The meeting was called to order at 3:05 p.m. Alden presented the subcommittee chairs with certificates of appreciation. It was moved and seconded to approve the minutes of November 7, 2011, and the motion passed unanimously.

La Vonne Neal, dean of the College of Education; Charles Howell, chair of the Department of Leadership, Educational Psychology, and Foundations; Jennifer Schmidt, educational psychology program coordinator; Marc VanOverbeke, assistant chair of the Department of Leadership, Educational Psychology, and Foundations were introduced.

Falkoff noted that the APC members would continue the conversation about the programs in the Department of Leadership, Educational Psychology, and Foundations from a couple of weeks ago. He thanked the subcommittee members and stated there are several issues to address. They are: enrollment, especially minority enrollment; access to courses; and the shift to more full-time students in the educational psychology programs.

The strengths of the M.S.Ed. in Foundations of Education degree program are that it is cost effective and it is a strong program.

One discussion point is that the enrollment numbers are low; there were only three students in the program in 2010. An external reviewer recommended implementing a targeted recruitment plan. Should enrollment be increased? Over the past few years, the faculty has been talking about this issue. This is a small program with a large service mission that takes the faculty away from recruiting activities. The external reviewer suggested that we have professional development courses for working individuals to increase enrollment. The challenge is the time commitment to do this. The program has been developing contacts with the Chicago Public Schools for faculty doing research, and this will help with bringing in students of color. The program is also working with the curriculum and instruction programs to bridge the two programs. The reality is that this will always be a small program. Currently there are five to seven students enrolled in the program, and the program could handle ten students per year. At the undergraduate level there are several recruitment efforts underway. They are: an honors section in an upper-division course, a certificate of graduate study, and, most notably, the undergraduate student assistant program. These students work closely with faculty members to present at conferences and to obtain teaching experience. The program has also just started an undergraduate certificate. The two
programs in curriculum and instruction were moved to the department in July 2011, and this has provided some other opportunities for students. The programs at the University of Illinois (UoI) and Western Illinois University (WIU) are significantly larger than our program. The UoI program has a heavy concentration in the history and philosophy of foundations of education, and a lot of students go to these programs because of the policy perspective. They also have faculty dedicated to the graduate program. Is the problem having a limited number of faculty, or is the problem the low number of students? At NIU, faculty have heavy teaching loads, and there is no drawing power except that we have a doctoral degree. The program at WIU has federal funding. The college has been developing a Strategic Enrollment Management Plan that includes communication, recruitment, and retention. The communication phase of the plan is completed, and the recruitment and retention plans are being finalized. There is also a student services operation in the college. The individuals in this operation sit down with all the chairs and work on enhancing recruitment and retention. The college is also developing a diversity action plan. What are the career tracks for students? Most students go in one of two directions: some pursue doctoral degrees and some go on to teach at four-year colleges. This program provides value for the students, and the students tell us this. The faculty would hate to see the program not be offered at NIU. The focus of the UoI program is on policy; how would you describe our program? The NIU program is focused on the value of schools and education; our program looks at the disciplinary perspective of schools.

Is there an issue with the credit hour production for non-majors? The program is expanding its general education course offerings. We meet the demand in teacher preparation, but we are concerned with enrollment.

There are many strengths in the M.S.Ed. in Educational Psychology program. There is strong demand and societal need for the program, the program has low costs, and the program is developing a discipline-specific writing course. This writing course provides students with multiple opportunities for exposure to research methodology.

One discussion point is that minority enrollment seems to have improved recently, but the graduation rates are low. Some of the students have not been able to maintain assistantships. One minority student graduated last semester, and two minority students will graduate this semester. The graduation rate lags behind enrollment; we expect to see an increase in graduation rates in the next couple of years. What did the program do to increase enrollment? The website has been revised and a recruiting brochure has been created. The program has also been working with the University Honors Program. Several persons of color have enrolled in the educational psychology programs. Some of the faculty have been successful at obtaining grants ($1.2 million), and some of this money has been used to offer more assistantships to graduate students.

Another discussion point is access to courses. This continues to be something that the program struggles with. The faculty have been discussing this issue. The program has done several things to resolve this issue. They are: developed course rotations and a list of when courses will be offered; talked with faculty about mentoring students; and emailed students frequently about what courses will be offered each semester. There has been a real boost in enrollment because of specialized emails sent to students. This is improving. Does the program offer online courses? There are a limited number of online courses, but we are talking about developing more online courses. There have been some discussions about offering the terminal track of the program online, and there is a large demand for courses on working with gifted students that could be offered online. Would working with the gifted students be another track or a new degree? The faculty have not been talking about a new degree. Would supporting more master’s students impact the course rotation schedule? This should make it easier to develop a rotation schedule.
The strengths of the Ed.D. in Educational Psychology degree program are: the occupational demand seems good, the program costs are low, the initiatives implemented to shorten time-to-degree, and the faculty have worked to implement programmatic changes.

One discussion point is course availability. This is the same issue that was discussed previously regarding the M.S.Ed. in Educational Psychology degree program. Everything that was said about the master’s program applies to the Ed.D. program. There were two core courses that we could not offer on a regular basis; now we are offering these key courses more regularly. A separate course section has been made available to educational psychology students, which has helped a lot.

Minority enrollment is dropping, and only two degrees have been awarded to minority students in the past five years. The program has had good success at recruiting international students, and we would like to continue this practice. All of the recruitment efforts mentioned when we discussed the master’s program are also being used to recruit students into the Ed.D. program. We are sending brochures to institutions that have high populations of students of color and master’s only institutions. Currently there are 24-29 students enrolled in the doctoral program. The target capacity for this program is 35 students. There are very few men in the doctoral program. This is typical of many of the education fields in general. It would be preferable to have better gender balance in the program.

What are the career paths for master’s and doctoral graduates? Students enrolled in the master’s program are usually classroom teachers who want to improve their teaching skills. There are a growing number of master’s students who intend to pursue doctorates, and these students tend to enroll in our master’s program on a full-time basis. Graduates of the doctoral program get doctoral positions, post-doc positions, and research positions.

The last discussion point is that the program is moving toward having a Ph.D. program with full-time students. What happens to the students who cannot study on a full-time basis? The program expects that the enrollment will be split 50/50 between part- and full-time students. The program has made efforts to make all students feel included. There are two annual events held for students, and many faculty have started advising groups that have helped students develop resources and connections.

There are two interim reports on the agenda: the M.A.T. and the M.S.T. The IBHE requires that institutions submit an interim report three years after a new program is approved. A summary of these two reports will be submitted to the IBHE. These degrees are housed in the Graduate School. The M.A.T. and M.S.T. were created to serve broad groups of students. The M.A.T. was set up for students seeking initial teacher certification and has specializations in elementary education and health education. The M.A.T. did not come close to meeting target enrollments. The specialization in elementary education was not implemented. There have been a few students enrolled in the specialization in health education. We will keep an eye on enrollment in the M.A.T. and have future discussions about whether this is a viable program. Enrollment in the M.S.Ed. in Elementary Education has tanked over the last couple of years. In 2005 there were 165 students enrolled in the program, and in 2011 three students are enrolled in this program. The issue is that teachers are being laid off. The M.S.T. was set up for individuals who already have teacher certification and are seeking endorsements in other areas. The M.S.T. has specializations in middle school mathematics education, engineering education, and health education 6-12. The specialization in middle school mathematics education was created within the M.S.T. because students who did not have a baccalaureate in mathematics could not pursue the M.S. in Mathematics. The specialization in middle school mathematics and engineering education were grant funded, and these funds paid the tuition for students enrolled in the specializations. The grant funds
have been exhausted. In order to offer these programs, we would need to recruit from a broad area to offer an off-campus cohort. The departments have an interest in continuing these specializations, but they do not have a plan. The report to the IBHE should say that we will monitor these programs and evaluate whether they will continue to be viable programs.

The decision of what we do with these programs rests with us. We have other programs that have low enrollments. Now we have been asked to tell the IBHE what programs have been deleted because they have had low enrollments. The IBHE also asked for an analysis on what the courses cost and how this money had been reallocated. One degree program has recently been deleted (the B.A. in Russian). The IBHE board’s mentality is that we keep adding new programs and we never delete programs. Responsibility for deletions rests with the campus, so the deletions of emphases, specializations, minors, and certificates are not regularly reported to the IBHE board. There is an Annual Listing of Changes that identifies things that have been added and deleted, but this goes to the IBHE staff. The IBHE board has a difficult time getting its head around internal reallocation. Programs can be expanded and collapsed to deal with the number of students enrolled by reallocating positions when people retire and by reassigning faculty positions. The deans have been told to look at these types of issues.

The M.A.T. and M.S.T. are flexible programs that are not tied to any departments or a particular faculty. Offering programs in the STEM disciplines might help increase enrollment at the master’s level. STEM teachers are still in demand nationwide.

A motion was made and seconded to endorse the M.A.T. and M.S.T interim reports. The motion passed unanimously.

The 2011 First Year Composition Assessment Report is the next item on the agenda. This report is an analysis of first year student’s writing abilities, and this is the fourth year that this information has been compiled. There were students selected at random from English 103 and 104 courses, and the project looked at how students’ writing changed over time. The rubric that was used for the University Writing Project was also used for this project. This year students have done worse on the papers produced in English 104, and we are not exactly sure why they have done worse.

A report was written by the first year composition director that discussed possible reasons for the results we obtained. The rubric is sound. One difference is in the way students are approaching writing the papers. English 103 students are asked to make an important first impression, and English 104 students are asked to make an important final impression. The papers are not graded, and students in 103 are asked to perform this task at the beginning of the semester while 104 students are asked to perform this task at the end of the semester. English 103 focuses writing in his/her own voice, while 104 focuses on writing in a professional research voice. Students struggle more with the professional voice. When students are learning how to write better, they usually do worse before they improve. Things that have been done to improve performance include: working with students on editing their papers, suggesting to students that they use the University Writing Center and Writer’s Workshop services, and providing more opportunities for writing.

Perhaps this is not a worthwhile initiative to continue. Why are evaluations done of papers that are not graded in the courses? It is hard to get some faculty members to grade assignments that they don’t see as part of the curriculum. Critical and analytical thinking are related to every course. Faculty don’t realize how important high stakes testing really is. If an item is not graded, students tune out. Could the top student get extra credit for doing well on this assignment so there is some incentive to do well on the assignment? At the end of a semester there is so much going on that this is not an ideal time to complete the assignment. Ideally this assignment has to count for something. Faculty need to see this as part of the
curriculum. Until we address this basic flaw in the way the assessment assignment is explained, all of these solutions will fail. Students should have a stake in this, but the faculty should have a higher stake in this than the students. Why don’t we ask the faculty for randomly graded assignments? This is done with the University Writing Project, but we could do this with this project too. Students could be asked to complete an examination after completing 90 credit hours. If students are successful on this examination, good; if not, students could be required to take another English writing course to help address the problem areas. This would have to be part of the curricular process. The focus on writing in English 103 and 104 are very different. Maybe the program should consider having more continuity in the two courses by mixing the two kinds of writing in both courses. We need to continue to focus on this issue.

The meeting adjourned at 4:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn Cradduck