External Review
Graduate Programs in Human Development and Family Studies
Texas Tech University

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In preparing this assessment of the graduate programs in Human Development and Family Studies (HDFS), the information used was included in the program review document prepared by the Department, interviews with College and Department administrators (Dean, Associate Dean for Research, Interim Chair, Graduate Program Coordinator), faculty, and graduate students, a tour of the facilities that took place during part of a 2-day site visit (April 20-21, 2014), and additional materials requested from the Review Committee (e.g., Student Learning Outcomes, retention data). All members of the Review Committee participated in these interviews (Drs. Lee Duemer [Committee Chair, TTU], Diane Bales [University of Georgia], Kay Pasley [Florida State University], Chris Robitschek [TTU], and Susan Urban [TTU]).

In this document, I include both my overall assessment of the areas of interest, as well as my conclusions and recommendations.

Preface

I preface my comments by discussing two key issues: Choice of comparison departments and perceived changes in department’s cultural context. The criteria used to identify comparative departments (Arizona State University [ASU], Auburn University [AU], Iowa State University [IAS], and University of Georgia [UGA]) was not clearly articulated, and I believe that the selection of these programs places TTU at a disadvantage. For example, all comparison departments are embedded in universities designated by the Carnegie Classification as Research Universities/Very High Research Activity, whereas Texas Tech University [TTU] has yet to achieve this designation and is currently classified as a Research University/High Research Activity. As such, TTU/HDFS appears to compare poorly to the other HDFS units in terms of research awards and expenditures. Additionally, three of the comparison HDFS departments (ASU, AU, and UGA) include graduate degree programs in marriage and family therapy (MFT) at the masters and/or doctoral levels, whereas TTU does not. Specifically, both ASU and Auburn offer only master’s level training in MFT, and UGA offers only doctoral level training in MFT. Also, only IAS has like programs as part of the Great Plains Consortium (identified as GP-IDEA). Lastly, the mission and overall enrollment of the universities are not adequately comparable, such that AU, IAS, and UGA are land-grant universities with unique missions not reflected in the mission and resources at TTU, and only two of the four universities are similar in overall enrollment to TTU (ASU and UGA).
Given these differences, the comparisons made must be interpreted cautiously. For example, the resources available at Research Universities/Very High Research Activities and internal support services are typically more plentiful and well developed than those universities with lower classifications, so mentoring faculty to be highly successful in meeting expectations for funded research may be more challenging at TTU. Additionally, the master’s level enrollment data are inflated for ASU and AU, because they include enrollment data for MFT programs; this is also true of UGA doctoral enrollment data. Faculty counts at AU and UGA are inflated also; they include tenure-track faculty dedicated to MFT training (typically at least three full-time positions are required as part of COAMFTE Accreditation), and other faculty at these universities hold positions dedicated to the land grant mission as Extension Specialists (2 members at both universities have limited teaching and mentoring responsibilities).

Although TTU’s goal of increasing graduate enrollment to 8,000 is a worthy goal, it is my impression that the necessary infrastructure to accomplish this goal is limited. For example, in the current context of social media and evidence showing that prospective student use websites (e.g., GradSchools.com, Peterson’s Guide) as a first step in identifying potential programs, only the latter resource easily identified TTU’s HDFS programs. Importantly, the recruiting methods currently active in HDFS are traditional rather than current and innovative, and there appear to be no digital system for facilitating recruitment beyond the application submission process. The recruitment process at comparative universities are more sophisticated, and they clearly draw from a national rather than local or regional pool of prospective students.

An overarching theme of “changes in the departmental cultural context” surfaced during the review process which reflected the perceptions of some of the faculty. Clearly, HDFS has experienced numerous changes since the prior program review. Faculty have retired, died, and taken positions elsewhere. In addition, greater emphasis on grant supported research programs and higher levels of productivity to move TTU toward Research University/Very High Research Activity designation, and the College’s designation of three “resource investment areas” (obesity, recovery services, and retirement planning and living) appear to challenge some faculty to redirect or renew their efforts towards these goals with limited additional support. Such changes can be difficult for faculty who do not want to redirect their ongoing research programs and/or take on new research areas to garner additional resources for themselves or HDFS. Some faculty believe that a redistribution of resources has occurred to build new units at the expense of more established units. Not surprisingly, HDFS faculty appear to represent opposite ends of a continuum from negative to hopeful assessment of the future. Among some graduate students, there is a belief that HDFS has a diminished national reputation, but the perceived causes of such loss are not well articulated.

I. Academic Unit Description and Strategic Plan

Vision, Mission, and Goals: Very Good
The mission of the unit to be multidisciplinary where contextual and systemic frameworks are applied “to the study of individual development and relationship processes
across the life space through research, teaching, and service.” This is a common mission for
HDFS units nationally.

The “donor friendly vision statement is “...by 2020, the Human Development and Family
Studies program will be known for its global connections through research and education
collaborations, initiatives in diversity, service learning, and community and worldwide
engagement.” Minus the global references, I interpreted this in terms of national reputation
for these four focused areas.

The general goals are outlined in the extended vision statement in the report submitted
by HDFS and mirror those of the College and University. These include: nationally recognized
scholars, integration of diversity throughout the unit, publish and disseminate research,
promote the wellbeing of families, provide service to the community, and develop socially
responsible students who can apply their knowledge and critical thinking skills. With the lack of
clearly identified objectives and benchmarks, it will be difficult to determine when the vision
has been achieved.

**Strategic Plan: Excellent**

HDFS adheres to the strategic plan of the College of Human Sciences which reflects that
of the University. There are five strategic priorities: selectively increase enrollment (focus on
graduate programs), strengthen academic quality and reputation and promote student success
in a global community; expand and enhance research and creative scholarship; further outreach
and engagement; and increase and maximize resources. Although assessment method are
noted in the HDFS review document, the lack of specific benchmarks will make it difficult to
assess progress. For example, Priority 1, to increase enrollment and promote student success,
could be strengthened if a designated benchmark was included, such as increasing graduate
student enrollment by 5% per year for the next 5 years. Then assessment includes the number
of graduate students enrolled annually with “actions” reflecting the meeting or failing to meet
this benchmark.

**Positive Components:** The mission and vision statements are derived from the strategic
directions of the University and reflect common themes, suggesting that the academic unit is in
step with that of the College and University. These statements provide some general guidance
for HDFS in determining its future.

**Areas of Improvement:** Most faculty appeared uninformed about the strategic
initiatives, and the process by which they were derived could not be clearly articulated.
Importantly, the HDFS vision statement is broad and there is no clear vision for the graduate
programs specifically. Developing a clear vision for the graduate programs might serve HDFS
well in growing its national and international reputation.
II. Program Curriculum

Alignment of Program with Stated Program and Institutional Goals and Purposes: Excellent

As noted earlier, there is clear alignment of the program with the College and University goals and purposes. The program statement is somewhat general and broad which reflects the diverse interests of the faculty.

Curriculum Development Coordination and Delivery: Good

The graduate curriculum has not undergone an extensive review since 2005, although there have been some recent discussion regarding the qualifying examination process. There are multiple options for master’s level students with the GP-IDEA consortium online programs, a thesis-only option, and two doctoral programs, one post-baccalaureate and one post-master’s degree. Much of the responsibility for curriculum coordination has fallen to the Graduate Program Coordinator (GPC) with what appears to be limited input from the faculty. Decisions regarding which graduate courses would be taught appeared to be determine by the GPC, and then changes have been common due to changes in faculty, etc.

Faculty spoke highly of sequence of research methods courses, as did students, although students expressed concerns that they could not anticipate when courses would be offered and reported that this affected their timely completion (means of 2.5 years for master’s and 7.3 years for doctoral); both average completion times are longer than is reported in comparative programs. The HDFS review document shows a number of courses that are rarely offered, and the suggested sequence of courses used to assist students in planning their program of study did not reflect actual practice.

Program Learning Outcomes Assessment: Very Good

Most, but not all, student learning outcomes were clearly articulated and documented. Several assessments relied on the annual assessment meeting addressing student progress, where they “were judged to be proficient;” the criteria used by faculty to determine proficiency was not clearly articulate for the various outcomes. For example, outcomes related to (a) writing, thinking and research skills, (b) research, literature reviews and time management, (c) professional socialization, and (d) timely progress all used the annual assessment meeting to determine student performance. Also absent from these summaries is any recommended actions that might improve performance.

Program Curriculum Compared to Peer Programs: Good

HDFS offers much of the same core curriculum as that in comparable units: theories of human development, theories of family studies, and multiple courses in research methods and statistics. Also, doctoral students are similarly mentored in teaching and conducting research.

Somewhat unique to HDFS at TTU is its emphasis on the breadth of research interests, “creating many areas in which graduate students may specialize.” They note five areas of expertise: lifespan development; relational processes; research on theory, statistical methods, and analyses; Hispanic and other ethnic studies; and issues related to rural populations. It is unclear which faculty are aligned with each of these five areas and the specific nature of the
faculty expertise in these areas. For example, reviewing the titles of publications appearing on faculty vita, it was difficult to determine common research themes for a particular faculty member and then common themes across faculty. Although such breadth can appeal to prospective students and allows faculty to teach a breadth of content, it also diminishes the ability to (a) build a strong, targeted national reputation stemming from depth of expertise, and (b) attract students who strategically seek out this unit because of such expertise. Examining comparative programs shows less breadth, and this allows for greater depth and a stronger national reputation. For example, ASU offers three specializations: measurement and statistical analysis, social and emotional development, and learning and development. There are multiple faculty aligned with each specialization. Additionally, ASU has a national reputations for studying Latino children and families, and attracts students who want to develop expertise in measurement and statistical analysis and apply such expertise in studying Latino children and families. HDFS at Auburn University focuses on interpersonal competence and relationship dynamics in the context of families and has an established national reputation for addressing the social, cognitive, and emotional health of children and youth and intervention and prevention research and application.

**Positive Components:**
There is a notable breadth of courses offered in the department that build on the diverse interests and expertise of the faculty. Thus, students have many content courses to select from and are encourage to enroll in courses outside the department as well.

**Areas of Improvement:**
A thorough and critical curriculum review is recommended, as the breadth of the current offerings weakens the ability of the program to have a clear identity nationally and internationally that serves to attract the very best of prospective students seeking this expertise. Because it HDFS lacks a clear programmatic identity, faculty at other universities are unlikely to recommend prospective students to the program. The current programs offerings are common rather than distinctive, and targeting areas of distinction are important for growing the graduate programs and drawing from a national pool of students rather than locally.

The faculty recognizes the limitations of the thesis-only master’s degree program, reducing the program’s appeal to prospective students seeking a practice-oriented advanced degree. It also places additional burden on the faculty to mentor students with limited background and experience in the research process. Many HDFS programs offer both thesis and non-thesis options, typically requiring 30 credits including a capstone experience. Students in either option take the same core courses (e.g., research methods and statistics, theory, and advanced seminars in HD and FS where an overview of the current research is examined and critiqued). Comparative programs offering both options report that the expected time to completion with a thesis is two years, whereas less time is required for the non-thesis option (15-18 months). Developing a sequence of courses that allows for a practice-oriented option may serve students interested in working with families and/or individuals and who have limited interest in the research enterprise, but who gain an appreciation for research-based practice. HDFS is pursuing an “applied developmental science” option which may be attractive to
prospective students, but my understanding is that no attempt was made to determine this market value of this option. Too, it has the potential to be confused with similar programs offered nationally in psychology departments. Given the rural location of TTU, the conceptualization of this option as an online offering is important. Care should be taken to provide a program that can be marketed as distinct from other such programs available in Texas (e.g., University of Texas at Dallas). Distinction and perceived marketability will be essential here.

The doctoral program appears course driven, requiring completion of 84 credits (with dissertation credits). All comparative programs have many fewer requirements, ranging from 44 to 72 credits. Although 84 credits can be reduced by 30 taken in a master degree, this also holds true of the other programs. Thus, the program requirements undermine a timely completion (4 years on average in comparative programs, and 5 years in post-baccalaureate doctoral programs compared with 7.3 years in HDFS).

III. Faculty Productivity

Qualifications: Excellent

Overall the graduate faculty have the necessary qualifications to be highly productive in research, teaching/mentoring, and engagement. Most faculty have different research foci, so research teams may be challenging to build within HDFS. Moreover, their current research interests do not bode well for garnering additional resources from the College given the stated investment areas (obesity, recovery services, and retirement planning and living). There is some unevenness in three areas of productivity over the past six years: number of students supervised (ranges: PhD 1-8, and 6 faculty had a single student; MS 0-4, 3 faculty had 0, and 6 had 1), refereed publications (ranging from 1 to 18), and grants submitted/awarded. All faculty appear actively engaged in University service reflective of their status.

Publications: Very Good

Most but not all faculty are actively engaged in the publication process; the average publication per faculty is less than two per year which would be expected given the current teaching responsibilities. By my count, there is an observed unevenness of refereed publications by individual faculty over the last 6 years: two faculty had a single publication (1 Associate, 1 Professor), one had two publications (Professor), two had 5-6 such publications (1 Associate, 1 Professor), and all others had 8-18 refereed publications. It appears that during the assessment period, faculty had similar responsibilities in teaching and engagement.

Teaching Load: Very Good

Teaching loads are reasonable (2:2 for most faculty) and in line with expectations at most research universities and like programs. To accommodate designated administrative responsibilities (e.g., Associate Dean, Graduate Program Director), start-up agreements with new faculty, and the responsibilities associated with funded research projects, some faculty have reduced teaching loads.
External Grants: Very Good

Most, but not all, faculty are actively engaged in submitting proposals for external funding, and some faculty are successful in securing federal funding (the gold standard). Most faculty are successful in securing funds from sources internal to TTU; however, the typical amounts awarded are small (e.g., $2000, $5000, $10000) and do little to contribute to the funding of graduate student Research Assistantships. The lack of Research Assistantships is perceived as a limitation by graduate students, and they do not appear knowledgeable about how such positions are typically funded and why there are so few of them available.

Although a good deal of energy has been put forth by several faculty in preparing and submitting proposals to external sources, success has been illusive as shown in the Research Expenditures per year, ranging from $579,864 (2012) to $1,258,378 (2009). These amounts are much lower than those noted in comparative programs, even among those programs with fewer tenured faculty (Auburn, UGA). It may be helpful to provide stronger mentoring than is currently available and which may require going outside the University for assistance (e.g., hiring external reviewers known for their success and experience on review panels to providing critical feedback on drafts of proposals). Internal funding has remained relatively stable since 2008 with the exception of decreased in F & A and increase in course fees (the latter of which should be exploited where possible).

Few faculty have been recognized in the College, University, or nationally for their research contributions with awards, etc. Seeking more opportunities for recognition is encouraged, such as efforts to nominate faculty for Fellow status in professional organizations.

Teaching Evaluations: Excellent

There is a good deal of evidence that HDFS faculty and Graduate Teaching Assistants are recognized in the College and University for excellence in teaching and have receive a number of awards and recognitions. Further, faculty are known for the quality of their mentoring of graduate students as reported by the students. They also successfully participate in offering courses needed for interdisciplinary program and by other departments (e.g., Psychology).

Professional Service: Very Good

Overall, the faculty is highly involved in professional service at all levels and are particularly involved as ad hoc reviewers for various journals in the field. Some are designated members of journal Editorial Boards, some serve in leadership positions for professional organizations both regionally and nationally, and some provide other services for professional organizations.

Community Service: Excellent

There is some unevenness in community service, but this is not unexpected, as some faculty are engaged in more applied research. The rural location of TTU warrants a strong community-university partnership, and clearly those who take on such responsibilities are providing invaluable service.
Positive Components:
Many faculty are actively engaged in the multiple responsibilities inherent in the academy (research, teaching, and service) and are performing well in balancing them. Other faculty are much less engaged in the research enterprise, but they demonstrate involvement in teaching and service.

Areas of Improvement:
Given the unevenness of faculty engagement in research and mentoring of graduate students coupled with the consistency in teaching responsibilities, realignment of assignments may be warranted. Additional mentoring in the grant proposal development may be helpful in improving the success rate of all faculty in securing external funding which is increasingly more challenging. There is confusion regarding the criteria used in the assignment of graduate assistants to assist faculty in meeting their multiple responsibilities, and this should be a transparent process.

IV. Students and Graduates

Time to degree: Needs Improvement
Both average time to degree for master’s-only students and doctoral students is Excessive and has increased overtime (master’s from 2.56 in 2008 to 3.33 in 2012; doctoral from 5.43 to 7.33 in the same period). The increase in time to degree for master’s students suggests that many are actually post-baccalaureate doctoral students and engaged in taking doctoral courses while completing the master’s requirements. Further, the explanation offered is for the increased time to degree in the doctoral program is due to the increase enrollment of post-baccalaureate doctoral students; however, the websites and graduate student handbooks from comparative programs with similar degree offerings report shorter time to degree, typically noting 2 years for master’s and 5 years for post-baccalaureate doctoral students. The increase in time to degree does not correlate with better placements. In part, the reduced credit requirements and greater emphasis on research experience rather than content courses may explain some of the differences here. Although some faculty spoke proudly of attracting a diverse student population, often admitting those with little HDFS background and limited language skills, others perceived this as a problem, as these students require more time to gain desired competencies and demand more faculty attention.

Although we were assured that students received feedback from faculty regarding the progress, students reported a lack of consistency here. Some long-retained students reported they had received no feedback from the annual review assessment in the past several years, whereas others indicated that such feedback was provided by their advisor.

Retention: Needs Improvement
The retention data made available do not allow assessment of the characteristics of those not retained, nor do they reflect the concerns expressed by students about the qualifying examination process. Although most students leave for “personal reasons,” some faculty
expressed concerns that the emphasis on increasing graduate enrollment has resulted in the recruitment of less qualified students and those less prepared for graduate study. For example, the GPC indicated that little emphasis is placed on GRE scores of students and that no minimum standards were applied and that average writing scores of students were 3.5. Because 4.0 is considered “average”, students are being admitted with less than average writing scores, and this coupled with marginal average verbal scores places additional burden on faculty for individualized mentoring. Others, including many students, suggested that there is little emphasis in the recruitment and socialization processes that helps them gain a clear understanding of the realities and expectations of graduate education and the goals of the program.

Further, most students complained that the stipend rates for service to the department “had not changed in 14 years”. Although this may be true and every effort should be made to increase the amount to attract a stronger pool of potential students, recruitment efforts could be include cost of living comparisons. For example, the cost of living in Tempe, AZ, is 28% higher than Lubbock; Auburn, AL, is 30% higher; Ames, IA is 23% higher; and Athens, GA, is 17% higher, so stipends “go farther” in Lubbock. Additionally, a pool of funds might be reserved to attract the best US students by negotiating to subsidize health care cost or increase stipends to off-set tuition expenses and then decreasing the commitment to international students who are often costly because of additional time needed to develop competencies.

**Graduation Rates: Good**

Because the data provided do not distinguish clearly by program (e.g., GP-IDEA from M.S.; post-baccalaureate PhD from PhD), assessment of graduate rates are global rather than specific. Comparison with IAS, the only program lacking MFT training, shows lightly fewer degrees awarded.

Many students expressed concerns regarding the qualifying examination process where about 50% of students do not pass all components of the examination on the first attempt. This suggests a continued disjuncture between course content and related experiences and the content of the examination. Exploring alternative ways of such assessment that are common in other universities (e.g., preparation of research article for publication, completing a critical review of the literature with later publication as a goal, preparation of a grant proposal, or portfolio development) might be helpful.

**Enrollment: Good**

The graduate enrollment is good in light of commitments made the two undergraduate majors (ECE and HDFS with 2013 fall enrollment of 839 of which 517 is designated as HDFS). Expectations are to grow the graduate enrollment at TTU to 8,000 or 20% of undergraduate enrollment. This requires 100% graduate enrollment increase in HDFS which is not a realistic goal with the current resources. However, some clear benchmarks for growth should be determined to use in assessing progress, and additional steps to turn admissions decisions into enrollees must be taken. Applying more stringent criteria for admission to the doctoral programs should be considered, because of the long-term investment in faculty time and departmental resources especially in the post-baccalaureate program.
Demographics: Good
HDFS has performed admirably in attracting a diverse student applicant pool, especially in attracting a balance of national and international students. More effective recruitment may be required to increase the number of qualified applicants nationally and then turn these applicants into enrollees.

Two realities challenge the program in accomplishing this: providing timely and competitive financial offers and perceptions about the programs and TTU. When asked, current HDFS graduate students consistently reported that their primary reason for enrolling was having financial support, except in two cases where the reason was to work with a particular faculty (match). In my experience, financial support that is both timely and competitive is key to effective recruitment; reports suggest offers often come late. Further to effective recruit nationally, students must perceive other elements of the program as desirable, so efforts extended to demonstrate the value inherent in the faculty expertise (with an emphasis of matching interests and expertise), facilities (a strength in HDFS) and the general location are essential. Better marketing efforts is required here, and competitive programs bring the most desirable candidate to campus for interviews to promote their programs and dispel misinformation, but has been less successful in turning applicants into enrollee especially among US students. Also, good website content and welcoming graduate student handbooks are essential marketing tools, and both are lacking for HDFS.

Numbers of Degrees Conferred Annually: Good
In light of the current enrollment, the number of degrees conferred is adequate. Students expressed concern that required courses were not offered regularly which affected their ability of timely completion. Additionally, the common inability of students to successfully pass all portions of the qualifying exams is also a deterrent to timely completion. Although faculty have had a number of discussion about this and has resulted in students electing to take a “remediation” course for preparation, discussions with comparative programs regarding alternatives to the current exam process might prove helpful.

Support Services: Good
There are a number of support services provided at the College and University levels. It is less clear whether unique support is offered at the department level, although both faculty and students consistently noted the collegial nature of HDFS and the encouragement to work collaboratively. Further, the resources on campus for faculty and students (e.g., library holdings and access to digital material) appear to be adequate, although students expressed concern that software needed for statistical analysis was not adequately available and the cost was prohibitive for individual purchase.

Job Placement: Good
The goal of the doctoral program is to prepare students for positions in the academy, and they have been somewhat successful in doing so. By my count, of the 67 graduate students included in the report of job placement, 11 MS student had not job information reported, and
21 MS students were identified as moving into doctoral programs (the majority in HDFS and TTU which may ultimately influence there later placement success). Of the remaining 25 doctoral students, 6 secured postdoctoral fellowships, and 12 were identified as faculty, including “instructors” (5 secured positions as Assistant Professors commonly at regional universities). Given the perceived excellence of the doctoral training by both faculty and students, student placement was disappointing and a critical evaluation of competencies necessary to improve student placement is warranted. Graduate students indicated that socialization regarding the job search process and placement is lacking.

**Student/Faculty Ratio: Needs Improvement**

Compared to other HDFS programs the ratio is high with 3 students to each tenured faculty; however, this ratio fails to show the unevenness of the distribution of students across faculty with some supervising a single student while others supervise many students. In part, the unevenness may be due to the scholarly inactivity of three faculty (2 had a single refereed journal article, and 1 had 2 publications over the last 6 years) and low scholarly activity of 2 additional faculty (on average 1-2 per year over the review period), also making them less desirable mentors given the placement expectations.

**Positive Components:**

HDFS has made good strides in attempting to diversify its student population and both students and faculty express pride in this accomplishment. Although some faculty proudly reported that the admissions process devalues reliance on GRE scores, others expressed concern that the quality of students has diminished over time.

Most MS students continue their education in Ph.D. programs often selecting TTU, and current students speak highly of the learning experiences provided. Many PhD students are successful in secure employment in colleges and universities and are appreciative of their methods and statistical training and opportunities for collaboration with graduate students and faculty.

**Areas of Improvement:**

Several areas require attention. Specifically, direct efforts toward more timely completion of degrees whether this necessitates a reduction in requirements or improved mentoring, or both. Additionally, examine carefully student retention to determine the characteristics of students not retained and implement related prevention strategies, including changes in the recruitment and selection processes. Update and improve the graduate student handbook, so it is more user friendly and provides additional information (e.g., criteria applied in annual evaluation of students, direction for resolution of evaluation disputes). Explore ways to reduce the commitment to undergraduate education, perhaps offering fewer courses and centralizing undergraduate advising, so greater focus can be placed on enhancing and streamlining the graduate programs. Emphasize the matching of student interest with faculty expertise with the goal of building a stronger national reputation that draws students to HDFS at TTU, as well as educating prospective students on the importance of such matching. This may alleviate some of the issues related to the uneven selection of mentors. Explore alternative ways of assessing student progress in lieu of the examination process. Take care to
eliminate the involvement of graduate students in the unnecessary business of the department; students’ comments showed that they had been drawn into inappropriate matters. Lastly, engage in more systematic preparation of students for their professional future to facilitate better placements and later success in achieving tenure.

V. Facilities and Resources

Facilities: Excellent
The facilities available to faculty and students are impressive: Barton Observational Research Suite, Child Development Research Center, and TTU Early Head Start Center. Additionally, the HDFS Office suite is well designed to accommodate the necessary activities. Faculty offices are spacious and can accommodate small informal meetings. Given the concerns expressed by several faculty, careful monitoring of use of space should be ongoing. Although some faculty reported a lack of space to accommodate their research activities, faculty offices appear larger than offices at other universities which are often limited to 120 sq. ft.). Also, some expressed a need for additional data storage, and every effort should be made to digitize data when possible to reduce this need.

Although some students with teaching responsibilities reported that private space was unavailable for consulting with students, and others complained that they did not have individual offices, the Interim Chair indicated that space was designated for private conversations with students. Private offices were not possible, and given the space limitations at most universities, this was not uncommon. Better articulation about space availability and criteria for use may be helpful for fuller understanding.

Facility Support Resources: Good
Conversations with faculty did not result in requests for additional support resources except in two areas: data storage (discussed earlier) and statistical consulting. A single faculty expressed concern over the lack of statistical consulting available at the College level. Many universities provide complimentary statistical consultation to students and faculty in a centralized location that is supported by the University; in such “centers” employees often include doctoral students who specialized in general areas (e.g., social sciences research, biomedical research) and software (e.g., SPSS, STATA, SAS) and who are supervised by designated faculty with related expertise. This appears to be lacking at TTU. Additionally, the purchasing of desired software site licenses appears more costly than evident at other universities (e.g., SPSS $100+ at TTU vs. $32 at Florida State University).

Financial Resources: Needs Improvement
Without reservation, there has been dramatic decrease in budget allocation to HDFS since 2008, down from $205,944 to $103,612 in 2013. Although some of this was a result of reorganization where faculty were reassigned, these changes do not fully explain the dramatic reduction in resources. The three areas noted by the Dean as strategic investments may place HDFS at further risk for fewer resources. I believe that it is unrealistic to expect faculty with
well-established research programs to redirect their energy toward these initiatives. Targeted hiring of new faculty may be better way to engage in these College-level initiatives. In spite of this reduction in financial resources, HDFS has been able to maintain its general level of productivity and graduate student enrollment. Yet, a context where limited resources is the reality often proves unattractive to faculty and student recruitment efforts (e.g., specialized hire with trauma-related expertise, as well as new Assistant Professors).

**Staff Resources: Good**

HDFS has 2.5 staff member which is adequate for the operation of the office and the multiple responsibilities therein. However, the number of faculty has been reduced primarily through attrition, as MFT faculty were reassigned to the Department of Community, Family and Addiction Services in 2012, reducing faculty to 19 (18 current faculty and 1 open position targeted for a faculty with expertise in trauma services). With the recent hire of a new HDFS Chair, the total tenure-track faculty will be 20, and this count is similar to the identified comparable programs. For example, although ASU has 43 tenure-track faculty compared with what will be 20 in HDFS, ASU also has triple the number of undergraduate students and double the number of graduate students. IAS has about the same number of undergraduate students, 7 fewer graduate students, and 1 more faculty than HDFS. Both Auburn and UGA have about 30% fewer undergraduate students, 15% fewer graduate students, and 4 fewer tenure-track faculty. Thus, although the number of faculty in HDFS is not idea, it is certainly not dramatically different from other programs.

**Positive Components:**

The departmental facilities, resource support provided faculty, and staff resources are strong, although not all faculty or students would agree. There are three outstanding research facilities and associated resources available to both faculty and students designed for multiple use. Two and a half staff provide service to the HDFS, handling fiscal, personnel, and academic issues, as well as proving assistance to the operation of the graduate programs. Much less adequate are the financial resources for departmental operation.

**Areas of Improvement:**

Additional financial support in terms of providing more operating budget is needed, and more reasonable priced software and centralized statistical services made available. (Consider the model from Oregon State University where certain costly analytic software is house on a centralize server allowing access by a designated number of students at one time.) HDFS would also benefit from one additional faculty member that is strategically selected bringing the tenure-track faculty headcount to 21. My understanding of the typical hiring practice is to leave the position description fairly broad and then hire the best candidate regardless of his or her area of expertise. Instead, HDFS might be best served by targeting the area of expertise needed in the department and then searching for the best candidate to fill that area. Additional efforts should be made to hire faculty with HDFS degrees (rather than psychology degrees for example) when possible, as this clearly communicates to HDFS students that they are competitive in like departments.
VI. Overall Ranking - Good

Summative Conclusions

HDFS has many strengths of which they should be proud, including continuing to provide a meaningful education for graduate students while managing a growing undergraduate population and doing so with fewer resources. This demonstrates a commitment to offering the best education possible in a changing context. Most notable is their excellence in teaching and their ability to effectively mentor graduate students in teaching.

The faculty and students value the program curriculum and believe that it is something that sets them apart from peer program. However, a thorough review of other HDFS programs does not support this belief. The breadth of the offerings and the lack of clear programmatic foci (a) reduce the possibilities of recruiting the best students nationally, (b) limit the recruitment of faculty with targeted expertise, and (c) undermine the potential for building a stronger reputation among peer programs. Similarly, faculty areas of expertise are broad and matching student interest with faculty expertise in the recruitment process is not emphasized. Further, the heavy course requirement places students at risk for being retained longer than necessary and challenges the department to effectively sequence course offerings and provide ongoing financial support. Coupled with minimal socialization to the profession and no systematic job search training, students are not well prepared for employment in the academy.

The productivity indicators of the faculty and their effective involvement in graduate education varies. Some faculty are highly productive and involved, whereas others are much less so. Yet, all retain similar assignments. The three areas indicated by the College for strategic investment may not serve the department well given the established areas of faculty research. Further reduction of resources will undermine efforts of HDFS to develop and build on its strengths.

The financial support has diminished drastically since 2008, and it cannot be accounted for through simple attrition of faculty and reorganization. Additional resources are needed to reinvigorate HDFS and facilitate the necessary growth in graduate enrollment. Although some faculty expressed concern for a lack of research space, this was not evident from the site visit.

Summative Recommendations

In light of the strengths and challenges facing HDFS, I offer several recommendations for building on current strengths:

1. The three strategic investment areas identified by the College may not be in the best interest of HDFS. Every effort should be made to maintain current expertise rather than emphasizing redirection; HDFS should not be penalized for choosing not to redirect it’s expertise toward this effort, as other areas may prove to be better suited to them.

2. Work to developing a clearly defined national identity and program focus or foci that sets HDFS apart from similar units and can be used in developing a strategic plan for hiring new faculty and recruiting graduate students.
3. Undertake a thorough and critical curriculum review to determine the courses needed at all levels (undergraduate, master’s, doctoral), so the resulting program best prepares students for competitive job markets.

4. Reduce emphasis on post-baccalaureate recruitment, as students awarded all degrees from a single program often are at a disadvantaged in the job market than those who successfully complete advanced degrees elsewhere.

5. Course sequencing should be implemented in such a way that students and advisors can plan a program of study for more timely completion.

6. Identify ways to reduce the commitment to undergraduate education and focus more on graduate programs. For example, programs can reduce faculty burden by centralizing undergraduate advising responsibilities to expand opportunities for mentoring graduate students.

7. Systematically socialize students into the academic culture and professional attitudes and behaviors; such socialization should not left to a single individual or single course or selection of a certain advisor.

8. Review and revise the Graduate Student Handbook to provide clear statements of current policies and procedures that reinforce both and understanding of academic culture and professionalism. Elements of due process must be outlined and articulated, and faculty should be continuously educated about policy and procedural changes.

9. The procedures for the annual assessment of graduate students must be followed so (a) all students understand the criteria on which they are evaluated, (b) faculty/advisors apply these criteria consistently across students, (c) students received written feedback on their progress annually, and (d) all involved are provided with opportunities to appeal decisions that affect program retention or continuation of financial support.

10. Determine ways to provide higher stipends to graduate assistants, so competitive offers are extended and maintained over time, and offers occur well in advance of the April 15 deadline. This may require offering support to fewer students and identifying innovative ways of generating additional means of support. Additionally, criteria for making graduate student assignments should be transparent.

11. Provide additional resources to HDFS including faculty lines, statistical support (e.g., reduced cost for site licenses, consulting), secure space for storage of data or services for the digitizing of data for storage, and research space. A careful review of available research space and use in the College and HDFS is warranted. From these data, faculty discussions are recommended to increase transparency of criteria used in assigning
space and conditions under which space is assigned and reassigned. Such systematic review of space should occur regularly.