are converted to technology labs and studios for on-line courses.
- The collegiality among the faculty and staff has improved significantly under the 2-term leadership of the current chair but there are still several goals to achieve in areas of mentoring junior faculty and forging equity among senior faculty. There needs to be more transparency in the hiring, promotion, and merit pay processes that work toward building a collaborative culture.
- The panel agrees with the vision of the Chair to shift downward the current large enrollment numbers for Ph.D. students. The extremely large Ph.D. numbers has brought about less than satisfactory advising practices and a proliferation of courses within programs. This needs to be examined and studied. Improvement in academic excellence and attainment of department research and scholarship goals requires an increase in the quality of Ph.D. graduate students. There also needs to be a shift within the Ph. D. program away from preparing academic leaders and toward preparing academic researchers. The new on-line Ed.D. program should be the place for academic leaders' graduate study.
- To become a top tier department, TLAC faculties need to network both internally with other programs and departments at TAMU and externally with other scholars and programs at Research 1 universities. Grants and publications should be targeting research priorities and high-impact journals, respectively. Networks should be based on problem-driven and project-based research collaborations.
- Progress needs to be made in creating national networks with other exemplary faculty and research programs. We recommend that TLAC and the College of Education become more strategic with regard to hiring and mentoring faculty members who can elevate the status of the department.

- The addition of the clinical faculty to TLAC has had a positive impact on the mentoring and advising of undergraduates and students enrolled in teacher professional development programs of study; e.g., study abroad, Lohnman Learning Community. The clinical faculty has also positively impacted the on-line Ed.D. cohort program. Evidence-based decision-making should be employed to monitor the 'status gap' between tenure-track and clinical faculty.
- Assessment of academic courses and programs should be coordinated around formal, integrated outcomes based models.

## ***Key Findings and Recommendations***

Our key findings and recommendations are based on the Academic Reports provided by Department Chair Dennie L. Smith, Associate Chairs Cathleen C. Loving and Cynthia King Boettcher and the faculty and staff of the Department of Teaching, Learning and Culture and on the discussions and interviews with administrators, faculty, staff and students during our visit to Texas A&M in College Station, TX on February 28 through March 3, 2010. We thank Cathleen Loving and her colleagues for preparing such a thorough report, which provided us with a sound grounding of TLAC's programs, the current situations and challenges, and enabled us to have a more in-depth review during our time on campus. Additionally, we want to recognize the openness and honesty individuals brought to our discussions and meetings.

The 'Findings and Recommendations' are presented in two sections. The first section addresses questions and goals put forth by the Texas A&M University administration. The second section addresses questions and goals put forth by the Department of Teaching, Learning and Culture. The crosscutting themes in the recommendations are:

- Establishing a **focus** on goals and priorities.
- **Networking** across the nation, state and campus.
- Being guided in research, in graduate education and in teacher education programs by measures of **student learning outcomes**.
- Establishing a **collaborative culture** through mentoring, transparency in decision-making, and project-based research.

### Section 1

#### Texas A&M University Administration

### **Allocation of Resources and Level of Support from the Provost and the Graduate College**

The Department receives and should continue to receive support for preparing teachers, which includes support for advising, technology integration, instruction, and field-focused experiences. We recommend that resources (time, people, and funds) be allocated toward supporting research on the short and long term impact of the programs. Given that TAMU and TLAC are striving to be recognized for research contributions, studying initial teacher preparation, professional development for experienced teachers, and teacher leadership might be an integral part of an overall research portfolio. Research on impact might better enable the department to focus on those programs for which it would like to be known. We recommend that the department become more discriminating on which teacher

preparation programs it offers. It is not necessary to cover the universe of possibilities.

### **Supports that are utilized or needed**

We recommend that the central administration and the Dean's office maintain current resource bases, such as start-up packages, but that there should be some shift in funding that rewards the department for growing existing programs and establishing new ones (such as the urban leadership endeavor). Some of this shift should support the research recommended in the previous paragraph. We further recommend that both the campus and the college develop robust and easily accessible communications about what resources are available and how individuals and groups might access these resources. The same hold for resources that may enhance promotion and tenure, particularly at the level of assistant professor. One option to consider that is used at other universities is awarding a one-semester sabbatical for the preparation of manuscripts during the 4<sup>th</sup> year; following a successful 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> year review.

### **Impact of Faculty Reinvestment**

We recommend that the department maintain the clinical faculty for supporting undergraduate and graduate instructional programs, but also that it work toward a more diversified clinical faculty—one that more closely resembles the demographics of the districts into which preservice teachers are placed and TLAC graduates are hired. In a similar vein we recommend that the department continue using funds to maintain the recruitment and retention of a diverse tenure-line faculty, taking advantage of the trend begun using faculty reinvestment funds. These faculty members have great potential to inform curriculum and instruction for preservice teachers and we would like to see progress toward tenure-line faculty becoming more involved in preservice teacher education at both undergraduate and graduate levels. By involvement we mean curriculum development, instruction, and research on the impact teacher preparation has on students' learning—students in the program and students in the classrooms served by the programs. We also recommend that the momentum begun by reinvesting in faculty not be lost. There is a perception among faculty that women and faculty members of color lack support from senior faculty members, which could lead to attrition within the next few years.

### **Leveraging College and Departmental Resources**

TLAC needs to continue being thoughtful and mindful about leveraging resources. We recommend that faculty should be encouraged and directed to become more involved in cross campus and college research collaborations and in community service learning projects. Such collaborations and projects need to be problem-based and interdisciplinary in nature. The variety of teacher education programs at TAMU offers up an opportunity to systematically research how these programs

impact student-learning outcomes. The infusion of technology into learning environments presents another opportunity to study student-learning outcomes. To these ends, tenure-track faculty should be involved with beginning teacher education for purposes of establishing a research focus on teaching and learning and of serving as role models for cultural diversity at TAMU.

We find the department currently practices fiscal responsibility and we recommend that these practices be maintained. The panel agrees with the department chair that the number of Ph.D. students should be drastically reduced. Also, admission of Ph.D. doctoral students should be centralized at the department level, not the current practice of admission decisions being made at the program level. The current practice leads to graduate students not having stable funding and receiving less than adequate mentoring and advising. The current practice leads to too many courses with under enrollment. We recommend that TLAC should continue its' efforts to build and expand the on-line courses of study, in particular the Ed.D. In the Ed.D. program, the expertise of clinical faculty can be used for mentoring and advising. Here, too, is where the development of graduate students into academic leaders should reside hence helping reduce the numbers in the Ph.D. program.

### **Interactions with other departments on and off campus**

We recommend that 'silos' must come down so that TLAC may be a successful member of the TAMU community in the decades ahead. If TAMU is to achieve the national high-ranking status level it desires for the College of Education and the University, greater cooperation and collaboration is necessary. We see opportunity for the TLAC and the College of Education to step into a leadership role for both the University and the State. Such networking across Colleges and Departments will have greater impact upon the theory and research that will, in turn, address the multifarious questions and problems facing the practice of pedagogy in the educational institutions across the nation.

We recommend that TLAC faculty build on and learn from recent collaborative success and continue to become an academic unit that values and recognizes the importance of research or instruction projects that cut across departmental and college boundaries. The fiscal and academic environments that once rewarded domain-oriented individualism have been replaced with structures that calls for collaboration and networking across disciplinary and methodological domains. We recommend TLAC become far more proactive in identifying university, state, and national agendas and initiatives that have the potential to support cutting edge research and innovation in pedagogy.

### **Aligning assessments with program standards**

We recommend that TLAC maintain an effective assessment system that strives to incorporate new innovations in the assessment field into TLAC programs. Throughout the review process the team did not encounter useful evidence

documenting graduate or undergraduate programs. Information about students after graduating from TAMU was less than satisfactory. While such information might exist in a more implicit manner, it was not outwardly discernable from the artifacts the review received. Hence, the department should make the products of the program evaluation and student employment placements visible through various outlets. The survey of faculty was useful but needs to be continually revisited for alignment with department, college and university strategic goals.

The undergraduate students are receiving strong advising services, graduate students less so. We recommend that TLAC work cooperatively with the advising services to maintain current advising services and maintain the regular review of the undergraduates' progress to degree completion. We recommend that TLAC and the College of Education consider implementing formal assessment whether as point of service surveys, focus groups, etc. Our perception of graduate level advising was less positive, and hence, it would appear that a formal and regular assessment of graduate advising would be in order. Some universities include, as part of the tenure and promotion packets, graduate student surveys of faculty advising. This becomes a component of the scholarship of teaching review.



Section 2  
Department of Teaching, Learning and Culture

**Advancing the State of the Discipline and Meeting the Needs of the Profession**

The department has two compatible goals—advancing knowledge and meeting the needs of the profession. We recommend maintaining the current trajectory of increased publication and encourage progress toward submitting more manuscripts to high impact journals. We recommend that faculty become more proactive in publishing with graduate students, as well as clinical faculty members, in addition to engaging in and supporting regional and national presentations of research.

We encourage the department to maintain their focus on high need areas such as mathematics and science education, urban education, and English as Second Language—and explore bringing bilingual education back into the department. We would like to see more progress both on research that addresses equity issues within the field of education in general and within the department in particular—thereby garnering the reputation of being a model for other university sectors. Finally, we recommend that the department decide in which areas it wishes to excel and to become more and more focused on related areas of research and practice to emphasize.

**Enabling effective student learning**

We found that the faculty reinvestment program has had a positive effect on undergraduate students. We recommend that TLAC continue to implement programmatic structures for professional teacher education that enable 1) class sizes that allow personal contact with clinical faculty, 2) extensive field experiences that begin at the earliest stages of the professional training, and 3) contact with advisers who are personable, available, and knowledgeable. Still, undergraduates had difficulty in expressing an overriding frame that makes the TLAC experience unique. Others stated that they be given a detailed picture of the student teaching experience earlier in the program of study.

We found students to be favorable about the Lohnman Learning Community and the Study Abroad program. We recommend that the Study Abroad program be expanded but that it also needs to examine how best to integrate the experiences of students going overseas into campus-based courses or teacher education programs. We find the investment in clinical faculty has contributed to establishing a firm commitment to upgrading the curriculum, maintaining a diverse and lengthy clinical experience, and integrating technology and writing in courses. We recommend that TLAC and the College of Education be cognizant of the 'status gap' and 'pay gap' between tenure-track and clinical faculty and when and where appropriate make evidence-based decisions to reward equitably.

The TLAC Department has made a concerted effort to incorporate technology into the undergraduate program. The team saw several examples of students' instructional uses of technology where the products could be used during their induction years. The Verizon Room provides the students with access to up-to-date technology. We recommend investment in the TLAC technology programs. Other departments look to TLAC as a leader in such programmatic developments and given the exponential growth of technology in the schools efforts must be taken to maintain a currency with hardware and software, technology oriented curriculum and instruction, and parity with the public schools of Texas.

### **Meeting the Goals of the University**

We recommend that TLAC continue to provide doctoral students with ongoing assistantship lines (three years) and travel support. There is a healthy graduate student culture and an overall pride and satisfaction the graduate students expressed about the TLAC experience. We recommend that in order for doctoral students to achieve TLAC goals regarding publishing before graduating and competing for research one university positions, they would benefit from more formalized research group-based apprenticeships and from mentoring targeted at critical stages of the doctoral program.

We recommend that TLAC and the College of Education continue to develop the cohort based, on-line Ed.D. program. This practitioner- oriented program has great potential to impact positively the leadership in school districts across the state. There is a need, however, to develop a stronger advising plan that spans the stages of the doctoral experience. Also, it is not clear if a full formative and summative evaluation model has been fleshed out for the program.

TLAC needs to maintain the commitment to becoming a stronger research-oriented culture. Progress needs to be made in creating national networks with other exemplary faculty and research programs. We recommend that TLAC and the College of Education become more strategic with regard to hiring and mentoring faculty members who can elevate the status of the department. For example, having as a goal graduate students publishing and presenting at national conferences before graduation would imply that new junior faculty hires in TLAC would meet this goal as well.

### **Perceptions from the field**

We recommend that TLAC faculty and staff continue progressing toward the spirit of collegiality and stability that is currently developing in TLAC. The department is becoming more stabilized organizationally but a change in department leadership is looming. We recommend that the College of Education and University senior administrators carefully gauge this management team change so as not to erode

TLAC's current organizational, financial, and pedagogical successes. The next leader for TLAC should be someone who can be a model on how to inspire and mentor the younger tenure-track and clinical faculty and who can establish procedures and mechanisms that nurture networking within TLAC, with departments and programs across the College and University and with State and National agencies. Administrative leadership in TLAC and the College of Education needs to become more adept at helping faculty take the next steps forward in building on established successes and growing them in ways that open up exciting transformational research and development opportunities.

TLAC faculties are productive in the generation of scholarship and there is some evidence of leadership in the professional organizations. Productivity has increased among all faculty such that the question is no longer 'Are faculty publishing?' but rather 'Where and on what are faculty publishing?' We recommend that TLAC programs develop and sharpen strategic plans to undertake research and scholarship that can be reported at high profile scholarly conferences and published in high impact journals. Such plans should be coordinated around research groups examining problem-driven research questions and brokered by College of Education senior administrators. External perceptions of TLAC's scholarly productivity indicate that only a few programs are engaging in important agenda setting research and development at this time. Progressing TLAC faculty and graduate students to reposition themselves in the national arena will require mentorship and nurturing of the younger faculty in areas of research, grantsmanship, publishing, mentoring graduate students, and professional leadership, among others. Guidance and support from College and University senior administration is critically important.

We recommend that TLAC and the College of Education engage in a strategic planning process to determine which areas of scholarly strength and/or of societal need will serve as the focal points for the next decade. The current programmatic structures for graduate student education and research agendas need be reconsidered as interdisciplinary communities of scholars. Such networks will bring forth a breadth of knowledge and methods that are needed to examine the complex curriculum, instruction and assessment alignment problems facing schools, school districts and out-of-school learning environments throughout the State of Texas, our Nation and the world. Independent scholarship while important must be bolstered by the scholarship of synergism for both basic and applied research. We recommend that TLAC faculty, tenure-track and clinical, coordinate efforts through the Ed.D. and Ph.D. programs of study to research and development agendas that address the core mission of a Land Grant and AAU institution; e.g., new knowledge generation with impact and programs that are not boutique but major contributors for placement of people and products.