

**The Department of Teaching, Learning and Culture Response to
2010 External Review Report
July 8, 2010**

Executive Summary

In early March 2010 the Department of Teaching, Learning and Culture underwent a thorough external program review of undergraduate, graduate and research programs. We were visited by three nationally known scholars, Professor Richard A. Duschl of Penn State University, Professor Renee Clift of the University of Arizona, and Professor Norm Stahl of Northern Illinois University. (Our fourth reviewer, Arizona State's Dean of the College of Education Gene Garcia learned he was unable to make the visit only a few days before--due to important budget meetings he could not miss). All had been sent a seven-volume document ahead of time providing details of the department. What follows is our response to the reviewers' executive summary along with more specific actions in response to their suggestions and, finally, our 2011-2012 budget-cutting plans as mandated by the University.

Reviewers' Executive Summary and Our Response:

1. Reviewers' Statement "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 have on student learning outcomes, and 2) how the design of learning environments impacts student learning outcomes."

Actions: *1. Establish 2 \$3,000 start-up grants from endowment for specific research related to teacher education.*
 2. Appoint Standing Committee to identify areas for research in teacher education.

2. Reviewers' Statement "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."

Actions: *1. Technology has been and will continue as a priority to ensure that our programs maintain their competitive edge.*

2. *The newly developed Classroom of the Future's Learning Studio will keep pace with new teaching and learning technologies by having examples available for faculty and student use.*
3. *Training sessions for faculty will be planned to introduce new technologies such as the Promethean Boards, iPads, and ThinkFinity (Verizon Product).*

3. Reviewers' Statement "The collegiality among the faculty and staff has improved significantly under the two-term leadership of the current chair, but there are still several goals to achieve in the 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."

- Actions:**
1. *Current transparency includes faculty committees for these functions. Also, specific guidelines are available to guide the decision-making process.*
 2. *Organize a faculty meeting to discuss more specific understandings of the request for more transparency and equity issues*
 3. *Develop an action plan for mentoring with specific input from junior faculty.*
 4. *Incorporate the reviewers' suggestions for the new department chair*

4. Reviewers' Statement "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 have 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 the 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."

- Actions:**
1. *Continue to monitor the quality of programs for preparing Ph.D. students for research institutions and Ed.D. students for leadership and practitioner roles.*
 2. *Establish an Advising Committee to address mentoring of Graduate Students*
 3. *Currently developing a revised and improved application for the Ph.D.*
 4. *Continue work on differentiation between Ph.D. & Ed.D. research guidelines (record of study & dissertation).*

5. Reviewers' Statement "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."

- Actions:**
1. *Document the extent of current collaborations in and out of the department*
 2. *Form task force to guide problem-driven research for faculty and students.*
 3. *Focus on quality of research of faculty and students*
 4. *Adding two persons for research at College level will help provide support and additional expertise for external funds*
 5. *Emphasize this goal in the selection of a new department head*

6. Reviewers' Statement "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."

- Actions:**
1. *The Department as in the past will continue to hire faculty to elevate overall faculty status.*
 2. *Interviewing, screening and mentoring processes will be revisited, due to two reinvestment hires being unsuccessful in either seeking tenure or performing satisfactorily as clinical faculty.*

7. Reviewers' Statement "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, Lohman 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."

- Actions:**
1. *Addressing status gap will be accomplished, in part, when clinical faculty are approved by the Office of Graduate Studies to chair Ed.D. and Masters (Non-Thesis) committees.*
 2. *An anonymous survey will be administered to determine some of the issues related to "status gap" between tenure-track and clinical faculty.*
 3. *Continue to clarify expectations for both clinical and tenure line faculty through re-visiting evaluation instruments & process.*
 4. *Revisit TLAC Values Statements for faculty, staff and students.*

8. Assessment of academic courses and programs should be coordinated around formal, integrated outcomes-based models.

Actions:

1. *Current undergraduate program has recently developed outcomes for all concentrations.*
2. *Graduate Committee will be assigned the task of identifying the most important outcomes for a Ph.D. – Research and an Ed.D. – Practitioner degrees.*
3. *Current undergraduate programs will have specific outcomes for SACS Accreditation.*

Additional Actions in Response to the Review:

Changes in Research Emphasis

- We agree that we should do research on the impact of some of our programs, such as teacher preparation, leadership and professional development.

Action: *We will seek approval for an additional concentration area in TLAC called “Teacher Education,” which will be interdisciplinary across other concentration areas such as math or ESL, attracting faculty and students within the department and the college. We will encourage and reward partnerships between tenure-track and clinical faculty to do research on our current programs and follow up with studies related to our students and former students in the field. For example: How well are our former teacher education students who became ESL certified succeeding with students when compared to those who did not obtain certification?*

- While TLAC faculty and graduate students are “productive in the generation of scholarship,” we should increase our scholarly productivity in important areas and publish more in higher impact journals

Action: *We will encourage interdisciplinary research groups to form around similar interests and worthy questions. While this currently goes on informally, we can improve by explicitly requesting, from faculty, ideas for research groups they would like to be part of. By identifying interests publicly, as well as providing venues and small incentives—like lunch—we believe we can increase the likelihood that research groups will form. A step beyond the formation of such groups would be to ask each group to report to faculty on their direction, progress, and to present findings that would be of interest to faculty and students. Also, the department will identify and recognize the most significant research that is making the most impact annually.*

Graduate Programs

- We need to work to identify our most viable programs. We “can’t do everything.”

Action: *In working to identify our most viable programs, we will eliminate the “Early Childhood” concentration area for both undergraduate and graduate programs. The Masters and Ph.D. concentration will no longer be offered starting this fall, 2010. We worked hard for several years to build the program with a search for an associate or full professor who also had some grant writing experience as well at the requisite research and teaching. We had an excellent search committee, but never found a good match. The undergraduates who use to choose an early childhood specialty within the K-6 certification area will now have a subject area specialty, such as math, science etc. This actually makes them more marketable—and still having enough coursework involving young children that they are comfortable with pre-k and kindergarten.*

- *The reviewers said, “Silos must come down.”

Action: *We agree to some extent and are planning to make more efficient and more interdisciplinary our graduate program organization. Currently, with the elimination of early childhood, we have six concentration areas--each with its own faculty, program listing/courses, supported grad students, protocols for everything from when to meet to what a Ph.D. preliminary exam or proposal entails, sense of identity and some sense of competition for resources from the other five groups: math ed., science ed., ESL, reading/literacy, urban ed. and curriculum and culture.*

To encourage research and teaching collaboration, innovative and equitable GA assignments, consistency in faculty and graduate student protocols, we propose to rearrange them into three areas, starting fall, 2010: Math Ed. /Science Ed.; Reading/ESL; and Curriculum and Culture /Urban Ed. There will continue to be one representative from each of the six areas as members of the Graduate Committee and one on the Leadership Committee to assure adequate representation from each specialty. One of the first areas that will be discussed among each new group is course offerings, and how they can be either consolidated or better framed as appropriate for either group, rather than for a rarified few. The Graduate Committee will also consider requiring all concentration areas to include a minimum of one course in another concentration as part of their degree plan and overall program in lieu of one of the core courses.

- We need to improve the overall quality of our Ph.D. students. The reviewers want our numbers to be smaller than the current +200.

Action: While Texas A&M University is generally committed to maintaining enrollment levels, we are aware of the need to be fairly confident that the Ph.D. students who are admitted to TLAC are 1) well suited to pursuing a research-intensive degree, 2) able to find an appropriate faculty mentor to devote time and expertise, 3) informed about financial obligations and opportunities for funding, and 4) likely to be successful in coursework and the dissertation process in a timely manner.

For these reasons, the TLAC Graduate Committee has been working on a revised application that has better defined requirements (such as GRE minimums-or weight of that score against other things, TOEFL sub-score distribution), explicit questions that require answers showing reflection, commitment, a reasonable level of expertise in the chosen area, and reasonable writing skills. In addition, the process of admission of doctoral students will change to a more centralized system. While the six concentration areas (math, science, ESL, Curriculum and Culture and Urban ED) will continue to be given all applications to their areas for review, several changes are designed to assure admission has been based on the best available data from applications—and to improve the timing of our offers:

- 1) The Director of Graduate Studies will look at all completed applications as soon as they are available--giving her a first look at numbers, areas of interest, and at how applicants are responding to the revised application. She will pass all applications on to concentration group leaders.
- 2) Concentration area groups will meet in their paired groups –Math/Sci; ESL/Literacy; Urban Ed/C&C to examine all applications—and to conduct required interviews with those of interest. They will select those applications they wish to go forward—either for admittance with funding, or for admittance with no funding.
- 3) All applications of interest to concentration groups will be forwarded to a sub-committee of the Graduate Committee, whose duty will be to confirm selections from the three concentration areas and to make decisions on any applications that fall outside of the normal metric for acceptance, but concentration areas have made a case for their consideration.
- 4) Between each of the paired concentration groups, the department will continue to fund 6 doctoral students for three years. Their funding comes from a source that requires them to aid in course development and/or implementation. Thus there is a base of 18 funded doctoral students at all times, plus additional students funded through research grants, post-prelim exam teaching assignments, and sponsored students from abroad. We currently have over 50 Ph.D. students receiving some sort of organized funding.

5. We will determine the overall quality of the Ph.D. program by the number of graduates accepting positions in research universities and the Ed.D. graduates accepting leadership in practitioners roles.

- The reviewers had concerns related to formal assessment of TLAC Ph.D. students.

Action: *The Graduate Committee will take up at its first meeting in fall, 2010 the issue of instituting a qualifying examination to be taken after 27 hours of coursework for all students. The exam would be developed by an ad hoc group of members of the Graduate Committee, as well as some other TLAC graduate faculty. We believe that writing skills, failing to complete courses on time, or unacceptable grades will have shown up by this time—and, on the other hand, the student has had time to get acclimated to the role of a doctoral student. A formal procedure for evaluation, probationary status, and dismissal will be included in these plans--which will then go to the faculty for approval.*

Another area requiring better assessment is in graduate assistantship evaluations. Whether they are GAT, GANT or GAR, we will implement use of the OGS evaluation instrument each semester to help students know how they are doing in fulfilling their responsibilities and to provide the faculty with a guide to outlining duties and assessing outcomes.

- Reviewers commented that it is in the online Executive Ed.D. program “where the development of academic leaders should reside, hence helping reduce the numbers in the Ph.D. program.”

Action: *Currently we have two cohorts of online Executive Ed.D. students going through the program (a total of 25 students). Due to budget issues, we have delayed adding a third cohort, normally starting in spring. In the meantime, however, our Urban Education program leaders will develop a concentration course plan to start an online Ed.D. program for their next cohort of students. A few might be advised to pursue a Ph.D. This seems more in line with the goals of many applicants--most of whom are full-time educators in and around Houston interested in practitioner research. And it would encourage the addition of a much-needed pool of urban experts. This would reduce the Ph.D. acceptances significantly.*

Networking

- Reviewers asked TLAC faculty members to do more networking and collaborating outside the department. To some extent we disagree with their assessment and offer the following:

Action: *We are already doing quite a lot of this. A number of our faculty and graduate students are involved in funded projects that are cross-college—such as a visualization project with the Viz Lab in Architecture, science education professional development projects with Geology and Geophysics and the Botanical Society of America. One faculty member in science education is funded partially by the IAODP (Ocean Drilling Project). One member of TLAC has a joint appointment in Geography. Three members of the Mathematics Department have joint appointments in TLAC. Two members of Educational Psychology and one member of Education Administration and Human Resource Development have joint appointments in TLAC. In addition, we are co-teaching with members of the College of Science in the successful AggieTEACH (formerly MASS) program, where COS majors take five education courses and conduct student teaching within TLAC.*

Finally, as director of the State of Texas Education Research Center, Dr. Hersh Waxman is involved in a number of state-funded projects requiring college-wide involvement. The latest one, where he serves as PI, is the effort to develop College Career and Readiness Standards (CCRS), with Department Head, Dr. Dennie Smith as Co-PI. This collaboration involves faculty from each department in CEHD. The department will do a better job monitoring and marketing these collaborations through annual documentation.

Faculty

- Reviewers asked us to keep up the momentum created by the positive impact with our faculty reinvestment program and to continue to emphasize diversity in our faculty hires.

Action: *While two of our faculty hired under the reinvestment program did not work out, we have had other clinical and tenure-track faculty hired during this unique program doing very well in their teaching and research. To strengthen our undergraduate science education program, a clinical faculty member will be hired to begin in fall, 2011. The search committee has been formed and will make every effort to reach a diverse pool of candidates.*

- We were also asked to involve tenure-track faculty more in undergraduate education and research on teacher preparation.

Action: *Starting with fall, 2011, all tenure-line faculty will teach one undergraduate course a year. They were recently informed of this at a June 24 meeting, which was video streamed for all who could not attend. Faculty responded favorably to this.*

Aligning Assessment with Program Standards

- Reviewers were less than pleased with “evidence provided that documented graduate or undergraduate programs”--and the employment of our students after graduation.

Action: *We agree that information on where our students are employed after leaving Texas A&M in the last five years (whether undergraduate or graduate students) was spotty. We did attempt to gather this information for both, but did not put a high enough priority on this; and, the large numbers whose whereabouts are not known challenged us. We will make better use of data the College does gather on undergraduates and seek strategies to improve former graduate student data gathering.*

Our best sources for such data are the Texas Education Agency—which helps us find public school teachers and their location--and the TAMU Association of Former Students. Assuming most Aggies join AFS, if one has access to these lists, one is able to send them an email requesting information. Dr. Hersh Waxman and his team in the ERC led an effort to create a detailed student survey, arrange permission to access the email lists and send and receive responses.

Without going into the results of these surveys in this report, suffice it to say that we now have adequate data on the strengths and weaknesses of both our undergraduate and graduate programs, according to this survey. We will, over the next year and more not only inform our faculty about these results, but also evaluate how much has improved since the students were in our program, and how much still needs to be done. Action has already been taken in some areas. For example, we now provide doctoral students much more choice in research-intensive courses than several years ago.

The TLAC student evaluation report is available online at the TLAC website <http://tlac.tamu.edu/> as “program review” on the left column link. See Volume 3 page 32 (a 40-pg document). In Volume 7, Appendix 9, the complete 300-page report is provided.

We were surprised that the reviewers failed to mention one word about the student survey, even though the summary report was prominent at the end of Volume 3

**TLAC Budget Reduction Plan:
To Be Implemented Over the Biennium Fall, 2011 to Fall, 2013**

Here is what TLAC is doing as a result of recent budget cuts required of all institutions by the Legislative Budget Board of Texas—all coming after the reviewers left in early March, 2010.

The first requirement was that all entities cut their budget for fiscal year 2010-2011 by 5%. That was accomplished rather easily.

Then at the beginning of June, 2010 the LBB informed institutions that they might have to cut anywhere from 5% to 10%, beginning with the cut budget from FY 2010-1011, for the biennium beginning with fall, 2011. That notice changed shortly after to a likely 10% cut. In the College, the 10% cut was to be carried out equally by all departments and by the College itself. The distribution of cuts was confirmed in mid-June and TLAC's portion is \$440,710, to be cut from its budget for the biennium FY 2011 and FY 2012. The cuts must come from the State Account—which is the major faculty salary account.

In order to meet these budget demands, the following assumptions, strategies and positive practices will be fully implemented beginning in fall, 2011. A specific breakdown of budget cuts is included.

Assumptions

- Maintain current enrollment at the undergraduate and graduate level
- Support STEM high need priority areas (math, science, ESL)
- Fund & maintain full time positions whenever possible
- Differential tuition (was “distance learning fees”) enables flexible use of funds (fund instructional costs)—recent change approved by Board of Regents allows these funds to be used to pay faculty salaries for online courses, as well as for graduate student support when they are involved in teaching. TLAC generates twice as much as any other department in the College
- Develop online summer program beginning in 2010
- Summer program priorities (require online) are Executive Online Ed.D., Graduate Secondary Certification, Online M.Ed.
- Maintain carry-over salary savings accounts from grants for faculty
- Maintain efforts to keep department financially self-sufficient (in the black)
- Search for clinical faculty member in science education for fall, 2011
- Encourage faculty to continue securing external funds
- Faculty fund professional travel using grant funds as much as possible

Strategies

- Tenure line faculty will teach at least one undergraduate course per year

- Minimum of 10 students for graduate elective courses and 25 for graduate core courses-starting to implement this in Spring, 2011 as a transition semester
- Reduce the number of newly developed temporary courses (EDCI 689); those that are 689 should seek permanent numbers and a place in the catalog.
- Eliminate Early Childhood Ph.D. program
- Reconfigure undergraduate Early Childhood program to require subject matter specialty
- Maintain travel funds for assistant professors
- Enlist enrollment management for both graduate and undergraduate students
- Increase enrollment in undergraduate introductory courses (75+)
- Work on securing two large classrooms near EDCT for our increased undergraduate class size. We currently have none large enough for our new plans
- Eliminate 31 sections in undergraduate program
- Eliminate 10-15 sections at the graduate level
- Institute tighter planning ahead of time for undergraduate and core graduate courses
- Organize for interdisciplinary groups: Science/Math; Literacy/ESL; Urban Education/Curriculum & Culture
- Negotiate possible incentives for retirement

TLAC Specific Budget Reduction Planned Actions

<i>Category</i>	<i>Explanation</i>	<i>Amount Cut</i>
Contingent Faculty	31 sections fewer needed	\$132,874
Faculty Leaving	3 during 2010-2011	\$174,022
Summer Program	50% less from state fund-- use other sources	\$50,585
Field Placement & Advising Staff	Leave vacant	\$28,376
Remove Land Lines	Except key office phones (encourage computer phones)	\$26,000
Field Supervision Funding	Move to fee account	\$22,853
Administrative Stipends	Two undergraduate leaders (\$3000 each)	\$6000
Total		\$440,710