

**Review of the MAEd in Community College Administration Program at
Western Carolina University
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I. Introduction

a. Visit

This visit focused on a review of the MAEd in Community College Administration program housed within the College of Education and Applied Professions, Educational Leadership and Foundations Department at Western Carolina University. The Review Team conducted its investigation on March 8 and 9, 2010. An indepth review undertaken of a program of this nature in a compressed timeframe doesn't allow for detailed examination of the program but rather allows findings to be based on relatively short interviews with multiple stakeholders, observations and the reading of materials.

b. Summary of meetings conducted by the review team

The review team met with a wide array of WCU's employees during the campus visit. Those people interviewed by position are the Program Director, Department Head, Dean of the College, Dean of the Graduate College, Office of Institutional Effectiveness representatives, Office of the Provost representative, students, and alumni of the program. The team also met with the previous Department Head who remains a WCU faculty member. This discussion allowed the team to gain a valuable historical perspective of the MAEd program since most other employees directly associated with the program are relatively new hires of Western Carolina University. The review team also toured the ITV facilities.

II. Analysis of Program

a. Graduate Program Curriculum

(a) It is difficult to analyze the curriculum of the Master of Arts in Education Community College Administration program (MAEd), without considering its relationship within the Educational Leadership and Foundations Department (in future referred to as ELF). In order to create uniformity and to allow for integration and coordination of the various programs in ELF, it is recommended that the quality concepts focused here on the MAEd program be concurrently developed in the EdD, and other programs of the ELF. It should be recognized that the knowledge, skills, and attitudes acquired in the program must prepare graduate students for work effectively, in this case, in the 18 community colleges of the region and the state. The accepted way proposed by experts in the field is to redefine the curricula to reflect competency based or a quality outcome approach to experiential learning, to seek efficiency in program offerings, to reconstitute a strong and competent faculty, to commit to the policies and procedures of the graduate school and the college of education, and to re-establish communication with the field. The set of recommendations in this section of the report are designed to achieve that essential goal.

(b) The curriculum for ELF programs would typically include a *Core* consisting of courses in, (1) programming and evaluation, (2) foundations, (3) teaching and learning, and (4) organization and administration. The *Specialization* as it relates to the MAEd typically consist of courses taken within the department reflecting the application and practice in community colleges as determined by recent research as to the emphasis and importance of academics, student development, resource development, and institutional effectiveness and research.

The research component typically consists of *Statistics for Behavioral Sciences*, *quantitative* and qualitative methods, and more recently, models for blending both quantitative and qualitative methods in step-wise research projects.

The program leader can determine interdisciplinary work of the faculty based on their existing expertise with consideration of the strength of the department in the core and specialization.

Each graduate student must be assigned an initial advisor. This decision should be the graduate student's choice within the policies developed by the department to prevent overloading of some faculty. The department must provide professional development to faculty in teaching, supervising research and service specifically to community

colleges in the region and state, especially as it relates to the adjuncts and junior faculty.

The ELF department should look to research, core and specialization courses designed to accommodate graduate students in the community college program in combination with those in K-12 or higher education. Such actions increase both efficiency and effectiveness, and often enhance the concepts of K-16, K-12 in the region.

Under the recommended cohort model, those students beginning course work at the same time should experience the same courses together, especially as it relates to core courses. Under on the recommended cohort model, those students beginning course work together should also experience the same core courses together. Thus, electives within the three components should not be allowed, except in unusual circumstances. Appendix 2 of the *Response to Program Review Standards* must be preceded by a strategic policy review in the college of education in order to be in compliance with the Graduate School and the College of Education. Once this step is completed, the ELF leadership team should revise the strategic plan as it relates to its programs and its personnel.

In the event that a graduate student is required to drop out or stop-out of the program, due to health reasons, some method should be available to join a next cohort or to catch up with their cohort depending on the circumstances. EDSU 605 *Principles of Supervision* should not be substituted for EDHE 615 *Leading the Academic Department*, in the MAEd program, since the principles of supervision do not typically correlate well with modern leadership principles, especially as applied to higher education environments. EDHE 615, *Leading the Academic Department* should be a prerequisite to EDHE 683, and the internship should be taken in the third or fourth semester to allow the community college some flexibility in accommodating interns in their academic environment. The general elective component of the curriculum should be designed for the graduate students to receive additional instruction and to increase competency gain in his or her area of interest in the community college. Thus, the committee would like to seek the addition of a resource management course to include a component of grant writing and management. In addition, it is important that EDHE 693 *Guided Electives*, be taught employing the more important student development framework based on the advocacy process at the American Association of Community Colleges. Of particular concern on the part of the committee is the lack of a change management course in the MAEd program. Essentially change strategies must be a part of any quality education program, and such a course should be perceived and required as part of the review of the strategic plan.

In general, once the program competencies for the MAEd program are determined and approved by the department and the graduate school, the program for the MAEd must be reconstituted. It is possible that other changes might be necessary at the course level and in coordination with the ELF Department. Certainly the courses should be reviewed; in some cases new professors assigned, topics and content updated and evaluation procedures brought in line with the competencies. In addition, a major writing and problem-solving component must exist in each course. Adjunct professors must be assigned completed syllabi and not expected to develop syllabi themselves. Also, it is expected that adjuncts will receive adequate professional development and training in the employment of competency-based instruction and experiential learning. In addition, exploring the possibility of hiring a consultant this summer with expertise in competency-based curriculum development may be advantageous to reconstitute the competency-based framework for the courses in the MAEd program, and then allow the assigned professors to add appropriate and up to date content for each assigned course.

(c) Course Content. The content and focus of courses in the MAEd must be examined by a course content review team to determine the extent to which the courses must be modernized related to competency bases, and evaluation methods, and thus, to be revised to fit the stated purpose of the department and the MAEd program. (The program's purpose is stated; "*Central to this purpose is the development of leaders who can think critically, communicate, innovate, and perform effectively in the lively environment of the community college.*" A quality graduate program such as the MAEd will evaluate and measure the extent to which its purpose is being accomplished. This concern leads to a continuous quality program in which behavior, competencies, courses and the program are being revised on a continuous cycle.

(d) Writing requirements. In order to achieve the program's purpose, significant writing requirements must exist across the curriculum. It must be the policy of the department head of ELF to ensure the approved competency list for the department contains a substantive requirement for all courses and program offerings for a writing component to be evaluated on a standard protocol and feedback to students on timely basis. The university writing center should be able to provide assistance in the development of a graduate writing protocol, and this element must be significant evaluation criteria for all graduate courses in the ELF department. A method for feedback to graduate students within a course was provided to the MAEd program leader by one of the consultants providing this evaluation of the MAEd program.

(e) Program and course competencies. Modern graduate programs develop competency lists for all graduate programs. Given the hierarchical nature of the ELF programs, a common set of competencies can be developed with specialization

language for the three levels of education leadership, as required. A competency model was provided to the program leader of MAEd, and this document can be modified to the extent necessary to provide essential competency lists further modified to fit the level of the competencies within the education leadership paradigm.

(f) Case-Study Approach. In order to motivate students to master the stated purpose of the MAEd program, faculty should consider introducing the case-study method of instruction, where possible. One way to build cases that relate to problems and challenges in the community colleges served by the program would be to provide presidents and other members of their leadership team with a case writing module, and then allow them to present the cases in class. Students would provide solutions to the case or problem area while working in teams, and the presenter could indicate the actual solution to the presented problem. In these and other courses in the program, to the extent possible, relevant and timely cases, or as appropriate, single concept cases should be employed as such strategies increase general leadership competency, problem-solving, as well as the quality of writing against a standard set of criteria.

(g) Criterion-referenced evaluation. The course content review task force, or similar team, should ensure that program and course evaluation processes are related to the competencies and the objectives of the course. Short answers and multiple choice options should be kept to a minimum and evaluation criteria must be clearly stated in the syllabi of each course. A syllabus model employing modern curriculum applications was provided to the program leader of the MAEd program. It is suggested that the ELF Department Head and her program leaders constitute the departmental leadership team and revise the model to fit the needs of the department.

(h) Cohort tracking. In order to predict course and program scheduling and evaluation, student requirements, and program development and evaluation, a cohort tracking process should be employed. The recruiting schedule should be developed and the program leader, department head and selected faculty should recruit students in the fall, winter and spring to enter the program as a cohort, commencing with a summer orientation program. First priority should go to the 18 community colleges in the region, then the remaining community colleges in the state, and third, other community colleges as required completing the cohort. In this effort it will be important to work with the presidents and the leadership teams of the 18 regional community colleges, and through this effort have them, as appropriate, participate in the review and revision of the program.

(i) Admissions standards. The secret to attracting a cohort of students who can meet the admission standards, and to successfully complete the program is to raise the level of expectations by those who work in, those who attend, and those who support the program. Under this model the successful and satisfied students and graduates become

recruiters for the program. In the MAEd of this type, the verbal score on the GRE becomes a key predictor of success in the program, and research on previous admissions would allow the program to establish a cut-score range that has predicted success in the past. The second part of the admission process is a writing sample that provides an indicator of motivation and commitment, as well as some indication of the thought processes and writing skills of the potential graduate student. The third typical assessment criteria are an evaluation by the immediate supervisor of the potential graduate student in order to ensure the support of the individuals accepted in the program. One of the reasons for conducting research on previous graduates is to establish a range of cut-scores to provide a basis for admission into the program and to allow a second set of decision-making for ethnic minorities who typically score lower on examinations of this nature. The department might determine admission criteria and policies of the UNC System, and apply them appropriately to meet local needs. Once admissions standards are approved by the Graduate School, exceptions should be rare and be based on a consensus of high potential for success in the program, with the expectation that students who score significantly below standard without other evidence of future performance, will typically require extra help and will often become a burden to the graduate student team process and with the faculty of the program.

b. Student Body

The students who met with the review committee presented themselves in an excellent fashion, and appeared to be of sufficient quality for a reasonably good master degree program. Several of the students were WCU employees and others worked at nearby community colleges. While these students were not cherry picked for the meeting, their close proximity to WCU may well be a factor in their volunteering vs. those from other locations.

The program's internal review report does indicate that a certain percentage of the students are not able to write at a level that is expected of graduate students. The ability of community college administrators to master and demonstrate outstanding communications skills both orally and in writing is a non-negotiable competency. These skills also are prerequisites to group problem solving, creativity, collaboration, entrepreneurial initiatives, innovation, etc. The point is that the program should consider a set of criteria for student admission that can be formulated by researching best practices of other like-type institutions of higher education.

Based on a limited amount of feedback from the session with seven of the program's students (two graduates and five current students), there seems to be a lack of support services for students who take classes at a distance. Further data from a much larger random sample of students across several disciplines should be collected and analyzed before any definitive action is taken. Students who are employees of WCU can

generally navigate the administrative processes, but it is because they can easily help each other.

WCU should examine the way in which support services are provided to students who do not attend classes on its campus. The students that the review team met with indicated that support services for students at a distance were neither transparent nor easy to navigate once they were identified. While the preceding comment is limited to only the MAEd students and cannot be generalized beyond the group, it does deserve further investigation by WCU academic disciplines that offer classes at a distance.

Planning and assessment strategies

The program as currently structured is essentially a collection of courses based on history and consisting of content that the current faculty desires to teach. Given this situation, there seems to be adequate evidence that student learning is insufficiently documented. For the most part, the individual faculty members drive their own development and execution of the planning and assessment initiatives. As in other aspects of this report, planning and assessment strategies should flow from a policy framework of the college and the department.

The bigger and more urgent question relates to the degree to which the student learning goals and outcomes are on target with the knowledge and skills needed by today's and tomorrow's community college leaders and administrators. The College/Program is urged to do research-the literature (e.g., AACCC Presidential Profile) along with other documents, and generate data from the Community College Presidents in the WCU service area to formulate a set of measurable outcome competencies. Once these competencies are adopted, a realigned curriculum with appropriate assessment strategies can be codified for a high quality MAEd program.

III. Analysis of Faculty

a. Qualifications

Appendix 4: Faculty Resources of the program "Response to Program Review Standards" presents an adequate picture of the qualifications of the faculty in the MAEd program, but inadequate to support both the master and the doctoral programs. What is evident however, is that faculty, in general, have not used their professional talents to align the program with the changing demands of the 18 community colleges served in the region. Adding new blood into the programs and looking for ways to link the MAEd and EdD programs in a ladder configuration would encourage the best master students to continue in the doctoral program, when appropriate, can deal with this issue. The data support the fact that faculty are overloaded and that the essentially unsupported EdD program, while important to the college, department, and program, is an additional workload for the faculty. It would be reasonable to assume that efforts

in this doctoral program affect negatively the quality of the MAEd program. It is possible to staff for the doctoral program, but programmatically, it should be seen primarily as a capstone professional opportunity for successful graduates of the MAEd program.

b. Resources and support

The dean of the college, the graduate dean, and the provost, agree that recruitment for two additional positions is likely once the program has been reconstituted. In addition, a mutual agreement must exist among the MAEd program director, the ELF department head, and the dean of the College of Education in deciding that the program is ready to admit a full cohort of students. If this is planned for fall 2012, it would be important to commence these searches this summer. In addition, it might be possible to accelerate the tenure process for the current MAEd program director, unless it is the belief of the leadership that a more experienced faculty person could and should be recruited. In one situation, an associate professor, who has had leadership experience in the community college could be recruited to handle some of the core courses and to handle the internship program by coordinating with the leadership teams of the 18 community colleges in the region. Moreover, a second full-time professor could be recruited at the assistant level, and if appropriate, a professor who is currently serving part-time could be considered. It seems that the current program director should be retained in her role. She has impressed the evaluation team with her energy, vision, and administrative and leadership ability.

Faculty compensation was beyond the scope of this External Review Report. However a general discussion of promotion and tenure protocols indicated that the policies of the College of Education and of the Graduate School were adequate in all aspects. Notwithstanding, as part of the Graduate School and College of Education strategic review, these concepts and policies should be reviewed and revised as necessary.

c. Teaching, Research/Creative Activities, and Service.

From the data analyzed, the quality of the full-time and part-time faculty in the program varies in an expected, but not necessarily a student development manner. What seems to be missing is long-term stable administrative leadership in the program. As previously discussed, in other aspects of this report, evidence exists that syllabi do not include some of the most recent quality concepts in experiential and competency based learning. Student evaluations and performance expectations vary across the program based on the philosophy of the faculty member. Where these essential teaching and learning processes and outcomes vary to the possible detriment to the quality competency enhancement of the student, the leadership of the university,

college, department, and program must increase consensus building, standards of individual and team performance, and supervision, as necessary.

There is evidence that the over-loading of faculty in the program is taking its toll in the research and creative activities of the faculty. Some faculty members do not show evidence of publications in the past three years, and junior faculty seems to be publishing more than some of the senior faculty. The Graduate School and the College of Education should conduct research to determine the average faculty load in all graduate programs; this would be especially true in the University of North Carolina System. Loading faculty excessively in teaching and associated assignments is unreasonable while simultaneously creating an expectation that the typical faculty member can carry out an associated quality research and service program.

IV. Analysis of Operational Facilities and Budget

a. Facilities

The facilities for the program appear to be adequate to very good. The library resource support is strong and most resources are available to students via electronic connectivity. The number of E-Books, Electronic Journals, and Education Databases are certainly adequate for the number of students and faculty currently associated with the program.

b. Budget

The review team did not examine a detailed budget for the program. However, the budget apparently does not allow for additional faculty members during the current fiscal year. Both the Dean and Department Head indicated that they are preparing requests to add two faculty members in FY11. This will require support from the state legislature or the reallocation of existing financial resources within the University and/or the College. In order to grow the program, both in terms of quality and number of students, the new faculty members are a prerequisite. While the level of the new faculty members is the College's decision, they all should have had successful administrative experiences at the community college level. Community college administration is much different than K-12 and senior college level administration.

V. Summary of Programs Strengths and Areas for Improvement

a. Overall impression of the program

The MAEd program is an excellent base from which to launch a much-needed high quality program that prepares mid-level leaders for community colleges. The program is the only one in North Carolina and can be molded to not only serve WCU's service area but the entire state and region.

The Review Team's general observations are:

- The program has done better than could be reasonably expected with the support and resources that it has been provided.
- The program fills a unique niche and growing need for highly qualified mid-level community college leaders and administrators.
- The program should move to an online delivery methodology with adaptations for some short and highly intense face-to-face group mentoring.
- The program with appropriate WCU sponsorship could become a Center of Excellence for the preparation of mid-level community college leaders and administrators.

b. Overall strengths of the program

The program does have a number of current, as well as emerging, strengths:

- The one faculty member that the Review Team met with is highly qualified and committed to the program. (The other faculty member was not available to the Team because of illness.)
- The Dean of the College and the program's Department Head both expressed a strong desire to provide the leadership support needed for a high quality program.
- The Dean of the Graduate College is supportive of the program but stated that major policies and procedures must be developed and adhered to.
- Those associated with the program are committed to flexible delivery methodologies and are not "married" to the outdated industrial model of pedagogy.
- The incorporation of a student internship experience in the program is an exemplary feature.
- All parties indicated that growth in program quality is first and this will lead to increased number of qualified students.
- The current students, as well as graduates, are very positive about the program, faculty, and especially the Program Director.
- The program's access to the Office of Institutional Effectiveness for the generation of strategic data is noteworthy.
- The number of females associated with the program who are preparing to be community college leaders and administrators is impressive.

c. Areas for improvement of the program

- Through collaborative and open discussions a shared vision must be developed for the program.
- Reconceptualization of the unit's core programs and services is in order given the availability of financial resources to higher education in North Carolina. (Thirteen (13) areas do seem almost unmanageable for the size of the unit.)

- The strategic plan for the college and program need to be updated to assure coherence and connectivity.
- The curriculum for the program must be reformulated in a competency based format with clearly defined and measurable exit program outcomes.
- The methodology employed to calculate faculty load should be re-evaluated, e.g., advisement of doctoral students should be a part of load.
- The College should clarify the value placed on excellence in teaching and other scholarship initiatives.
- The Program/College should develop and adhere to criteria for the admission of students to graduate work at the master degree level.
- The Program should establish and adhere to a level of academic rigor appropriate to graduate work at the master degree level.
- The College/Program must consistently engage in a high-level of dialogue with a cohort of community college leaders.
- The lack of minority students and faculty associated with the program is noteworthy.
- The Program should give consideration to requiring students to write a master degree level thesis in lieu of the comprehensive examination. The advantage of a thesis is that students are required to write as well as apply research skills both of which are of significant value to community college leaders and administrators.

d. Summary of Recommendations

- The desired terminal outcomes for the program must be determined and then a curriculum with a systemic scope and sequence must be developed, implement, and evaluated on a continuous basis.
- The program should consider enrolling students in a cohort format rather than rolling enrollment.
- The program must have additional faculty to meet growth goals in quality, quantity, and diversity, especially faculty members of color.
- The College should determine and announce the true priority of the program in relationship to its other programs and services.
- The College/Program should seek and generate extramural funding for improvements and sustainability.
- The College/Program should develop and adhere to criteria for student admission into the program.
- WCU should solicit and use feedback from stakeholders in its services area to assure that programs and services are aligned with the area's needs.
- The College should define a methodology for determining faculty load at the graduate education level.

- The College/Department Head should clarify the role, authority, and responsibilities for the Program Director.
- The College/Program may want to give consideration to changing the name of the program to Community College Leadership and Administration.