Program: M.S.Ed. in Curriculum and Instruction (13.0301)

Major Findings and Recommendations:

- **Major changes in the program:** The M.S.Ed. in Curriculum and Instruction is designed to prepare knowledgeable, reflective practitioners to work in both school and community educational settings across grade/age levels (preschool through high school). Over the past five years, the economic recession and the lack of funding for state-supported K-12 schools have started to impact the occupational demand and number of applicants to the M.S.Ed. program. School districts have been reducing their teaching forces to balance budgets due to financial instability and uncertainty at the local and state levels. As such, many educators early in their careers have chosen not to pursue a master’s degree; rather they are deferring enrollment until a time when job security is more certain. However, the Illinois State Board of Education 2011 Report on Educator Supply and Demand in Illinois indicates, through 2014, it is estimated that Illinois will need nearly 7,200 special and 36,000 regular education teachers. Historically, re-entries have filled just over 40 percent of teacher vacancies each year, so Illinois districts will need to hire about 17,000 re-entries and 26,000 first-time teachers over the next four years. In that same time period, Illinois is expected to need over 3,500 administrators and 4,100 other educators. This projected need for new teachers suggests subsequent demand for the M.S.Ed. in Curriculum and Instruction.

- **Major findings and recommendations:** During the program review period, NIU’s M.S.Ed. in Curriculum and Instruction has accounted for a low of 76 (14 percent) to a high of 102 (19 percent) of enrollments of the total master’s degrees awarded in this area by public universities in the state. However, these enrollments have been declining. The program has accounted for a low of 38 (15 percent) to a high of 76 (34 percent) of the total master’s degrees awarded in this area by public universities in the state. The program is cost-effective with total program costs per credit hour consistently below the state average. The development and delivery of off-campus cohorts throughout the NIU service region over the past seven years has allowed for program flexibility as well as faculty being able to meet the needs of students from a wide array of educational settings based on tailored curricular offerings. Alumni report 100 percent (67 out of 67 respondents) satisfaction with degree completion time. This level of satisfaction appears to be related to ease in scheduling courses. The course rotation system allows students to plan their enrollment in courses for their program of study. Alumni feedback concerning “faculty thoroughness in the treatment of course material” and “academic support and helpfulness to students” also reveals very strong satisfaction (a four-year mean of 94 percent [63 or 67 respondents] and 97 percent [64 of 67] respectively). Another strength of the program is active involvement with and completion by alumni of certificates in the areas of advanced teaching practices (National Board Certified Teachers) and in environmental education. Since the last review cycle, 31 students completed the former and 9 students have completed the latter certificate.
• Actions taken since the last review: Some of the changes that have been undertaken in the M.S.Ed. program in curriculum and instruction have been in response to initiatives set in motion at the time of the last program review (e.g., embedded-course assessments); others have been instituted as a result of the reorganization of the College of Education and personnel changes (e.g., deans, associate deans, department chairs, and faculty leaving the university), changing economic circumstances, and student needs. Since the last program review, faculty have developed and embedded common assessments in required courses. Three courses, in particular, are noteworthy. TLCI 500, Curriculum Instruction and the Community, and TLCI 510, Critical Practices in Curriculum and Instruction, provide students with a common set of theoretical perspectives and practical applications that guide their master’s level course work. TLCI 598, the master’s capstone class, requires students to synthesize course learning, conceptualize, and carry out their own research. Faculty have examined each of the courses and have adopted common learning outcomes rubrics. Additionally, regular scheduling of courses has been established and maintained since the last program review cycle. In doing so, students have a clear understanding of when courses will be offered, giving them the opportunity to schedule classes in a timely fashion.

• Actions taken as a result of this review: With declining enrollments, the program is dedicated to identifying and developing new master’s degree cohorts by using innovative delivery, tailored curricular offerings, and working closely with the Office of External and Global Programs. The program has also committed to making the curriculum and instruction area website a viable recruitment tool by updating the website regularly to highlight course offerings and noting faculty and student accomplishments. In line with the new College of Education’s Diversity Plan, the program should work to recruit and retain diverse students. A follow-up report on the program’s recruitment efforts and enrollments will be submitted to the Academic Planning Council in 2015.

Outcome

• Decision:
  ___X___ Program in good standing (follow-up report in 2015)

• Explanation: The program demonstrates that majors are successful in achieving learning outcomes, and alumni express high levels of satisfaction with the program. The program is working to increase enrollments despite a statewide downturn in this area.

Program: Ed.D. in Curriculum and Instruction (13.0301)

Major Findings and Recommendations:

• Major changes in the program: The Ed.D. in Curriculum and Instruction is designed to prepare students to be leaders in research and in the development of new knowledge and applications in the field of education. Specializations within the Ed.D. in Curriculum and Instruction include the following: Curriculum leadership; literacy education; and science, social studies, and environmental education integration. The doctoral program prepares graduates to hold leadership, academic, and research positions in P-20 institutions, conduct educational research, and serve as educational leaders in community settings. The societal need for doctoral graduates in the field of curriculum and instruction continues to be consistent. At the state and national levels, the demand
for educators seeking employment as academicians, administrators, curriculum directors, professional development coordinators, content specialist coordinators, and teacher leaders remains strong. Large numbers of retirements, a national emphasis on No Child Left Behind policies, and national movements such as Curriculum for the 21st Century, assessment for learning, and teacher evaluation all support the need for doctorates in curriculum and instruction. The NIU program has adapted to these changing needs accordingly.

Alumni from the doctoral program hold positions as classroom teachers, team leaders, content specialist coordinators, principals, curriculum directors, and superintendents in urban, suburban, and rural settings in and around Chicagoland. Alumni have also joined the professoriate in public and private higher education institutions in Illinois, other states, and internationally. The Pew Research Center has projected for the next 19 years, 10,000 baby boomers per day will reach age 65 (26 percent of the total U.S. population). The aging of this group of Americans will dramatically change the composition of the country and impact the teaching force in higher education. With the retirement of so many baby boomers from the professoriate, there should be a growing demand for new assistant professors in the fields included within the Ed.D. in Curriculum and Instruction.

- **Major findings and recommendations**: As with some other institutions across the state, enrollments and degrees awarded in this program have been declining. In addition, enrollments and degrees awarded from the NIU program as a percentage of the total public institutions have also been declining from 137 (36 percent) to 119 (29 percent) of enrollments and from 12 (27 percent) to 12 (25 percent) of degrees awarded during the review period.

That said, graduates have reported a 100 percent satisfaction (18 out of 18) with regard to timely degree completion. A sample of students who finished over the past five years indicates an average completion rate of 6.3 years. Given most students are employed full-time as professional educators while pursuing their doctoral degree (and not enrolled as full-time graduate students while in the program), the completion rate reveals strong advising and support by faculty throughout the dissertation process.

Program faculty have redefined many of the courses to ensure that the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in doctoral work (specifically dissertation completion) and beyond are embedded in each course. For example, in TLCI 703, Design of Curriculum and Instruction, students practice initial research skills by conducting interviews and synthesizing the qualitative findings. Additionally, in TLCI 704, Research Seminar in Curriculum and Instruction, students write substantive drafts of chapters for their dissertation, and their work is evaluated based on rubrics created by program faculty. These course-embedded measures are reported to the university each year as part of the annual assessment process.

- **Actions taken since the last review**: Since the last review, program faculty have systematically implemented the assessment program. Two annual reports (Annual Assessment Update Report and the NIU Initial and Advanced Certification Accreditation Program Report) have been consistently submitted to the college and university documenting and describing the common assessments utilized in the Ed.D. program. Program-area faculty have collaboratively developed the course-embedded assessments and taken responsibility for gathering the data from the core courses. Yearly feedback from college and university administration has been positive.
The candidacy exam has been refined to provide students the opportunity to demonstrate knowledge and skills gained through the program and to help them to narrow the focus of their dissertation research. Feedback from students who have completed the candidacy exam has been highly favorable. Since the last review cycle, the pass rate has been 92 percent (47 out of 51), far exceeding the 80 percent target.

Efforts to continue recruiting minority students have focused primarily on offering cohorts in areas that are experiencing demographic shifts (Joliet and the northwest suburbs of Chicago). Beginning in fall 2011, recruiting and retaining minority students became a major priority of the College of Education, resulting in the development of a college wide Diversity Plan. As that plan is implemented, faculty have expressed interest in aligning efforts with that initiative.

Finally, there is strong commitment by current faculty to maintain the program during a time when several tenure-track faculty have left since the last review cycle due to retirements, leadership positions, and out-of-state university jobs, with limited opportunity to replace them due to challenging economic times.

- Actions taken as a result of this review: Based on the current review, the Ed.D. in Curriculum and Instruction will continue to refine the program assessment plan, in particular, expanding the systematic collection of all assessments and maintaining a database for housing that information; develop online/hybrid courses to further address student needs; and add faculty, as funding permits.

Outcome

- Decision: _X_ Program in good standing (review in 8 years)

- Explanation: Despite declines in faculty numbers, the Ed.D. in Curriculum and Instruction program continues to serve student need, reports high levels of student satisfaction, and maintains low costs per credit hour.

Program: B.S.Ed. in Special Education (13.1001)

Major Findings and Recommendations:

- Major changes in the program: The B.S.Ed. in Special Education program provides a broad range of professional knowledge, skills, and dispositions for candidates preparing to become special education teachers. The program includes two emphases: Learning behavior specialist I (LBS I) and vision impairments. The LBS I emphasis prepares candidates to obtain Illinois teacher certification as a Learning Behavior Specialist I (Kindergarten–12th grade). The LBS I program is designed to prepare candidates to teach students with all types of disabilities at the elementary, middle, and secondary levels. The emphasis in vision impairments prepares candidates to obtain teacher

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1 Since the reviews were written, initial teacher certification has been changed to educator licensure.
The demand for special education teachers both nationally and within Illinois is great. According to the 2011 Educator Supply and Demand in Illinois Annual Report, school districts continue to report shortages of special education teachers. In fact, the greatest number of unfilled positions in both 2010 and 2011 was in special education. Through 2014, it is estimated that Illinois will need over 7,100 special education teachers. In 2011, Alexa Posny, then assistant secretary for special education at the U.S. Department of Education, stated, “We know that within 5-10 years, the majority of our teachers who are special educators are probably going to retire. I believe we’re going to need 40,000 to 50,000 more special educators in the next ten years.” The combination of teacher attrition, increasing enrollments, and persistent teacher shortages can only mean that the demand for well-trained, committed special education teachers will continue to grow.

Major findings and recommendations: The special education program at NIU has a solid reputation for producing well-trained and effective special educators. The Illinois State Board of Education reviews of NIU’s educational programs during the period under consideration have been highly positive regarding the performance of the special education program. The program is accredited by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation and by the Council for Exceptional Children. The vision impairments emphasis represents one of the largest of its kind in the country. Candidates from this emphasis have taken jobs in 22 states in the last four years and are currently working in every state of the country. They also make up the vast majority of teachers of students with visual impairments in the northern Illinois area. During the review period, enrollments in the B.S.Ed. program increased by 6 percent, from 376 to 398 students. Degrees awarded remained relatively stable from 99 to 93 per year over the same period.

Performance of NIU special education teacher candidates on the LBS I and Visual Disabilities content examinations consistently exceeds the state average in both percentage of candidates passing the exam and the mean passing score. Employment rates of graduates from the program range from 88 percent (29 out of 33) to 97 percent (34 out of 35) during the 2007-2011 reporting period. Alumni report high levels of satisfaction with their degrees, on average, 97 percent (103 out of 107).

• Actions taken since the last review: The program now has two assistive technology (AT) laboratories, one for candidates in the LBS I emphasis and one for candidates in the vision impairments emphasis. The faculty developed a LBS I course matrix that identifies what AT hardware and software will be taught in specific courses and the level of competence expected across courses (e.g., introductory, developing, or proficient). The coordinators for both of these laboratories have obtained internal and external funding to expand the laboratories and to hire graduate assistants to supervise the laboratories. In addition, several faculty collaborated on an internal grant to develop training DVDs to teach faculty in elementary, early childhood, and special education how to use the AT hardware and software.

Faculty increased the quality and quantity of early clinical experiences in the LBS I emphasis. This change was in response to candidate feedback that clinical experiences were a strong part of the program. Candidates now complete four clinical experiences prior to student teaching.
• Actions taken as a result of this review: As a result of this program review, the B.S.Ed. in Special Education program will continue to develop partnerships with schools in order to establish consistent early clinical and student teaching placements; revise the LBS I program to align with the new Illinois Professional Teaching Standards and the newly adopted EdTPA assessment in the State of Illinois; and develop online and hybrid course offerings to meet student needs.

Outcome

• Decision:
  
  X Program in good standing (review in 8 years)

• Explanation: The B.S.Ed. in Special Education program continues to meet student and occupational demand. Employment rates of graduates from the program range are consistently high. Alumni report high satisfaction levels with the degree.

Program: M.S.Ed. in Special Education (13.1001)

Major Findings and Recommendations:

• Major changes in the program: The M.S.Ed. in Special Education offers initial certification for learning behavior specialist I, visual impairments, orientation and mobility, and blind rehabilitation. It also offers advanced special education practices and early childhood special education (ECSE) non-certification programs. The special education program also offers five certificates of graduate study (CGS), four of which lead to LBS II certification in assistive technology, behavior intervention, curriculum adaptations, and multiple disabilities. Candidates may complete one or more CGS as part of the advanced practices or ECSE degree programs, or candidates may complete CGSs independent of a degree program. The fifth CGS leads to director of special education endorsement on an Administrative (Type 75) Certificate. The special education program provides a broad range of professional knowledge, skills, and dispositions for candidates preparing to become special education teachers and those pursuing advanced study in special education.

According to the 2011 Educator Supply and Demand in Illinois Annual Report, school districts continue to report shortages in special education: 169 districts identified shortages in LBS I educators; 132 reported shortages in other special education certifications, including visual disabilities and special education directors; and 129 districts reported shortages in teachers with LBS II certification. In fact, the greatest number of unfilled positions in both 2010 and 2011 was in special education. Through 2014 it is estimated that Illinois will need over 7,100 special education teachers. The need for professionals to work with individuals with vision impairments and blindness also has increased in recent years as wounded members of the military return to the U.S. with visual disabilities. The special education program at NIU recently received federal funding to develop a program of study that specifically addresses the needs of returning military personnel with visual disabilities.

• Major findings and recommendations: Faculty in the M.S.Ed. in Special Education program have national and international stature in the areas of visual impairments, orientation and mobility,
blind rehabilitation, early childhood special education, and special education. The faculty are active scholars as evidenced by the number of peer reviewed publications, presentations, and consultations in school settings. Faculty have served as members of editorial review boards and journal editors, held offices in national and international organizations, and obtained over 2.3 million dollars in externally funded grants.

There has been a 17 percent decline in enrollments (from 145 to 120) and a 20 percent decline in the number of degrees awarded (from 75 to 60) over the review period. The job placement rate of graduates is high, alumni employment rates have ranged from a low of 79 percent (15 out of 19) in 2008 to a high of 95 percent (20 out of 21) in 2010. Many of the initial certification candidates are hired by the school districts in which they completed student teaching. Candidates who complete the director of special education graduate certificate are typically hired in administrative positions as special education directors. Graduates who complete the advanced special education practices specialization and obtain one or more LBS II certificates of graduate studies also are hired in administrative positions or as specialists who work with classroom teachers, other staff, and families in their areas of expertise.

Students perform well both on external and internal assessments. Content area exam scores and pass rates for LBS I, vision impairments, and director of special education are high and similar to or exceed the state average in both percentage of candidates passing the exams and the mean passing scores.

Aggregated data for course-embedded assessments that are included in internal annual reports (2007-2011) indicate that candidates consistently meet standards. Satisfaction of alumni with the program overall has ranged from 90 percent (19 out of 21) to 97 percent (28 out of 29) during the review period. Graduates identified student teaching experiences, effective courses, and knowledgeable and experienced professors as the most beneficial aspects of the programs.

• Actions taken since the last review: The previous program review provided recommendations for improvement that have since been implemented. Among these are the development of an advanced practices specialization, the development of four LBS II certificates of graduate studies, and the development of a director of special education certificate of graduate studies. Also in response to the recommendations from the previous review, the program has obtained external and internal funding to support the two assistive technology laboratories and to hire graduate assistants to supervise the laboratories. Further, the program developed assessment plans for the learning behavior specialist I and II certification programs. These plans were revised in 2011-2012 following a college reorganization in fall 2011 and these revised assessment plans also reflect the revised 2009 Council for Exceptional Children personnel preparation standards. Examples of revisions to the program based on assessment outcomes and feedback from candidates, employers, and our Professional Advisory Council include: adding practice in developing IEPs and transition plans to multiple courses, including a co-teaching assignment and artifact to TLSE 565; providing more content in classroom management and writing behavioral objectives; adding an assignment for candidates to research an evidence-based curriculum; providing experience in administering Response to Intervention and data-based decision making (a federal/state initiative now implemented in all Illinois schools); and discussing the responsible use of social media and privacy laws such as the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).
• Actions taken as a result of this review: As a result of this program review, the M.S.Ed. in Special Education program will continue to develop relationships with several after-school tutoring programs to grow opportunities for early clinical experiences that are linked to methods courses for the LBS I specialization for nontraditional candidates; revise the LBS I to align with the new Illinois Professional Teaching Standards and the newly adopted EdTPA assessment in the State of Illinois; and develop online and hybrid course offerings to meet student needs. As enrollments have declined somewhat during this period, a follow-up report on the program’s recruitment efforts and enrollments will be submitted to the Academic Planning Council in 2015.

Outcome

• Decision: ___X__ Program in good standing (follow-up report in 2015)

• Explanation: The program has demonstrated successful student learning outcomes, addresses student and occupational demand, and has high satisfaction among alumni. Employment of graduates is high and growing.

Program: B.S.Ed. in Elementary Education (13.1202)

Major Findings and Recommendations:

• Major changes in the program: The B.S.Ed. in Elementary Education prepares candidates for initial certification in elementary education. According to the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics in the Occupational Outlook Handbook (2010-2011 edition), “employment of kindergarten, elementary, middle, and secondary school teachers is expected to grow by 13 percent between 2008 and 2018, which is about as fast as the average for all occupations. Through 2018, overall student enrollments in elementary, middle, and secondary schools—a key factor in the demand for teachers—are expected to rise more slowly than in the past as children of the baby-boom generation leave the school system . . . enrollments in the Midwest are expected to hold relatively steady.”

The Educator Supply and Demand in Illinois 2011 Annual Report from the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) gives a more sobering picture of the demand for elementary education teachers. The ISBE projects that through 2014 there will be a need for 12,452 self-contained elementary school teachers, or about 3,100 per year. There will be competition for these positions between new and experienced teachers, so the number of new hires may well continue to be in the range of 1,000 per year, far fewer new teachers than are being produced statewide.

• Major findings and recommendations: The B.S.Ed. in Elementary Education program has documented success in the form of LiveText-based evaluation of artifacts in every course relative to the learning outcomes of the program; candidate passing rates on the Illinois Certification Testing System tests; exit surveys of graduating candidates; alumni surveys; and faculty teaching ratings. For example, during this review period, pass rates for teacher certification ranged from 97 percent (198 students) in 2007 to 99 percent (136 students) in 2011. Alumni surveys indicated a high level of satisfaction with the overall degree program (ranging from 89 percent (58 out of 65)
to 97 percent (77 out of 79). The program has merited national Associate for Childhood Education International (ACEI) recognition.

Enrollments in the program have declined over the review period by 24 percent (from 403 to 306). Given the occupational outlook for graduates with this degree, this decline may partially be seen as an appropriate reduction, but specific enrollment targets should be set. Degrees awarded, on the other hand, increased 25 percent from 150 to 187. Further, despite lower enrollments, costs for the program have been at or below the statewide average for programs in this field.

- **Actions taken since the last review:** The last program review recommended changes and improvements aligned to meeting the ACEI standards and were organized according to a framework focusing on three areas: candidates’ knowledge in core content areas, candidates’ professional and pedagogical knowledge, and candidates’ effect on student learning. These actions have been undertaken and ACEI recognition awarded.

Another major change that has taken place since the last program review is the addition of English Language Learners (ELL) courses to meet student and societal demand. Also, there was a change in the order of the courses in the program so that they are arranged by themes and better serve the needs of students.

- **Actions taken as a result of this review:** As a result of this review, the program is committed to right-sizing enrollment, continuing to enhance multicultural and ELL expertise among teacher candidates, and increasing online and hybrid courses to address student need. A follow-up report on the program’s recruitment efforts and enrollments will be submitted to the Academic Planning Council in 2015.

**Outcome**

- **Decision:**
  
  X Program in good standing (follow-up report in 2015)

- **Explanation:** The B.S.Ed. in Elementary Education program successfully prepares students to pass the teacher certification exam in this area. Alumni are satisfied with the degree, and costs are at or below the state average.

**Program:** M.S.Ed. in Elementary Education (13.1202)

Major Findings and Recommendations:

- **Major changes in the program:** Illinois has enacted new teacher certification levels and renewal mandates that influence demand for the program’s professional development focus. In order to move from initial teacher certification to a standard teaching certification, novice teachers must also fulfill a continuing professional development requirement. This requirement may be met by earning an M.S.Ed. in Elementary Education. The context for the M.S.Ed in Elementary Education in Illinois has changed drastically in the last five to six years. Districts and teachers less often request a generic degree in elementary education, opting instead for a master’s that
specializes in, among other fields, technology, literacy, mathematics, leadership, or assessment. Though pieces of each of these areas are integrated into the program, the market for this degree has receded sharply. NIU offers master’s degrees in several of the areas listed above, and it would appear that students may be better served by earning these degrees rather than an M.S.Ed. in Elementary Education.

**Major findings and recommendations:** Enrollments and degrees awarded in the M.S.Ed. in Elementary Education program have been down dramatically during the review period. Enrollments dropped from 93 to 3 between 2007 and 2011, and degrees awarded declined from 96 to 37 between 2006 and 2009. The program faculty are redirecting students into M.S. degrees that are more generally marketable or helping them to attain a certificate of graduate studies in a specialized area. In the past, the program has been strong with 98 percent (48 out of 49) satisfaction with the overall degree program as measured through alumni surveys over the program review period, and average graduate pass rates on the certification exam of 85 percent (123 out of 144) during the review period. However, the primary strength of the program faculty now lies in their ability to move in the direction that the market requires that of more focused master’s degrees and areas of study.

**Actions taken since the last review:** Since the last review, faculty in the M.S.Ed. in Elementary Education program have reevaluated the need for the degree and, based on changes in market demand, worked to phase out this degree and increase other opportunities within the department, college, and university for alternative areas of study.

**Actions taken as a result of this review:** The program faculty will continue efforts to phase out the degree, including full implementation of a teach-out plan for students currently in the M.S.Ed. in Elementary Education. A follow-up report on the program’s teach-out plan and status will be submitted to the Academic Planning Council in 2015.

**Outcome**

- **Decision:**
  - X Program in good standing (follow-up report due in 2015)
- **Explanation:** The program, while it exists, remains in good standing. Additional review will occur subsequent to the follow-up report in 2015 describing the program’s teach-out plan and status.

**Program:** B.S. in Early Childhood Studies (13.1210)

**Major Findings and Recommendations:**

- **Major changes in the program:** The B.S. in Early Childhood Studies program is supported jointly by the College of Education and the College of Health and Human Sciences. The program is designed to prepare educators to work with children ages birth through third grade in Illinois public and private settings, including Pre-K programs, kindergarten classrooms, Head Start, special education classrooms through age five, and elementary classrooms through third grade. Upon completion of the program, candidates will have acquired the essential skills and dispositions for
teachers in the State of Illinois, the teacher preparation standards of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), and the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) standards for early childhood teacher preparation.

Recent revisions in Illinois have necessitated changes in the structure and guidelines for teacher certification in general, and the early childhood studies program is well-positioned to meet emerging requirements. For example, national discussions proposing universal pre-K access suggest significant expansion of early childhood may be on the horizon. In addition, student demand remains high, as evidenced by large numbers of students who self-identify as pre-early childhood studies majors.

Demand for graduates is high, particularly in Illinois where both rural and urban communities report shortages of qualified early childhood staff and growing demand. National statistics, for example suggest the number of jobs in preschools (inclusive of Pre-K and Head Start) is expected to increase 25 percent by 2020. At the federal level, political pressure is building to expand preschool services to all low-income and middle-income families.

• Major findings and recommendations: Graduation rates and time to completion are high relative to the university and to competing institutions in Illinois, and graduates are usually employed in positions related or closely related to their major (ranging from 78 percent [15 out of 19] to 100 percent [18 out of 18] during the review period). Alumni surveys indicate a high degree of satisfaction with the program overall (100 percent [49 out of 49] for the last three years of the program review period). The program has a high number of transfers, indicating that the climate for nontraditional students is comfortable and articulation with community colleges is strong.

Students perform very well on the Illinois Early Childhood Content Test (with pass rates ranging from 94 percent to 100 percent during the program review period). These pass rates for graduates are consistently above the state average, and have remained so over time.

Although student demand for the undergraduate early childhood major is high, program enrollment is limited by state pre-admission requirements, particularly in math. Still, enrollments have increased over the review period by over 10 percent (from 77 to 85).

• Actions taken since the last review: Since the time of the last review, the program has experienced several personnel changes (one death; one resignation; two lost positions; one retirement). The program has also worked to accommodate the needs of a changing field by revising the curriculum, including the addition of course work focused on assessing and supporting children with special needs.

• Actions taken as a result of this review: In the future, key challenges and priorities for the program will include retaining qualified faculty and staff; increasing partnerships globally and throughout Northern Illinois; and retaining pre-majors (needing additional assistance to prepare for the Test of Academic Proficiency).
Outcome

- **Decision:**
  
  ___X__ Program in good standing (review in 8 years)

- **Explanation:** The B.S. in Early Childhood Studies is a strong and growing program that meets student and societal demands. Graduates of the program perform well on the Illinois Early Childhood Content Test and are very satisfied with the degree program overall.

**Program:** M.S.Ed. in Early Childhood Education (13.1210)

**Major Findings and Recommendations:**

- **Major changes in the program:** The early childhood education masters’ degree is designed to prepare professionals for a wide variety of leadership roles in early education. Graduates work in public and private classroom settings. In addition, graduates work in administration of early education and care programs, home-based education programs, and community college teaching. Masters’ candidates in early childhood education may choose to pursue an Illinois early childhood teaching license or design an area of study that supports other career goals in the field. Curricular options in the masters’ degree at NIU make it possible to respond to a rapidly changing and expanding field.

Demand for graduates is high, particularly in Illinois where employment is expected to grow by 17 percent from 2010 to 2020. At the federal level, political pressure is building to expand preschool services to all low-income and middle-income families. In addition, professionals with advanced degrees are sought for positions as teacher trainers, community college teachers, and policy leaders.

- **Major findings and recommendations:** Enrollments have fluctuated during the review period and, ultimately, declined 29 percent (from 45 to 32) over the review period. That said, graduation rates have been high, and graduates are usually employed in positions related or closely related to their degree (98 percent average, 39 out of 40) during the review period. Alumni surveys indicate a high degree of satisfaction with the program overall (100 percent [35 out of 35] for the years 2008–2010). Candidates seeking certification perform very well on the Illinois Early Childhood Content Test. Performance on the content test also indicates relevancy of the curriculum for the field of early childhood. Pass rates for graduates are consistently above the state average and have remained so over the review period.

While the diversity of the student body is similar to other schools in Illinois, there is still a need to consistently enroll more men, more Spanish-speaking students, and more students from other underrepresented groups. There is a demand in the field for professionals who can work well in diverse communities and with diverse families.

- **Actions taken since the last review:** Since the time of the last review, the program has experienced several personnel changes (one death; one resignation; two lost positions). The program has also worked to accommodate the needs of a changing field by revising the curriculum, including the addition of course work focused on assessing and supporting children with special needs.
• **Actions taken as a result of this review:** Key challenges and priorities for the M.S.Ed. in Early Childhood Education include increasing enrollments to a viable capacity of around 50 students; developing curricular innovations to appeal to a broad range of career goals in the field; and recruiting more men, more Spanish-speaking students and more students from underrepresented groups. A follow-up report on the program’s recruitment efforts and enrollments will be submitted to the Academic Planning Council in 2015.

**Outcome**

• **Decision:**  
  ___X___ Program in good standing (follow up report due in 2015)

• **Explanation:** The M.S.Ed. in Early Childhood Education program continues to address occupational demand despite the need to increase enrollments. Graduates are employed in the field and are highly satisfied with the program.

**Program:** M.S.Ed. in Literacy Education (13.1315)

**Major Findings and Recommendations:**

• **Major changes in the program:** The M.S.Ed. in Literacy Education offers programs of study to candidates focusing on the area of reading and to candidates focusing on the area of bilingual education/English as a second language (BE/ESL).

  The demand for graduates who focus on reading (and are qualified to be reading specialists) has remained constant over the past several years. However, with the recent focus on Response to Intervention, it is expected that the demand may increase in future years. The demand for graduates who focus on BE/ESL is very high. The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) projects that, by 2014, an additional 1,248 bilingual teachers will be needed. In addition, the growth of the English Language Learners (ELL) population being taught within mainstream classrooms assures a strong market for teachers who hold an endorsement in English as a Second Language, which means they can differentiate instruction to meet the linguistic and cultural needs of ELLs.

  The reading and BE/ESL faculty who teach in the master’s program are also expected to provide course work in reading and BE/ESL to several other programs within the college and across the university. The reading faculty deliver two courses to students majoring in elementary education and one course to students majoring in early childhood and in secondary education. The impact of ISBE’s mandate that all graduating teacher candidates be prepared to work with ELLs has resulted in other colleges contacting the BE/ESL faculty to discuss how the faculty might become involved in preparing their teacher candidates.

• **Major findings and recommendations:** Students in the program represent a wide variety of rural, suburban, and urban school districts and teaching expertise across the K-12 levels. They complete the program in a timely fashion (on average 97 percent of alumni [89 out of 92] were satisfied with their degree completion time during the review period), move into positions requiring the
certification/endorsements earned as a result of the program (on average 97 percent [88 out of 91] of alumni were employed during the review period), and are highly satisfied with the quality of the program (on average 96 percent [88 out of 92] during the review period).

Each program area has established a rigorous, sequential course work framework and has received National Recognition or Approval from its respective Specialized Professional Association. These are the International Reading Association for the area of reading and the Teachers to Speakers of Other Languages for the area of bilingual education/English as a second language.

Each focus area has developed a set of key assessments that are completed by each candidate. Across the years of this report, almost 100 percent of the candidates met or exceeded expectations on those key assessments. This includes a 99 percent pass rate (151 out of 152) for candidates who took the state licensure Reading Specialist Test.

Enrollments in the M.S.Ed. in Literacy Education program have declined over the program review period by 44 percent (from 161 in 2007 to 91 in 2011). However, similar declines have been seen in graduate literacy programs throughout the state.

- **Actions taken since the last review:** The six recommendations for the M.S.Ed. in Literacy Education that were given at the last review have all been successfully addressed. First, the program has increased its minority enrollment, due to its efforts to establish reading cohorts in districts with high numbers of minority enrollment and due to the increased enrollment in the M.S.Ed. in Literacy Education program with a focus on BE/ESL. Second, program faculty serving the BE/ESL focus developed a congruent standards/outcomes based program that led to its national recognition (accreditation) with the Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages organization and to ISBE program approval. Third, student portfolios were developed as key assessment tools for the candidates focusing in the area of reading. Portfolio narratives that are assessed three times throughout the program describe how specific assignments have enabled candidates to achieve the required standards and how they have impacted candidates’ knowledge, practice, and philosophy. Fourth, the program has focused on off-campus delivery of the degree and related course work through the establishment of cohorts in numerous locations including Naperville, Hoffman Estates, Lake County, Crystal Lake, Plano, and Elmwood. Fifth, the program has developed a set of procedures to assure that there is an ongoing analysis of assessment data and that the results are used for program improvement. Finally, the program is continually examining ways to meet student demand within the constraints of existing resources. Offering course work at various locations reduces the driving time for students, as does the use of hybrid courses where about half of the classes are held face-to-face and half are completed through online activities.

- **Actions taken as a result of this review:** The M.S.Ed. in Literacy Education program is committed to the following future actions: (1) continuing to recruit students into the program, particularly in the focus area on reading, as this is an anticipated growth area; (2) increasing online/hybrid course development and technology upgrades to classrooms to meet student needs; and (3) offering select courses, such as bilingualism and reading, for students enrolled in the BE/ESL program focus in Spanish. A follow-up report on the program’s recruitment efforts and enrollments will be submitted to the Academic Planning Council in 2015.
Outcome

- **Decision:**

  ___X__ Program in good standing (follow-up report in 2015)

- **Explanation:** The M.S.Ed. in Literacy Education program prepares students well for state licensure and has well satisfied alumni. The program is reflective and responsive to student needs and has demonstrated agility in meeting changing market demands.

**Program:** B.A./B.S. in Psychology (42.0101)

Major Findings and Recommendations:

- **Major changes in the program:** The B.A./B.S. in Psychology program prepares students to delve into many fields that intersect with undergraduate training in psychology. The science and practice of psychology remain central to a wide variety of occupations, and the content knowledge and methods that comprise the discipline remain relevant to the effective functioning of individuals in a society that is highly dependent on complex interpersonal relationships and requires critical thinking skills to evaluate information that is variable in its quality, methodology, and modality. The acceleration of advances in the areas of neuroscience, cognition, social processes, and clinical practice has led to increased scientific emphases on these areas of research, but these areas of study have also become integral to a wide variety of fields, including education, mental health, business, nonprofit, and government.

  The occupational demand and societal need for program graduates is strong. According to the *Occupational Outlook Handbook* (2010-2011 edition), opportunities for psychologists and those in related jobs have a favorable forecast: from 2008 to 2018 there is a projected 12 percent increase in the number of psychologists across the nation. The baccalaureate program in psychology prepares students for employment in a wide variety of fields including health-related, social services, education, business, and nonprofit organizations, and graduates of the program report employment across these areas (e.g., business: 30 percent; nonprofit: 16 percent; health: 13 percent; college/university: 13 percent).

- **Major findings and recommendations:** A notable strength of the B.A./B.S. program is its very high student demand. During the five-year review period, the number of program majors has continued to grow steadily, from 777 majors in fall 2007 to 890 majors in fall 2012, representing a 15 percent increase. Degrees awarded during this period have also increased by 15 percent (from 202 to 239). The program also serves a large non-major population primarily through three courses that can be taken for general education credit. Approximately 51 percent of credit hours produced by the department during the last five years were generated by non-majors (38,072 out of 75,349 credit hours).

  A second strength of the program is its cost effectiveness at both the lower- and upper-division levels. The department generates approximately 12 percent of the lower-division psychology credit hours produced statewide and 11 percent of the upper-division credit hours. Program costs typically are at or somewhat below the state average.
There is strong evidence of positive learning outcomes among program majors. In an examination of student writing by independent raters, over 90 percent of written laboratory reports were rated as adequate, very good, or excellent for quality and thoroughness of review and evaluation of relevant background literature; over 90 percent of the reports were rated positively for quality of data analyses; and over 93 percent of the reports received positive ratings for the quality of discussion and interpretation. Students completing internships also received excellent evaluations from employers with over 94 percent rated as either “very good” or “excellent” for overall quality of work; 100 percent of students were rated as learning “readily” or “very quickly”; and when overall performance was compared to other employees, over 94 percent of student interns were compared favorably (i.e., “meets standard” or above).

Student satisfaction with the program is high. According to the NIU alumni survey, over 95 percent of alumni (278 out of 294) indicated that their academic experiences were either “helpful” or “very helpful” in defining and solving problems, and 96 percent of alumni (283 out of 294) reported that their academic experiences were either “helpful” or “very helpful” in developing analytical thinking skills. Over 91 percent of alumni (241 out of 264) were satisfied with their degree; 95 percent (251 out of 264) felt the time to degree completion was satisfactory, and 86 percent (181 out of 211) were satisfied with their initial job placement.

- Actions taken since the last review: Since the last program review, the program implemented several changes affecting curriculum, assessment, and engagement activities. The program completed a comprehensive review and revision of its assessment goals and procedures. These revisions have resulted in more comprehensive data on student outcome performance in the program and have documented the program’s success at meeting objectives. In an effort to provide greater structure to the department honors program and increase student participation, the department reorganized the program and created a new capstone honors course, PSYC 306, Advanced Research Methods. During this course, students work intensively on the honors thesis in collaboration with their faculty mentor. These changes have provided greater structure to the program and increased student participation.

In response to a growing demand for undergraduate research experiences, the program inaugurated an annual undergraduate research conference. As a part of this conference, students prepare professional quality research posters that are displayed for fellow students, faculty, and friends. This conference has become a major event within the department involving many undergraduate students in valuable engaged learning research activities. In response to a very high demand for psychology laboratory courses, the program developed and now routinely offers PSYC 434, Industrial-Organizational Psychology Laboratory. This laboratory course is viewed as an important addition to the undergraduate curriculum both in terms of student demand for laboratory courses generally and interest in industrial-organizational psychology specifically.

- Actions taken as a result of this review: The B.A./B.S. in Psychology program will continue to assess its ability to provide high-quality advising to its undergraduate majors. Although the breadth of the curriculum is viewed as a strength of the program, additional topics-based courses will build on this strength. The program will seek to identify such high-interest courses and will attempt to integrate such offerings into the curriculum. Finally, the program will seek to develop additional online based courses at the undergraduate level to meet increasing student need.
Outcome

• Decision:
  
  ___X___ Program in good standing (review in 8 years)

• Explanation: The B.A./B.S. in Psychology program is a large and growing program. Graduates have high employment rates and are satisfied with the program. The occupational outlook for individuals with this degree is positive.

Program: M.A. in Psychology (42.0101)

Major Findings and Recommendations:

• Major changes in the program: The M.A. program in the Department of Psychology is an integral part of the Ph.D. program and is designed to provide graduate-level training in the foundational areas of psychology in order to prepare students for more concentrated study at the doctoral level. Only one program area within the degree program typically results in a terminal M.A. degree: the school psychology entitlement program, which serves students seeking specialist-level certification as school psychologists. All other students in the M.A. program are ultimately seeking the Ph.D. as their terminal degree.

For school psychology students completing the M.A. degree, occupational demand has historically, and continues to be, very strong. The Occupational Outlook Handbook (2010-2011 edition), a publication of the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, reports that through 2018 employment opportunities for “clinical, counseling, and school psychologists” are expected to grow by approximately 12 percent. This publication states that the “demand for school psychologists will be driven by a growing awareness of how students’ mental health and behavioral problems, such as bullying, affect learning.” According to a report by the National Association of School Psychologists, there is a severe shortage of school psychologists nationally. It is worth noting that, during the past five years, all graduates of the school psychology certification program have received multiple job offers immediately upon completion of the internship experience.

Student demand for the M.A. program, both for those seeking the terminal M.A. degree and those seeking the Ph.D., is very high. Across all program areas, the department receives an average of 362 applications each year, and the department admits an average of 25 new students each year (approximately 7 percent of applicants). Students admitted to the program have outstanding credentials. During the past three years, admitted students obtained average verbal and quantitative scores on the Graduate Record Exam of 545 (74th percentile) and 640 (56th percentile) respectively, and they had an average undergraduate GPA of 3.70. Students applying to the terminal master’s program are of commensurate quality to students seeking admission to the Ph.D. program.

• Major findings and recommendations: Particular strengths of the M.A. in Psychology program include very high student demand and excellent student quality. During the review period, enrollments increased by 14 percent (from 56 to 64). Scholarship among students is another strength of the program. During the period 2007-2011, 87 percent of students’ thesis projects...
resulted in conference presentations or publications in professional journals. Moreover, students in the program routinely collaborate and publish with faculty mentors. These findings indicate that students are actively engaged in the research enterprise and are obtaining the requisite methodological and content expertise to contribute to scientific knowledge. A third strength of the program relates to its placement record. Approximately 74 percent (53 out of 72) of the department’s M.A. students complete a thesis and continue in the doctoral program. The majority of the remaining students are enrolled in the specialist-level program in school psychology. During the last five years, all students completing this program have been successful at obtaining employment as a school psychologist immediately upon graduation. Indeed, NIU graduates of this program are actively recruited by school districts for employment as school psychologists.

Students in the program have demonstrated applied skills associated with professional practice. During the last five years, 100 percent of the M.A. students eligible to apply for internship placements as school psychologists obtained a position during their first year of application. Moreover, of students completing M.A. level internships, 84 percent (27 out of 32) achieved average final ratings by on-site supervisors of “very good” or above. Finally, during the final on-site review, faculty supervisors routinely query the field-based supervisors with regard to suggestions for the program based on their work with the NIU intern. Supervisors consistently report that NIU interns are among the most qualified in the state and routinely seek to hire NIU graduates. Based on surveys of M.A. graduates one year following graduation, alumni hold the program in high regard; 97 percent of survey respondents (29 out of 30) reported being satisfied with their degree; 94 percent (28 out of 30) considered the degree to be a worthwhile investment; and 97 percent (29 out of 30) felt the time to degree completion was satisfactory.

- Actions taken since the last review: Since the last program review, the department has engaged in a number of initiatives to strengthen an already strong program. For example, the school psychology program faculty reviewed its procedures for evaluating prospective students and initiated an on-campus “interview day” that all students applying to the program are strongly encouraged to attend. This program change has enhanced the program’s ability to assess student characteristics and allow for students to interact with program faculty and students. In response to ongoing program assessment, the school psychology program revised its practicum sequence for both its first-year and most senior students. These changes have introduced practicum experiences more strategically within the curriculum and have resulted in more rigorous applied training. Finally, in a continuing effort to attract highly qualified students from underrepresented groups, the department initiated the annual Diversifying Psychology Open House. Students from midwestern colleges and universities are invited to the open house, and special efforts are made to communicate information about the event to programs that provide support and training for underrepresented student groups. Attendance at the conference has grown each year, participating students have provided very positive informal feedback, and area colleges and universities are now routinely notifying their students of the event.

- Actions taken as a result of this review: The program and department will continue to seek ways to use its extant research space more efficiently through renovation and space assignment consolidation. The department will also seek additional faculty positions, funding permitting, in such high demand areas as school psychology, industrial-organizational psychology, and social psychology. Finally, the department will continue to consider the appropriate balance between the terminal M.A. program (school psychology) and the Ph.D. program.
Outcome

- **Decision:**
  
  ___X___ Program in good standing (review in 8 years)

- **Explanation:** The M.A. in Psychology program has demonstrated strong student success in student learning outcomes. Most of the students in the program earn their M.A. on the way to their doctoral degrees and, those who do not, have a high employment rate as school psychologists. Alumni of the program are satisfied with the program overall.

**Program:** Ph.D. in Psychology (42.0101)

Major Findings and Recommendations:

- **Major changes in the program:** The Ph.D. in Psychology program is designed to prepare students for psychology careers in a wide variety of professional settings including academic, human services, educational, mental health care, business, and government. Successful preparation of students to fill such disparate professional positions requires a thorough and broad grounding in the basic principles of psychology, the development of advanced skills in research methods and analysis, and concentrated course work in a particular field of the discipline.

Both published studies of occupational demand and placement of NIU graduates indicate a strong demand for doctoral-trained psychologists. According to the *Occupational Outlook Handbook* (2010-2011 edition), employment among all psychologists is expected to grow about as fast as the average for all occupations through 2018, by approximately 12 percent. Employment among “clinical, counseling, and school psychologists” is expected to grow approximately 11 percent during this period, employment among industrial-organizational psychologists is expected to grow by approximately 26 percent, and growth among other subdisciplines within psychology is expected to be approximately 14 percent. The report notes that demand for clinical psychologists will be driven by “the rising healthcare costs associated with unhealthy lifestyles, such as smoking, alcoholism, and obesity, which have made prevention and treatment more critical” and the demand for industrial-organizational psychologists will be driven by the need to “boost worker productivity and retention rates in a wide range of businesses.” Consistent with these occupational demands, there continues to be a very strong student demand for the department’s Ph.D. program. Across all program areas, the department receives an average of 362 applications each year, and the department admits an average of 25 new students each year (approximately 7 percent of applicants). Ph.D. programs in clinical, industrial-organizational, and school psychology are particularly competitive. Students admitted to the department have outstanding credentials. During the past three years, admitted students obtained average verbal and quantitative scores on the Graduate Record Exam of 545 (74th percentile) and 640 (56th percentile) respectively, and they had an average undergraduate GPA of 3.70. Faculty in program areas of study admit students based on available resources (e.g., laboratory space, time to supervise). During the review period, enrollment in the program has remained relatively stable (averaging approximately 75 students).

- **Major findings and recommendations:** One of the primary strengths of the Ph.D. in Psychology program is the very high student demand for the program and quality of students matriculating to
the program. Enrollments fluctuate based on student and faculty needs and during the review period, there has been a decrease in enrollments of 13 percent (from 84 to 73). That said, the department receives many more applications than it can accommodate, the students admitted to the program have outstanding credentials, and the program consistently produces among the highest number of Ph.D.s in the university (with 10-20 degrees awarded per year). Once in the program, students become actively involved in scholarly research, a hallmark of strong doctoral training. Students in the program produce high-quality research products including dissertations that receive very positive evaluations by external reviewers; during the review period, numerous projects were presented at scientific conferences or published in peer-reviewed journals. Students in the department routinely coauthor presentations and publications with program faculty (195 journal publications and over 500 conference presentations during the past five years). Graduates of the program are also highly successful at obtaining employment following graduation, with approximately half of the department’s graduates employed in applied settings (32 out of 67), over a quarter of graduates engaged in academic careers (18 out of 67), and the remainder of graduates in post-doctoral and research positions at some of the most prestigious institutions nationally. Department faculty also have an exceptional record of scholarship and external funding. During the five-year review period, faculty produced over 400 refereed journal articles, chapters, and books; over 650 presentations at scientific conferences; and secured over $17 million in externally funded grants and contracts. Finally, the Ph.D. program remains highly cost-effective (consistently below the state average).

The program has been very successful at achieving valued student learning outcomes. One such outcome is the completion of a dissertation research project that makes a substantial contribution to the profession. During the last five years, 63 students successfully completed the written dissertation and oral defense. External reviewers’ ratings of the extent to which dissertations made a “substantial contribution to knowledge” were very positive, with over 98 percent (62 of 63) of students’ dissertations achieving a rating of “agree” or “strongly agree.”

Another goal of the program is to develop students’ teaching effectiveness. During the past five years, student evaluations of the classroom effectiveness of teaching assistants (TA) in the introductory psychology course averaged between “excellent” and “very good.” For course sections beyond introductory psychology, taught by advanced TAs, the average rating was also between “excellent” and “very good.” These highly favorable teaching evaluations received by TAs suggest that the department’s teaching practicum course and the supervised teaching experiences are successfully preparing doctoral students to enter teaching careers at the college/university level.

An important outcome measure of applied clinical preparation is the success of students in obtaining pre-doctoral internship placements. During the past five years, 85 percent of the students applying for internship placements obtained placements during their first year of application with the remaining students obtaining internships during their second year. A final objective for students in the program is successful entry into academic, business, government, and health related professional settings. In a survey of graduates of the program (one year post graduation; 2008–2010), 100 percent (19 out of 19) of graduates seeking employment reported being employed. Moreover, 100 percent (19 out of 19) of respondents who were employed regarded their current position as either “very related” or “related” to their graduate training. These data indicate that the training experiences provided in the program are strategically aligned to meet regional and national marketplace needs.
Actions taken since the last review: Since the last program review, the Ph.D. in Psychology program has engaged in a number of initiatives. The department revised its merit evaluation criteria to increase the merit value of both external grant applications and awards. In an effort to attract highly qualified students from underrepresented groups, the department initiated the annual Diversifying Psychology Open House. Students from midwestern colleges and universities are invited to the open house, and special efforts are made to communicate information about the event to programs that provide support and training for underrepresented student groups. The school psychology program sought and obtained accreditation of its Ph.D. program by the American Psychological Association (APA). In its analysis of the program, APA reviewers cited the quality of program students, the rigorous practicum sequence, effective faculty role models, and extensive and well integrated program assessment procedures as particular strengths. Finally, the clinical psychology program successfully completed the reaccreditation process by the APA. The accreditation review of the program was highly favorable, citing the quality of students, comprehensive documentation of policies and procedures, well integrated curricular activities, and extensive availability of externships as particular strengths.

Actions taken as a result of this review: The program and department will continue to seek ways to use its research space more efficiently through renovation and space assignment consolidation. The department will also seek additional faculty positions, funding permitting, in such high demand areas as school psychology, industrial-organizational psychology, and social psychology. Finally, the department will continue to consider the appropriate balance between the terminal M.A. program with a specialization in school psychology and the Ph.D. program.

Outcome

Decision:

__X__ Program in good standing (review in 8 years)

Explanation: The Ph.D. in Psychology program is and has been NIU’s top Ph.D. producer with 10 to 20 degrees awarded each year. Faculty and students alike are involved in rigorous research pursuits, and, overall, alumni are satisfied with the program.

Program: Master of Public Administration (44.0401)

Major Findings and Recommendations:

Major changes in the program: The most significant change in the disciplinary context of public administration has been a shift in focus from theory and practice of government to governance, and from public administration to public affairs more broadly. Underlying this shift is a new specialization on collaboration of governments and nonprofit and private organizations to deliver public services, especially at the local community level. This is motivating NIU and peer institutions to enhance programming for nonprofit management specializations and to create new courses that enhance skills for public service managers to work across sectors as well as within a wide range of organizational types. Finally, public affairs peer institutions have agreed to accreditation based on learning outcomes, with measureable performance within specific domains of competencies required to lead and manage public service organizations in the 21st century.
Hence, the Master of Public Administration (M.P.A.) program at NIU has identified program level competencies for all students, and specific competencies for each specialization within the M.P.A. degree, and has created instruments to assess student gains in these competencies from orientation to graduation and a few years beyond graduation. Finally, M.P.A. programs in the 21st century need to be engaged globally with peer institutions in other countries to both bring international perspectives into American classrooms and to provide opportunities for students and faculty to explore theory and practice in a non-U.S. context.

- **Major findings and recommendations:** One of the key strengths of the Master of Public Administration program is a consistently high placement record for graduating students. During the review period, the placement rate within six months of graduation ranged from 93 percent to 96 percent. The placement record is itself a function of the signature strength of the NIU program, an internship program that places pre-career students into a paid, two-year professional management internship, working 20-24 hours/week on projects that benefit local governments and nonprofit agencies. The experiences students gain in these internships makes them highly attractive candidates for entry level management positions in a variety of public service agencies, particularly in local governments.

Assessments of student learning have been recently revised in the M.P.A. program and limited data were available on the assessment of student learning outcomes at the time of the review. Data from alumni surveys demonstrate 98 percent satisfaction (40 out of 41) with the program across the review period and strong agreement that the degree prepared them for their employment in the field (100 percent agreement, 36 out of 36, across the review period).

Enrollments in the M.P.A. program have declined 23 percent (from 88 to 67), and degrees awarded per year have fluctuated somewhat (averaging around 32 per year) over the review period. Currently the program serves younger students and an important program improvement will be to attract more mid-career professionals to the M.P.A. program. This will serve the impending leadership deficit as baby boomer managers retire and move the profile of the NIU program closer to peer institutions, which tend to have a much higher share of mid-career students in their programs.

- **Actions taken since the last review:** The program faculty have engaged in a three-year process to develop program level competencies and instruments for measuring learning outcomes. All students now complete a comprehensive assessment inventory at orientation and graduation, and internship supervisors also use the assessment inventory to evaluate their intern at the beginning and end of the two-year internship. Past survey instruments have been revised to integrate those questions and results with the overall assessment plan to assess learning outcomes. In addition, the capstone and comprehensive exam processes have been revised significantly to orient them toward building and measuring program level competencies of students. Learning outcomes are presented at the student orientation session, and program competencies are identified and emphasized in all courses throughout the program.

The Master in Public Administration program has also provided national leadership to attract more women to the local government profession. Working closely with local government practitioners and professional organizations at the state and national levels, the program has engaged students and faculty in research on women in the profession, as well as presented results to practitioners at national and state professional meetings, and led recruitment efforts at select
colleges and universities to bring more women into the M.P.A. and the profession. Approximately 50 percent of M.P.A. students (34 out of 67) are women.

- **Actions taken as a result of this review:** The Masters in Public Administration program is responding to the need for increased mid-career enrollments by reformatting the course delivery to concentrated courses that allow mid-career professionals to attend classes one night per week for a year (including summer) to obtain a graduate certificate in public management, which is nearly half of an M.P.A.; they can complete the M.P.A. at the same pace in another year and a half. This is also moving the program faculty to increase course flexibility with blended delivery formats that incorporate online content with reduced in-class meetings. Similarly, the program is responding to student and societal needs for a more globally engaged program. The M.P.A. program is moving forward in creating double degree programs with top-ranked M.P.A. programs in China and Thailand. Assessment and enrollment remain critical areas for the program, and a follow-up report on the program’s assessment outcomes and enrollments will be submitted to the Academic Planning Council in 2015.

**Outcome**

- **Decision:**
  
  ____X___ Program in good standing (follow up report due in 2015)

- **Explanation:** The Master in Public Administration program is highly regarded, has a strong employment rate for graduates, and has satisfied alumni. Assessments of student learning outcomes have been comprehensively revised, and data from these assessments are forthcoming.

**Program: B.A./B.S. in Political Science (45.1001)**

**Major Findings and Recommendations:**

- **Major changes in the program:** The B.A./B.S. in Political Science program prepares undergraduate students for many careers and provides them with a solid understanding of the discipline of political science. Political science is the primary discipline dealing with the workings of government, both in the United States and internationally. This knowledge is essential to functioning democracies. The *Occupational Outlook Handbook* (2010-2011 edition) projects that overall employment of political scientists is expected to grow 21 percent from 2008 to 2018, much faster than the average for all occupations. Demand for political science research is growing because of increasing interest in politics, foreign affairs, and public policy, including social and environmental policy issues, healthcare, and immigration. Political scientists enjoy careers in law, various levels of government, and in seemingly unrelated high-level jobs that require policy analysis and good critical thinking and communication skills.

- **Major findings and recommendations:** The number of students in the B.A./B.S. in Political Science program has declined slightly in this review period. From 2007-2011, the number of political science majors at NIU declined by 4 percent (from 426 to 409), which is slightly less than the statewide average for public schools. NIU consistently has had the third largest undergraduate political science program in the state in terms of majors behind University of Illinois, Urbana-
Champaign and DePaul University. Overall, the interest in and relevance of the discipline remains keen and undisputed. NIU confers an average of 120 undergraduate degrees in political science each year (600 over the five year review period).

The program strengths stem from a commitment on the part of faculty to undergraduate teaching in and out of the classroom. The Department of Political Science is a strong teaching department with several faculty winning important teaching awards (e.g., in the last two years, two political science faculty have been awarded the prestigious Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching Award) and strong teaching evaluations on the whole. Faculty work with students on honors theses, independent studies, and other research-based programs (e.g., Research Rookies) on a regular basis. Perhaps most importantly, the program offers many experiential and engaged-learning opportunities.

Generally, program costs over the review period have been under the statewide average. Evidence from writing rubrics and other assessment measures shows that students are gaining the critical, analytic, and communication skills needed in their careers. The department has a distinguished record of nominating successful Lincoln Laureates. The Lincoln Laureate is the top university-wide award for undergraduates, and political science majors won this award in 2004, 2006, 2008, 2010, and 2011. Surveys demonstrate that alumni of the program are satisfied overall with the political science degree program (an average of 91 percent [126 out of 139] over the program review period) and believed that the program helped them to understand international issues (100 percent [139 out of 139] over the program review period).

- **Actions taken since the last review:** The last program review (2005) concluded that the B.A./B.S. in Political Science program was performing well overall. Between this program review and the last program review, the program has undertaken new initiatives to measure program success. For example, the program uses rubrics across the courses to assess student writing, critical thinking, and analytical and research skills that the program values and considers crucial learning outcomes for students. One important innovation in the undergraduate program has been revamping the departmental honors program so that it is rigorous and offers students a significant experiential component.

One weakness, identified in the last program review and through focus groups with undergraduates since, has been the internship program. The program has made several attempts to improve this aspect of the program, including assigning a faculty internship coordinator to develop the rigor and reach of the program and changing several aspects of the internship course to make it more rigorous and enable the program to assess the experience from the student and mentor points of view. The establishment of the Washington D.C. Congressional Internship Program has been the most important accomplishment with respect to giving students prominent internship opportunities. The department has also resuscitated the Model United Nations Club and the student advisory council, started a pre-law society and mock trial team, established a permanent presence in the Oxford Study Abroad program, and created a spring break in Washington D.C. program.

Most recently, the department has undertaken various forms of alumni outreach, including establishing an advisory board for the department with great emphasis on alumni participation. This should help the department develop current student and alumni relationships and generate
better feedback for the department for developing relevant opportunities for students’ future endeavors.

- **Actions taken as a result of this review:** In the future, the faculty of the B.A./B.S. in Political Science program will work to build on strengths and address weaknesses. Some of the plans going forward are as follows: (1) work on offering courses tied together by “themes” across the political science discipline (e.g., fall 2012, the program offered several courses tied to the federal election); (2) continue to work on improving the internship offerings through the department; and (3) improve alumni networks and relationships.

**Outcome**

- **Decision:**
  
  __X__ Program in good standing (review in 8 years)

- **Explanation:** The B.A./B.S. in Political Science program continues to offer students engaged and experiential learning opportunities. The cost to produce program credit hours is generally under the state average. Alumni are satisfied with their degrees.

**Program:** M.A. in Political Science (45.1001)

**Major Findings and Recommendations:**

- **Major changes in the program:** A significant change in the field of political science is that an M.A. in Political Science degree is rarely sufficient any longer to land jobs as post-secondary instructors. Increasingly, four-year liberal arts universities and community colleges require new faculty to have Ph.D.s. However, this reduction in demand for students with M.A. degrees has been offset by occupational needs for employees in both the public and private sector who possess research competence, oral and written communication skills, and an awareness of the politics and cultures of the U.S. and other nations.

  Specifically, employment of social scientists and related professionals is expected to grow faster than the average employment category. The Illinois Department of Employment Security estimates a 20 percent increase in “social scientists and related workers” from 2008 to 2018 representing a 2 percent annual compound growth. Consequent to these changes, there remains significant student demand for the M.A. in Political Science program as evidenced by the level of new applicants and the overall large size of both graduate programs housed in the Department of Political Science. To address changes in potential employer demands, the department is in the process of revamping its M.A. degree to better prepare students for either a Ph.D. education or careers as policy analysts in the public and private sectors.

- **Major findings and recommendations:** One of the major strengths of the M.A. in Political Science program is a solid reputation in the Northern Illinois region, resulting in significant demand for the political science M.A. degree. This undoubtedly is fueled by the stature of our nationally, and internationally, recognized faculty who are committed to high quality in both teaching and research. Moreover, the department has built exceptional strength in several key disciplinary areas.
(public administration, classical political theory, and Southeast Asian studies), thereby offering students' unique educational opportunities and skills.

Enrollments in the M.A. program have declined over the review period by 47 percent (from 36 to 19). However, degrees awarded have declined only 17 percent (from 12 to 10) over this same period. Assessment of student learning outcomes and student satisfaction with the M.A. program during the review period is incomplete. Current leadership has put in place better assessment strategies including a pre- and post-test program of learning outcomes and started the implementation of internal surveys and phone calls to measure student satisfaction. To date, faculty assessment of student preparedness for successfully completing a Ph.D. program suggests that learning outcomes are not always being achieved. However, in the program review period, students have published newspaper opinion editorials, written book reviews, worked with publishers writing test banks and other instructor resource materials, and presented research at regional, national, and international conferences. Alumni survey responses suggests that students successfully completing the program are either “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with the program overall (86 percent [6 out of 7] over the review period) and believe their degree is “related” or “closely related” to their employment (100 percent [5 out of 5] over the review period).

- **Actions taken since the last review:** Many of the suggestions that came out of the previous review are no longer consistent with the program’s objectives. There has been considerable turnover in department faculty during the inter-review period. For instance, suggestions from the previous review dealt with how to better accommodate students to make the graduate programs more attractive (such as allowing graduate students to take undergraduate courses or not requiring students to take research methods), which would then lead to increased enrollment. The program and department now disagree with this tactic for recruitment, opting instead to maintain higher standards to grow the quality of the program. Additionally, the program faculty now believe, in part because of an evolving job market, that it is important to require M.A. students to take research methods courses to provide them with the skills they need to be successful in the job market or to enter a Ph.D. program.

There were some suggestions in the previous review related to the recruitment and retention of women and minority students, two groups that are still significantly underrepresented in the political science profession. The program still values this initiative and has made attempts in the review period to attract and retain individuals from these groups by hiring and promoting faculty from underrepresented groups to serve as role models. The program has also made affirmative efforts to recruit members of underrepresented communities from NIU’s own undergraduate programs, and the department has bought a database of names of prospective minority graduate students to assist with recruiting.

- **Actions taken as a result of this review:** As a result of this review, the Master in Political Science program will implement changes to the M.A. curriculum to better prepare students for a Ph.D. program or develop basic policy analysis skills. Some of the plans going forward are as follows: (1) creating a second field for M.A. students whereby they would need to take an additional six credits in a subfield of the discipline and (2) require M.A. students to take two research methodology courses (POLS 602 and POLS 603) to allow for more complete preparedness for a Ph.D. program or an occupation as a policy analyst. The program faculty will also implement the newly created assessment methods and provide a report on the outcomes from these methods and enrollments to the Academic Planning Council in 2015.
Outcome

- **Decision:**
  
  ___X___ Program in good standing (follow up report due in 2015)

- **Explanation:** The M.A. in Political Science program is evolving to meet current needs. Assessments of student learning outcomes have been comprehensively revised and data from these assessments are forthcoming.

**Program:** Ph.D. in Political Science (45.1001)

**Major Findings and Recommendations:**

- **Major changes in the program:** One major change in the political science discipline is that in order for Ph.D. students to be competitive in the job market it is necessary to gain exposure at peer-reviewed conferences and to have already published in peer-reviewed outlets. This fundamental change in the field is driving changes in NIU’s Ph.D. in Political Science program.

  There has been a considerable increase in occupational demand for students broadly trained in research methods and, specifically, policy analysis, and this demand exists across both the public and private sectors. The Illinois Department of Employment Security estimates a 20 percent increase in “social scientists and related workers” from 2008 to 2018 representing a 2 percent annual compound growth. These data are confirmed by the United States Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics. Most specifically, the Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates a growth of about 800 political scientists from 2008 to 2018, a 19 percent growth. To address the increasing emphasis on research accomplishment as a prerequisite for employment, the program is instituting several changes to the curriculum and degree requirements (outlined below).

- **Major findings and recommendations:** Considering the Ph.D. in Political Science program strengths, the review process has made it clear that recent graduates feel the course work in the program helped to prepare them for the candidacy examinations and for the completion of the dissertation. An additional strength is that graduates of the program are successful in finding positions both in academia and in the private sector. Eighty percent (8 out of 10) of the graduates who responded to the university’s alumni survey reported being employed in a position that was making use of their training from NIU. During the review period, enrollments in the program increased 5 percent from 61 to 64, and degrees awarded remained constant at an average of 7 per year.

  During the review period, the program’s doctoral students have obtained acceptable publication and conference presentation records, either alone or as coauthors with faculty while at NIU. From 2007 through 2011, Ph.D. students presented 10 papers at regional conferences, 19 at national conferences, and 15 at international conferences. In addition to conference presentations, on many occasions they have also served as discussants for panels or on roundtables. During the review period, students in the Ph.D. program published at least six peer-reviewed book chapters and articles, four of which were coauthored with faculty. Although this is considered a program strength, more work needs to be done in this area because of changing occupational demands.
Actions taken since the last review: Following the last review, the Ph.D. in Political Science program instituted each fall a meeting of the department’s graduate committee devoted to assessment. At the meeting, the director of graduate studies or another member of the faculty presents a summary of the information collected from each assessment tool and any resulting suggestions for program and/or policy changes. Policy changes developed and approved at this meeting are then presented at the next department meeting for consideration. Changes approved at the department meeting are then implemented.

To address the underrepresentation of women reported in the previous review, the program has petitioned the Graduate School at NIU to consider women as an underrepresented group in the discipline and eligible for half scholarships through the Rhoten Smith Scholarship program. This initiative was supported by the Graduate School, and the department has been able to secure half stipends for female graduate students. Additionally, to assist students in the job search process, the department has created the position of placement director as a service position for one faculty member. Yet again, as a result of focus groups and informal graduate student feedback, the department has also created the Political Science Graduate Student Association to create opportunities for increased peer interaction for students. The group has sponsored a picnic and brown bags, obtained student government association funding to improve the operations of the shared graduate student office space, and devised a webpage link to the department that allows students to post curriculum vitas. Last, to help graduate students prepare for teaching their own classes, Ph.D. students are now required to attend a department sponsored orientation held in the fall. The purpose of the orientation is to ensure there are no unanswered questions before new teachers embark on their first independent classroom experiences.

Actions taken as a result of this review: As the result of the current review and to address the increasing emphasis on research accomplishment as a prerequisite for employment for graduates of the Ph.D. in Political Science program, several changes to the program’s curriculum and degree requirements are being undertaken. They are as follows: (1) the department will now hold “brown bag” events each semester to increase faculty/student research interaction in an informal setting; (2) candidacy exam policies across sub-fields will be standardized to ensure fairness and integrity in the process, and students will now be able to take candidacy exams in two semesters, which should help move them obtain their degrees more quickly; (3) students will now be required to take required methods courses in their first year of study to ensure a quick start on their own research initiatives; and (4) beginning fall 2014, all students successfully completing the Ph.D. program must present research at a peer-reviewed conference. These changes will help students be more competitive on the job market.

Outcome

Decision:

X Program in good standing (review in 8 years)

Explanation: The Ph.D. in Political Science program sets and upholds rigorous standards, is responsive to student and employer needs, and has a high employment rate for graduates. Enrollments in the program are growing and occupational demand is strong.
Program: Psychological Services Center (90.4201)

Major Findings and Recommendations:

• Major changes in the program: The Psychological Services Center (PSC) is the primary organization and setting for the training and delivery of applied psychological services for the clinical psychology graduate program in the Department of Psychology. The PSC provides at least five semesters of training for masters and doctoral level clinical psychology students; a sub-group of students in the school psychology doctoral program are also eligible for training experiences in the PSC. The NIU clinical psychology training program follows the scientist-practitioner model, and as such, espouses inculcation of the value for and skills in delivering empirically supported approaches to psychotherapy and assessment. The primary objectives of the PSC are: (1) to create and maintain a training environment in which graduate students learn to deliver evidence-based strategies of psychological assessment and intervention; (2) to provide wide ranging, low cost, high-quality psychological services to the citizens of the Northern Illinois region and NIU community; and (3) to encourage an atmosphere supportive of faculty and graduate student research opportunities. The PSC is the foundational experience that provides student clinicians with the knowledge and experience to secure required externship placements, a critical source of funding for the clinical psychology graduate program.

• Major findings and recommendations: Strengths of the PSC include on-going collaborative efforts with a wide range of university-based (e.g., NIU Speech-Language-Hearing Clinic and Disability Resource Center) and external entities (e.g., Kreider Services, Kishwaukee Community College, and many private and public schools in northern Illinois area). Such collaborations have yielded a reliable referral base from which appropriate training cases are accepted for psychological services. Major achievements for the PSC include a collaboration with NIU’s Speech-Language-Hearing Clinic and the Literacy Clinic, which yielded the “Collaborative Clinic” intensive interdisciplinary assessment demonstration project; a two-year long series of joint case conferences; and a P-20 funded, week-long interdisciplinary training experience for graduate students in five separate training programs housed in three different colleges. The shared experience fostered greater numbers of challenging, high-quality referrals to the PSC and invigorated professional connections among faculty across the three participating colleges. Such collaborations, as well as community advisory board meetings, and careful follow-up of client cases have facilitated the development of several paid externships for the clinical program (e.g., Kreider Services, DeKalb County Probation Department, and Joliet Public Schools). All of these collaborations have enriched and diversified the students’ understanding and delivery of culturally sensitive, empirically informed psychological services.

The PSC has a significant impact on NIU and the surrounding northern Illinois community. Clients are referred by area physicians and mental health professionals from as far away as Chicago, Davenport, and rural areas of southern Wisconsin. PSC clients routinely report high satisfaction with services provided. A recent review of PSC outreach efforts revealed that, over the last five years, services were provided free of charge to children from about 31 schools in 12 counties in northern Illinois. These collaborations have benefitted the graduate students by broadening and deepening their
clinical training in interdisciplinary approaches for children and their parents with a wide range of disorders and disabilities. The great majority of children and families served would not have been able to access such comprehensive services by any other means. The Psychological Services Center is also well known for its clinical treatment of adults experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder and other anxiety disorders.

- **Actions taken since the last review:** The addition of the PSC research assistantship has allowed more detailed and flexible progress monitoring of client outcomes and satisfaction with services. Analyses of program evaluation findings are periodically presented by the PSC research assistant in the PSC staff meetings. Such presentations enhance the students’ appreciation of the range of clinical problems addressed by the clinic as well as the diversity of the clientele. Research ideas are generated from such presentations, some of which have been presented at national meetings.

- **Actions taken as a result of this review:** Continued consultation with other NIU mental health clinic directors may lead to possible linkages with psychiatric services appropriate for university-based clinics that serve the general public as well as NIU students. Consultation with other training clinic directors in Illinois may also point to ways to engage psychiatric services and obtain third party reimbursement. Continued collaboration is planned with area agencies and school districts and other college campuses in the northern Illinois area because such connections have led to very productive and stimulating learning opportunities for PSC student clinicians. Presentations of program evaluation findings have led to more research activities within the PSC, and there are current efforts to convert traditional data collection to computerized data collection. Such changes may facilitate more flexible and complex data analyses of program evaluation measures. The high quality of the clinical supervisors and PSC clinicians are acknowledged as the most valuable resources of the Psychological Services Center.

**Outcome**

- **Decision:**
  
  X Program in good standing (review in 8 years)

- **Explanation:** The Psychological Services Clinic has addressed well the public service and teaching goals. Clients are accessing services they may not be able to afford elsewhere and are seeing important gains through these services. Students are receiving high-quality clinical training through the clinic. The PSC has established successful collaborations with community organizations throughout the region.

**Program:** Center for the Study of Family Violence and Sexual Assault (90.4407)

**Major Findings and Recommendations:**

- **Major changes in the program:** The Center for the Study of Family Violence and Sexual Assault is a basic research facility devoted to advancing the understanding of the dynamics of family violence and sexual assault. Continued demand for this type of facility is evidenced by: (1) increasing numbers of faculty from various departments seeking to become associates of the center, (2) continued demand from undergraduate and graduate students for research training.
opportunities sponsored by the center, (3) high rates of dissemination of the research products (scholarly articles, book chapters, poster/paper presentations) produced by center associates, and (4) sustained high levels of external funding, including success in competing for federal research grants.

- **Major findings and recommendations:** A core strength of the Center for the Study of Family Violence and Sexual Assault is its 21,000 square foot, federally-funded, physical facility. The center offers state-of-the-art research and training facilities designed to promote a wide range of research interests. Since completion of the physical facility in 2002, the center’s interdisciplinary research activities and related training activities have increased. Center personnel include a director, half-time associate director, and 12 center associates who are all actively pursuing research in the area of family violence and trauma.

In addition to supporting cutting edge research on interpersonal violence and trauma, the center provides a variety of research training opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students. For example, the center sponsors three Family Violence Fellowships each year, which are designed to support graduate students who show exceptional promise with respect to their research productivity in the areas of family violence and trauma.

Major outcomes and achievements of the center during this review period include the following: (1) the center and its faculty associates have been awarded over $10 million dollars in external funding over the five year period from 2007 to 2011; (2) the center ranked first among interdisciplinary units at NIU with respect to external funding awards in FY2011; (3) during the period from FY2008 to FY2011, the center had one of the strongest portfolios among the social sciences at NIU with respect to obtaining competitive research awards.

- **Actions taken since the last review:** Since the last review, the leadership in the center has successfully transitioned to a new director and associate director. During this transition, the associate director’s position was reconfigured into a joint appointment with the Department of Psychology, resulting in the associate director’s time commitment to the center being reduced from full-time to half-time.

The center sustained its operations over the past five years on a relatively modest level of internal funding (approximately $115,000 per year), with the expansion in its research and training opportunities made possible by increases in external funding. Indeed, the ratio of external to internal funding during the period from FY2007 to FY2011 was 17.5 to 1, which surpassed the 10 to 1 ratio noted in the center’s prior review.

- **Actions taken as a result of this review:** In order to sustain continued growth and productivity of the Center for the Study of Family Violence and Sexual Assault, a number of goals/benchmarks have been set for the next review period including the following: (1) the center will continue to sustain an external to internal funding ratio of at least 10 to 1; (2) the center will continue to expand the number of associated faculty from 12 to 15; (3) the center will continue to expand the number of associated faculty receiving external funding from three to five (this is in addition to the funding obtained by the center director and emeritus director); (4) the center will maintain its current funding levels for public service and will seek to increase the number of competitive research grants obtained; and (5) the center will maintain its involvement in undergraduate and graduate research training (including continuing the Family Violence Fellowship program) and
will obtain external funds to expand research training opportunities for graduate and undergraduate students.

Outcome

- **Decision:**
  
  __X__ Program in good standing (review in 8 years)

- **Explanation:** The Center for the Study of Family Violence and Sexual Assault has a well-established research track record and continues to support opportunities for NIU faculty and students in contributing to research in the fields of family violence and sexual assault.

**Program:** Center for Child Welfare and Education (90.4407A)

Major Findings and Recommendations:

- **Major changes in the program:** The Center for Child Welfare and Education (CCWE) aims to assist the education and development of children and youth who have been abused or neglected. CCWE’s work contributes to the body of knowledge, and influences training and practice, to positively affect educational outcomes of this unique population. There are four major objectives: (1) to promote best practice, (2) to contribute to the preparation of the professional workforce, (3) to influence policy analysis and development, and (4) to engage in research.

  State funding for the center, and other organizations of this type, has declined during the review period. Between 2007 and 2011, state funding was reduced from $2,891,223 to $2,572,968, a reduction of 11 percent. This reduction has had substantial impact on the services for clients in need.

- **Major findings and recommendations:** The CCWE administers three grant programs: the Educational Access Project (EAP), Project CHOICES (CHOICES), and the Northern Region Permanency Enhancement Project (PEP). All technical assistance provided by EAP is based on referral. EAP served on average 3,679 children per year and trained on average 2,849 professionals and parents per year during the review period. The numbers of schools CHOICES served increased from 16 in 2007 to 44 in 2011. Also, after CCWE assisted with the initial development of PEP in the northern region, nine local action teams were formed to serve a greater number of individuals within the region.

- **Actions taken since the last review:** Since the last review, CCWE has been able to maintain limited state funding for programs and services, despite difficult economic times, and has continued to successfully meet its objectives.

- **Actions taken as a result of this review:** As a result of this review, the Center for Child Welfare and Education will work to expand information and education in the area of child abuse and neglect and work to develop partnerships with faculty within NIU to engage collaboratively in potential external funding efforts.
Outcome

- **Decision:**
  
  ____X____ Program in good standing (review in 8 years)

- **Explanation:** The Center for Child Welfare and Education has addressed well the public service goals. Clients are accessing services they may not be able to afford elsewhere. The CCWE makes important research and practice contributions to the field of child abuse and neglect.

Program: Center for Governmental Studies (90.4510)

Major Findings and Recommendations:

- **Major changes in the program:** The Center for Governmental Studies (CGS) is a public service, technical assistance, and public policy studies unit within Northern Illinois University. Its mission is to provide expertise that helps decision makers implement efficient, sustainable, and cost-effective approaches to social, economic, and information management issues. Since its inception in 1969, the CGS has been oriented to advancing the state of knowledge and serving the professional needs of regional clientele, especially city managers and local public officials. The CGS became an integral component of the University’s Division of Outreach, Engagement, and Information Technologies (OEIT) when the division was established in 2001. The OEIT was created to improve the university’s ability to address its outreach and service mission by delivering a more comprehensive set of applied research, outreach, and engagement activities to the Northern Illinois region and beyond. In support of this mission, the CGS provides technical assistance to staff in a variety of local governments, state and federal agencies, regional councils, non-profit organizations, and professional associations. This assistance involves conducting economic development studies such as fiscal impact analysis or labor market analysis; facilitating strategic planning; providing data and analytical studies, including the mapping of data; and helping public sector agencies design and manage large administrative databases. The CGS also disseminates information on innovative solutions to public sector problems through publications, educational programs, and training activities.

- **Major findings and recommendations:** Four important strengths of the CGS have been affirmed through this review process. First, the CGS professional and operating staff alike are dedicated to the mission of the university, the division, and the CGS, and they all possess the skills and knowledge to perform in a manner that brings credit to NIU. Second, the CGS staff members coordinate their activities with other units within the division and are committed to expanding their efforts to build partnerships and collaborative activities with faculty and students in all of the colleges that comprise the NIU community. Third, many examples of the CGS projects and activities speak to the emphasis that the CGS places on innovation and entrepreneurship. And fourth, the CGS has remained a relevant and valuable resource over the 43 years of its existence as evidenced by its ability to leverage significant external funding with a decreasing allocation of general revenue support.

The CGS has undertaken 198 funded projects and numerous public service and pro bono activities between FY2005 and FY2010 that support NIU’s mission of outreach and service. Of the 140
unduplicated clients represented by these projects, 42 have returned to the CGS for additional project support for a return rate of 30 percent. The CGS staff also support the work of university committees and units. Since 2005, the CGS has provided meeting facilitation support to campus-wide efforts, strategic planning assistance to specific units and functions within NIU, and technical assistance to requesting units. In FY2012 alone, the CGS contributed more than $250,000 in staff time to public service and pro bono activities.

Institutional support for the CGS has decreased from $611,732 in FY2005 to $539,044 in FY2010, or by a total of 12 percent. The CGS has been able to maintain its operations by generating significant external funding that totaled more than $9.7 million in projects. The annual average of external grants and contracts generated during that period was $1.3 million.

• Actions taken since the last review: The most significant development that has occurred since the last review is the combined impact of continued cuts in higher education funding and the recession. Concurrently, potential public sector and non-governmental organizational clients impacted by the recession have curtailed the types of projects for which they would seek assistance from the CGS. This has required a redoubling of the CGS staff efforts to generate projects that enabled the CGS to generate external funding of more than $9.7 million in projects involving 140 unique clients.

• Actions taken as a result of this review: Improvement areas identified for the CGS to address in the coming year include (1) continuing to strengthen the multidisciplinarity of the project teams; (2) improving project tracking (particularly for unfunded projects and pro bono activities), client satisfaction, and impact measurement; (3) devising alternative strategies to help diversify the CGS funding sources; and (4) incorporating quality measures into the CGS operations.

Of particular importance to the future of the CGS is the development of strategies to diversify and expand our funding sources. Three strategies have been identified as a result of this review: forming long-term strategic alliances with partner organizations to expand the reach of the services provided; pursuing larger projects that are more cost-effective; and seeking financial support for multi-year initiatives.

Outcome

• Decision:

   ___X__ Program in good standing (review in 8 years)

Explanation: Despite difficult economic times, the Center for Governmental Studies has remained strong and active during this review period with 198 funded projects and numerous public service and pro bono activities. Clients are satisfied with the work of the CGS as evidence by the 30 percent return rate for clients. The CGS continues to meet campus and regional needs.
Program: Public Opinion Laboratory (90.4599)

Major Findings and Recommendations:

- **Major changes in the program:** The Public Opinion Laboratory (POL), a nonacademic unit of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, is a full-service survey research facility, collecting information by means of telephone, online, and mail surveys as well as focus groups. In comparison with other academic survey research units, as reported in the Association of Academic Survey Research Organizations 2011 survey of 84 institutions, the POL is among the larger academic survey research units.

- **Major findings and recommendations:** With a track record of 30 years in operation, the POL has established itself as a reputable unit conducting scientific surveys in northern Illinois as well as other areas. Its staff is highly capable in all survey research methodologies. The POL has established itself as a primary source for health data pertaining to children as well as adults. This includes statewide surveys as well as surveys conducted in regional areas, including Chicago and other municipalities and counties.

   Being part of NIU, the POL is able to recruit from the university community to staff the POL at all levels. This is a reciprocal relationship; newly-recruited research associates and graduate assistants as well as telephone interviewers are provided training and practical experience in survey research. In addition, the network of NIU alumni is helpful in bringing projects to the POL.

   Over the past five years, the POL has had 75 clients (12 internal and 63 external), with projects in these five categories: (1) internal NIU projects, (2) public policy, (3) community planning, (4) academic research, and (5) corporate and organizational planning.

- **Actions taken since the last review:** Over the past five years, the Public Opinion Laboratory has undergone some changes in staffing. The current POL staff includes a director, associate director, research associates, and assistant telephone center supervisor who were not in these positions five years earlier. With respect to survey research capabilities, the POL has improved in several areas. The addition of higher caliber staff will allow for more complex projects, notably random-digit-dial surveys requiring oversampling of selected areas and dual-frame sampling to properly include cellular telephone numbers.

   At the time of the last review, August 2005, there was support for modernization of the POL’s computer-assisted telephone interview system including technology infrastructure, telephony, and software. This modernization was completed in 2006.

   The recession has had an impact on demand for services of the POL, in terms of both internal and external clients. This is particularly true for the demand from internal clients, which was less than 1 percent of all POL funding during the review period. Discussions regarding the best way to proceed for the POL to remain financially solvent have been ongoing throughout NIU.

- **Actions taken as a result of this review:** The Public Opinion Laboratory objectives, going forward, are to: contribute to the knowledge and understanding of significant social, health, economic and business issues in northern Illinois and elsewhere; provide outreach service to northern Illinois community development projects involving survey research; conduct survey research in
accordance with the professional standards of the American Association for Public Opinion Research and sponsor requirements; provide an opportunity for students to gain hands-on research experience to supplement course work in the social sciences; provide employment opportunities for the NIU student body as interviewers as well as assistantship opportunities for graduate students; develop student learning outcome objectives and document survey research learning for students who are in supportive professional staff positions, graduate or undergraduate internships, or employed as telephone center interviewers and supervisors; and defray operating expenses by means of revenues generated from externally funded projects. To meet these objectives and to support the financial solvency of the POL, the staff and services of the Public Opinion Laboratory will be relocated to the Division of Outreach, Engagement, and Information Technologies where it will cease to be an independent center and will be supported by the infrastructure of this division.

Outcome

- **Decision:**
  
  ___ X ___ Program in good standing (review in 8 years)

- **Explanation:** Despite financial concerns, the Public Opinion Laboratory has a strong reputation and continues to serve mostly external clients. The POL will remain in good standing while it transitions to the Division of Outreach, Engagement, and Information Technologies where it will cease to be an independent center.

**Program:** Literacy Clinic

**Major Findings and Recommendations:**

- **Major changes in the program:** From 2008 to 2012, the demand for Literacy Clinic services has increased significantly. This increase is tied to two major factors. First, the Literacy Clinic expanded its programming when it moved to a new larger facility in NIU’s Health, Wellness, and Literacy Center in Sycamore, Illinois. Since moving to the new location, the clinic has added programs including America Reads after-school and summer services (funded by Federal Work Study funds), Book Buddies (offered in conjunction with two literacy courses, LTRE 231/431), Reading Individualized Tutoring Services (a fee-for-service program), and contractual programs (e.g., St. Mary’s Reading Specialist Services and Supplemental Educational Services Provider for CUSD 428). Due to strong partnerships with local school districts and a positive reputation in the community, referrals to Literacy Clinic programs have increased. Second, the economic downturn has contributed to increased demand for Literacy Clinic services. This is partly due to decreases in school-based reading support programs, coupled with more families seeking low- or no-cost reading support services because they cannot afford private tutoring or commercial tutoring programs. There are waiting lists for the Literacy Clinic’s no-cost programs.

- **Major findings and recommendations:** The Literacy Clinic provides services to over 400 clients per year. Gains made by clients are generally substantial (e.g., up to one year of reading growth after 10 hours of services). Graduate and undergraduate students receive high-quality clinical training
through the Literacy Clinic, and all indicators of their performance were met during the program review period.

- **Actions taken since the last review:** This is the first review completed by the Literacy Clinic; therefore, it is not possible to describe major actions taken since the last review. However, actions taken during this program review period include moving the clinic to a new, state-of-the-art facility; expanding services; and securing both internal and external funding.

- **Actions taken as a result of this review:** As a result of this review, the Literacy Clinic sought and received funding from the Department of Literacy Education to pay the director one month of summer salary to allow more time for the development of grants and contracts to fund Literacy Clinic initiatives and programs. This funding went into effect in summer 2013. A second important action that will be taken as a result of this review is that the clinic will scale up research efforts to examine more closely the efficacy of the programs, to develop research-based models of reading intervention, and to engage both graduate and undergraduate students in research projects through the Literacy Clinic.

**Outcome**

- **Decision:**
  
  ___X___ Program in good standing (review in 8 years)

- **Explanation:** The Literacy Clinic has addressed well the public service and teaching goals. Clients are accessing services they may not be able to afford elsewhere and are seeing important gains through these services. Students are receiving high-quality clinical training through the clinic. More recently, the clinic has begun to undertake successful research endeavors and will continue to grow in this area in the future.