

**Department of Child and Adolescent Studies
Program Performance Review**

Reviewer Report – Spring 2014

Submitted by

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Introduction

The Program Performance Review (PPR) at CSU Fullerton is designed to “assure that curricular offerings and instructional methods are meeting the needs of the various constituencies served” (UPS 410.200). The Department of Child and Adolescent Studies (CAS) submitted a written report in March of 2014. A team of 2 external and 1 internal reviewers received the report and during the course of a one day visit on March 20, 2014, met with the Department Chair, The Dean of the College of Health and Human Development, students in the major, department faculty as well as the department’s assessment team, staff and field work coordinator. The following is an analysis of the department based on the self-report and meetings. This report includes an analysis of the Department’s strengths as well as recommendations for future planning and continued excellence.

The Department of Child and Adolescent Studies (CAS) at CSU Fullerton has a rich history and outstanding reputation. The Department offers a Bachelor of Science Degree in Child and Adolescent Development (CHAD) with four options (Early Childhood Development, Elementary School Settings, Adolescent/Youth Development, and Family and Community Contexts). The CHAD major requires 51 units, including a basic core of 9 units shared across all options. Based on its reputation of outstanding, engaged faculty, rigorous curriculum, and a tradition of excellence, the department has experienced consistent and steady growth in both First-time freshman and Transfer applications. In Academic Year 2005-2006, 415 First-time freshmen applied and 233 were admitted. In 2012 514 applied and 217 were admitted. This represents a 23% increase in First-time freshman applicants in 7 years. Transfer applications have similarly increased (by 21%) over this period of time. In academic year 2012-2013 the total headcount was 1,168.5 for both lower and upper division courses. Graduation rates for all students are consistently high and CAS had a noteworthy improvement in graduation rates for first time freshman over the period of review.

The department FTEF was stable during the period of review, typically ranging from 22 to 24. From AY 05/06 through AY 12/13, the number of tenured/tenure-track faculty remained fairly stable (range=11-15). The Department successfully hired five tenure-track faculty during this period, and several faculty members were tenured and/or promoted. In the spring of 2013, an additional tenure-track faculty member was hired and joined the Department, bringing the current total to 14 tenured/tenure-track faculty members. This number includes five assistant professors, four associate

professors, and five full professors.

Meetings between the team and the various constituent groups yielded in-depth information about the overall program functioning as well as details about curriculum, assessment methods, faculty strengths, and student interests. Overall, the team was impressed by the department's leadership, faculty, staff, and students, and with the College administration. The following are specific areas emphasized in the Program Performance Review for 2014.

Curriculum

A. Key Strengths

The curriculum required of the B.S. in Child and Adolescent Studies has been designed in a way that should lead students to a broad and well-integrated knowledge of the discipline. The sequence of coursework provides students with empirically-derived knowledge about physical, social, emotional, and cognitive developmental milestones from conception through adolescence and individual and cultural differences across typical and atypical developmental trajectories. The 51 unit requirements for the major include a common core of 9 units shared by all students. The common core includes a foundational introduction course (CAS 101), an introduction to child, family and community (CAS 201) course, and a course exceptional children. It is noteworthy that this core is consistent with the Lower Division Transfer Pattern agreement in Early Childhood Education between the California community colleges the CSU system. Given that the majority of community college transfer students who complete coursework in Early Childhood Education select Child and Adolescent Studies as their major upon transfer, this curriculum well serves community college students in terms of time to graduation.

Students choose from four options that provides an area of emphasis tailored to common professional pathways pursued by majors after completing the Bachelor's degree: Early Childhood Development, Elementary School Settings, Adolescent/Youth Development, and Family and Community Contexts. These pathways provide opportunities for students to complete coursework and develop peer networks among students with common professional interests given the wide range of career options available to students completing this degree program.

The Department is to be commended for adding the Option in Early Childhood Development as the four curriculum pathways based on career interests were created. In the state of California, the B.S. in Child and Adolescent Development - Early Childhood Development Option fulfills requirements for teachers in state funded early care and education settings, so it is important to have coursework that provides depth of understanding in early childhood.

Over the past seven years, the Department has increased the number of courses and sections available in fully online or hybrid formats. Currently, all of the core CAS classes have been approved by the University to be delivered in an online format which suggest that attention to

effectively decoupling seat-time from student learning is being addressed. In addition, several CAS faculty members have participated in training opportunities to learn how to deliver high quality online instruction. The Department continues to discuss ways to ensure that online classes are of high quality.

The CHAD majors complete two practicum courses prior to graduation culminating with a 60 hours of service hours at a minimum in community-based organizations. It's noted that in many cases students exceed this minimum. In addition to providing rich educational experiences for CAS students, these practica provide campus community partners with over 25,000 hours of service per year. This is evidence of the Department's strong commitment investing in students' professional and career development as developing professional experience and professional networks often increases undergraduate students' marketability for employment and advanced degree programs.

Noteworthy is the Department's investment in offer all of the core courses for the degree program at the satellite campus in Irvine. This allows students who work full-time and who are geographically farther from the Fullerton campus access and opportunities to complete the Bachelor's degree.

B. Recommendations

Currently, one full-time lecturer serves as a department fieldwork/practicum coordinator. Her responsibilities include providing an overview of the fieldwork/practicum to all majors, communicating with the University's Center for Internships and Community Engagement, advising students regarding field placements, and serving as a liaison to the community organizations in partnership with the Department. Given the increase in the number of students served by the department, care should be taken to sustain, if not supplement, the resources available for practicum coordination.

As the University develops University-level policies regarding student internships as prescribed by the Chancellor's Office ([EO 1064](#)), the Department might consider reducing the large number of current practicum sites available to students. It is laudable to seek to offer such a wide range of types of sites in such an extensive geographical area. However, this strategy can result in placements of uneven educational value and can challenge the department's ability to develop the kinds of relationships with site personnel that will assure proper student oversight. The Department might identify current, high quality practicum sites which have the interest and capacity to accommodate a larger number of students per term to reduce the number of sites CAS students are placed at. This may facilitate programmatic communication between the practicum coordinator and site supervisors. Striking a balance between the breadth of sites given the range of career paths/settings, and the capacity each site may serve the Department well. This may increase the Department's ability to effectively manage and maintain a quality practicum experience.

Faculty

A. Key Strengths

A notable strength for the Department is its faculty. As described above, the teaching staff has remained fairly stable, both in number and in actual composition, over the past several years. As is typical of the CSU, a bit over half (58%) of the FTEF is comprised of tenured or tenure-track faculty. While the department has lost a small number of T/TT faculty to retirement and other considerations, it has successfully recruited several others and plans are underway for two additional hires (one each in 13/14 and 14/15). These new hires will deepen the Department's strengths in the areas of diversity, clinical and educational applications, and leadership and team-building. At the moment, the T/TT faculty are evenly distributed across the ranks of Assistant, Associate and full Professor, effectively creating a good balance of experience.

Faculty develop and sustain active scholarly agendas, as evidenced by their publications and professional presentations, by their success in securing grants, and by the range of services they render to their professional communities. It is noteworthy that the Department has made the commitment to supplement the re-assigned time made available to tenure-track faculty by the College and by the University significantly, resulting in a reduced course load for the Years 1-5 of the probationary period. This decision reflects the collegial and communal spirit that is evident in many aspects of the Department's functioning. This significant investment has contributed, no doubt, to the productivity of the junior faculty.

Relatively recently completed construction of a new lab space should facilitate continued on-campus data-collection and research productivity. It should also facilitate continued involvement of students in faculty members' research, affording more students access to one of the "high impact educational practices" most clearly associated with student academic success and perseverance.

The quality and level of engagement of Department faculty is not lost on students. During an hour-long session with a dozen CAS majors, students repeatedly spoke of the obvious commitment and passion which their instructors brought to their teaching and advising. They provided numerous examples of instructors encouraging and challenging students to excel ("...they try to push you to get professional experiences and to do things you never dreamed of trying to do..."). They commented on their instructors' wide-ranging areas of expertise, and on the depth and relevance of the curriculum. And they indicated that they felt their instructors were caring and professional in their responses to students' difficulties.

B. Recommendations

The Department has identified four key priorities that have implications for its faculty: (1) maintaining the currency of the curriculum, (2) incorporating more High Impact Educational Practices in the curriculum, (3) continuing to provide robust advisement for students and (4)

continuing to engage in meaningful program- and course-level assessment.

In order to succeed in meeting these goals, the Department and its faculty will need to continue to be successful in its tenure-track hires, and will need resources from the College and from the University, including a viable SFR as well as material support. The existing Departmental culture and generally positive attitude would appear to be exemplary, as faculty “step up to the plate” to assume leadership roles and assist one another in a wide variety of service capacities. In order to sustain this level and quality of effort, care must be taken not to over-tax the faculty, or ask them to assume significantly more responsibilities.

Faculty have begun to explore ways to provide professional growth and development support for mid-career and senior faculty, including re-assigned time, as well as funds for research and for professional travel. The literature is quite clear on this point: this kind of investment is critical if faculty vitality and engagement is to be sustained throughout the arc of the career.

Program Assessment

A. Key Strengths

For the past seven years, the CAS Department has been utilizing a systematic process to assess the quality of student learning. The department has a formal Assessment Committee consisting of a chair and three additional faculty members. The committee regularly gathers evidence to evaluate student educational outcomes. This process is designed to determine, on an ongoing basis, the strengths and opportunities for improvement of the program. The department developed a comprehensive framework of student learning outcomes with four major learning goals, that touch on knowledge, skills and professional behavior that the Department expects its graduates to possess. The department assessment process is collegial and faculty driven. The committee leads the process but all faculty are engaged – both full time and part time.

The Department developed a five-year, cyclical plan to systematically assess outcomes. The results are used to improve the program, change the curriculum and enhance pedagogical practices where necessary. As part of this cycle, each year two learning goals are comprehensively assessed. Data points may include common assignments in designated courses or stand-alone assignments specifically created as part of the assessment plan. As a result, the department has “closed the loop” each year in a variety of ways.

Overall, the CAS Department has been a campus leader in the assessment process. The department’s approach and commitment to assessment is outstanding and commendable. The Department and Assessment team has approached this critical academic endeavor with a great deal of seriousness, effort and energy. The result is an ongoing process that is scientific, comprehensive and serves as a model.

B. Recommendations

It is important for the College to support the Department's serious effort to assess the impact of its program in meaningful ways. The amount of time spent by faculty serving on the Assessment Committee should be recognized and factored into workload considerations. Future configurations of the assessment team may also include Part-Time faculty, who play a critical role in the department. If this important work is to continue, faculty time and departmental resources should accurately reflect the costs associated with this ongoing effort.

Student Experience and Support

A. Key Strengths

Consistent with the Department's goal to promote student success through effective advisement and support there is ample evidence to corroborate our conclusion that the Department highly values and facilitates students' learning and students' development during their university experience both in- and outside of the classroom.

Advisement: The Department has developed an organized and well-thought out and implemented advisement system where new majors are provided necessary information to navigate the degree program in an academic advising overview. Students then meet with an academic advisor on an individual basis to review the University's degree audit portal to develop personalized academic plans. Students are encouraged to review academic plans with advisors on a regular basis. The advisement services are provided at both the Fullerton and Irvine campuses during business hours and evening times. The Department also holds group advisement sessions prior to registration periods and "Live Grad Check" meetings where students are able to have a "real-time" audit of their viability to graduate. They can receive direct feedback and advisement regarding whether their candidacy status is valid.

Co-Curricular Experiences and Perceived Support from Faculty: Students describe that the Department (its faculty) is tremendously supportive and engaged with students outside of the classroom. The Department is providing rich early research experiences for its students. Students shared how their participation in research has been a catalyst for their interest in pursuing advanced degrees. Although these students are typically earning independent study units used toward the degree, it is worth noting that the true faculty workload inherent in effectively engaging undergraduates in scaffolded research experiences is inadequately captured in CSU faculty workload reports. The high level of investment incorporating undergraduate students in research has been shown as a predictor of success and engagement of students, particularly for first-generation college students and thus this work is to be commended.

The Department has also actively participated in University initiatives that engage students. The Department offers community service learning classes, freshman learning communities at the residence halls, an active department-affiliated student organization, and use of peer mentors via a Title V Department of Education grant focusing on student retention and degree completion rates. Particularly noteworthy are the international fieldwork experiences CAS offers its students. Specifically, the internship experience in Thailand was described by students as life-changing and the highlight of their university experience. The program faculty and staff should be commended for the time, care, and work they have dedicated to this important and deeply meaningful program.

Student Feedback: During our meeting with current students, they used a variety of adjectives to describe their experience as CHAD majors including, but not limited to: *enjoyable, eye-opening, experience-based, rollercoaster, lifegiving, enriching, fulfilling, adventurous, stepping stone, scaffolding*. Each of these descriptors speak to the rich academic experiences students are receiving, but also to the “high-touch”, warm and supportive community the Department has created and nurtured for its students.

B. Recommendations

As indicated above in the commendations, the Department has been consistently active in creating rich learning experiences and opportunities for professional and career development for undergraduate majors. One recommendation to consider is designing a formal system for tracking the paths of graduates from the program including employment and career paths (e.g., entry-level job positions, matriculation into graduate programs) related to the practica experiences. With budgets continuing to tighten, the department would do well to accrue more systematic evidence of the benefits experiences (i.e., the practica, international experiences, and early research experiences) they are providing their students.

As the advising system continues to develop, the Department might consider developing online assets/resources (i.e., a Department YouTube Channel, LinkedIn or Facebook page) where short video tutorials regarding advising, and videos featuring faculty, students, and alumni can be available.

Conclusion

Throughout this report, we have highlighted a number of key strengths of the Department. We have also enumerated a number of recommendations which, we feel, if implemented, will enable it to continue to thrive and excel. We summarize some of the themes of our report below:

- Department faculty members have continued to work effectively and collegially to develop and offer a high quality curriculum to a growing number of students. Courses are rigorous and rich in engaging educational experiences. Students emerge well-prepared. Care must

be taken not to over-extend faculty in delivering this curriculum, however. And care should be taken to make strategic choices about field placements for students in the practicum courses.

- Department faculty make monitoring the effectiveness of their programs an important part of “business as usual”, such that students’ needs are clearly recognized and met. The assessment strategy developed by department faculty is excellent. But again, resources must be provided and care should be taken to ensure that its continued implementation does not become burdensome.
- We noted the efforts the department has gone to, to ensure that junior faculty are provided with resources and release time to establish themselves, professionally. We are hopeful that resources can be identified to extend similar opportunities for professional growth and renewal to the tenured faculty as well.
- And lastly, a spirit of collegiality is evident in throughout the arenas in which faculty work together in all areas of departmental functioning. It would appear that departmental personnel are well matched to the kinds of tasks they have undertaken, and that opportunities abound for faculty to assume leadership roles in numerous areas departmental and campus governance. As senior faculty move along and as new faculty are “folded in” to the mix, we hope such a department culture can continue to thrive.

In closing, we offer this final comment. At the heart of CSU’s mission is the commitment to provide an education for its students that equips them to be life-long learners, that prepares them to pursue a wide variety of professional and personal goals, and that helps them contribute meaningfully to their communities, broadly defined. The Fullerton Department of Child and Adolescent Studies is, in many ways, an example of this mission fulfilled.