

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



Office of the
Head

Department of Curriculum and Pedagogy
UBC Faculty of Education
2125 Main Mall
Vancouver, BC, Canada V6T 1Z4
Tel: 604-822-5337
Fax: 604-822-4714
peter.grimmett@ubc.ca

January 30, 2015

Dr. Blye Frank
Professor and Dean
Faculty of Education
University of British Columbia
2125 Main Mall
Vancouver, BC
V6T 1Z4

Dear Blye,

RE: EDCP Response to External Review

On Thursday January 15 2015, the Department of Curriculum and Pedagogy had its first session deliberating on the findings and recommendations of the External Reviewers' final report. On Wednesday January 21, 2015, the graduate students in the department met to discuss the same report. Here I report the initial findings of these two meetings and characterize the process the department will follow between now and an off-campus retreat in May where we will set about developing a five-year strategic plan.

These two initial meetings have provided an overview of the direction the department wishes to take during the process leading up to the May retreat. A very useful initial but thorough discussion took place at the January department meeting. Faculty members attempted to prioritize recommendations in order of importance and urgency. The graduate student meeting was equally useful, attempting a similar purpose of prioritizing the report's recommendations for future deliberation.

Summary of the discussion at both meetings

#1. *Develop a 5-year strategic plan* was seen as important and scheduled to come together at an off-campus retreat in May 2015.

#2. *Take the lead in undergraduate teacher education* was postponed until the February department meeting research conversation at which discussion will be framed around how the department can work with others to move the teacher education agenda forward at UBC.

#3. *Expand the EDCP-based M.Ed. [cohort] Program offerings* was a recommendation that the department had already deliberated on before the review but has yet to be quite explicit about the parameters circumscribing such offerings as they relate to faculty members' other responsibilities as scholars and teachers. Hence, the discussion on the implementation of this one will come later.

#4. *Redefine and promote the M.A. and Ph.D. programs solely in terms of curriculum studies* was a recommendation that provoked much discussion, debate, and controversy for both faculty members and graduate students.

#5. *Further differentiate research-intensive programs (M.A. & Ph.D.)* provoked little debate because most members seemed to agree with this recommendation. Again, there is a need to explicate the details and direction of how that differentiation should occur. It was seen as closely linked to recommendations #3 and #4 and needs to be considered in light of these recommendations.

#6. *Ensure equitable workloads* provoked some discussion, largely on account of members attempting to understand how the reviewers understood that cohorts could be run without coordination. Coordination of areas and cohorts is indeed time-consuming service. Some members noted that when EDCP members undertake coordination of program areas on top of full 12-credit regular loads, it creates an inequity in the Faculty because, contrary to the Dean's directive in 2011, other departments still allocate coordination credits to their members. Hence, EDCP members see the recommendation of *ensuring equitable workloads* as a directive to the Dean rather than the department.

#7. *Enhance the doctoral student experience* was a recommendation members agreed with but again, needs to be explicated in concrete possibilities.

#8. *Increase staff complement* was not yet adequately discussed and, despite the current fiscal environment, some noted that the complement of staff supporting EDCP faculty is small relative to that in evidence at major research universities comparable to UBC, and that EDCP staff members are quite over-extended in their jobs with things as they are now. Given the department's contractual involvement with the Princess Nora University in Saudi Arabia and the strong possibility of the department beginning to run its own cohorts, I shall be proposing to the EDCP Leadership Executive and the department that we use some of the funding to address this as a priority.

#9. *Continue to enrich and sustain the intellectual vibrancy present in the Department* was a recommendation all agreed to, hence was not discussed in detail at this initial stage.

#10. *Update dysfunctional lab equipment and spaces* provoked discussion on what needed to be done.

#11. *Produce a more critical, reflective, and useful self-study for future reviews* was acknowledged but not discussed at any length at this time.

Prioritization of recommendations:

#4. *Redefine and promote the M.A. and Ph.D. programs solely in terms of curriculum studies.* Faculty members noted that there is inherent tension within the department between a position steeped in the historically based status quo (i.e., keeping the subject area specializations intact) and the position recommended by the reviewers (i.e., dissolving them into new program formations under curriculum studies where there is a critical mass of researchers). It should be noted that this is a longstanding sustained discussion within the department on this issue and potential for clustering (e.g., Arts, STEM). While acknowledging the importance of this issue, some questioned the extent to which this specific department problem was indeed resolvable or is a priority. Others were strongly of the opinion that Recommendation #4 had little merit (a few expressing strong disagreement) on the ground that eliminating the specializations at the M.A. and Ph.D. levels would likely make EDCP programs less attractive, would negatively affect student recruitment and intake, and ultimately have implications for the overall sustainability of the department as an academic unit¹. Others found contradictory statements about specializations in the report to be perplexing. For example, the reviewers had pointed to the various subject areas as strength in the department while also recommending that all M.A. and Ph.D. programs be redefined and promoted solely under the umbrella of curriculum studies without reference to specializations. The graduate students shared the concerns of many department members about recommendation #4. At the same time, they felt that the review had highlighted some important issues that need to be addressed and called for their prioritization in the discussion moving forward. For example, they do not believe that EDCP has the necessary faculty members to support graduate students in all of the specializations currently offered, a situation that is exacerbated for them when a faculty member in a specialization takes a sabbatical leave. Their suggestion is that a solution involving compromise needs to be found to this dilemma and they urge greater collaboration between and among departments as a way of helping students academically and financially.

#10. *Update dysfunctional lab equipment and spaces.* This was prioritized this as urgent by graduate students and one group of faculty members. We understand “lab” to refer not only to math, science (biology, chemistry, physics), technology, and home economics labs but also to music rooms and art

¹ Eliminating specializations at the M.A. and Ph.D. levels could likely have a further consequence—one that was not raised at the department meeting, but important perhaps to register. That is, what would this mean for the academic and scholarly careers of department members who have developed and established their careers and scholarly identities in areas of study outside of curriculum studies (strictly defined)?

studios. Specifically, the graduate students detailed how music rooms are actually music hallways with no soundproofing, and that there is no space available for students to practice their art. Their proposed possibilities were to see if the new Ponderosa building offered opportunities or a collaborative agreement could be made between EDCP and the Faculty of Education with the Department of Fine Arts and the School of Music to address these concerns. One group of faculty members noted that the word “dysfunctional” does not adequately address their concerns about the laboratories, claiming that they function as well as they do because of diligent faculty and staff. The labs require considerable updating of equipment. For example, data projectors should be installed in the biology and chemistry labs to eliminate the use of computer carts.

#2. *Take the lead in undergraduate teacher education* will be the focus of the February 12, 2015 department meeting research conversation at which the discussion will be framed around how the department can move toward enhancing the teacher education agenda at UBC.

One recommendation that was conspicuous by its absence was any reference to research. This was because the external reviewers were impressed with the amount and quality of research and scholarly activity that the department as a whole undertakes, given our heavy involvement in, and commitment to, the teacher education program. Indeed, it was noted that recommendation #9. *Continue to enrich and sustain the intellectual vibrancy present in the Department* was essentially a complimentary reference to the department’s scholarly activity and research productivity. At the department meeting, the issue of a strategy for deepening and sustaining our continuing research purpose and productivity was mentioned as an important focus for moving the department forward, even though it was not given prominence by the review team in their recommendations. We are of the view that it is our high quality research and scholarship that has had a demonstrable impact in the world, which, in turn, brings both recognition and status to the department, the Faculty and the University.

Action Plan

We plan to establish four task forces to address each of the four (three plus one) prioritized recommendations and report back to the department at the May retreat.

Task Force #1 will grapple with the question of graduate programs in the department and the tension that is created around the recommendation to redefine and promote graduate programs² around

² Recommendation #5 *Further differentiate research-intensive programs (M.A. & Ph.D.)* and recommendation #3. *Expand the EDCP-based M.Ed. [cohort] Program offerings* will be delegated to the departmental GAC as part of their ongoing work.

curriculum studies without reference to specializations. It will involve an examination of how disciplinary, trans-disciplinary, and inter-disciplinary work can be effectively undertaken in the same academic unit.

Task Force #2 will address the question of updating lab equipment and spaces, including math, science (biology, chemistry, physics), technology, and home economics labs, music rooms, and art studios. Part of this work will involve a careful documentation of the centrality of the lab spaces to the distinctive contribution that EDCP makes to the undergraduate and graduate teacher education programs.

Task Force #3 will examine the role played by the department in the teacher education program with a view to seeing how we can continue to work constructively with the TEO to move the program forward toward a highly regarded and outstanding preparation process that attracts high numbers of tuition-paying students.

Task Force #4 will examine strategies for deepening and sustaining our continuing research purpose and productivity that is manifested in peer-reviewed publications in the department. This will involve looking at ways in which the department can provide incentives for research practice, commensurate with each individual faculty member's career stage and sensitive to the mix of funded and non-funded research that exists in EDCP

This then constitutes our initial response to the report of the external reviewers.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "P.P. Grimm", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Peter P. Grimm, Ph.D.
Professor and Head