

WERKLUND SCHOOL OF EDUCATION UNIT REVIEW

Summary Report

The Site Visit of the Review Team for the University of Calgary's Werklund School of Education took place from January 18-20, 2021. Due to COVID-19, the site visit took place virtually. The Review Team consisted of:

Carol Nicoll, Emeritus Professor, Queensland University of Technology (formerly Executive Dean, Faculty of Education QUT)

Ruth Childs, Professor and Interim Director, Institute for the Study of University Pedagogy, University of Toronto

Rita Irwin, Distinguished University Scholar and Professor, The University of British Columbia

Dawn Johnston, Teaching Professor and Associate Dean, Teaching, Learning and Student Engagement, Faculty of Arts, University of Calgary

Following the Site Visit, the Unit Review Team prepared a written report containing comments and recommendations. The Werklund School of Education subsequently provided responses to the recommendations. General comments and the recommendations and responses follow.

General Comments of the Unit Review Team

There was strong support across the broad range of stakeholders for the leadership style and strategic directions of the current Senior Leadership team, led by Dean Dianne Gereluk. The Review panel heard consistent acknowledgement that 'voices are heard' by senior management. There was strong appreciation of the Dean's collegiality, collaborative approach, transparency of decision-making and care for staff and students. There was a very strong and palpable (even via zoom) sense of pride in the Werklund School of Education expressed by almost all staff and students interviewed.

The Werklund School of Education has made very impressive progress in terms of its reputation, rankings and performance over the past decade. This upward trajectory is to be highly commended and acknowledged as the result of deliberate strategic direction, strong leadership and a lot of very hard work by all staff including professional, support, and academic staff.

The focus on improving the participation and outcomes for Indigenous Canadians and specifically Indigenous academics, and to better prepare graduates with knowledge of Indigenous languages and culture has, importantly, moved beyond good intentions into focused and sustained hiring of Indigenous academic staff, including postdoctoral scholars.

The community-based Bachelor of Education program introduced six years ago, has been a successful initiative which is benefiting teacher supply in not only Alberta but also across

Canada, particularly in rural and remote areas.

Community stakeholders were strongly supportive of the approach of Werklund faculty and staff and commend their collaborative and responsive engagement and their commitment to treating schools and teachers as partners. The Partner Research School program is clearly working well and the strong relationships with teachers and principals are building a very strong reputation for the Faculty throughout Alberta and nationally.

The Review team thanks the authors of the Self-Appraisal document which provided most of the data for the Review and was very clear and well-written.

Faculty Response:

This document responds to the report from the Werklund School of Education Unit Review that was conducted January 18-20, 2021. The Unit Review Report was circulated and discussed at the March 9, 2021 Dean's Advisory Committee meeting and at the March 16, 2021 Werklund School of Education Faculty Council meeting. The Leadership Team would like to extend their appreciation to the reviewers in reviewing our self-study documents and providing thoughtful and constructive feedback, especially given the context of the review. As highlighted by the reviewers, this report is reflective of a particular moment in time and reflects the internal and external shifts in leadership, provincial economic instability, and a global pandemic.

Overall, we are satisfied with the report and, generally speaking, aligns with many of the issues that the School has already identified as areas for attention. We are pleased to note the recognition of the growth reflected in our work over the last five years and given new leadership, current strengths in building capacity and collegial support. The recommendations are timely, as we embark on the process of developing a new strategic academic plan for 2022 which will set the academic priorities for the following five years.

Reviewer Recommendations and Unit Response Follow-up

GOVERNANCE AND STRUCTURE

Recommendation 1: *That more work is done to break down silos across Werklund to create a stronger sense of 'One Werklund', that is underpinned by a shared vision and strategic direction.*

Faculty Response:

Over the last 18 months, multiple focus groups and town halls were held to review and update the vision, mission, and values of the Werklund School. The Werklund School of Education Faculty Council approved these changes in January 2020. Continued work over the last 18 months has focused on unifying the overarching direction of the Werklund School and embedding the values we espouse both internally among faculty and externally to our community stakeholders. Over the next year, the focus will be expanded to consider the priorities for the next five years within the strategic academic plan.

Recommendation 2: That the Faculty undertakes a review of the current Educational Study Areas (EDSA) structure

Faculty Response:

We agree that a fulsome review of the organizational structure, with a focus on EDSAs, must occur. Originally planned for spring 2020, a delay occurred due to the upcoming review, Covid conditions and change fatigue. This recommendation will be addressed as a priority as we move forward with the development of the new strategic academic plan for 2022.

RESEARCH

Recommendation 3: That, given interdisciplinarity is a University wide strategic priority, more focus is given to the facilitation of interdisciplinary research both within the Faculty through the EDSAs and with other Faculties. There was considerable voicing of a commitment to transdisciplinarity in research, but no real evidence of its effectiveness or outcomes or how each EDSA made this part of their strategic goals.

Faculty Response:

This recommendation parallels the previous discussion that EDSAs may not be the best structure to support interdisciplinary research. Transitioning from a commitment to transdisciplinarity in research to a culture that implements it, is a priority and an imperative for both Werklund School and the institution. Through dialogue emerging from the strategic academic planning process combined with the broader *Growth through Focus* plan, Werklund School can better align with institutional priorities and identify how Werklund School can be a leader at the University.

Recommendation 4: That the Faculty make measurement and/or demonstration of the impact of their research a strong priority for the next stage of research growth.

Faculty Response:

As a collective, we will determine a list of faculty metrics that will drive academic and research priorities in comparison to other U15 faculties of education. These metrics will be used to capture scholarly and public impact in our respective disciplines. Also, these metrics will be utilized within Faculty Guidelines to move the Werklund School of Education forward. A committee, including scholars across and within ranks, is currently working on academic guidelines in regards to promotion, tenure and merit. In accordance with the General Faculties Council Handbook, these guidelines describe how the Werklund School interprets the relative importance and weighting of research and scholarship, teaching, and service and their relevant activities that the School defines as legitimate and appropriate. Particular attentiveness will be given to the Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) to community engaged research and research outputs that have meaningful impact in society. Additionally, the Office of Research is creating better processes for collecting data of research productivity to track and to support the growth of scholars' research programs. The

recent relocation of the three academic support offices is illustrative of leveraging opportunities across various grants and awards.

Recommendation 5: *That if the Faculty does aspire to a higher ranking amongst Canadian universities, then increased research performance will be essential.*

Faculty Response:

Although research performance has significantly improved over the past decade, we continue to explore the best processes in capturing data from meaningful research that aligns with ranking methodologies and the Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) principles. Since the last unit review, different targeted supports have been provided to researchers with uneven success. Currently in place are targeted resources to support with grant and award writing, professional writers, and more transparent course releases for successful attainment of research grants has assisted faculty to secure research.

This year, attention has been focused on developing mechanisms to track progress to assist in laddering research achievements to more robust grants and awards. Additionally, the process of creating Faculty Guidelines, mentioned above, will allow for deeper dialogue on how to best reflect research performance.

With provincial economic instability and recent budget reductions, it will be even more important for supports to become more deliberate and in alignment with Werklund School and institutional priorities. The strategic planning process will provide the impetus for broader conversation of how to leverage current expertise from individual success to a broader external scale.

TEACHING, STUDENT EXPERIENCE AND COURSES

Recommendation 6: *That further consideration be given to a focus on the national market for courses and student recruitment, in addition to a provincial one.*

Faculty Response:

Werklund School continues to attract national and international graduate students across the programs. Our residency-based thesis MA and PhD programs enrolls approximately 30 students international per year. Building on our reputation as a research-intensive faculty, we have identified the need to become more deliberate in marketing programs and student recruitment. In early 2021, an environmental scan, conducted by Leger, provided a benchmark of our reputation, provincially and nationally. A further study has been planned for spring 2021 to examine our current offerings of graduate programs in comparison to other Faculties of Education across Canada. This data will inform the development of a strategic plan for recruitment. Broader discussions with the faculty will need to occur as topics shift from emergent interests to alignment with trends and patterns in education and the expertise held by faculty.

Recommendation 7: That consideration be given to marketing the suite of Education degrees for vocational outcomes other than teaching in schools or early childhood settings.

Faculty Response:

Werklund School currently offers non-traditional Education specializations including Adult Learning, Counselling Psychology and School and Applied Child Psychology. Continued marketing will occur in collaboration with Continuing Education to offer non-credit international professional learning opportunities. Two proposed Summer International Programs are being developed for summer 2022 with University of Hamburg and University of Mississippi (contingent on evolving travel restrictions). We are also exploring alternate pathways for undergraduate students who do not wish to be certified teachers.

Recommendation 8: That feedback is sought from students after a full year of online delivery with a focus on seeking improvements to the quality of student engagement through online delivery.

Faculty Response:

Werklund School has a strong history of providing quality online and blended courses and the Office of Teaching and Learning has worked with instructors in best practices of online pedagogy. Surveys were conducted by the Office of Teaching and Learning in fall 2020 particularly related to online learning impacted by Covid. Although this experience has somewhat mitigated the impact of the shift to online courses for students and staff; surveys conducted within the last 18 months have indicated challenges in workload, building relationships, mental health and Zoom fatigue. Both the undergraduate and graduate student associations conducted surveys regarding their student experience. Over 80% of the undergraduate respondents felt online support was “strong” to “very strong”. Additionally, feedback of online activities suggests that instructor-led sessions and breakout rooms were very effective and discussion posts were the least effective. Continuous improvements are part of our commitment to online blended delivery and is a main priority of the Office of Teaching and Learning. In response to faculty and student experiences, some amendments to the learning experiences have been made for summer and fall 2021.

Recommendation 9: That a review of Graduate Programs be undertaken, which should include a consideration of the following issues:

- a) *How to create a stronger intellectual and support community for graduate students*

Faculty Response:

Over the past year, significant ongoing conversations have occurred with specific actions and ongoing plans remaining a priority for Graduate Programs. For example, EDSAs have made increasing efforts to create regular opportunities for graduate students to present their ongoing research and include students in meetings and informal gatherings. The academic support offices also invite students to contribute to broader thematic symposia such as Diversity Days, teaching and learning presentations and supports for improving research grant and award applications. The

Graduate Programs in Education Students Association have organized and led the graduate student *Tapestry of Learning* conference. Broader discussions of how to deepen intellectual communities will continue to be prioritized and will be specifically prioritized in the development of the five year strategic academic plan.

- b) *Increase the range of research methods courses offered across all graduate programs*

Faculty Response:

Over the last year, a working group was created to review the purposeful provision of research methods courses across the graduate programs led by the Associate Dean Graduate Programs. A proposed cycle of research methods courses are currently being developed with implementation over the next two years.

- c) *Explore the different perceptions of the EdD and PhD and strengths and challenges of each*

Faculty Response:

Over the past few years, significant conversations have occurred regarding the differences, real and perceived, between the EdD and PhD programs. An opportunity to combine students within specialization courses may help build a more inclusive intellectual community and reduce some of the misperceptions of quality of rigour and scholarly excellence. Clear communication will be made available to students on the value of the EDD and PhD programs to help in student selection.

- d) *How to attract more high-quality graduate students, both domestic and international*

Faculty Response:

A priority within Graduate Programs is to establish a strategic recruitment plan, working in collaboration with the Registrar's Office, the Faculty of Graduate Studies, and the Communications Office on the strategic marketing plan, prior to the next admission cycle that will attract more high-quality graduate students.

- e) *Explore the consequences of rotating graduate admissions by EDSA rather than intake of best students across all EDSAs each year*

Faculty Response:

Over the last decade, admissions to the EdD program has been on a rotating cycle between the specialization areas. Adult Learning, Learning Sciences and K-12 Leadership alternates every other year with Curriculum and Learning, Language and Literacy and Post-Secondary Leadership cohorts. After a robust discussion with faculty, it was determined to admit PhD and MA Education Research students each year to attract the best applicants. Admissions to Education Psychology programs is

under review with respect to attracting high-quality applicants, faculty workload and financial sustainability. Rotating admissions allows for a maximizing of resources and ensures that the top students are admitted.

- f) Consider the place of the Educational Psychology Doctorate in the suite of graduate programs in terms of cost, enrolments, whether a Masters in Educational Psychology may suffice given Alberta's registration requirements, and any duplication with other Psychology degrees in the University.*

Faculty Response:

Doctoral programs are vital to all disciplines in a research-intensive university. They attract high-quality scholars and students are poised to fill leadership positions in the field. As we aspire to elevate our rankings, we note that all the top faculties of education in Canada have doctoral programs in Educational Psychology. At least 20% of children present with exceptionality or a childhood disorder and as good advocates of child and youth wellbeing, we have a responsibility to serve our community. Given the importance of the PhD, it would be reputationally damaging to only offer an MSc in this area.

As mentioned previously, seeking the balance between trends in education, community needs, faculty expertise and financial sustainability is ongoing. All graduate programs are reviewed semi-annually in regards to student enrolment and program costs. These reviews have identified the unsustainability of the current doctorate program in School and Applied Child Psychology. The cost associated with accreditation requirements, including the number of courses and internships, directly impacts the program. If we were to make any changes, it would be to work with the accrediting body to make required changes and would be done in collaboration with other faculties across Canada. Consideration is being given to combining some of the administrative roles between the two psychology specializations.

Recommendation 10: *That some enhancements to the Community-based BEd be considered in terms of:*

- a) The impact of the residency requirement (the two-week summer session) on students who are full-time workers and who do not live in Calgary*

Faculty Response:

In developing the BEd Community-based pathway, the summer residency was widely discussed and a similar residency within our graduate programs was examined, as well as other programs without residency. At that time, it was determined that an annual residency would provide students with a connection to faculty, staff, Werklund School and the University that would serve them well throughout their program. Fully online programs at other institutions seemed to be less successful. Financial assistance and scholarships are offered to some students through philanthropic donations to the University and/or school divisions. Students are surveyed each year in regards to their satisfaction of the program, including the summer residency. Overwhelmingly, students appreciate

the summer residency program as a way to build a strong relational connection with faculty and students, as well as receive technical supports as they transition onto online learning in subsequent terms.

b) The courses that are undertaken during the residential period

Faculty Response:

As part of the ongoing enhancement to the program, Undergraduate Programs maps the curriculum across the program to ensure sequence and content is appropriate. The courses offered during the summer residency are courses that have been identified as benefitting from an on campus setting (Introduction to Educational Studies, STEM Education, Ethics and the Law and two specialization courses).

c) whether any credit can be considered for the many students in this course who are already working in school or early childhood settings.

Faculty Response:

Advanced credit is limited by provincial accreditation standards but students wishing to achieve a BEd. Within Alberta, the only advanced credit that can be achieved in through the Journeyman Certificate which is not available in this program.

PEOPLE

Recommendation 11: *That the Faculty review and refine the workload allocation methodology*

Faculty Response:

The principles for assigning teaching workload was approved by the Werklund School in Education Faculty Council in 2014 and each year the allocation of non-teaching workload units (“teaching releases”) is reviewed annually and updated in parallel to a review of role responsibilities. In a survey of 13 Faculties of Education in Canada, the average workload of Werklund School faculty was comparable to the other Universities. Despite this, lowering the base workload units was explored in 2019 and found to be financially unsustainable. The acknowledgement of these workload units provides flexibility for differences in pathways. All faculty have the opportunity to request differentiated workload.

Differential workload in relation to research is reviewed annually. In 2020-21, 40 faculty received 93 workload units towards research and scholarship such as pre-tenure release, research and scholarship leave, large research grant releases, and editorships.

Over the last few years, class sizes have remained stable with teaching assistant support provided for larger classes and labs. Where possible, classes with very low enrolment were no longer offered or combined with similar topics.

The allocation of teaching releases for EDSAs chairs will be explored within the review of the organizational structure.

The recognition of relational and community engaged work is being developed as part of the faculty academic guidelines and will attend to more holistic forms of research.

Recommendation 12: *That the Faculty considers a mentoring program with a focus on the inclusion of pre-tenure academic staff.*

Faculty Response:

The New Faculty Network was established in 2013 to support new scholars. Additionally, each year the Dean meets with new faculty to discuss their plans in moving forward. Although the formal mentorship program that was attempted several years ago had merit, there were some challenges that reflects some of the limitations of formalized mentorship programs. Better communication of the current network and an exploration of a more robust program will be actioned.

Recommendation 13: *That more structured opportunities for all management and professional staff are provided for them to meet together and be a source of feedback on Faculty directions.*

Faculty Response:

Management and professional staff (MaPS) meet with the Vice Dean monthly to discuss issues pertinent to the School and are encouraged to provide agenda items for discussion. In addition, they are invited participants to all town hall discussions and invited guests to the Werklund School of Education Faculty Council. Additionally, this recommendation suggests that more explicit lines of two-way communication need to be established with support staff (AUPE). Associate Deans and managers are part of academic and administrative committees and serve as the conduit of soliciting and imparting information. A town hall dedicated to professional and support staff will be held on an ongoing basis.

Recommendation 14: *That further action is taken to support sessional staff to ensure that they feel part of the community of Werklund.*

Faculty Response:

This recommendation reflects an ongoing process of ensuring faculty on four-month contracts can become meaningful in the community of Werklund School while many of them hold other full-time employment. Recent initiatives include: the establishment of a sessional network, an academic conference for sessional instructors, specific invitations to town hall discussions, and inclusion of

semi-annual planning days for the undergraduate program. We will continue to explore ways that sessional staff are tied into our community in meaningful ways.

Recommendation 15: *That all staff and graduate students be given swipe card access to all floors of the Werklund Tower block to enable greater interchange between staff.*

Faculty Response:

For clarification, all floors have open access with only the oases (staff lounges) requiring swipe card access. After consultation with faculty and students, the decision was made to limit access to faculty and students to occupants with work space on the floor in order to reduce theft, uncleanliness, and migrant populations entering these areas. Faculty and students are encouraged to host others within the oases or to use the common staff lounge or the common student gathering spaces such as the Werklund Student Area on the second floor of the Education Tower. In the case of interdisciplinary research, card access will be granted to faculty members who require access to multiple floors.

Recommendation 16: *That internal communication within the Faculty be improved.*

Faculty Response:

Over the past 18 months, shifts have occurred so academic support offices combine communications resulting in fewer newsletters. Students in Undergraduate Programs lead the creation of the newsletter which has been well received by students and faculty. Although some small scale attempts have been implemented to address specific issues, we recognize that a full scale review needs to occur.

INDIGENOUS MATTERS

Recommendation 17: *That the Faculty continue increasing the Indigenous focus across the Faculty, including efforts to make Indigenous issues ‘everyone’s business’ not just the Indigenous staff responsibility; in other words, Indigenous matters.*

Faculty Response:

The ongoing work of de-colonizing the institution and increasing the Indigenous focus continues to be a priority of the Werklund School. Guided by Indigenous faculty¹, the intent is “to courageously and humbly progress with integrity, respect and in truth alongside Indigenous peoples to strengthen education for all students.”² The Director Indigenous Education and other Indigenous faculty provide leadership and support in implementing the priority areas identified at the 2019 Werklund Indigenous Scholars’ Retreat: leading the development of Indigenous pedagogies at a national level;

¹ Ethically, we believe this work should be guided by Indigenous faculty otherwise there are inherent risks and, without the deliberate inclusion of Indigenous scholars, works against the ethos of “Nothing about us without us” that is embraced by Indigenous communities across Canada.

² The Werklund School’s Indigenous Strategy, *Moving Forward in a Good Way*, was passed in 2015.

building faculty capacity; and the development of an Indigenous digital hub. Werklund faculty are recognized as leaders in implementing the commitments outlined in *ii' taa'poh'to'p, the University of Calgary's Indigenous Strategy*. In addition, the Coordinator Blackfoot Languages provides highly specialized expertise in extending this leadership and support. Professional learning has been provided to all support and professional staff within the Werklund School and Graduate Programs staff have continued the professional learning with a focus on Indigenous student experience. As stated at the beginning, de-colonizing the institution and increasing our Indigenous focus will continue to be a priority of the Werklund School

Recommendation 18: *That all teaching staff consider how they can model Indigenous ways of learning in their courses, rather than this being the preserve of Indigenous staff in the mandatory Indigenous units.*

Faculty Response:

Curriculum mapping of Indigenous ways of knowing in undergraduate program courses occurred in 2019 and graduate program courses will be reviewed as part of the next curriculum review in fall 2021. Three websites have been created to provide resources for instructors, students, staff and the community: [Werklund School of Education - Indigenous Education, Teaching and Learning - Indigenous Education Resources](#) and an [open access website](#) with resources for Indigenous literatures in BEd and K-12 classrooms. We would also like to acknowledge that there have been a number of strides to increase consciousness both at the Werklund School and institution.

Recommendation 19: *That all teaching staff consider how they can model Indigenous ways of learning in their courses, rather than this being the preserve of Indigenous staff in the mandatory Indigenous units.*

Faculty Response:

This recommendation will be addressed by formally inviting Indigenous representation on committees related to promotion, merit and tenure and informally through discussions with the Dean and other leaders in balancing an appropriate workload in light of a multitude of requests for service. There is further work in distinguishing Indigenizing work from that of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. This said, this continues to be a conversation both held in the School, alongside conversations at the central level. We recognize that constant vigilance is required to ensure that multiple demands on our Indigenous staff are monitored.

BUDGET

Recommendation 20: *That further development of modular, stackable credentials via online delivery be explored as shorter professional development opportunities for teachers throughout Canada. This may be a valuable source of additional revenue and their innovative structure was lauded by the*

reviewers.

Faculty Response:

The Werklund School of Education has been a leader and innovator on campus for the development of stackable credentials. Work has commenced on focused support in expanding our reputation and exploring opportunities for revenue generation that align with our expertise and trends in education. Working with recently gathered baseline data, targeted credentials will be a main pillar in the recruitment plan. Currently we are expanding the offerings of open studies courses at both the graduate and undergraduate levels, partnering with Continuing Education to offer non-credit courses to international students, and exploring.

Recommendation 21: *That the Faculty explore rationalisation of some courses, particularly the broad range of teaching areas currently offered in what appears to be attracting very small numbers in some cases.*

Faculty Response:

Analysis reviews of per-program and per-student costs of all of programs is conducted annually and is carefully monitored throughout the year. We have identified the need to become more intentional in marketing programs and in early 2021, an environment scan examining the value proposition of graduate programs in relation to other national programs was completed. This information will inform the ongoing discussion of balancing community and societal needs, faculty expertise, requirements of a research-intensive faculty and the financial sustainability of the programs.

Conclusion

This Unit Review is particularly welcomed by the Werklund School as it embarks on the process of renewing our strategic academic plan over the coming year. This report, along with other internal and external data, will provide a strong sense of direction and focus for the next five years. Many of the recommendations had been previously identified and actions have already begun to address some of the recommendations. The reviewers identified that there is work to be done if we wish to increase in the ranking. Using a holistic approach that is aligned to our vision and mission, adhering to our values, we will be able to best address these recommendations and meet future challenges for Werklund School.

We extend our heartfelt appreciation to the reviewers and the participants during this unit review that was held over zoom and across multiple time zones. The external examiners' care and attention to listening to the various voices was appreciated, and captured the areas that should be celebrated, and where the School can build capacity. In many respects, their recommendations resonate with the issues and challenges that have been identified, providing more resolve for continued engagement with our internal and external stakeholder groups.

Follow-up

The Review Team recommendations will be revisited mid-way through the cycle. At that point, the Werklund School of Education will be required to report on its status in acting on the recommendations, providing explanations and timelines for those which have not been met. This interim report should be submitted to the Provost in August 2023, with the next full review scheduled in 2025-26.