



Department of
Educational Policy Studies
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

April 19, 2024

To: Dean Diana Hess
From: Lesley Bartlett
Re: Response to Review Committee Report

We are pleased to respond to the EPS Academic Program Review External Report (January 28, 2024) and to the five questions posed in your memo of February 19, 2024. The EPS department discussed our response at our faculty meeting on April 19. It was approved unanimously. We would like to thank everyone involved in this process. In particular, Cindy Waldeck was extremely helpful.

1. What strategies might the department adopt to protect the strengths of the PhD program, as the size of the undergraduate program grows? Might the size of the undergraduate program eventually need to be limited?

The PhD program continues to thrive even with the growing undergraduate major. Our PhD students are competitive for some of the top fellowships and honors in the country and have great job placements. However, the department needs to address graduate teaching as many faculty teach undergraduates and rarely offer a PhD seminar or course. This will be a subject of discussion at a department meeting, where we will likely need to agree upon a rotation of graduate courses. We are committed to remaining a top-ranked, robust graduate program. We would welcome some guidance on whether central campus will address the minimum graduate enrollment size required for graduate classes. Given the decline in the number of graduate students, it is more difficult to maintain the past minimum in seminars central to our programs. We would also welcome more ideas from the dean's office in the coming years to enhance summer support for our graduate students. This will hasten their ability to conduct their research and writing and complete their graduate education in a timely way. And we will closely monitor the size of our undergraduate courses and assess how it affects our graduate program.

2. What effect does a reliance on Teaching Assistantships have on PhD students' academic experience and/or time to degree?

TA-ships are one of the few sources of PhD student funding in the department. Therefore, we must fund most of our students through these opportunities. They provide graduate students with essential experience, which has undoubtedly made many of them competitive nationally in what will remain a tight job market at the college and university level. We are also mindful that over-use of Teaching Assistantships can increase time to degree by taking time away from research; however, our time to degree has been fairly steady despite this expansion in TA-ships as funding sources. We will carefully monitor trends and address concerns as they appear.

3. What opportunities might the department have to expand Research Assistantships or Project Assistantships, along with more time for mentored research and pilot

studies?

PA-ships require outside funding (grants), and our department has a limited number of large grant writers. When available, we often offer students PA-ships; however, this also means fewer TAs for our courses. Several of our graduate courses offer mentored research studies, and as a faculty we should revisit how often and when these are offered. Some colleagues would like to work more closely with key members of WCER to strategize on how to create strong multi-methods proposals, pair people across interests, and leverage graduate student financial and intellectual support even in areas where they do not have direct personal research interests. We very much need additional support and help in creating new partnerships in areas that receive large grants and awards, and in thinking creatively about how to partner with Foundation efforts to increase donor support for graduate student research experiences. We have occasionally done this with other units on campus, but the efforts are difficult to sustain. We would especially welcome more ideas about how to support student research, especially for international students. The sources of external funding have diminished significantly over the past decade.

4. What strategies might the department adopt to address the unique funding needs of international students and/or students conducting international research?

We have often devised creative ways to offer summer funds for research in general, and we have continued to seek new ways to support students doing international research in particular. Most federal funding agencies do not allow funds for international students, so a more creative approach to a training grant is needed. We have sought and continue to need help from foundations, the Dean's Office, and other key individuals to raise more funds. We should stress that EPS has had some success in this area. We received funding from the Andreas Kazamias award to help support international students. Many of these students and our faculty have successfully competed for prestigious grants on and off campus. Individual members of the department have also tried to persuade professional contacts at various foundations to enhance funding for international research.

5. What opportunities, if any, might the department have to expand its MS program, given the lack of guaranteed funding available for MS students? Would an expansion of the MS program be desirable or undesirable?

Our MA program does not currently generate any revenue for the department. However, as a faculty we have discussed ways we might expand our MA program to include an option that might be feasible and revenue generating. While this might potentially create a different kind of pipeline into the PhD, it will only increase equity if we can secure additional funding for students. The department has creatively tried to imagine a 15-month MS program. This would be more affordable than our current program.

Many thanks again to the many people who gave their time, energy, and expertise to make this review process successful.