

**University of South Alabama**  
**College of Education**  
**ANNUAL REVIEW AND PROJECTIONS 2007**  
**Executive Summary**

Beginning in Summer 2004, the College undertook an ambitious re-organization plan intended to: expand the leadership opportunities in the College; improve equity in and accountability for decision making; reduce redundancy in routine operations; increase efficiency across the various units of the College; increase institutional diversity; make us more responsive as a College to external demands; and promote collaboration among ourselves and with our educational partners. For the past year, the College has focused its attention upon realizing 38 objectives organized under five major goals. Significant achievements and persistent challenges to realizing these goals are presented below. A detailed review of all objectives and related results is appended to this summary.

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

*Achievements*

Programs in Educational Leadership and Special Education were substantially revised with support from competitive grants awarded by the ALSDE to re-design their curricula to conform to new state standards as models for other institutions in the state. Requirements in USA Class B, A, Alternative Class A, and AA teacher education programs were approved by the Alabama State Board of Education on April 13, 2006 through April 12, 2011 and graduate admissions processes were revised across all programs to meet current state standards. Admission requirements for all alternative master's programs were all clarified to conform to NCLB and ALSDE requirements and integration of new Alabama Quality Teaching Standards into undergraduate programs was completed. The graduate programs in Instructional Design and Development reported success in meeting four post-implementation conditions set by ACHE.

The College exceeded its goal of 25% minority enrollment and was identified as 39<sup>th</sup> on a national list of colleges of education granting baccalaureate degrees to African Americans. The University data for full-time first-time freshmen, show Education majors have highest GPA for those returning and lowest for those not-returning across all colleges with a six-year graduation rate for freshman of 42%.

Student services were restructured and the Advising Center was reorganized and expanded resulting in an overall improvement in student advising on the undergraduate level. Programs were initiated for mentoring students and for recruiting candidates from two-year colleges. 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.

New faculty were hired in the critical areas of mathematics, science, reading, and special education to address long-standing shortages in these disciplines. Professional development programs were successfully implemented in multicultural literacy, qualitative research methods, contracts and grants development, technology (eCollege use), instructional design and curriculum revision, and active mentoring programs were conducted for new faculty, women faculty, and minority faculty.

Internet-based distance education with regional schools was expanded and videoconferencing capabilities were established with USA Baldwin County. Security cameras were installed throughout UCOM and in strategic locations outside the building with monitoring by campus police.

*Challenges*

Formal adoption of revised state standards has slowed revision of the undergraduate curriculum. Further, the ALSDE has not generated its annual "report card" at this writing, making a full assessment of employer satisfaction with the teaching performance of our graduates difficult to report objectively.

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

A central challenge facing the College is the diversification of its faculty and the development of a more welcoming environment for minority students. To these ends we hired an African-American male faculty member in Secondary Math and Science Education after a three-year search, promoted an African – American woman to Assistant Professor in a tenure-track position, appointed an African-American male with expertise in multicultural issues to a position as Visiting Professor, and one Hispanic woman was given a one-year temporary appointment. Three women were added to tenure track positions. 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-Difference program for HS 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 an IDD alumni reception. In addition, we completed the renovation of the physical facilities in the University Commons to improve “wayfinding” in the building and reduce noise while also creating a more welcoming environment. The College Web site was revised to make it easier for students to find accurate and up-to-date information and a digital message system was installed in the remodeled lobby in UCOM. The Student Services Office has been reconfigured to provide greater visibility and access to these services for students and our newly hired Coordinator of Student Advisement has completed a restructuring of the policies and procedures to redesign the program of services. Computer equipment was upgraded in some classrooms and computer labs and common areas in UCOM building were remodeled for student use.

*Challenges*

Enrollment figures for Spring 2006 versus Spring 2007 show negligible change in percent and raw number of students for African Americans (22.4%/490) and for All Minorities to 25.3% (555). Both figures exceed the University averages of 18.4% (undergraduate) and 24.1% (graduate). The College must continue its aggressive recruitment of minorities in every search and consider 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 if not demolition and replacement.

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

The College held its inaugural Founder’s Day over a three-day period to celebrate its founding and contributions to improving education in the Gulf Coast for 40 years. The College has established an office and a director of Development and Alumni Relations who has undertaken a vigorous development program on behalf of the College. The Office of Field Services has developed consistent policies for internship placement. Data indicate high levels of satisfaction with student teaching and internship supervision by partner schools. The majority of faculty report active engagement with the community. The College co-sponsored a community wide Education Summit attended by more than 600 interested citizens and school officials and collaborated with the Mayor's office to evaluate high school academics in Mobile as one of only two competitive grants awarded nationally by the US conference of Mayors.

A completely redesigned web-page has made access to college-sponsored activities easier. Competitive state grants to restructure educational leadership and special education and to support AMSTI and ARI, 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 with Finland and Costa Rica and a Fulbright Award to one of our faculty are bringing positive international

attention to the excellent work being done by our faculty. Faculty are actively involved as editors, program chairs, and association presidents.

#### *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. Lack of a community-wide vision and committed political and financial support for improving education K-20 constrain efforts to meet these demands.

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

#### *Achievements*

External grants funding increased from \$4.3M to \$4.7M over the previous year with the number of funded external grants remaining the same (12). The number of principal investigators remained constant (7). There were 19 proposals submitted for external funding in FY07 compared with 20 proposals in FY06. Four professional development (internal) grants were awarded for a total of \$14,004. The number of principal investigators declined (from 7 to 4). The Office of Alumni and Community Relations was established and a Director hired in collaboration with the University's Development Office. A program for creating scholarship endowments has been established and two new awards established in the name of participating faculty. A College Alumni Society was established, by-laws written and implemented, and officers elected. A plan for increasing student and alumni participation in College-sponsored activities is under development. Professional development programs aimed at improving faculty expertise in grantsmanship and qualitative research were conducted.

#### *Challenges*

Few faculty have experience conducting funded research and 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.

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

#### *Achievements*

Two new staff were hired to implement Banner Financial and oversee budget transactions in the Office of Contracts and Grants. A representative committee of faculty and administrators was appointed to review current policies, practices, and faculty concerns related to faculty evaluation, an initial meeting was held, and an action plan was developed for future consideration. A platform for student portfolio assessment was adopted, the current process was revised, training modules were developed, a pilot test of the system was conducted, five faculty were trained as key administrators, and a plan for implementation in fall 2007 was developed. Initial entries using TracDat have been successful, program review committees are functioning effectively, and all relevant reports have been submitted for self-study for accreditation of Instructional leadership and alignment of all undergraduate programs with new Alabama Quality Teaching Standards. All courses, except for PE activity courses, are now evaluated through the eCollege survey system to enable more responsive feedback and all field experiences are evaluated by the students, faculty, and on-site supervisors.

Faculty satisfaction surveys for all administrators were developed and administered with faculty reporting increased levels of satisfaction when compared to last year. Results were used to modify decision-

making, reduce meetings, and provide mentoring support. In particular, mentoring programs for women and minority faculty were conducted and a senior minority faculty member was hired who could serve as a role model for targeted areas of research and instructional development in multicultural education. The Chair of the Faculty Council was appointed to the Dean's Administrative Council that develops policy and procedures in the College. Faculty Council actively engaged in identifying key issues for policy review.

*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 eCollege integration with portfolio provider. There is a continued need to establish clear guidelines for assignments, faculty evaluation, and the provision of appropriate rewards. Current strategic planning is limited to the College with input from University and community partners. Integration of College plan with community-wide goals for education awaits development.

RLH: August 10, 2007