

**Program Review Report  
for the**

**MASTER OF ARTS IN EDUCATION  
At  
KREMEN SCHOOL OF EDUCATION  
AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT**

**California State University  
Fresno**

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*Report prepared for the*

*OPTIONS in*

*ADMINISTRATION AND SUPERVISION,*

*CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION,*

*EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION*

*READING/LANGUAGE ARTS*

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## **I Introduction**

The Kremen School of Education and Human Development is a “center for academic excellence and collaboration in the fields of education and counseling. Graduates will become community leaders who advocate for high standards and democratic values with attention to professional ethics and diversity”, as the College’s vision states. The review team observed key components of this vision in action while conducting this work.

We had ample and unrestricted access to key sources of information. All college of education staff, students, faculty, and leaders involved in this effort exhibited a very collaborative and collegial attitude towards the review team. They all showed openness and a professional tone that made this work an authentic and enjoyable endeavor. We met with teams and individuals for practically two full days, including working lunches, and early morning meetings.

Throughout these two day review we gathered evidence of the College’s efforts to achieve its goals, in particular:

- To prepare professionals who are committed to leadership and service in diverse community settings.
- To prepare education professionals who have a command of content knowledge and pedagogy and who continuously strive to improve their practice.
- To integrate performance assessment as a key evaluation technique in each of our programs.
- To support the lifelong development of practicing professionals with services and programs including the doctorate.
- To recruit qualified candidates, who are representative of the diversity in our community, into the fields of education and counseling, beginning with students in the public schools.
- To be a national demonstration site for exemplary practices in education and counseling.
- To sustain a university work environment that is exemplary in its humanity, ethics, effectiveness and intellectual vitality.
- To be the higher education partner of choice for the public schools and other relevant institutions of the five counties we serve in the Central Valley.

The methodology utilized consisted primarily of 1) individual and group interviews, 2) whole classroom informal interview, 3) observations, and 4) text from reports, procedural materials, and students’ work.

In the following sections we document the strengths, challenges and possibilities the College seems to be wrestling with. In the first section we list them in no particular order. The second section summarizes them all, and in the third we propose some recommendations.

## **II Comments and observations on strengths, challenges**

### **1. Accreditation**

Faculty and staff appeared quite relaxed and a sense of confidence prevailed. We heard from most interviewees how glad and satisfied they were after receiving approval from two very important institutions that oversee quality of higher education in the field of education: NCATE and CCTC.

### **2. Degrees and academic rigor**

All four reviewed programs offer a combination of academic course work with an average of six academic units of practicum. Students expressed their appreciation that course work required them to apply theory to real situations at work, and that professors were knowledgeable of theoretical and practical aspects of the subject matter. Some faculty framed their courses as “works-in-progress” as metaphor for constant adjustments and renewal of the content over time as opposed to fixed material.

While faculty engages in course modifications based on the feedback provided by student surveys, it was not clear how faculty carried this out. In other words, the review team did not have evidence of whether the use of these data is primarily done individually, or collectively, and whether there was a structural mechanism that allows for sharing good practices.

When the review team asked students: “are you getting out of this program(s) what you really wanted (professionally)? The answer was always “yes.” The only caveat to the “yes” answer came as a request from a few students of the Reading program: they need courses and some degree of differentiation for secondary and adult learning. In their view, the current design of the Reading program serves only elementary education. The review team asked the same question to the program leadership and some faculty, and they all concurred that this was an issue.

A few students expressed their disappointment with group projects. They suggested the need to discontinue its use as a pedagogical strategy, or implement it in a more flexible manner.

All programs appear to have consistent midterm assessment – denominated “advancement to candidacy” -- and end-of-program exit requirements. Additionally all programs have a set of post graduation surveys: exit, alumni, and employer. The latter is usually administered to superintendents, principals, and other job supervisors.

All MA degrees, with the exception of Curriculum and Instruction, are tied to some type of credentialing. This combination opens up several career pathways to graduates especially in the public sector. But not having a credentialing component, graduates from C and I are left alone with an MA diploma that, while arming them with the skills and

knowledge to work in this field, does not exist in the culture of school districts as a necessary requirement to opt for better paid and more significant jobs.

In the self study 22 faculty were listed for a C& I option that counts 40 students only. When we asked why there was such high faculty-student ratio, it was explained to us that the twenty two faculty are those who at some point or another have taught in the program, but that they are quite busy teaching in the teaching credential and other programs. Similarly confusing is the fact that the Administration and Supervision degree is granted by an option with the word “research” in it. No program exists that offers “research” as a degree, rather, the faculty in this program teach research courses to students from all programs. In other universities and programs, curriculum and instruction as well as research are considered strands embedded in larger bodies of study, and not stand alone programs.

Once a student meets the University admissions requirements it is very likely that she/he will be also accepted into the program to which he/she applied. Admission requirements for each of the four programs seem uneven and applied very flexibly. Chairs, coordinators, and faculty agreed that admission requirements such as the GRE seem irrelevant and thus, students should not be asked to take standardized tests. For some programs interviewing applicants may reflect a more accurate assessment of the individual’s potential; for others the statement of purpose; yet for others the selection done by principals or district office appears as the determinant factor for admissions. It was mentioned a few times that in the latter case competition from private colleges placed some pressure on admissions policy, since private colleges would pick up those students not accepted by CSU Fresno.

Similar to difference in admissions criteria, the four programs utilize different instruments to assess progress at mid-program, as well as graduation requirements. In sum, all four options (or programs) constitute distinctive fields of study with their own traditions and identity.

### **3. Faculty teaching, community involvement. and advising.**

Student program assessment is one of the most accurate ways to gauge learning effectiveness. The review team interviewed students in this regard. Without exception students described the faculty’s work as “personable,” “helpful,” “challenging,” and “flexible”. According to some students, “faculty is always there for you.” Others defined their experience as life transforming, such as a Math graduate who stated: “[when I entered the C&I program] I knew a lot about mathematics, but it is until now that I know how math is related to real life issues.”

During one of the interviews with a group of students, a graduate offered a passionate account of her experience in the program and at her job. This student opposed the use of packaged reading solutions that her school was pushing down on teachers, assuming that such packaged solutions would improve test scores. She described how she was unable to articulate her ideas and opinions for the lack of both full understanding of issues and

suitable language to name things. “I knew in my gut they were wrong” she said, “but I couldn’t express myself. After taking some of the courses I was able to call things by their name. I was equipped with the language, the understanding. I learned how to articulate my frustrations, and to be effective.”

Invariably faculty overextend their normative work time, mostly because they tend to have an overload of students. Faculty are in constant touch with students either as a result of classroom assignments, or their advising load. Faculty are always available via their personal home and mobile phones, office phones, blackboard, email, and other informal means. Students told the review committee that they always receive syllabi, lesson plans, and assignments on timely basis.

Additionally, and as an effort to better serve the area’s community, some programs are offered locally, rather than on the university’s campus. Faculty pointed out an ostensible increase of driving time to and from the sites, which, in turn, adds to the daily work load, extra physical tension, and damage to the environment.

The average advising hovers around 7 students per professor and the program coordinators seem overloaded. Not only do these professors participate in the admission process of all new students, they also continue to check on students’ progress until they graduate. Glaring differences exist between these coordinators’ loads and regular faculty, but also among the coordinators themselves. Dr. Wise, for instance, advises and supports about 240 students in the Administration program. These students belong to the different cohorts taking classes outside the campus, as well as students on campus. Dr. Fry Bohlin advises and supports about 40 students who are not in cohorts and as a result find themselves at simultaneously different stages of their respective programs, as well as differing from each other’s professional interests.

Coordinators’ work schedules include weekends, and massive use of their cars and personal mobile phones. It appears to this review committee that this is not an issue of choice, as suggested by a program Chair, but of design. Coordinators “run the programs” as was expressed to this review committee on several occasions. We concur, but it is obviously not sustainable.

#### **4. College and University support**

According to the College Dean, the Provost’s office, and the University’s accounting office there is a sizable amount of funds earmarked for faculty travel, publications, and research, as well as to promote the inclusion of underserved subgroups. The access and actual use of these resources across the four MA programs appear quite uneven at best. It is almost the end of the academic year and the Dean reports a large amount of discretionary funds left over simply because faculty did not apply this year. This seems to also be the case of the Provost funds as well as the Chancellor fellowship awards.

The majority of faculty consulted on this issue agreed that the main reason why they did not apply for those resources was due to lack of time. They are so busy, it was argued,

that applying for funds that would eventually release them from such work-load, became onerous.

New faculty typically teach a reduced load, and buy out time is readily available to support their scholarly interests.

Faculty appear split between the need to publish in indexed, peer reviewed journals, and more popular magazines. While some expressed understanding of the University push for indexed publications, they also argued that choosing between these publications read by a very small, scholar audience was unattractive. Publication in magazines that reach out to the lay audience, in the view of these faculty, promises greater impact among school districts, locally, regionally, statewide and nationally.

Additionally, the College of Education has succeeded in bringing in electronic technology at different levels. The entire building is wireless, most classrooms enjoy multimedia equipment, computer laboratories, writing services, and other technologies are ubiquitous, including a teleconferencing room where students can see and engage presenters from the US or abroad in real time.

Having all the above mentioned resources available, institutional support and competitive salaries have not translated into successful faculty recruitment. It was stated to this review committee the need to attract faculty of color, reflective of the population the College serves. Three of the programs lack tenured and tenure track faculty; the deficit is particularly grave in Administration Education where only four professors serve a huge number of students. This fact puts this program in a precarious situation since the only way to serve such a large population is by augmenting the number of adjunct faculty. There are about 23 current adjuncts today.

The Dean, the Associate Dean, and the program Chairs expressed the same concerns. The Dean hopes to hire at least 3 new faculty for the year 08-09 or earlier. Similar, although less dramatic is the case for the Reading program where the goal is to add one more faculty member in 08-09.

## **5. Data use and change**

Faculty tend to utilize most pieces of data available to both understand program effectiveness and to improve programs. Some of these include the surveys listed above, projects, portfolios, ethics assessment, and charter school assessment. Yet, it appears that data systems are not readily available for timely use, or just not tracked. This is the case of applicants' rejection/acceptance rates, student retention rates, and enrollment yield. Some of the interviewees, nonetheless, possessed anecdotal information in this regard.

Some program faculty meet twice a month, others once. But it was not specified how much time in those meetings is devoted to data analysis and planning.

The existing exit survey is the same for all programs. This lack of differentiation does not allow respondents to specify the needs and concerns pertaining to specific programs..

SOAP data are consistently collected and used to modify programs. The concerns in regards to these data expressed by graduate studies suggest that there is a dissonance between what faculty do and what the Division of Graduate studies knows. Another illustrative example of this dissonance is the concern expressed in regards to the possible student recruitment for a yet unapproved bilingual education program. Faculty were clear and emphatic that no recruitment has been done.

### III Summary

While the four MA options face various degrees of challenges, the evidence presented to this review committee shows that these are all programs with tremendous significance for the students and the communities they serve. Faculty make themselves available and behave in quite an open and flexible manner, teach relevant material, expose students to real life situations via assignments and course work; some teach in sites located in the community; and they are all constantly supporting and advising students. These features provide the edge and most central definition of the four MA programs reviewed.

Challenges promise to move these programs from good to great. Following we list, in no particular order, the ones we consider of strategic value.

- Reading for secondary and adult education
- Career paths for Curriculum and Instruction graduates.
- Admissions to the programs appear quite flexible, or even not totally under the control of the options faculty –as is the case of some cohorts of the Administration and Supervision program.
- The four programs are distinct, and independent from each other.
- Faculty burn out, especially for the coordinators, seems quite possible.
- Creating cohorts may alleviate the work load. Yet, cohorts made up of individuals or teams from the same school district miss the opportunity to learn from other districts and teach their best practices to others. As a result, homogeneous cohorts tend to reproduce the status quo.
- Research and publications may require solutions that go beyond structural change. The new push towards research and publications in the CSU system signifies a cultural shift.
- There appears that no consistent use of data, sharing of best practice, and the creation of specific surveys prevail through the four programs.
- Timely and assertive communication between graduate studies and the MA programs appear weak.

#### IV Recommendations

Challenges	Suggestions
Reading for secondary and adult education	<p>1. Conduct a mini study among current students to determine how many have interest in secondary school and adult literacy, to implement immediate remedies.</p> <p>2. Conduct a wider fact finding study to explore significance and potential benefits to the community for an eventual expansion of the Reading option to include secondary school and adult literacy emphasis.</p>
Career paths for Curriculum and Instruction graduates.	<p>3. Convene a series of exploratory conversations between the leadership of both emphases, to see course overlapping, holes, and new needs, so that C&amp;I students combine their specialization with leadership preparation. This could allow C&amp;I students to obtain the Tier 1 credential.</p>
Admissions to the programs appear quite flexible, or even not totally under the control of the options faculty –as is the case of some cohorts of the Administration and Supervision program.	<p>5. Mass education at graduate level is problematic, and becomes quite controversial when no effective quality control mechanisms exist. The MA options and the College may need to revisit their strategic plan and reconsider growth caps, as well as effective quality control mechanisms prior, during, and after each graduation cycle.</p>
The four programs are distinct, and independent from each other. .	<p>6. Independently and in collaboration with each other, options may want to conduct a needs analysis and measure the benefits and costs of remaining under the same MA in Education name, as opposed to specific MA degrees corresponding to the field of study of each option.</p> <p>7. Each option, the College leadership and faculty may want to consider the pros and cons of other structural models that would facilitate clearer identities, decision making, and functions. In other CSU and UC Colleges a departmental structure,</p>

	<p>division structure, etc. exists that operates autonomously and independently from each other.</p> <p>.</p>
<p>Faculty burn out, especially the coordinators, seems quite possible.</p>	<p>8. Redefine the job description of coordinators, to make this a human scale assignment.</p> <p>9. Coordinators workload needs to be lower (dramatically lower in the case of Admin Ed.) to reduce levels of stress and increase their productivity.</p> <p>10. Add release time for advising, field work.</p> <p>11. Redistribute other coordinating responsibilities across the programs' faculty.</p> <p>12. Include mobile phones, and extra driving time for faculty teaching and meeting with students far from the campus..</p>
<p>Creating cohorts may alleviate the work load. Yet, cohorts made up of individuals or teams from the same school district miss the opportunity to learn from other districts and teach their best practices to others. As a result, homogeneous cohorts tend to reproduce the status quo.</p>	<p>13. Organize students in heterogeneous cohorts to ensure cross professional fertilization.</p> <p>14. Have initial orientation to the programs and regular advising of all students throughout the program's cycle.</p>
<p>Research and publications may require solutions that go beyond structural change. The new push towards research and publications in the CSU system signifies a cultural shift.</p>	<p>15. Provide consistent mentorship for all faculty.</p> <p>16. Revise application process to include faculty participation in the form of a committee.</p> <p>17. Model College-wide by promoting year round poster sessions, mini conferences, discussion and writing groups.</p>
<p>There appears that no consistent use of data, sharing of best practice, and the creation of specific surveys prevail through the four programs.</p>	<p>18 Create program specific exit surveys</p> <p>19. Create data committees at the College level to infuse the habit of data use in all options.</p>
<p>Timely and assertive communication between graduate studies and the our MA</p>	<p>20 Start with the SOAPS. These must be consistently updated along with</p>

programs appear weak.	program adjustments communicated at both levels – the College and the university.
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## V Signatures