

External Review of Educational Studies Program, Trinity College

February 13, 2018

Submitted by:

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I. Introduction

Prior to our visit to the campus, we received and reviewed materials provided by the Educational Studies Program including their self-assessment report and course catalog. We compliment Jack on his very thorough self-assessment. On February 5-6, 2018, we visited Trinity College. During our two-day visit, we met with Administrators (Tim Cresswell, Dean of Faculty and Professor of American Studies and Anne Lambright, Dean of Academic Affairs and Professor of Language and Culture Studies), Educational Studies Program Faculty (Jack Dougherty and Stefanie Wong), Curriculum Committee Members (Chris Hoag, Associate Professor of Economics and Katherine Lahti, Associate Professor of Language and Culture Studies) library and information technology staff (Rob Walsh, David Tatem, and Peter Rawson), twelve Education Studies students, and eight members of cognate departments (Tennyson O'Donnell, Director of Writing Center; Angel Perez, Vice President of Enrollment and Lecturer; Isaac Kamola, Assistant Professor of Political Science, Jim Trostle, Professor & Chair of Anthropology; Dina Anselmi, Associate Professor and Chair of Psychology; Rachel Moskowitz, Assistant Professor of Public Policy & Law; Steve Valocchi, Professor and Chair of Sociology; and Stefanie Chambers, Professor and Chair of Political Science.) We also took a tour (led by Jack Dougherty) of campus-community partnership sites in Hartford. In addition, during the visit, he provided us copies of the previous external review in 2004. Our visit ended with an exit interview with Dean Cresswell and Lambright. Although we had a relatively brief visit, we believe we gained a reasonable understanding of both the strengths of and the challenges facing the Educational Studies Program (hereafter EdS) at Trinity College. We wish to thank all the individuals with whom we met for their candor in speaking with us.

In this report, we summarize the strengths and challenges of the program and articulate a set of recommendations that we hope will guide the program's movement into the future.

II. Strengths of the Program

The Educational Studies Program has a number of clear strengths:

A. The Importance of Educational Studies Within the Mission of a Liberal Arts Education

Educational Studies offers a carefully structured interdisciplinary program that stands out among peer liberal arts institutions. The interdisciplinary nature of the program is well-reflected in the EdS faculty's articulation of the mission of the program: "...Educational Studies compares and contrasts how different disciplines approach related areas of knowledge" (Self Assessment 2018, p. 3). In addition to core education courses, the EdS major includes an impressive array of cross-referenced courses in social sciences and humanities. EdS students often double major and generally immerse themselves in the richness of the Trinity curriculum both in and outside the classroom. This is perhaps because the major is not constrained by external (licensure) program requirements experienced by liberal arts programs that have to negotiate and navigate the delicate balance between liberal arts and the pre-professional preparation of teachers. Most of the students we talked to were double majors and impressively articulated the synergy between Education Studies and their liberal arts majors. Members of cognate departments said they thought the EdS program was interdisciplinary and rigorous, despite the stereotype of Educational Studies elsewhere.

B. Faculty

We were very impressed with how much the program has accomplished given its very limited human resources. The faculty and staff are extremely dedicated to the program. Jack Dougherty is the only tenure-line full-time professor. In addition, there is one two-year visiting faculty member, Stephanie Wong. Stephanie has had a strong impact on the EdS students in the short time she has been at Trinity. They praised her for her teaching and mentoring skills. The program owes an incredible debt to the dedication of its current chair, Jack. It is clear that he is the driving force behind all that the program is able to accomplish. We were impressed with the number of faculty members from other departments who talked to us -- everyone of them praised not only Jack's dedication to this program (and other programs on campus), but also his considerable skill as an effective administrator.

C. Curriculum

The Educational Studies Program offerings are varied, rigorous, and emphasize analytical and research skills. The introductory course (Educ 200-Analyzing Schools) is especially effective in helping students grapple with complex educational issues while gaining participant observer experience in an urban context. This course has a strong impact on students. Most of the students we spoke with affirmed that the course influenced their decision to pursue the EdS major and/or challenge educational and social inequities. The second required course is Educ 300: Educational Reform, and it engages students in a historical inquiry into education. In EdS electives such as Educ 309: Race, Class, and Educational Policy, Educ 308: Cities, Suburbs, and Schools, and Educ 305: Immigrants & Education, Educ 320: Anthropology and Education,

students are exposed to other foundational approaches to the study of education. Students engage in primary research through Educ 400: Senior Research Seminar. The students we spoke with extolled Educ 400: Senior Research Seminar for its rigor, emphasis on research projects that are meaningful to students, and involvement of guest evaluators chosen by students.

We noted a strong emphasis across Educ 200, 300, and 400 on community engagement and research. Further program focus on research is evident in the requirement that students take a research methods course and a research project seminar from two or more participating departments and programs. We found that the students had an impressive list of cross referenced courses from which to choose. The emphasis on research is remarkable and serves to enhance the program's interdisciplinarity and students' research skills. Students meet frequently with EdS faculty to review their plans for the major. This thoughtful organization of courses results in an interdisciplinary major that produces students with admirable cognitive, civic, and research competencies.

D. Students

The faculty we spoke with thought that EdS students were more likely to be first generation, minority, female and civic-minded. This was consistent with our sense of the program after speaking to twelve students, although we do not have statistics about the student body relative to the student population overall at Trinity. The EdS students we spoke with were uniformly impressive in their articulation of the mission of the program as well as the outcomes expected of all majors. They expressed their appreciation of the program's ability to teach critical thinking skills as well as practical application of theories in real life urban educational settings. They were also extremely knowledgeable about faculty positions -- they all knew that Jack was a full-time tenured faculty member and that Stefanie was there on a two-year contract and was not on the tenure-track. They were able to distinguish between the other staff and faculty members that they encountered as well -- this was at a level well beyond the students we have seen at our institutions (University of Pennsylvania, Yale, and Smith College). Perhaps this stems from the precarious position of the program since it only has one full-time tenured faculty member. They all noted the considered loss of Andrea Dyrness to the University of Colorado.

We fully agreed with faculty members from cognate departments when they described EdS students as "incredibly strong", "superior", "articulate", "well prepared," and "beyond impressive." They attributed this high quality to a solid curriculum (for example foundational courses, senior project, theory-practice courses) that EdS students are exposed to.

E. Relationships with Cognate Departments

We found evidence of an impressive working relationship between the EdS Program and cognate departments. Cognate departments and programs offer a wide range of courses that are cross-listed or cross-referenced and count toward the EdS major. These courses range from research methods courses to issue and place based courses to topic courses in various

departments and programs including International Studies, Anthropology, Public Policy & Law, Psychology, Sociology, Political Science, and Rhetoric. Similarly, as stated in the self-study, all 300-level education courses are cross referenced with other departments and programs. For example, Educ 305: Immigrants and Education--cross referenced with Anthropology and International studies; Educ 309: Race, Class and Ed Policy--cross-ref with Public Policy, Women & Gender; Educ 320: Anthropology and Education--cross-referenced with Anthropology, International Studies; Educ 307: Latinos in Education--cross-referenced with American Studies, Anthropology, Latin American Studies.

Another indicator that the EdS Program at Trinity is well-respected across the campus is its physical location in McCook Hall, which is at the center of the campus and shared with faculty from other departments and programs. This location suggested to us a collegiality that was confirmed when we spoke with members of cognate departments. They praised the EdS Program as “highly interdisciplinary,” “rigorous,” and “unique in its involvement in the city.” There was a general consensus that Jack Dougherty is the “mover” and “shaker” and a “driving force” who enjoys everyone’s respect on campus.

III. Areas of Concern

A. Faculty

The Educational Studies Program’s biggest challenge is its small and fragile staffing. While the EdS Program has accomplished much with only one full-time tenured faculty member, and one other temporary full-time faculty member (along with courses offered by others in the college who are not formally affiliated with EdS), this level of personnel is not sufficient to support a vibrant program. Since Stefanie is still completing her PhD and not a tenure-track faculty member (and thus somewhat limited in what she can do for the program and at the college), EdS is almost a “one-man show.” Jack Dougherty is also currently directing two campus-wide programs at the request of the dean and therefore only able to offer two courses to the department. He however carries all the advising load since Stefanie is new and is finishing her PhD, and hence negotiated a contract that exempts her from advising students. To put it mildly, Jack is stretched too thin and the program would collapse without him.

Students are well aware of these challenges. Jack serves as the advisor to all of the EdS students. Because of his administrative load, he is also unable to offer additional upper-division courses. There are also no other faculty to offer these courses.

Students also noted that Jack was essentially the only choice one had for advising. While Jack can do many things, he cannot (nor should he be expected) to do everything. Some students have different research interests from Jack, and others expressed some difficulty in the program if they did not get along with Jack. We noted that students of color especially valued Stefanie, and the older students praised Andrea Dyrness. They thought that not only was Stefanie a woman of color and therefore more easily connected with some of them, she also studied and understood

communities of color and immigrants. They wanted to emphasize that they would greatly value diversity when considering future hires.

B. Curriculum

The students enjoyed being in Educ 200 and 300 together, but some wished there were more upper-division courses offered by EdS. They thought that while Educ 200 and 300 gave students a good introduction to Educational Studies, students have to go outside of the program to take upper-division courses just as their research interests were piqued. The cross-listed courses do not always make connections to education explicit. In addition, students are less able to meet other students in the EdS program.

Another challenge was that students are asked to plan their future course-taking in their sophomore year. In fact, because only Educ 200, 300, and 400 are offered regularly, while other courses are cross-referenced or offered irregularly (and even the regular courses are sometimes offered every other year), we agreed with student sentiment that completing the course planning worksheet was a challenging task given the uncertainty of the courses offered every semester.

A couple of students noted that the schedule of the senior project was not flexible and affected their plans for study abroad, etc. We are uncertain if this was a general problem or if was just encountered by a small number of students.

In terms of teacher preparation, we noted that a few students would like for Trinity to offer it. We do not believe this is possible given the very limited resources in EdS. Students can take teacher preparation courses at the University of St. Joseph's, but it was unclear to them and to us how this was coordinated. Students noted that they were sent there and then sent back to Trinity. This suggests a need for coordination between the two schools. Students also thought there was a lack of rigor in the courses offered at the University of Saint Joseph (USJ). They reasoned that EdS should at least offer pedagogy courses in the absence of Teacher Preparation courses.

Some minority students also expressed concern with the model of community engagement that is in place at Trinity and many other schools throughout the U.S. They wanted further reflection of how educational institutions could give back to the community -- they did not want the local community to be seen as a resource that is exploited by faculty and students. This was especially noticeable to students who were from the Hartford area (or from an area similar to Hartford). This critique was a philosophical one that should be considered by all colleges and universities thinking about community engagement.

C. Partnerships with Cognate Departments

Jack has done a remarkable job working with his colleagues in other departments. It is no small feat that so many of them met with us and expressed their willingness to work with EdS and with Jack. The challenges for EdS may be similar to other departments at Trinity. Given the strict limit to the total number of faculty at Trinity, every request for faculty lines is a zero-sum

game. Jack is very cognizant of this and has planned accordingly. Other departments are also aware that the most direct path to growth (or simply maintaining their modest sizes) is to request joint appointments with other departments. Of course, this carries the risk of having new hires count against one's department while hosting someone who is more interested in participating in the other department.

Finally, we saw a tremendous disadvantage of all of the social sciences at Trinity given the number of students they teach (both in terms of course units and majors). Jack's self-assessment details the faculty resources per student on p. 40. The social sciences (of which EdS is a part) has a majors/faculty ratio of 6.5 compared to 2.0 for arts, 2.0 for Humanities, and 3.4 for the Natural Sciences and 3.6 for Trinity overall.

IV. Recommendations

A. Staffing

Currently, EdS is fortunate to have Jack Dougherty as its Chair. However, one person, however capable, cannot be an entire program. Its current structure is not sustainable. If Jack left, the program would dissolve. In order for the program to serve its students and to continue to strive, the program needs three full-time faculty lines (FTEs). In fact, this is what was recommended in the last external review (in 2004).

We fully support the proposed position in urban and global education for all the reasons provided in the self-study and in the request for this position sent by the program to the Educational Policy Committee. The new tenure-track faculty member should be hired immediately as Jack Dougherty currently also serves as the Faculty Director of both Community Learning and the Liberal Arts Action Lab, and will not return 100% to Education Studies until 2020. A full-time faculty member would be able to take up advising and other programmatic duties and obligations that Jack Dougherty cannot perform on his own.

The 3-year joint visiting faculty position in Ed Studies and Sociology is a good short-term solution to the need for a research methods course expressed by several of the EdS students with whom we spoke. The program currently relies on other departments to provide research methods courses to EdS majors. If the 3-year joint EdS-Sociology position works, then EdS and Sociology may partner and share one full-time tenure-track faculty member. This would bring Educational Studies to 2.5 FTEs. The remaining half may come through a shared position with another department or via another route. We strongly believe that EdS should have a total of 3 full-time tenured or tenure-track faculty members.

In addition to the three full-time faculty (tenured or tenure track), we hope that the college continues to support Robert Cotto as a coordinator of its programs in local schools. He could also serve as a coordinator for the Trinity students interested in the teacher preparation program at the University of Saint Joseph -- we detail the justification for this need below.

B. Curriculum & Programmatic Structure

While EdS faculty, cognate departments members, and administration did not endorse the addition of a teacher certification component, students interested in pursuing licensure at the University of St. Joseph expressed concerns about the lack of coordination between Trinity and St. Joseph. We recommend that EdS appoint a Teacher Certification Adviser to serve as liaison with USJ and advise Trinity students pursuing licensure. A non-tenure track faculty would be appropriate for this role. The person would also manage partnerships and community engagement efforts of the program. The TCA position would make it easier for students to get teacher certification in their undergraduate tenure at Trinity College.

As noted elsewhere in this report, a major strength of the program is its strong grounding in the liberal arts tradition of Trinity as well as the respect the program receives from cognate departments. Students expressed concerns that there is no guarantee that cross-referenced courses they have included in their plan of study would be offered during the semester they plan to take them. Education Studies has no say over the cross-listed courses. A somewhat formal agreement between EdS Program and cognate departments would ensure that certain cross-listed courses are regularly offered.

Another strength of the program is its engagement work with the city of Hartford, even in the absence of a structure that coordinates campus-wide community engagement efforts. As exemplified by Jack's leadership at Community Learning and the Liberal Arts Action Lab, EdS faculty work hard toward making Trinity a truly engaged institution. They offer courses that require students to complete observations, service learning and research in the city. Such courses require lot of time and energy on part of the instructor. A coordinating structure (e.g. a Center) would handle most of the logistical work and free up faculty to teach Program courses and mentor students. We hope that Trinity places EdS at the center of its future coordinated efforts in community engagement.

C. Relationships with Other Departments

Jack has a wonderful relationship with numerous colleagues at Trinity College. However, it is unclear that each of the constituents who are interested in EdS are able to communicate with each other. The conversations about EdS stem from relationships with Jack as an individual. We learned that there was an EdS Advisory Board, but that it has either been dissolved or is currently dormant. We recommend that during this period when EdS is not fully-staffed that it would benefit from having an active Advisory Board, with members from cognate departments. This would also ensure a relationship between EdS and Sociology, Anthropology, etc. and not just a relationship between individual colleagues and Jack.

V. Conclusion

Overall, we were very impressed with all that EdS has accomplished given its limited resources. We hope that that Trinity College increases its support of this important and vibrant

program. We hope that that this report is helpful to all of you as you continue your excellent work for EdS.