Present: Alden, Bak, Baumgartner, Damodaran, Dawson, Douglass, Falkoff, Gordon, Gorman, Hertz, Matuszewich, House, Prawitz

Guests: Derryl Block, Dean, College of Health and Human Sciences; Susan Bowers, Associate Professor, School of Family, Consumer, and Nutrition Sciences; Lynette Chandler, Professor, Department of Special and Early Education; Maylan Dunn-Kenney, Associate Professor, Department of Special and Early Education; Connie Fox, Interim Chair, Department of Special and Early Education and Associate Dean, College of Education; Sherrill Morris, Acting Associate Vice Provost for Academic Outcomes Assessment, Office of Assessment Services; La Vonne Neal, Dean, College of Education; Thomas Pavkov, Chair, School of Family, Consumer, and Nutrition Sciences; Mary Pritchard, Associate Dean, College of Health and Human Sciences

The meeting was called to order at 3:05 p.m.

La Vonne Neal, dean of the College of Education; Connie Fox, interim chair of the Department of Special and Early Education and associate dean of the College of Education; Maylan Dunn-Kenney, associate professor in the Department of Special and Early Education; Derryl Block, dean of the College of Health and Human Sciences; Mary Pritchard, associate dean of the College of Health and Human Sciences; and Susan Bowers, associate professor in the School of Family, Consumer, and Nutrition Sciences were introduced.

It was moved and seconded to approve the minutes of October 15, 2012, and the motion passed unanimously.

La Vonne Neal acknowledged the hard work of the faculty in developing the review. They did a wonderful job in synthesizing the information, and I appreciate the collaboration with the College of Health and Human Sciences.

Connie Fox noted that the leadership model in the department is that the program coordinators carry the heavy work load. She thanked Maylan Dunn-Kenney and Lynette Chandler.

Derryl Block said she is very proud of the collaboration with the College of Education and glad the report is in, despite changes in leadership in the College of Health and Human Sciences and the School of Family, Consumer, and Nutrition Sciences. Mary Pritchard indicated that the state is changing the licensure requirements, but the requirements are yet to be determined.

The meeting was turned over to Lisa Baumgartner to present the subcommittee report. She indicated that the APC members would discuss some of the items mentioned in the report.

There were several strengths noted in the School of Family, Consumer, and Nutrition Sciences departmental context section. The department possesses a highly rated Child Development Laboratory (CDL) with a stellar staff. The CDL serves as a practicum site for early childhood studies majors and
serves faculty, students, and community members in providing care to their young children. The faculty is diverse and has been engaged in many scholarly activities. The program supports the initiatives of NIU, most directly in training undergraduate and graduate students to serve Illinois children and families. As part of this approach, the program has a partnership with a local Head Start program.

We will discuss three or four of the discussion points. The report states that the early childhood studies major; with an emphasis in 04 certification within the School of Family, Consumer, and Nutrition Sciences (FCNS); represents a relatively small percentage of the students and faculty effort within FCNS. Do you know the specific percentage of students served? The enrollment in the school is over 800 students; so this program probably serves about 4 percent of the students in the school. Other students take the courses offered for the early childhood studies major. This is a large, diverse school. We were confused about the function of the Steering Committee. It seems like this is a little unbalanced. There have been lots of transitions. The Steering Committee is up and doing well this fall. There were many people doing edits on the report because we didn’t have a chair when the report was written. The question was about how the Steering Committee was operating. This did not negatively impact students. The curricular process does get held up because both the department and the school have to approve the curricular changes, and then the colleges have to approve those changes. The curricular changes will all make the next catalog. The area faculty in FCNS work on the curriculum, and the College of Health and Human Sciences deals with curriculum in the fall. This does not negatively impact students. There is mention made of resource allocation, new leadership in the college, and a new strategic planning process. The new dean is working on a strategic planning process for the college. There is a similar process going on in the school as well. We are examining the mission and vision and moving forward from there.

One of the strengths of the B.S. in Early Childhood Studies program is it received reaccreditation. Congratulations on your role in the NCATE reaccreditation process in 2011.

There are several discussion points, but the subcommittee concentrated on the male and minority enrollment issue. What is being done to increase male enrollment in the program? It would be helpful to include comparable institutions’ male and minority enrollment numbers to your program. A plan to develop a recruitment strategy would be a positive addition to the program review. The female/male ratio in this program is similar to other institutions and true in the field in general. This is a female dominated profession. We have had some success with male enrollment in the program. One year we had four males enrolled in the program. There are more males who complete the graduate program. Some of these are career changers. In this economy there is an opportunity for male students to get involved in this program. The number of males in this program is miniscule. This is also a program that is in critical need in the state. There is a significant difference in pay for early childhood positions. There are now national incentives to address this issue. One of President Obama’s New Executive Orders is to work with individuals of color in early childhood; funding is tied to this as well. We want to be involved in this. The subcommittee was concerned with the internal benchmarks (p. 57). What are appropriate internal measures of quality for this program? Identify at least five appropriate indicators related to the program/student learning outcomes and provide baseline data and targets for the next review. These benchmarks indicators can be internally derived (e.g., alumni satisfaction with the program; proportion of degrees awarded to women and minorities; the number of students participating in internships, working on research or service programs, or publishing the in the field; and/or attainment of targets for assessment indicators). You need to have baselines and targets. There are baselines and targets in the review. The issue is the benchmark indicators you selected (i.e., alumni satisfaction). You already have 100 percent of your alumni who are satisfied with the program. Select something you are looking to improve. For example, the baseline for alumni being employed is 79 percent, and you want it to be 80 percent. You should also disaggregate the number of degrees awarded to males and minorities. Talk about why you picked these indicators. Do you want this section changed now, or should we pick
different indicators when the program undergoes review the next time? You have another opportunity to revise this document. If you want new benchmarks, you can put this in the next version of the document. Pick something where you can make progress. Setting benchmarks should not only be thought about during the program review process. Talk about where we are and where we are going.

Recommendations for the future we basically already talked about. The priorities outlined are excellent given the background and needs of your degree program. Providing benchmarks that would be more meaningful would be a good idea.

There are many strengths noted in the departmental context section for the Department of Special and Early Education (SEED). SEED has a number of formal and informal partnerships with area schools that have resulted in exciting initiatives. To meet the teacher preparation needs of the region, faculty members have secured funding for several initiatives. We liked the idea of the faculty offering engaged learning activities in their classrooms. The faculty are involved in programming in the Teach House. Tell us a little bit about the Teach House. This is a university initiative. All the students living in the Teach House indicated that they wanted to be teachers. We have a little additional funding for the faculty who are engaged with students in the Teach House. The students develop leadership skills and design programming opportunities. This is a real learning community this is academically structured. It is a community of many different majors all living together.

There are several discussion points. The Assistive Technology Laboratory has limited space that restricts enrollment in assistive technology courses. The department has looked at strategic ways to use this lab. Are you seeking additional funding for developing ways to make this better? There has been funding in the past for this lab. Now students are trained to work in the lab. There is one class in assistive technology every semester, but other classes use this lab too. Students working in the lab must be able to help students work on their projects. One faculty member oversees the student workers. This is an advantage for our students because few universities develop this skill set in their students. The department is understaffed, and a large number of courses are being taught by part-time instructors. A justification for the importance of adjunct faculty should be included in the review. The subcommittee members were surprised that 40 percent of the courses are taught by adjuncts. This is a very high percentage, but the department provided a good explanation as to why they do this. We are training students to be practitioners. All of the adjunct professors are teachers; they talk about what happens in the schools, and this is invaluable to our students. Would you be hiring adjuncts regardless of the cost savings? The cost savings are nice, but in teacher education the trend nationally is to have more adjunct professors that teach specialized courses. The adjuncts bring a piece of the preparation for students that our faculty don’t have. Schools change quickly and you need flexibility with the staff to handle the changes the state makes. The trend is to have clinical experiences, and the preferred staff is clinical faculty followed by adjuncts. This allows programs to make operational adjustments quickly. NIU is about two decades behind when it comes to clinical experiences. More institutions are pivoting to this. We do appreciate the benefit to the finances as well. These are adjunct faculty who have taught in our program for many years. They participate in faculty meetings and curriculum changes. Hiring adjuncts can be beneficial, but there is also a concern about over-reliance on adjuncts. The subcommittee was very concerned about this, but you seem content with this arrangement. All adjuncts have a faculty mentor. The department would be concerned if it didn’t have a faculty member with a particular expertise. We have been successful at this. Additional certification, the certificate of graduate study, and endorsement options are proposed across the two programs. This will affect faculty workload. Is it feasible to expand the programs offered with the current faculty, or will new faculty be needed? Many of the courses for certification are also required in our programs. Some of the areas have a higher demand than what we can meet right now. There is demand in the special education and early childhood programs. We need to do a better job of recruiting into these programs. This is difficult to do in this
recession. The department is looking at how it can take our programs and market them to a different audience (career changers). There are some individuals who work full-time, and they want to enter into the teaching field. We would like to offer one or two courses per semester for these individuals, but we also need to look at what impact this has on our on-campus programs and our faculty. Finding placements for early clinical field experiences and student teaching continues to be a struggle. We have partnership agreements, and this is getting better. In school settings there are many elementary education teachers and usually one special education teacher, so the special education teachers are placed all over the place. This is difficult. We have had a lot of promising visits with schools recently.

The APC turned to the strengths of the B.S.Ed. in Special Education. The learning outcomes are clearly aligned with the standards of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC). The need for teachers of students with visual impairments is especially high, so job placements in this area are high. The Teach House is a very positive thing.

We will talk about a couple of the discussion points. Occupational demand for LBSI and vision impairments teachers have increased leading to an increase in the number of candidates per course from 25-30 students, and the entrance and retention GPA has been reduced to 2.5. How has this affected faculty workload and morale? Will the increase in candidates without additional faculty, if that is the case, affect the reputation of the program? The concern is that there are too many students and not enough faculty. The program was comfortable with reducing the GPA to 2.5 because of the changes in the basic skills test requirements. If students can pass the basic skills examination, that is enough for them to enter the program. So far, having 30 students in a course hasn’t been a problem. We have had fewer students apply to the program. This should be stated in the review. There is no mention of increasing male and minority enrollment, but I know you want to increase enrollment. The department has a strategic plan, and one of the initiatives is to increase diversity. The college has a recruitment coordinator who has targeted schools that have large minority enrollment. We have also asked faculty at schools where we have clinical students, where graduates are teaching, and where faculty are doing research to help recruit minorities. There have been some overtures made to place students in the Chicago Public School system. This will help us with recruitment in the future. Graduates and student candidates have indicated that they believe they are least prepared in the areas of multicultural education and teaching English language learners (ELL). The addition of the multicultural class early in the degree program is excellent for student development. How widely spread is the ELL content across the curriculum? An ELL course has been added that is co-taught by faculty, and we are working on the infusion of ELL across all courses. The Illinois Professional Teaching Standards (IPTS) alignment is helping us do this. The faculty is committed to doing this, and we are addressing this. We are thinking about putting in a methods class for ELL. The internal benchmarking measures ideally have baseline and target percentages. It is hard to see if there is improvement with the way these are written. There is no way to tell whether departmental activities are improving or will be improving. Think of benchmarks that you want identified and what the targets should be. The current benchmarks are hard to reduce to a number.

The APC turned to the discussion of the M.S.Ed. in Special Education program.

One of the discussion points was about minority enrollment, but you have already addressed this issue. Another discussion point is that faculty will offer hybrid courses. What type of support is going to be offered for faculty to develop these courses? The program will offer hybrid courses; students do not care for online courses. This program provides certification for the State of Illinois, so it is unlikely that out-of-state students would enroll in this program. An introduction to special education course was offered online and face to face, and the students all signed up for the face-to-face course. We are also looking at marketing these classes in a different way beyond Illinois and NIU students; we know people
are mobile. We would like to market this program to veterans. Some institutions offer programs where military personnel are posted.

The subcommittee noted that the learning outcomes for the B.S.Ed. and M.S.Ed. were essentially the same. Why is this the case? The college assessment coordinator and an individual at NCATE said we had to use the same standards for both programs. Students are required to do different things in order to complete the M.S.Ed. degree. Master’s students are required to complete a research course, and in this courses they do critical research and prepare a research study. Students also complete a capstone course where they do a literature review, write a grant, evaluate a program, and develop curriculum. The courses address the same standards, but they are more rigorous for the M.S.Ed. students, and these students do additional projects. Graduate students review and critique a curriculum; this is not done at the undergraduate level. Don’t you say that the goals of the master’s program are enhanced and more robust that the goals of the undergraduate program? Yes. The CEC and IPTS standards are required, but the degree outcomes need to be separate so we don’t lose a degree. Rewrite the outcomes, and add additional outcomes for the M.S.Ed. degree program. Sherrill Morris can help you with this issue.

The APC moved on to the review of the M.S.Ed. in Early Childhood Education program.

The strengths of the program are that the assessments are tied to the learning outcomes, and the alumni satisfaction is really high even though the numbers of survey respondents are low.

There are a couple of discussion points. The subcommittee had a discussion concerning the enrollment rates. There needs to be more narrative added to the review when you talk about the decline in enrollment. Discuss in the review the efforts taken to increase male student enrollment. This is the same discussion we had regarding the bachelor’s degree. The number of males in the program is zero.

Thank you for your hard work.

The meeting adjourned at 4:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn Cradduck

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