

Department of Child and Adolescent Studies (CAS)

Program Performance Review (PPR)

Department Response to Reviewer Report

This report is in response to the PPR Reviewer Report submitted on April 5th 2022, by internal reviewers Dr. Rosie Ordoñez-Jasis (Dept of Literacy & Reading Education, College of Education) and Dr. Rebekah Smart (Dept of Counseling, College of Health & Human Development), and external reviewers Dr. Allison Sidle Fuligni (Dept of Child & Family Studies, College of Health & Human Services, California State University, Los Angeles) and Dr. Amber Gonzalez (Dept of Child and Adolescent Development, College of Education, Sacramento State University), hereto referred to as the “Reviewers” in the narratives below.

The CAS Department is extremely grateful to the Reviewers for their thorough examination of the program and the evaluator’s report that they provided us. The following includes the strengths and areas of concerns raised by the reviewers, followed by the Department’s response in bold.

Key Strengths

• Curriculum

The Department was commended for offering options for concentrations (Early Childhood Development, Elementary School Settings, Adolescent/Youth Development, and Family and Community Contexts) that are related in ways that ensure that critical topics of the major are covered while also allowing “...for students to choose an area of professional interest to focus on.” The Reviewers also commended our program for our intentional and comprehensive work in “preparing students to develop cultural competencies” in order to effectively work with diverse communities” and how these learning objectives have been integrated across the curriculum. Reviewers also highlighted the increased opportunities that our program has generated in service-learning partnerships, both domestically and internationally, as well as increased scholarship opportunities over the period of review, including high impact practices such as faculty led and supervised research experiences. Finally, the evaluation report noted the department’s efforts at continuing to fulfill the needs of students looking for careers in early and elementary education, such as the creation of a subject matter course path in preparation for the Multiple Subject Teaching Credential and an Integrated Teacher Education Pathway for the Special Education Credential.

The CAS department is encouraged by the Reviewer’s feedback and plans to continue looking for ways to improve the curriculum and to offer a program that is designed to adapt to any changes in the employment landscape for preschool through elementary grade level education careers, while also providing effective preparation for students pursuing non-teaching careers.

The importance of ensuring cultural competence throughout our program continues as we move to further develop more advanced and advocacy-based skillsets in our students.

Our faculty's strong scholarship and research productivity will continue to provide opportunities for students to engage in this high impact practice, and we will determine ways to better incentivize faculty mentorship and supervision of students in order to increase the scale of these opportunities and make them available to more students.

- **Faculty**

Reviewers commented on the “healthy” and “collegial” climate of our faculty community and the many scholarly and research activities of our faculty and their service contributions to the university, which they characterized as “impressive.” Their report also highlighted the significant and impactful work of our Diversity in Development committee that has provided comprehensive support to colleagues in better integrating course materials that further the aims of cultural competence in students. Reviewers also noted the robust hiring of tenure track faculty over the period of review and the commensurate increases in tenure density. Reviewers’ Interactions with our junior faculty members also indicated that our onboarding process was “supportive.” Faculty-student research collaborations were once again highlighted as a strength and particular mention was made of the “creative” way that our department has encouraged student participation and mentorship in this high impact practice via the provision of credits that can faculty release time.

Finally, the team’s interactions with students highlighted the enthusiasm students have for our program and the support they felt that faculty offered, especially in response to COVID related challenges. In addition, the Reviewers noted our students testimonies as to the myriad opportunities to interact with our faculty.

The Department is committed to continue maintaining a productive, collegial, and supportive environment for all our faculty, whether tenured/tenure track or lecturers. These efforts begin with our ability to recruit and retain faculty that align with our department values, while also demonstrating the scholarly and teaching excellence that sets them apart. We have been particularly effective in recruiting and retaining a diverse group of faculty and are set to continue in that effort as we look to hire an additional tenure-track position for the coming Fall. We hope to continue receiving the College’s support in adding faculty lines given our stable and growing student enrollment, as well as the coming retirements and the recent exits of senior faculty to upper level administrative positions at other CSUs.

- **Program Assessment**

The reviewer’s report identified our Program Assessment process and outcomes as a clear strength of our department, highlighting the support we provide to assessment activities that address its sustainability, the participation of assessment committee members who have a demonstrated expertise in their practice, and the strong collaboration of the assessment committee and the faculty overall, which in turn allows for effective “closing the loop” activities. Finally, Reviewers noted efforts at collecting student-centered data via our Exit Survey and the uniformly strong ratings students reported regarding their self-perceived preparation in key learning domains.

The department will continue to devote the necessary resources to effective program assessment activities not because of compliance requirements, but because we understand that the information gained helps us identify challenges in student learning outcomes and direct and drive the process of curricular and pedagogical improvements to address those challenges.

- **Student Experience and Support**

Reviewers reported on their positive interactions with students who shared their experiences with co-curricular and extracurricular activities, including the numerous internship and practicum offerings tied to their courses, as well as newly developed ones that have come online during the review period. The international fieldwork practicum experiences were also highlighted as particularly transformative for students.

The Reviewers also met with the principal figures of our advising team, noting their dedication to their work with students despite the acknowledged reality that more resources and personnel should be devoted to these efforts. Another advising resource that was mentioned by students was the Peer Mentoring Program, which has been consistently described as a positive factor in their educational experience.

Our major is often characterized as an applied one, and therefore the importance of fieldwork practicum and internship experiences is key to student learning and development. The department will do all it can to continue offering these experiences and expand resource intensive offerings like the international practicums if efforts at securing additional funding prove successful. We are also happy to report the return to in-person fieldwork and practicum experiences this semester as we emerge from COVID precautions and into a more “normal” curricular experience for our students.

Regarding student advising, the department acknowledges the tremendous efforts of our two major advisors and our main office staff in guiding students’ educational experiences within our program and helping them navigate a successful pathway to graduation. We continue to look for ways to increase the resources devoted to advising, acknowledging that we need more advising capacity. To that end, the College has devoted resources to hire a Student Services Professional that we will share with one other program. This new hire will help with basic advising, freeing up valuable time for our major advisors to focus on the more complicated and involved aspects of major advising.

We are also very proud of our Peer Mentor Program, members of our department played a central role in the program’s creation at the college level. This program was and continues to be the largest undergraduate peer mentoring effort on this campus and assessment studies have shown its effectiveness in improving retention and graduation rates.

Areas of Concern

- **Curriculum**

The reviewers advised the department to better track how the SLO of Cultural Competence is introduced, developed, and mastered across the curriculum and to determine why this SLO was “not

met” when first assessed. Furthermore, the reviewers asked us to examine ways to better support the efforts of those involved in improving cultural competence among our students as well as those involved in the more general efforts of improving equity and inclusivity in student learning and other student success outcomes. Finally, the reviewers recommended that CAS 300 (elements of effective professional communication) be a required course for all majors.

The department has already identified where *all* SLOs, including cultural competence, are introduced, developed, and mastered in the curriculum, as noted in our Curriculum Map. As to our students not meeting this SLO the first time it was assessed, it is important to note that the only data we have was from this initial baseline assessment, and that this SLO will be assessed again in the 2022-23 AY. This evaluation will reflect the department actions taken after the first assessment of this SLO that we believe will lead to improve student performance.

Regarding equity gaps in student outcomes at the department level, on-going efforts at advising faculty on equity minded pedagogical and curricular practices continues and will be a professional development focus during the twice-yearly department retreats. It is also important to note that recent changes in equity gaps may be reflective of COVID related changes to course modalities and students’ levels of engagement---a phenomenon not confined to our department alone.

Regarding department support for activities related to the Cultural Competence SLO and the Diversity in Development Committee more broadly, the department feels it is important to articulate that T/TT faculty in our department engage in many service activities which vary in intensity and required effort, and the understanding to this point has been that only extraordinary on-going service responsibilities are allocated additional support such as course release time. Nevertheless, we acknowledge that in some instances, specific work associated with improving cultural competence through the work of the Diversity in Development Committee may rise to levels justifying additional support of those in leadership roles, and that a process for seeking that support should to be created.

The department continues to explore avenues to alter and add to our curriculum as a means of gaining approval for a CEST waiver and we hope to establish mutually beneficial collaborations with our colleagues in the College of Education and other programs to facilitate a successful path forward in response to coming state level changes to TK-3 credentials and permits.

It is not clear how this miscommunication arose regarding CAS 300, but this *is* a required course in the major.

- **Faculty**

Reviewers noted that faculty efforts within the Diversity in Development committee need to be carefully examined for instances of cultural taxation, given the phenomenon of faculty of color routinely taking on a disproportionate burden for diversity, equity, and inclusivity efforts within department activities, but also in service to the community. Reviewers advised the department to look for ways to increase the flexibility of meeting service standards within the RTP process. Finally, reviewers encouraged the College to find ways to support these efforts at the department level through appropriate forms of

faculty compensation. Additional faculty support may also be required as the department addresses equity gaps in graduation and retention rates for its majors.

We acknowledge the very real phenomenon of cultural taxation and will work to make sure that the burdens of service responsibility are carefully monitored and balanced in a way that is equitable. Changes to the RTP standards may be part of that process, as are more general policies and protocols that encourage faculty to communicate with the chair when specific service responsibilities are perceived to be above and beyond what is considered typical and therefore deserving of greater support.

Finally, the department will re-double its efforts at trying to determine the factors responsible for increased equity gaps in retention and graduation rates, while also continuing to encourage faculty to access and reflect upon their own course level equity gaps in GPA as the first steps in using evidence-based methods to mitigate them.

- **Program Assessment**

The Reviewer's evaluation identified several recommendations to improve our department's program assessment efforts and its utility in promoting student success. These include a recommendation that the department better assess the impact of our fieldwork practicum and internship offerings on students' abilities to practically apply their learning as currently assessed in SLOs targeting cultural competency (SLO 1d) and advocacy (SLO 3c). Furthermore, the Reviewers recommended that in addition to the curricular mapping of SLOs as they are introduced, developed, and mastered, instructors consider taking the additional step of making the connection of SLOs and particular course learning goals and objectives more salient by including the relevant ones in their syllabi and explaining to students the connections among them. Finally, the Reviewers noted that in our self-study discussion of the work of our Community Advisory Board and our initial steps in better engaging CAS alumni to support the program and to determine their own post-graduation outcomes, we were stymied by a lack of resources and the tremendous work and effort it takes to properly conduct such assessments. Reviewers recommended that the University develop and administer an annual "Year-Out" survey to help the department "evaluate graduates' abilities to contribute as professionals in their work with diverse children, adolescents, and families."

We appreciate the Reviewer's focus on our fieldwork practicum and internship coursework and understand the desire to see an evaluation that connects student knowledge as assessed through the SLOs and the practical, applied skills that we would expect to see in fieldwork placements. However, this would require extensive resources given that, unlike other programs with fieldwork components, the placements our students can choose from vary substantially and cut across educational, residential, non-profit, and other community settings. Any assessment regime would have to take that variety into account. We can pledge to examine this question more fully and determine if any process could be developed that is within our means.

The idea of better integrating SLOs into syllabi and better articulating the connections between course learning goals and our SLOs has merit and the program assessment committee, in consultation with our faculty, will pursue this idea more intentionally in the near future. Finally, we are in complete agreement that an effective assessment of alumni outcomes will require University support and leadership and hope that such a process gains traction. Good alumni data would reveal information useful to the department, college, and campus in designing coursework and experiences that meet the needs of the community.

- **Student Experience and Support**

The Reviewers made clear that a consistent message that they received both from the self-study and from participants during their day-long department visit was that we need to expand the capacity of our student advising, which in turn means the necessity for greater resources. Given that our department currently has only two major advisors, the Reviewers noted that it is very difficult, if not impossible, for every one of our approximately 1500 students to see an advisor even once a year. This negatively impacts student success outcomes, such as time to graduation, and may in fact do so in a disproportionate way for students who are first-generation. Reviewers offered several recommendations to help ameliorate this department challenge, such as increasing the time (WTUs) our advisors can devote to advising (they regularly teach two or more classes a semester in addition to their advising duties), requesting and receiving college and university support to expand our advising team, and integrating some basic advising information into courses that all of our majors are required to take.

The department fully agree that our students need more advising support and opportunities to engage with our advisors. We are happy to report that the College is in the process of hiring a new Student Support Professional that will provide some basic advising support to our department--- although they will be shared with one other department. This should take some of the load off our major advisors, but is unlikely, by itself, to fill the overall need. The department is also prepared to increase lecturer hiring in order to cover courses taught by our advisors, therefore freeing up more of their time for advising. However, this can only happen if our advisors are willing to forego their teaching assignments which they view as professionally satisfying and productive experiences.

Finally, integrating some basic advising information into our coursework, especially required courses taken at strategic points of students' course pathways, has merit. However, faculty would have to be trained to provide accurate and reliable advising to students, even if it were limited and basic in nature, and that also requires time and resources. The department is willing to engage in this discussion more fully and perhaps pilot a limited test-case of such a process with volunteer faculty to determine its impact and resource needs.

Conclusion

Once again, we would like to sincerely thank the work of the Reviewers in evaluating our program and sharing their recommendations with us. Overall, we deemed this evaluation as a positive acknowledgment of the efforts of our faculty and staff in providing for the success of our students in

all the ways we have determined as important and have articulated in our self-study. We also appreciate the constructive feedback the Reviewers provided that noted the challenges we face and the concerns—both present and future—that we must be mindful of. We will do our best to address these concerns where possible, although in many cases we will require additional resources to do so. Ultimately, our goal is steadfast in serving our students and preparing them for post-graduation life-- whether that be for their careers, continued post-baccalaureate education, or purposeful and beneficial impacts in their families and communities.

Sincerely and on behalf of the Department of Child & Adolescent Studies,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ioakim Boutakidis". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'I'.

Ioakim Boutakidis, Ph.D.

Chair & Professor of Child and Adolescent Studies.

Corrections:

We identified a few errors in the Reviewer's report that we would like to correct for the record. They are as follows:

*CAS 300 was identified as an elective course. It is a required course

*A meeting with our advising team was described by the Reviewers as comprising of a faculty member and 2 staff members. The advising team at that meeting was comprised of a tenured faculty member serving as a major advisor, 2 office staff members, and one lecturer also serving as a major advisor

*The acronym indicated for the Elementary settings acronym was listed as CHAD. The correct acronym is CHAS.

*Reviewers appeared to be under the impression that we assess students in every single class for programmatic assessment. This is not the case. Specific courses are targeted for specific SLOs.