

Request to Plan a Doctoral Program in Curriculum and Instruction at East Carolina University

Introduction

East Carolina University requests approval to plan a doctoral program in Curriculum and Instruction (CIP: 13.0301).

Program Description

The proposed PhD program in Curriculum and Instruction will prepare graduates for leadership and teaching positions in universities, pre-K-12 school systems, and government agencies that address methodological and substantive issues, curriculum policy, and practice. To prepare graduates for these roles, the program will focus on developing advanced expertise. Students will:

- develop advanced expertise in research on issues in curriculum and instruction
- analyze and evaluate curriculum policy
- evaluate instructional programs based upon the latest research from applied learning theory and cognitive science
- apply advanced methods of curriculum assessment, including measurement and scaling
- design initial and continuing professional development in areas of program specialization
- use advanced technologies in the design and delivery of instruction, including a focus on development of expertise in distance learning
- design and evaluate policy and programs which address the unique needs of educational systems in rural settings

The PhD program will accomplish these educational objectives through advanced preparation in one of three specialty areas: elementary education, reading/literacy, and special education, each of which will be based on a common core of study. Coursework in the common core will include foundational study in two major areas:

1. Curriculum and Instruction (e.g., trends in school learning theory/cognitive science; curriculum design and development; curriculum theory, reform, and change; curriculum policy issues in small and rural schools; advanced applications of technology in curriculum and instruction).
2. Research Methodology (e.g., advanced statistics; measurement and scaling; qualitative research and multivariate analysis).

The proposed PhD in curriculum and instruction is designed for students who hold master's degrees in the specialty area they intend to pursue. They will also be required to hold current teaching licensure in that area. An extensive research dissertation project focusing on the candidate's specialty area (elementary education, reading/literacy, or special education) will be the capstone experience for all doctoral candidates.

The PhD program will be characterized by four critical design features. First, the program will develop a strong in-field research emphasis. This emphasis will be the focus of both the common core and each of the specialty areas. As part of advanced study within each specialty area, students will apply expertise and perspectives gained through the common core in conducting school-based research on curriculum policy and practice within the discipline represented by their selected area.

Second, the PhD program will be designed to maximize the involvement of doctoral students in collaborative projects with faculty and area schools. East Carolina University has a long standing and nationally award winning partnership model (Christa McAuliffe Exemplary Teacher Education Award). The Latham Clinical School Network represents a formal partnership of sixteen public school systems and the College of Education at East Carolina University. Through this network and working with highly qualified faculty members, doctoral students will be deeply and continuously engaged in research, program development, professional development, and other activities linking their coursework to school settings on a continuing basis.

Third, the issues and challenges associated with the design, delivery, and evaluation of curriculum and instruction in pre-K-12 schools will be a continuing emphasis throughout all elements of the PhD program. In this regard, the College of Education houses the Rural Education Institute (REI) (<http://www.coe.ecu.edu/rei/>), one of two state-funded institutes focusing on research and program development connected to rural schools. REI, along with the Latham Clinical School Network, will provide mechanisms for engaging doctoral students directly in research and program development in rural schools and will provide logistical and financial support for such research on a competitive basis.

Fourth, the PhD program will place a strong emphasis on the role of technology in curriculum and instruction, particularly within distance learning settings. Within the common core, students will complete a course focused on advanced technologies, especially as they relate to distance learning and other matters associated with the delivery of highly specialized content instruction within rural settings. Within each specialty area, coursework will focus on the use of new technology developments, including distance learning technologies.

In summary, the PhD in curriculum and instruction will prepare its graduates for teaching, leadership, and in-field research roles that are necessary for the future advancement of pre-K-12 curriculum policy and practice. As future leaders equipped with advanced expertise in the design and conduct of research in their area of specialization (elementary education, reading/literacy, and special education), graduates will complete the program with a deep understanding of and significant experience in dealing with systemic curriculum and instruction problems, issues, and solutions associated with pre-K-12 schools. Additionally, graduates will have advanced proficiency in technology utilization and evaluation, especially distance learning at the university level.

Program Review

The review process for requests to plan is designed to determine if the proposal is developed to the stage appropriate for taking to the Graduate Council and if so what are the issues that may need further attention. Proposals to plan doctoral programs are reviewed internally. The concerns from the reviewers were summarized in a letter to the Chancellor prior to the presentation to the Graduate Council. That summary follows:

One reviewer notes that while the proposed program will fit well in the College of Education, for the proposal to be plausible there needs to be four new faculty members as indicated in the proposal. There should be evidence of commitment by the College or Administration to this expansion.

While there is evidence of demand and need for the program the reviewer thought more information should be provided in support of the need for the program. And more evidence would be helpful to understand the hypothesis that there may be a faculty shortage in this field.

The focus on rural needs and the use of technology both play to the strength of ECU. More development is needed of how the campus's commitment to online learning will play out in the program.

Graduate Council

The Graduate Council had, as a basis for its consideration, the proposal to plan the program, the summary letter to the Chancellor, and a presentation to the Council by representatives of the program. In addition to the issues raised previously, the following concerns were expressed by Council members: whether this should be Ph.D. program or Doctorate of Education program; whether incorporating three areas into the program (elementary education, reading/literacy, and special education) made the doctoral program too broad. On the other hand, Council members thought the emphasis on field experience in K-12 and in rural areas was very positive.

Response

Representatives of the program emphasized that what was needed was a research-based doctoral degree so that even the practitioners would be trained researchers not just critical consumers of research. ECU envisions practitioners out of this program taking a leadership role in curriculum and instructions and initiating and managing research on what works in their schools. So they have a rationale for training graduates to a higher level. That level would also be needed for those graduates who might seek an academic position.

The breadth issues was not seen as a problem since ECU expects the student to already have a master's degree and licensure in one of the three areas of potential specialty.

Need for the Program

With the need for more teachers in North Carolina growing there will be the need for more faculty to prepare those teachers, and a need for more highly trained practitioners to

provide leadership in curriculum and development for evidence-based teaching and decision making. Another feature of the program is to attempt to specifically address the needs of rural schools, of which there are many in the ECU orbit.

Recommendation by the Graduate Council

After consideration of the issues raised by previous reviewers and Council members, the Graduate Council voted, without dissent, to recommend approval for East Carolina University to plan a doctoral program in Curriculum and Instruction.

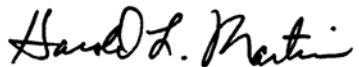
Issues to Address in Planning

In addition to the issues required as part of the planning process, the role that online learning will play in the program should be explained; the faculty resources that will be needed and their commitment; and any further evidence regarding potential faculty shortages in college and university teacher education programs should be included.

Recommendation

The staff of the General Administration recommends that the Board of Governors approve the request from East Carolina to plan a doctoral program Curriculum and Instruction.

Approved to be Recommended for Planning to the Committee on Educational Planning, Policies, and Programs



Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs Harold Martin January 3, 2007