

University of South Alabama
College of Education
ANNUAL REVIEW AND PROJECTIONS 2008

THE MISSION of the College of Education is to provide students with quality, accessible undergraduate and graduate professional education, to prepare graduates for professional careers and life-long learning, to promote the creation and dissemination of knowledge, to service our constituents through professional development programs and community outreach, and to assist regional educational agencies in meeting their professional obligations.

OUR VISION is to become the Gulf Coast leader in producing professional educators committed to life-long learning and the improvement of communities.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Beginning in Summer 2004, the College undertook an ambitious re-organization plan intended to: (1) expand the leadership opportunities in the College; (2) improve equity in and accountability for decision making; (3) reduce redundancy in routine operations; (3) increase efficiency across the various units of the College; (4) increase institutional diversity; (5) make us more responsive as a College to external demands; and (6) promote collaboration among ourselves and with our educational partners. For the past year, we focused our attention as a College on realizing 42 objectives organized under five major goals. Significant achievements have been realized that meet 37 of these objectives although most of these objectives remain operational, if not strategic (e.g., diversification of faculty and students, promoting faculty-student interaction, or expanding community engagement). Plans are underway to revise the current mission and vision statements of the College and align the goals more closely with the recently revised *USA Goals and Objectives (2008-2013)*. A detailed review of all current objectives and related results is appended to this summary.

Goal 1: To build academic quality and improve the learning environment

Achievements

Programs in Special Education (Master's), Library Media (Master's), and Reading Education (Master's) modified admissions criteria to expand the range of eligible applicants and respond to growing market demands for graduates in these areas. Similarly, criteria for admission to all Educational Specialist programs (Ed.S.) were made more rigorous with the addition of GRE writing and reading tests. Graduate admissions processes were revised across all programs to meet current state standards. Requirements for all Alternative Master's Programs were aligned to conform to NCLB regulations and to meet new ALSDE requirements. Integration of the new Alabama Quality Teaching Standards and the merger of undergraduate preparation programs in Elementary, Secondary, and Special Education are nearing completion with a review by the Alabama State Department of Education anticipated for July 2009.

Results across all areas of training on exit surveys of undergraduates programs and graduate programs indicated that 99% of undergraduate students and 94% of graduate students were satisfied overall with their preparation. Data from the Alabama Teacher Preparation Performance Profile indicated that 100% of the people who were trained in instructional support areas (counseling, educational media, and educational leadership) were satisfied with their preparation. Data from the Alabama Teacher Preparation Performance Profile that surveyed initially certified teachers from USA indicated that overall satisfaction was 86%. Less than 90% were satisfied with preparation in strategies to improve reading comprehension (80%), preparation in recognizing and referring special needs children (43%), preparation for working with special students in inclusive settings (48%), preparation in using technology to improve instruction (85%), preparation in using technology for record keeping (71%).

Several initiatives responded to the challenges of living in a culturally diverse, economically turbulent, and increasingly global environment. The latest University data show retention rates for scholarship students in the College at high to moderate levels for the past two years (90% and 76%, respectively). The College's efforts to recruit and retain minority students continue to lead the University and exceed College goals. Enrollment figures for spring semester 2007 versus spring semester 2008 show very modest gains in percent and raw number of students for African Americans (22.4% to 24.1%/490 to 500) and for All Minorities (25.3% to 26.6%/555 to 559). Nonetheless, data from the university for students who start out as first time full-time freshman, and data from an analysis of transfer students indicate that six year graduation rates are at 42% for first time freshman and 44% for transfers.

Responding to local demand for teachers prepared to work with the area's growing population of non-native speakers of English, a proposal to establish a master's program for English Speakers of Other Languages has been submitted to the ALSDE for review. Expanding our global outreach, collaborative agreements for student and faculty exchange were signed with the University of Salamanca (Spain) and Dongguk University (Korea). Collaboration with the University of Jyväskylä (Finland) has expanded to embrace teacher and leadership preparation in addition to current initiatives in counseling as well as health and physical education. The College sponsored a visit to campus by a team of educators from the University of Costa Rica as part of our previously approved collaborative agreement.

The Advising Center was refurbished and the reorganization completed with an increase in staff to four full-time and one half-time members. Mentoring programs for students and recent graduates were refined and an aggressive program for recruiting candidates from two-year colleges was initiated. Surveys of our graduates indicate that over 90% are generally satisfied with their programs with the highest area of satisfaction being with the overall performance of Student Services and the Advising Center.

Professional development programs were successfully implemented to improve multicultural literacy, the use of qualitative research methods, the development of competitive contracts and grants, the integration of portfolio assessment into the curriculum (Foliotek), and curriculum revisions to meet emerging standards. An active mentoring program for new faculty was continued with the provision of start-up funds to support research, pairing with a faculty mentor, and financial support through an extensive program of internal grants.

Faculty annual reports evidence increased extramural involvement, especially in collaboration with school and community partners. Teacher preparation programs are being revised to include greater involvement of faculty in school-based activities and student field experiences in every course. Curriculum development and school counseling planning meetings were held with the Mobile County Public School System (MCPSS) and the Baldwin County Public Schools (BCPS) to revise curricula and increase collaboration. Significant partnerships were created to support math and science instruction in area schools, especially for poor and minority students, through competitive grants secured by College faculty. Finally, the College, in collaboration with the College of Arts and Sciences secured ACHE approval for the first-of-its-kind doctoral program in Clinical and Counseling Psychology, which will fill a critical shortage of professional psychologists in the region and provide enhanced mental health services to area citizens.

Challenges

Delays in the adoption and clarification of revised state standards and the necessity to collaborate with local educational agencies, which are themselves under reorganization, have slowed revision of the undergraduate curriculum. Recurrent revisions in the use of Tracdat have confused planning. The latest version, accompanied by

timely reports from the Office of University Research, promises to greatly enhance data-driven decision-making for the future.

Goal 2: To improve the quality of student life and the campus atmosphere*Achievements*

Efforts to diversify the faculty continued as one tenure-track Asian male, one tenure-track Hispanic female, and an additional four women were added to tenure track positions. One woman was hired on a renewable Instructor appointment. An experienced African-American Full Professor was hired to mentor minority faculty and serve as a resource to faculty college-wide in writing for publication and multicultural issues.

To improve the multicultural climate in the College, we sponsored a distinguished lecture series on diversity, held monthly brown bag luncheons and Friday workshops, sponsored the Make-A-Change program for high school students, and sponsored faculty-student-staff attendance at a diversity luncheon. Students were included in College-sponsored diversity initiatives: we held a student honors and awards banquet, student-parent pre-graduation receptions in UCOM, and a reception for alumni of our Instructional Design and Development program. In addition, revision of the College website was completed to make it easier for students to find accurate and up-to-date information and advisement forms. The restructuring of the Student Advisement Center has been completed and staff members have been added as noted above. Computer equipment was upgraded in some classrooms and computer labs and the remodeling of the common areas in the UCOM building were completed. Plans for expansion of the College and the relocation of the Psychology Department in UCOM have been agreed upon with Arts & Sciences and a rough architectural plan and preliminary budget has been proposed to the President.

Challenges

The College must continue its aggressive recruitment of minorities in every search and expand its participation in campus/conference visits to establish a network of references. Although significant improvements have been undertaken in UCOM, the PE Building is woefully inadequate as an instructional facility and demands immediate and extensive renovation. Plans to establish a student alumni society have proven difficult to implement and greater attention is being given to supporting several disciplined-based and honor societies sponsored by the College.

Goal 3: To reinforce and improve the public image of the College*Achievements*

The College held its second Founders Day to celebrate its founding and contributions to improving education in the Gulf Coast for over 40 years with keynote speeches by local, state, and national education experts and 13 presentations by faculty, students, and alumni on their research.

The College continued to work with the Office of Development and Alumni Relations to create a vigorous development program. The Office of Field Services was expanded by the addition of a full-time Instructor to assist in planning, placement, and supervision and has undertaken the preparation of a detailed Teacher Preparation Field Services Manual to standardize policies and practice across placements. Data indicate high levels of satisfaction with student teaching and internship supervision by partner schools. The College again co-sponsored a community-wide Education Summit attended by more than 200 business, education, and community leaders, and collaborated extensively with local schools, charitable foundations, government and human service agencies, civic organizations, and area businesses to improve K-12 education. A completely redesigned web-page has made access to college-sponsored activities easier.

The Instructional Leadership and Teacher Mentor programs in the College have been hailed by officials in the Alabama State Department of Education as models for the rest of the state. The extensive University-wide collaboration that led to the Center for Autism and Developmental Disabilities is playing a leadership role state-wide in setting the agenda for research and development for services to children with autism and their families. College sponsorship of the Alabama Math, Science, and Technology Initiative (AMSTI), the Alabama Reading Initiative (ARI), and the South Alabama Research and In-service Center (SARIC), and the position of the Dean as the sole representative for higher education on the Executive Committee of the Governor's Commission on Quality Teaching have put the College in the forefront of educational reform in Alabama. Formal approval of international faculty exchanges noted above are bringing positive international attention to the excellent work being done by our faculty, in addition to their professional service as editors, authors, reviewers, program chairs, and association presidents in their disciplines.

Challenges

Persistent leadership challenges in area schools, coupled with escalating demands on public education, and national critiques of teacher preparation continue to erode confidence in the ability of public schools or colleges of education to respond effectively to critical economic and social conditions. An emerging public consensus on the need to improve public education notwithstanding, improving public perception of the role of professional educator preparation programs remains a critical component of community improvement efforts. Increased attention to the need to support the College through the otherwise highly successful University Leadership Campaign should be a priority.

Goal 4: To improve public and private financial support for the College

Achievements

External grants funding increased from \$4.7M to \$5.5M over the previous year with the number of funded external grants increasing to 20. The number of principal investigators remained constant (7). There were 25 proposals submitted for external funding in FY08 compared with 19 proposals in FY07, with a yield of 80%. Four professional development (internal) grants were awarded for a total of \$4,992. The number of principal investigators has declined since the inception of this program (from 7 to 4 to 2). A program for creating scholarship endowments has been established and five new awards were established to support students pursuing degrees in the College. Professional development programs aimed at improving faculty expertise in grantsmanship and qualitative research were conducted. One new staff member was hired to implement Banner Financial and to assist with budget transactions and clerical support in the Office of Contracts and Grants.

Challenges

Too few faculty have experience conducting funded research and/or lack viable models of "real world research" to guide the improvement of their own practice. Heavy teaching loads continue to draw faculty away from investing additional time into the development of new skills and areas of practice. Lacking a record of success in securing external funding and intensified competition from research universities in Alabama and neighboring states make it more difficult to succeed in securing necessary resources to rise above the crowd. Although more than \$47,000 has been committed to fostering grantsmanship through the College's Professional Development Grants Program, the decline in applicants demands increased attention to mentoring faculty to develop researchable questions from their own scholarship and teaching.

Goal 5: To improve planning and assessment processes*Achievements*

Attention has been focused on creating a more transparent and replicable assessment process across all units and activities in the College and on creating a sustainable leadership succession plan. Although the number of female faculty has increased substantially over the past three years to now represent nearly 60% of the total faculty, women and minority faculty at the Instructor and Assistant Professor ranks comprise nearly 50% of the total faculty. One female currently serves as an Assistant Department Chair and four females are members of the Dean's Administrative Council. In an effort to expand both leadership opportunities and decision-making, a set of roles and responsibilities were formalized and 12 program coordinators were appointed, eight of whom are female.

The Faculty Council was actively engaged in identifying key issues for policy review. A representative committee of faculty and administrators reviewed current policies, practices, and faculty concerns related to faculty evaluation and made recommendations regarding the standardization of procedures across departments. Uniform procedures for preparing tenure and promotion materials, a college format for the preparation of vitas, submission of annual goals and accomplishments, and the posting of critical materials (e.g., minutes of meetings, recent policy decisions, standardized forms, etc) to the College website were instituted. The Student Portfolio Assessment process was expanded to all undergraduate educator preparation programs and plans have been developed to expand adoption by all College degree programs. Program review committees are functioning effectively, and all relevant reports have been submitted to the appropriate accrediting bodies. Faculty satisfaction surveys for all administrators were administered with faculty reporting increased levels of satisfaction overall. Results were used to enhance participation in decision-making, focus evaluation procedures, and provide targeted support for faculty by rank. In particular, mentoring programs to support faculty research were conducted and a senior minority faculty member was hired to serve as a role model for research and instructional development in multicultural education.

College faculty were actively involved in the development of strategic plans for areas schools and the Dean serves on the Executive Committee of the Mobile Area Education Commission, which is charged with oversight for community-based planning and the transformation of education in the area. Advisory committees were established for all college units/programs, strategic planning committee members identified, and a meeting planned for October 2008.

Challenges

Problems persist with aligning current business practices, procedures in Banner, and the most current state financial practices. Progress in completing program restructuring was delayed by changing state standards and recurrent delays in bringing critical partners to the table. There is a continued need to establish clear guidelines for assigning faculty evaluation and for the provision of appropriate incentives and rewards for meeting the strategic objectives of the College. With the current and anticipated depression in financial support for higher education, the College is challenged to find strategic solutions to critical and continuing problems. Updating the current strategic plan to bring it into alignment with the University plan is under development.

RLH: October 15, 2008